Reading 2 Corinthians 3:4-18: An Exercise in Exegesis

Vilson Scholz
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, vscholz@uol.com.br

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.csl.edu/thd
Part of the Biblical Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholar.csl.edu/thd/16

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Theology Dissertation by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.
READING 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-18:
AN EXERCISE IN EXEGESIS

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by
Wilson Scholz
May 1993

Approved by: James Voelz
Advisor

Jacob A. O. Preus
Reader

Robert Rosin
Reader
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a special word of thanks to the people who made this project possible, namely, The Committee Responsible for International Scholarship Programs (CRISP) of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, in particular to Mr. Kenneth Reiner, for support and service; and the Administration of Seminario Concordia, Brazil, for granting me a leave of absence.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. James W. Voelz; to my readers, Dr. J. A. O. Preus III and Dr. Robert Rosin; and to Dr. Wayne E. Schmidt, Director of Graduate Studies, for making much easier things that at first appeared to be so complicated.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, and to the Brazilian colleagues and their families who lived on the campus of Concordia Seminary from 1990-1992.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .............................................. ii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

2. READING FOR THE SENSE OF THE TEXT ........... 16
   Section One: 2 Cor. 3:4-6 ....................... 18
   Section Two: 2 Cor. 3:7-11 ..................... 38
   Section Three: 2 Cor. 3:12-18 ................. 57

3. EXPLAINING SOME CONCEPTS OF 2 CORINTHIANS
   3 IN THE LIGHT OF THE NARROW CONTEXT
   AND OF THE PAULINE CORPUS ....................... 100

   Διακονία τοῦ θανάτου //
   Διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος ..................... 101
   Καινὴ διαθήκη // Παλαιὰ
   διαθήκη ............................................. 109
   Γράμμα // Πνεύμα ................................. 127
   Κάλυμμα μένει // Κάλυμμα
   περιαρισταί ........................................ 146

4. PROBING THE RHETORICAL DIMENSION OF
   2 CORINTHIANS 3 ................................. 157
   Speech-act Theory ................................. 158
   Rhetorical Criticism ............................. 162
   Is 2 Corinthians 3 Aimed
   at Paul's Opponents ............................. 171
   Rhetorical Analysis and 2 Corinthians ... 176
   The Rhetoric of 2 Corinthians 3 .............. 181
   The Force of the Text in New Contexts .... 191

5. CONCLUSION ............................................. 197

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................. 204
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Paul's letters have a reading history of almost two millennia. It is a history of readings and misreadings, of grasping the general drift of the texts and of being puzzled when it comes down to the details. Readers have felt this ever since the New Testament era. Already in the first century Saint Peter writes that some things in Paul's letters are "hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16).

Of the whole Pauline corpus, the Second Letter to the Corinthians has proved to be one of the most impenetrable. Paul and Timothy assured their first readers that they were writing to them only what they, the Christians at Corinth, could read and understand (2 Cor. 1:13). Yet, this does not mean that all readers, particularly late-comers, have read it with ease and complete understanding. One contemporary reader of 2 Corinthians, for instance, feels that

its argumentation is frequently obscure . . . . , its contents unfamiliar, its construction apparently haphazard, and its Sitz im Leben foggy."

In Second Corinthians, one of the most baffling

portions is chapter three. It is one of the most intensely studied portions of the Pauline corpus, as the flood of publications indicates. Many readers have come to one basic conclusion: it is a text that is not easily read.

Here are some of the reactions:

It [2 Cor. 3:1-4:6] is indeed one of the most fruitful and challenging parts of Paul's literary legacy.

While there is here no lack of clarity, there are many obscure passages in 3:7-18.

Many who try to grasp the nuances of Paul's argument may feel at times that they have a veil over their minds. It [2 Corinthians 3] is a passage fraught with exegetical perplexities.

We now approach what could be called the Mount Everest of Pauline texts as far as difficulty is concerned - or should we rather call it the sphinx among texts, since its difficulty lies in its enigmatic quality rather than in its complexity?

How should the reader approach a text as complex as 2 Corinthians 3? What method should he apply? In trying to

---

2"2 Corinthians 3" will be used throughout this paper as a convenient shorthand for "2 Cor. 3:4-18."

3In the last two decades, more than 25 essays on 2 Corinthians 3 or parts thereof were published in scholarly journals. See Bibliography.

4Stockhausen, 177.


find an answer to these questions, it is necessary to consider both the options that are available and some of the pitfalls that may be encountered along the way.

No matter what method the interpreter of 2 Corinthians 3 is going to select, it will stress either one or a combination of four elements: the text itself, the author of the text, the referent of the text, or the reader of the text.\(^8\) In any case, the text is presupposed, so that it may be described as the center around which the other elements, namely, the author, the reader, and the referent revolve.

This can be diagrammed as follows:

![Diagram of text structure](image)

Based on this diagram, the interpreter of 2 Corinthians 3...

Corinthians 3 could set out to discover what Paul really intended to say. Many interpreters would argue that this is the only viable option, namely, that the author's intention determines the meaning of the text and that the interpreter's task is to attempt to retrieve this intention. Yet, though it is fair to say that Paul's intention stands behind the text of Second Corinthians 3, otherwise the text would not have been written, it is also true that nobody can claim access to the apostle's mind apart from the text. No modern interpreter of Paul's

9 M. Davies, in a review on Brevard S. Childs [The Journal of Theological Studies 37 (1986), 161-62], refers to "the old Cartesian notion" that the author, as an individual who thinks without words, intends a meaning expressed through the medium of words, and that the author's intention therefore determines the meaning of the text. He indicates that this notion has been abandoned by most literary critics and philosophers because of its obvious difficulties, although many New Testament critics, and Childs, too, assume it unselconsciously.

In the field of Biblical hermeneutics, as Patrick R. Keifert explains in "Mind Reader and Maestro: Models for Understanding Biblical Interpreters" [In A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 224, note 16], the search for the author's intention springs from the Romantic hermeneutical tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey and its insistence that genuine understanding of a text involves and aims at what Paul Ricoeur refers to as "a 'congenial' coincidence with the 'genius' of the author."

10 James W. Voelz explains that "it is of no use appealing to the 'intention' of the author, for apart from a special interview with him, the author's intention is detectable only in the text." James W. Voelz, "Biblical Hermeneutics: Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?" in Light for Our World: Essays Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, ed. John W. Klotz (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1989), 246.
letters has access either to the sender or to the original receivers. All that is left is the text. The interpreter may well argue that his 'metatext,' either a commentary or a translation, is most certainly what Paul meant. Yet, this does not change the fact that it is just his interpretation of Paul's text. As Peter Cotterell and Max Turner have it, it is "actually only a hypothesis -- our hypothesis -- about the discourse meaning."  

Another option is to focus on the reference of the text, on its depiction of events or ideas. The interpreter could attempt to look through 2 Corinthians 3 at the circumstances behind the text, that is, at the empirical situation at Corinth that prompted the apostle to write the text. Many interpreters of the historical school insist that this is how a text should be read. The text in this case is taken as a window into reality or history, and the interpreter is "mainly interested in the relationship between the text and the external factors surrounding its origin."  

The interpreter ends up being an historian, and

---


Bernard Lonergan has a similar viewpoint, for he says that "anything over and above a re-issue of the same signs in the same order will be mediated by the experience, intelligence, and judgment of the interpreter." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Longman and Todd, 1972), 157.

is not always able to avoid the so-called 'referential fallacy,' that is, the attempt to explain the text in terms of extratextual reality.\(^{13}\) Interpreters that focus solely on Paul's opponents at Corinth, or insist that the identity of the assumed opponents is crucial for the reading of the text, are not far from committing this 'referential fallacy.'

A third possibility is to focus on the text. Although almost every interpreter would agree that the text is the basis and starting point for any reading, structuralists argue that the text is beginning, middle and end, that meaning is internal to language itself, given neither by the intending ego nor by reference to objects in the world outside the text but by relations within the structure of the language.\(^{14}\)

Such an emphasis on the text is certainly to be welcomed, although it is not without its dangers, especially if it is carried to extremes. By emphasizing the text as a self-contained, autonomous reality, the interpreter may easily succumb to the so-called "poetic or structuralist

---


\(^{14}\)M. Davies, 162.
fallacy. As a result, the author of the text, the historical context, not to mention the role of the reader, are left out of consideration. As Bernard C. Lategan explains, this isolation of the text cannot be maintained indefinitely either on the theoretical level or in the empirical realm. The text has a distinctive setting as part of a wider process of communication. In other words, communication is impossible without a historical frame of reference (i.e. socio-cultural competence) and an extratextual dialectic between a text and its readers.17

This brings us to the role of the reader, which can by no means be underestimated. After all, "there is no understanding without someone who understands."18 However, it should not be overemphasized either, lest one become guilty of what is sometimes called the "receptor's fallacy." As Bernard C. Lategan explains,

to concentrate all attention on the act of reception, thereby making the reader the almost exclusive arbiter over, or creator of, the meaning of the text, not only overextends the contribution reception has to make but


16 Lategan, Current Issues, 4.


also foreshortens the process of understanding in a dangerous way.  

In other words, the reader makes sense out of the text, yet it is not the case that any meaning can be derived from it. The text contains explicit formal constraints and definite signals which must be taken into account. The text has its own "laws," and it points out the direction the interpretation is intended to follow. The text is open to a certain number of meanings, but resists other meanings.  

Furthermore,  

The text with its constraints . . . . serves as the Gegenueber or foil, which is not only interpreted by the reader but which, in its turn, interprets and shapes the reader.  

This points out the direction in which I intend to go. Given the fact that nobody has access to the mind of the author apart from the text, it is not my purpose to try to discover what Paul had in mind when he wrote 2 Corinthians 3. Consequently, expressions like "what Paul really had in mind" or "what Paul is really saying" will be deliberately avoided. It is not my purpose, either, to come up with a detailed reconstruction of the situation at Corinth at the time when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. Neither am I going to  


focus solely on the structure of the text. My approach can, perhaps, be best described as an interaction with the text from the viewpoint of the reader. It is my purpose to approach the text with the awareness that I am a reader.

Two observations, however, are in place. First, even though it is true that any reading is individual, it must also be said that no reader is an island. Readers are taught to read. They are taught in and by the interpretive community. As Richard B. Hays explains,

the hermeneutical event occurs in my reading of the text, but my reading always proceeds within a community of interpretation, whose hermeneutical conventions inform my reading.

Thus, my reading of 2 Corinthians 3 is informed by the scholarly community, by many of those who read the text before me and left a record of their reading. Many of my conclusions are derived from other readers in the scholarly community, yet I would probably be unable to agree with any one of them all the way through. In this sense, this is my reading of the text. It is also informed by the community of faith. The reader of this dissertation should not be surprised if some of the conclusions are thoroughly Lutheran.

On the other hand, this reading exercise is not done by a naive or uninformed reader. The simple observation

---


that previous readings of the text are taken into consideration, not to mention that the Greek text is being read, already indicates that this is not going to be an unsophisticated reading. It may be called a critical reading done by a critical reader.

Since this notion of a "critical reader" is open to misunderstanding, it is necessary to explain in which sense it is being used here. "Critical reader" is a reader, yes, but he is at the same time a critic. What, then, does "critic" mean? Robert M. Fowler says that "being a critic means being part of a guild, or an 'interpretive community.'" Taking his cue from George Steiner, Fowler distinguishes between the critic and the reader. He points out that

the critic steps back from the text to strike a magisterial pose of critical, objectifying distance, whereas the reader tries to eliminate the distance between himself and the text to allow the merging of his being with that of the text.  

A second major way of characterizing the distinction between critic and reader is to say that

a critic makes judgments about the text and declares them, whereas a reader does neither. Because the reader does not objectify and judge the text, the reader tends not to talk about reading.


25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 28.
Since I am going to do all of this, namely, to step back from the text, to make judgments about the text, and to talk about my reading, I can certainly be described as a critic. Yet, I am not simply being a critic, who judges the text; I am also a reader. Thus, the label "critical reader," which is a combination of reader and critic, seems to be more appropriate, and wherever I use the word "reader" I mean "critical reader." For, as Fowler indicates, "when critics talk about reading, they usually mean reading critically, as their guild defines criticism." 27

Thus, in the first major chapter, I am going to present the results of my reading of 2 Corinthians 3 for its basic sense. The major focus will be on the Greek text as such, and the outcome may be described as an extended translation. Since this is the reading of a Christian theologian living almost two thousand years after the text was written, whose language is not Greek, and whose culture is not that of first-century Achaia, he has to avail himself of every tool available. Particularly helpful in this connection is the contribution of modern linguistics or, more properly, of modern semantics. With Moises Silva, I share the assumption that "acquaintance with up-to-date systematic work on the nature of language seems an

---

27 Ibid., 27.
indispensable foundation for proper exegesis."²⁸

In the next chapter, the text will be reread with a view to further describe and define some topics or clusters of ideas. This will be done intratextually, that is, in the light of 2 Corinthians 3, as well as intertextually, that is, in the light of the canonical context of Paul's epistles. Since not every major topic can be considered, the following pairs or oppositions have been selected:

διακονία τοῦ θανάτου // διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος; καὶνὴ διαθήκη // παλαιὰ διαθήκη; γράμμα // πνεύμα; and κάλυμμα μένει // κάλυμμα περιαψεῖται.

In the last major chapter, the text will be reread with an eye on its rhetorical dimension. After all, besides having a semantic dimension, a text has also a rhetorical or pragmatic dimension. 2 Corinthians 3 was written to accomplish something, and not merely to transmit some information. It is this so-called "impact" of the text that I am going to explore in chapter four. What will be scrutinized is how the text is set up, what kind of

²⁸Moises Silva, Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 10. Wolfgang Schenk points out that one of the purposes of his Die Philippberbriefe des Paulus (Stuttgart: W. Hohlhammer, 1984) is to further the notion that there can be no going back to an exegesis that is not informed by modern linguistic theory. In his words, "Ich waere nur froh, wenn meine Analysen mit dazu beitragen koennten, deutlich zu machen, dass es hinter eine sich linguistisch praezisierende Exegese kein Zurueck mehr gibt." Schenk, 14.
arguments are being employed, and how the text fits into the rhetorical categories of the classical world. Since the impact of the text is tied up with the situation that is being addressed by it, one has to give some consideration to the communicative setting of 2 Corinthians 3. One major question is whether the text is polemical or not.

I am well aware that this is not the full spectrum of reading possibilities. These are only three among many others. A text like 2 Corinthians 3 can and in fact has been read intertextually in its relation to the Old Testament, particularly in the light of the Exodus 34 passage. In this paper, however, no such reading will be attempted, although there will be sporadic reference to Exodus 34. 2 Corinthians 3 could also be read theologically from the perspective of Law and Gospel. One burning question, for instance, is the relation between the Pauline letter-Spirit opposition and the Lutheran law-gospel polarity. Yet, a thorough investigation of this aspect goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Before engaging in reading, the critical reader has to decide which Greek text he is going to read. He could either read a modern edition (almost by default) or take one of the ancient Greek manuscripts such as Papyrus 46, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, or any other.

---

29 A good example of this is the monograph by Carol Kern Stockhausen referred to above (see note 1).
Should he decide for Papyrus 46, which is the oldest extant copy of the Pauline corpus, having been written around A. D. 200, he would run into trouble right at the beginning of the pericope, for verse four is entirely missing from Papyrus 46. Later on, he would miss the second half of verse 13.

If he decides to take instead Codex Vaticanus, a copy written in the fourth century A. D., he might be making a bad choice. According to Kurt Aland, although the text of Codex Vaticanus is in general superior to Codex Sinaiticus, "in the Pauline letters the textual quality of B shifts, and it no longer commands the authority it possesses in the Gospels."

Codex Sinaiticus, also written in the fourth century A. D., would be a better pick. Here we have a text that comes close to the "standard text." The major differences

---


31 Aland and Aland, 107.

are εαυτοῦ instead of αὐτοῦ in verse 13, and the misspelling of μεταμορφούμεθα as μεταφορμοφούμεθα in verse 18. 33

The reader might as well decide to read the "standard text," either the third edition of The Greek New Testament, or the twenty-sixth edition of the Novum Testamentum Graece. Although this is an eclectic text, corresponding exactly to none of the ancient Greek manuscripts, there is one major reason why I decided to take this particular text: I am reading in community, and the community by and large is reading the "standard text." As Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland explain, "it has rapidly become the commonly accepted text for research and study in universities and churches." 34 It goes without saying that this option does not excuse me from paying attention to the text-critical problems of the text.


34 Aland and Aland, 35. In his farewell essay titled "Die Grundurkunde des Glaubens: Ein Bericht ueber 40 Jahre Arbeit an ihrem Text," in Bericht der Hermann Kunst-Stiftung zur Foerderung der neutestamentlichen Textforschung fuer die Jahre 1982 bis 1984 (Muenster, 1985), 28, Kurt Aland explains that the "standard text" is being used not only among Protestants and Roman Catholics but also in the Greek Orthodox and other Eastern churches. He boastfully says that "der Text des Neuen Testaments, der hier in Muenster betreut wird, ist der Text der Kirche, direkt in seiner griechischen Form und undirekt in den vielen Hunderten von Uebersetzungen, die auf seiner Basis entstanden sind."
CHAPTER II
READING FOR THE SENSE OF THE TEXT

In reading for the basic sense of the text, we will try to find out what the Greek text is saying.¹ In order to do this, we certainly have to pay attention to words and their meanings, though not in isolation. After all, a text is "a structure of interrelated units of meaning."² Words and their meanings are part of a larger whole, and "the meaning of the larger whole is more than the sum of the meanings conveyed by the individual words as signs/signifiers."³

In paying attention to words and their meanings as part of a larger whole, we will follow the text where the text leads us, pointing out at times that this or that comes as a surprise, and that here and there we have a hard time trying to make sense out of the text. For most of the time,

¹Since the text to be read is the Greek text, no particular translation will be followed, mentioned, defended or criticized at this point. Furthermore, no attempt will be made to furnish a well-rounded translation of the Greek text, for the whole argumentation is a translation, though somewhat extended.


³James W. Voelz, "Basic Introduction to Semantics for Exegetical Courses at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis," p. 2.
reading is no easy task, since all the way through the reader is faced with ambiguity, due to linguistic phenomena like vagueness and polysemy. 4

Since the text of 2 Corinthians 3 is a given, and assuming that the whole did make sense to its author, we set out in a search for textual cohesion and textual cohesiveness, 5 or the lack thereof. We pay attention to thought progression, watching for consistency or changes of subject matter. In terms of textual cohesiveness, the so-called markers of coordinate and subordinate relations, as well as markers of transition, are helpful in pointing out how the text hangs together. An important tool in this connection is the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

4Vagueness is experienced when the reader encounters superordinate or broad terms. Words like κακία, διακονία, and a host of others are vague on account of their broad semantic range. Put another way, they are vague because of fewer components of meaning. As for polysemy, it is that phenomenon in which "two or more meanings are associated with the same word." David Alan Black, Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 125.

5Linguists distinguish between textual cohesiveness and textual cohesion. The former is also called the microstructure of the text; the latter, the macro-structure. The macro-structure or cohesion has to do with overarching themes or topics that dominate the composition and structure of the text. The micro-structure or cohesiveness relates to relationships within the text, as, for example, the use of connectives, pronominalization, and so on. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffrey T. Reed, "Greek Grammar Since BDF: A Retrospective and Prospective Analysis," Filologia Neotestamentaria 4 (1991), 160.
Based on Semantic Domains,⁶ which helps us to throw some light on the semantic value and function of many of those 'little words' that are barely or never described in a standard commentary.

In order to facilitate the presentation of the material, 2 Cor. 3:4-18 is divided into three sections: 1) Verses 4-6; 2) Verses 7-11; and 3) Verses 12-18. This division corresponds to the paragraph division in The Greek New Testament.⁷ Yet, since 2 Cor. 3:4-18 is seen as a whole, due consideration is given to how these sections interlock.

Section One: 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Verse 4

The text starts out with πεποίθησιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἐχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν

---


⁷The Greek New Testament, ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, third edition (corrected) (United Bible Societies, 1983), 627. The 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland text presents two paragraphs, namely, verses 4-11, and verses 12-18. In the Nestle-Aland text, there is a major gap between the end of verse 6 and the beginning of verse 7, but apparently that is not meant to signal the beginning of a new paragraph. In fact, the editor provides no explanation as to the meaning of those gaps in the text. All that the editor explains is that "the system of paragraph divisions has been developed much more extensively than before." Novum Testamentum Graece, ed. Kurt Aland, 26th edition, 7th revised printing (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983), 44. In the previous edition of the Nestle text, 2 Cor. 3:4-18 was printed as one paragraph.
Since we decided to read only from this point on, we are not in a good position to determine what exactly is being talked about. We know that we are dropping into an ongoing communication. We are able to gather this from the little ἄν, which indicates that what follows is added on to the previous paragraph, with the possible implication of some contrast. A further indication that this is an ongoing conversation is the phrase πεποίθησιν τοιούτην. Πεποίθησις is confidence, trust. Τοιούτη indicates that it is a confidence that is of such a kind as identified in the context. From the standpoint of the reader, this context is always the preceding context.

Δέ is classified by Louw and Nida in Domain 89, Relations. And yet, even this little Δέ is polysemous. To begin with, it can mark a relation of contrast. Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.124 [see Matt. 22:14], p. 794. It can also be a marker of sequential addition, indicating a sequence of closely related events. Ibid., Subdomain 89.87 [see Matt. 1:2], p. 789. Finally, it can be a marker of "an additive relation, but with the possible implication of some contrast," in which case "and" would be a good translation equivalent. Ibid., Subdomain 89.94 [see Titus 1:1], p. 790. The latter seems to be the case in 2 Cor. 3:4.

Τοιούτη is here taken as a discourse referential of demonstrative or deictic reference. Louw and Nida, Subdomain 92.31 [see 2 Cor. 12:3], p. 817.

Wolfgang Schenk makes the important point that, from the viewpoint of the reader, the text that follows a given pericope is less important than the preceding text. After all, the preceding text provides background information on which the author builds and which he assumes the reader to be already familiar with as he goes on. Unfortunately, this distinction is not always made, inasmuch as the label "context" is applied to both what precedes and what follows. For the reader, however, context (or cotext) is always preceding context. Wolfgang Schenk, "Hebraeerbrief 4.14-16:
It is not hard to perceive that the text is phrased in the first person plural (ἐχοντες, "we have"). Under normal circumstances, that "we" is a reference to the writer and those associated with him, either including or excluding the audience.11 In this case, the audience is probably excluded, although at this point we cannot be absolutely sure that this is actually the case.12 Granted that the audience is excluded, what or who, then, should be the referent of the "we?"13 In other words, does the author refer only to himself or does he include other people? This question is not easily answered, for the referent could be either Paul speaking in his own name and using a sort of "regal we" or Paul and his fellow-workers. It could even be a reference to Paul and other apostles. A further possibility, though much less likely, would be Paul, Textlinguistik als Kommentierungsprinzip," New Testament Studies 26 (1980): 244.

11Louw and Nida, Subdomain 92.4 [Speaker and Those Associated with the Speaker, see Matt. 9:14], p. 814.

12Later on, in verse 6, it will become clear that the audience is excluded, for the διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης does not seem to include the audience.

13The difficulty here is not that the reader ignores the meaning of "we," but rather that he cannot determine the referent. According to Eugene A. Nida, quoted in Johannes P. Louw, Semantics of New Testament Greek (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 50, the difference between meaning (Bedeutung) and reference (Bezeichnung) is that the meaning of a word consists of the set of distinctive features which makes possible certain types of reference, while reference itself is the process of designating some entity, event, etc. by a particular symbol.
21

Timothy, and some of the Corinthian Christians, but not all of them.

There seems to be no solution to this problem unless one reads on or flips back to the previous pages. Verses 5 and 6 do not seem to be very helpful, unless one could insist that διακόνους hardly refers to only one person. The context, which again is preceding context, may help to elucidate this problem. Moving backwards in the text, we are struck by 2 Cor. 2:12-13, which is written in the first person singular. This seems to indicate that when one of the authors, presumably Paul, has something to say on his own, he writes in the first person singular. Going further back to the prescript of the letter, 2 Cor. 1:1, we become aware that the letter was sent out in the name of Paul and Timothy. This suggests that the "we" includes at least Paul and Timothy, although not necessarily implying co-authorship.14

14Michael Prior, in Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), notes that "Paul is the only one of the NT letter writers who names other people with himself in the opening of some of his letters." (37) He adds that, although commentaries virtually never take seriously the possibility that the person named together with Paul had a real share in the authorship of the letters, for one never reads of the Second Letter of Paul and Timothy to the Corinthians, "we should expect that a letter purporting to be written by Paul and someone else was genuinely co-authored." (39) The interesting thing with 2 Corinthians is that the pattern of singular/plural is very mixed. The letter starts out with the plural and stays with this pattern until 1:23. The only exception is the surprising singular (ἐπιστολά) in 1:13. 2 Cor. 1:23-2:13 is written by a single author, most certainly Paul. Beginning at 2:14 and throughout chapter three, not to mention chapter four, the discourse is again couched in
The author asserts, with a bit of emphasis one should add, that he has **πεποίθησις**. **Πεποίθησις** is an event word, that is, a word that, although grammatically classified as a noun, is an event from a semantic point of view. **Πεποίθησις** ("confidence, trust") is the activity or process of **πείθειν** ("to rely on, to trust in"). The object and the basis for this confidence are not indicated. Presumably it had been explained in the context, as *τοιαύτην* seems to indicate. *Ἐχω* is probably best taken in the sense of "to hold a view." The author is saying that he is actively engaged in holding a view of confidence. Confidence in or regarding what? The text does not say. The author assumes that this is understood from the first person plural. The significance of this switching back and forth has to be investigated in later chapters.

15 The phrase **πεποίθησις δὲ τοιαύτην** is placed first in the sentence, in emphatic position.

16 In standard discourse analysis all the signs of a language belong to one of the following basic semantic categories: objects, events, abstracts, or relations. Objects are things or entities. Events include all kinds of activities, happenings or processes. Abstracts describe qualities or capacities of objects and/or events. Relations show the meaningful connections between the other three groups. "These represent the most comprehensive categories in which meanings can be distributed." J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 65.

17 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 31.1 [see Matt. 14:5], p. 366. *Ἐχω*, too, is a polysemous word. It is classified by Louw and Nida in nine different semantic domains. It is commonly used to express ownership or possession of objects [in Louw and Nida, Subdomain 57.1; see Matt. 14:17], but this does not apply in the present context.
the context. He moves on, adding two prepositional phrases: διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. These phrases or theological formulas, like many others of the kind, are very dense. Yet, the author does not unpack them. Read on the semantic plane, they show that Christ is the agent who works this confidence, and that it is a confidence before God.

Verses 5-6

Verse five is couched in the first person plural (εσμέν), in a clear indication that this verse is still closely tied up with the context. In other words, the author and his companions are still the topic of the conversation. The opening οὐχ οὔτι, which is followed by

---

18 This "information" that the author does not supply because he assumes that it is provided by the context may be called "external entailment."

19 Hans Dieter Betz in his commentary on Galatians [Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979)] claims that these prepositional phrases "are abbreviations of theological doctrines." (27) Bernard C. Lategan comments that "an important feature of these formulas are their cryptic and abbreviated form which implies previous knowledge and familiarity with the context in which the formula operates." "Formulas in the Language of Paul: A Study of Prepositional Phrases in Galatians," Neotestamentica 25 (1991), 77.

20 Διά is a marker of intermediate agent. Louw and Nida, Subdomain 90.4 [see 1 Cor. 1:9], p. 797.

21 Πρὸς is best taken as a marker of association, with the implication of interrelationship. Ibid., Subdomain 89.112 [see Rom. 5:1], p. 792. This use of πρὸς is rare. The usual prepositions after πεπόθησις are εἰς (2 Cor. 8:22) and ἐν (Phil. 3:4).
the ἀλλά, seems to introduce a parenthetical remark. This raises the question of the connection between verse 5 and verse 4. There might be no connection at all. Assuming that there is one, what kind of connection is it? Much depends on how the reader takes the phrase ἰκανοὶ ἐσμὲν λογίσασθαι τι. Some readers are surprised by the occurrence of this phrase, especially the latter part, λογίσασθαι τι. Yet, there should be no surprise, particularly if ἰκανοὶ ἐσμὲν λογίσασθαι τι is seen as running parallel to πεποίθησιν ἔχειν. Actually, λογίζεσθαι can be taken in the sense of "to hold a view or have an opinion with regard to something." What the author is saying, in this case, is that he and his

22While the οὗ/οὐκ/οὐχ . . . ἀλλά antithesis is found all over the New Testament, the combination of οὐχ ὡς and ἀλλά is rare. It is found only in Paul (2 Cor. 1:24; 2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:17; 2 Thes. 3:9) and in John (John 7:22; 12:6; 1 John 4:10). Kurt Aland, ed., Vollstaendige Konkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament unter Zugrundeleung aller modernen kritischen Textausgaben und des Textus receptus, two volumes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983).

23According to Rudolf Bultmann, the reader would have expected something like "to proclaim the word of God." Yet, the text has λογίσασθαι τι, which "is more general and is intended to indicate Paul's radical incapacity for any independent activity." Rudolf Bultmann, The Second Letter to the Corinthians, translated by Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 75.

24Louw and Nida, Subdomain 31.1, Have an Opinion, Hold a View, p. 366. Λογίζομαι occurs some 42 times in the New Testament, mostly in Romans and 2 Corinthians. Besides "to hold a view," it can also mean "to reason about" [Subdomain 30.9; see 1 Cor. 13:11], "to keep mental record" [Subdomain 29.4; see 2 Cor. 5:19], and "charge to account" [Subdomain 57.227; see Rom. 4:4].
companions are not in a position to hold such a view of confidence (in their status?) on their own. This "on their own" is brought out by the phrase ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν. This phrase, which seems to be reinforced by the following ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, is the opposite of the preceding διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, which, in turn, is further explained by the following ἀλλ' ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. In other words, the author has such sort of confidence (in his qualification?) before God through Christ. If he is able to hold such a view (λογίσασθαι), this is not the product of his own imagination, it does not have its source in himself. Apostolic confidence in not a native endowment, but a gift from God. 25

The connection between verse 4 and verse 5 throws light on the scope of πεποίθησις in verse 4. What kind of confidence is that? It is the confidence which can say, ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Going over the text for a second time, which only a reader can do, it becomes apparent that the textual status of λογίσασθαι has not remained unchallenged in the history of textual transmission. Some manuscripts (C, D, F, G, 629, and a few others) read the present infinitive λογίζεσθαι. The cause for this variant may be itacism, 25

What the author asserts in verse 5 had been anticipated in an important statement in 2 Cor. 1:9: ἡμι μὴ πεποιθότες ὡμεν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ Θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκροὺς. On the other hand, verse 5 recalls the ἀπόστολος οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ πατρὸς in Gal. 1:1.
for both forms are pronounced almost alike. Or, it may be a deliberate change from aorist to present in order to emphasize that the author is actually engaged in the process of reckoning. The variant may have little or no chance of being accepted as text according to standard textual critical rules, but it does call attention to the fact that \( \text{λογίσασθαι} \) is aorist. In fact, it is the first aorist in the text. Is it significant? In what does \( \text{λογίσασθαι} \) differ from \( \text{λογίζεσθαι} \)? The aorist "concentrates attention upon the act itself, not upon the relationship which may exist between it and an actor."\(^{26}\)

This use of the aorist fits well into the context.

A further detail that strikes the eye of the reader is the phrase \( \text{ὅς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν} \). It appears to be redundant after the preceding \( \text{ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν} \), being added merely for the sake of emphasis. The text would make perfect sense without it. Since it is there, how should one read it? To begin with, the switch from \( \text{ἀπό} \) to \( \text{ἐκ} \) should probably not be pressed, for both prepositions are "markers of source of event or activity,"\(^{27}\) belonging to the same semantic domain, and seem to be used interchangeably for the sake of stylistic variation. And yet, there is one detail that is


\(^{27}\)Louw and Nida, Domains 90.15 [see Matt. 5:42] and 90.16 [see 1 Thess. 2:6], p. 799.
disturbing. Why ἐς ἐς ἐαυτῶν? This phrase is probably best taken in the sense of "with the assertion that it comes from us," or "as if we were trying to give the impression that it issues from ourselves." Thus, ὡς ἐς ἐαυτῶν is not quite the same as ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν.

In what follows, ἀλλὰ establishes a relation of contrast to verse 5a, and is followed by the indication that the source of the apostolic ἰκανότης is God. ἰκανότης, which is hapax legomenon, denotes the state of being adequate or qualified for something. This "something" still has to be supplied by the reader. Only in verse 6 will it become clear that the authors are talking about qualification for the ministry. The ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ is set in contrast to ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν and ὡς ἐς ἐαυτῶν, and runs parallel to the διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν of verse 4.

The phrase ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν is a strong statement, particularly in the light of the context. Even though the reader who began reading chapter three verse four may not be aware of this, the fact is that here the authors

---

28 This use of ὡς is classical. It could be argued that the ὡς is usually followed by a participle, which does not seem to be the case here. Yet, the participle of εἰμί is implied in 2 Cor. 3:5. There is a similar use of ὡς in 2 Cor. 2:17. See also 2 Cor. 10:2.

29 Louw and Nida, Domain 89.125 [see Matt. 5:17], p. 794.

30 Literally, a word "spoken once," that is, a word that occurs just once in the New Testament.

31 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 75.1, Adequate, Qualified, p. 679.
are providing an explicit answer to the question raised in 2 Cor. 2:16: καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τις Ἰκανός; The reader could have inferred, on the basis of the γάρ-clause that follows in 2 Cor. 2:17, that the answer was: Ἰκανοὶ ἐσμεν. In verses 5 and 6 the answer is made explicit.

Verse 6 is tied to verse 5 through pronominalization, that is, the pronoun ὅς stands for the preceding θεοῦ. Also the verb Ἰκανόω takes up the preceding Ἰκανότης. A further link is the first person plural of ἡμᾶς. However, the reader clearly notices that the scenario is changing, for the "we" are no longer the subject, but rather the object. The subject now is God.

In the opening ὅς καὶ, the use of καὶ is somewhat puzzling. Some readers take it as emphasizing the following Ἰκάνωσεν, in the sense of "who actually qualified us." Others take it in the sense of "really." Carol K. Stockhausen insists that it should be translated "God has also made us competent," the assumption being that prior to that someone else, namely, Moses was made competent by God. However, if this were the case, one would expect the text to say ὅς Ἰκάνωσεν καὶ ἡμᾶς rather than ὅς καὶ Ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς. Another possibility is to take καὶ in the sense of also, the implication being that "God also made us competent, in addition to calling us." Yet, it

---

32 Thus Bultmann, 76.

33 Carol Kern Stockhausen, Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3.1-4.6 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 84.
seems that καὶ was simply added in order to emphasize that the subject of the new sentence is identical with the last word in the preceding sentence.  

The verb ἴκανόω, "to make sufficient" or "to cause to be qualified," is an aorist indicative active. Some readers take the aorist as pointing to a specific event or point in time, and some even suggest that the apostle is referring to the Damascus road experience, but its use may simply indicate that the writer wants to concentrate attention upon the act itself. This is the more so considering that the cognates ἴκανοι and ἴκανότης already occurred in the context.

While the first half of verse 6, ὡς καὶ ἴκανωσεν ἡμᾶς, is nothing but a restatement of verse 5b, the second half adds something that qualifies the ἡμᾶς: God qualified us as διακόνους καινὴς διαθήκης, ό γράμματος ἄλλα πνεύματος. Although διακόνους had not appeared previously in the pericope, its use is not totally surprising, for it harks back to the διακονηθεῖσα ὑπ' ἡμῶν in 2 Cor. 3:3. Διάκονος is, on the basis of its components of meaning, "a person who

---

34 For a similar construction, see 1 Cor. 1:8.

35 From the standpoint of the writer this act or event clearly lies in the past.

36 ἴκανωσεν is followed by what is commonly referred to as a double accusative.
renders service. "Questions like "what kind of service?" or "service to whom?" can only be answered on the basis of what follows, namely, \textit{kai\(\nu\)s diath\(\acute{\text{e}}\)k\(\acute{\text{e}}\)s}.

This reference to a new covenant comes with a bit of surprise, though the reader at home in the Greek Old Testament might perhaps have anticipated it on the basis of verse 3, for the \textit{\'e\gamma\(\varepsilon\)\gamma\(\alpha\)\(\nu\)m\(\acute{\text{e}}\)n \(\epsilon\nu\) pl\(\acute{\text{a}}\)\(\iota\)n k\(\alpha\)\(\beta\)\(\iota\)\(\delta\)\(\iota\)\(\iota\)\(\iota\)\(\varepsilon\)\(\iota\)\(\zeta\)\(\iota\)\(\alpha\)\(\iota\)\(\iota\)\(\nu\)s s\(\alpha\)\(\kappa\)\(\alpha\)\(\iota\)\(\nu\)s\(\iota\)\(a\)\(\iota\)\(n\)} reminds of Jeremiah 31, where Yahweh promises a new covenant. Even more surprising is the combination of \textit{dias\(\acute{\text{k}}\)on\(\acute{\text{o}}\nu\)s} with \textit{kai\(\nu\)s diath\(\acute{\text{e}}\)k\(\acute{\text{e}}\)s}, which is unique in Paul's writings.

\textit{Diath\(\acute{\text{e}}\)k\(\acute{\text{e}}\)s} is an interesting sign. A reader familiar with extra-Biblical Greek would take it in the sense of last will and testament. However, by the time of the New Testament.

---

37 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 35.20 [Serve; see Matt. 20:26], p. 460. \textit{Dias\(\acute{k}\)on\(o\)s} stands in the same semantic field, that is, in paradigmatic relation, with \textit{\theta\(\iota\)\(r\)\(a\)\(p\)\(a\)\(n\)} and \textit{\upsilon\(\iota\)\(r\)\(e\)\(t\)\(e\)\(s\)}. It occurs about thirty times in the New Testament, eight times in the Gospels and the rest in the Pauline epistles.

38 In the Septuagint the pericope of the new covenant appears in chapter 38. The closest verbal parallel occurs in verse 33: \textit{kai \(\epsilon\pi\) k\(\alpha\)\(\beta\)\(\iota\)\(\iota\)\(a\)\(\iota\)\(s\) a\(\dot{\kappa}\)\(o\)\(t\)\(h\)\(n\) \(\gamma\r\acute{\text{r}}\alpha\)\(\nu\) \(\alpha\)\(t\)\(o\)\(u\)\(s\) (\(\nu\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\)\(\mu\)\(u\)\(o\)\(u\)\(s\)).

39 In Paul, \textit{dias\(\acute{k}\)on\(o\)s}, when applied to the Christian minister, either stands alone (1 Cor. 3:5) or is used in conjunction with \textit{\theta\(e\)\(o\)\(u\)} (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Thes. 3:2), \textit{dik\(a\)\(i\)o\(s\)\(o\)\(u\)n\(e\)s} (2 Cor. 11:15), \textit{\chi\(r\)\(i\)\(s\)t\(o\)\(u\)} (2 Cor. 11:23; Col. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:6), \textit{\epsilon\(v\)\(a\)\(g\)\(g\)\(e\)\(l\)\(i\)\(o\)u\(n\)} (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23), and \textit{\epsilon\(k\)\(k\)\(l\)\(h\)\(s\)\(i\)\(a\)\(s\)} (Col. 1:25). \textit{Diak\(o\)\(n\)on\(o\)s kai\(n\)\(u\)\(s diath\(\acute{\text{e}}\)k\(\acute{\text{e}}\)k\(\acute{\text{e}}\)s} occurs only in 2 Cor. 3:6.

40 Bauer, 183. Louw and Nida list this meaning under Subdomain 57.124 [Give], p. 572, and indicate that it can be found in Hebrews 9:16. They explain that this subdomain involves the transfer of some object or benefit from one person
Testament it had undergone a semantic change. It is now used in the sense of a divine covenant. This process of semantic change may also be described in terms of a theological specialization. Actually, this semantic shift was brought about by the Septuagint translators who rendered the Old Testament term b'rith by διαθήκη. In selecting διαθήκη rather than συνθήκη ("contract, agreement") the translators wished to emphasize the fact that the initiative for such a covenantal relationship existed with God rather than being the result of negotiation and compromise. Since this shift is already attested in the Septuagint, it may be considered a semantic loan in the New Testament. In 2 Cor. 3:6, the author apparently assumes that the readers know what this διαθήκη is all about, for he does not go into the pains of explaining it.

... to another with the initiative resting with the person who gives and without incurring an obligation on the part of a receiver to reciprocate. (566, note 23)

Its lexical meaning, according to Louw and Nida, is either "to make a solemn agreement involving reciprocal benefits and responsibilities" [Subdomain 34.43, Establish or Confirm a Relation; see Rom. 11:27], or "the verbal content of an agreement between two persons specifying reciprocal benefits and responsibilities" [Subdomain 34.44; see Gal. 3:15]. Ibid., p. 452.

Moises Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 79. Silva, following Stephen Ullmann, indicates that semantic changes are due either to linguistic innovation or to linguistic conservatism. διαθήκη is an example of linguistic conservatism, in which an old word is preserved to denote an object that has changed considerably. Ibid., 78.

Louw and Nida, 452.
The covenant of which the apostles are ministers is called a καίνη διαθήκη. καίνη is, again, a polysemous sign. It can denote new in time, that is, something that is in existence for only a short time.\(^\text{44}\) It can also denote new in class, that is, "new or recent and hence superior to that which is old."\(^\text{45}\) Here it is probably used in the latter sense.

The reader may wonder if there was any particular reason why the author used καίνως rather than any other word of the same semantic field. In fact, readers with a background in Classical Greek might well insist that there is a sharp distinction between καίνως and νέος, and that, in using καίνως, the author was signaling that he meant new in class. Yet, an investigation of the New Testament evidence does not allow such a facile conclusion. Though the distinction between καίνως (novel and different) and νέος (young and recent) may be applicable to certain contexts and is more in accordance with classical usage, it cannot be found in all occurrences of these words in the New Testament.\(^\text{46}\) Both καίνως and νέος may be used to express the concepts of new in time and new in class. In other words, depending on the context they are

\(^{44}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 67.115 [Duration of Time; see Mark 2:22], p. 645.

\(^{45}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 58.71 [New, Old (primarily non-temporal); see 2 Pet. 3:13], p. 594.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 594, note 9.
synonyms and can be used interchangeably. In the New Testament, both καινός (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:15) and νέος (Heb. 12:24) are applied to διαθήκη, showing that in a context with διαθήκη, καινός and νέος are clearly synonymous.

Besides figuring out the meaning of καινής διαθήκης, the reader also has to determine how this genitival construction relates to the governing διακόνους. In other words, what is a minister of a new covenant? Is it someone serving or standing in the service of the new covenant? Could it be someone dispensing

47 Anthony C. Thiselton points out that "most so-called synonyms are context-dependent," that is, in some contexts two different words may be used interchangeably, in others not. For example, in a context where the subject is a young man, a writer would hardly use καινός. "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation," in New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods, edited by I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1977), 92.

48 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes points out that Heb. 12:24 affords an indication that at the time when the New Testament was being written the distinction between καινός and νέος was becoming blurred. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 96, note 21. One could even venture the suggestion that, given the fact that, in the New Testament, καινός (42 occurrences) is much more frequent than νέος (23 occurrences), and considering that καινός is used in Jeremiah 31, the rule was to use καινός in connection with διαθήκη. Any departure from this, like, for instance, in Hebrews, may be taken as a sign that a special nuance is being envisaged.

49 Most modern translations render διακόνους καινής διαθήκης as "ministers/servants of a/the new covenant." This is as ambiguous as the Greek. The Today's English Version translates "it is he who made us capable of serving the new covenant."
or delivering the new covenant? Could it be both? It could be either one or both.\textsuperscript{50} The most natural way of taking it would be in the sense of someone serving the new covenant. Yet, a reader familiar with the \textit{εστε ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθείσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν} of 2 Cor. 3:3 could also take it in the sense of "someone who dispenses or delivers the new covenant."

\textit{Diakónoi} is qualified by \textit{καινὴς διαθήκης}, and this, in turn, is further explained by \textit{ο_COMPILER} \textit{γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεῦματος}. The use of these words is not totally unexpected, for both had been anticipated in the roots \textit{γραμμ-} and \textit{πνευμ-} which occurred twice and once respectively in 2 Cor. 3:1-3.\textsuperscript{51} Nevertheless, what comes as a bit of a surprise is the singular \textit{γράμμα}, considering that the plural is much more common.\textsuperscript{52} Why did the author use the singular? The reader can only guess. It is possible that he used the singular because it rhymes with

\textsuperscript{50} This ambiguity could, perhaps, be solved if we had at least one example of \textit{διακονέω} as a verb being used in a sentence with \textit{καινὴ διαθήκη}. This, however, is not the case in the New Testament.

\textsuperscript{51} The same holds good for the \textit{ἐφοροιεὶ} at the end of verse 6, which takes up the \textit{ζῶντος} of verse 3. This passage, then, illustrates well Paul's habit of dwelling on a word and coming back to it again and again. He does it with the following stems: \textit{ικαν-, διακον-,} and \textit{γραμμ-}. The Latin rhetoricians called this artifice \textit{traductio}. J. H. Bernard, \textit{The Second Epistle to the Corinthians}, \textit{The Expositor's Greek Testament}, volume 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1897), 53.

\textsuperscript{52} In the singular it occurs only in this passage and in Romans 2:27,29 and Romans 7:6.
πνεῦμα. Much more important and complex than this is the meaning of γράμμα. Its lexical or unmarked meaning is probably "a writing," or "what has been written." It may have a contextual meaning, that is, a particular meaning that is derived from the context. In order to determine this contextual meaning, the reader has to take into consideration the arrangement of words in the syntagm or, put another way, the grammatical constructions in which the term occurs. In the case of γράμμα, the latter part of verse 6 is very important, for here it is followed by the predicate ἀποκτέννει. The reader also has to consider that γράμμα is placed in antithesis to πνεῦμα, and this has a bearing on its meaning in this context.

Γράμμα is that which lacks the life-giving Spirit and

53 Unmarked meaning is the same as general meaning, namely, that meaning which would be readily applied in a minimum context where there is little or nothing to help the receptor in determining the meaning. Louw, Semantics of New Testament Greek, 34.

54 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 33.50 [Written Language; see John 5:47], p. 395. Γράμμα can also denote a letter of the alphabet [Subdomain 33.35; see Gal. 6:11]; an epistle [Subdomain 6:63; see Acts 28:21]; and a record of debts [Subdomain 33.39; see Luke 16:6].

55 According to Johannes P. Louw, contextual meaning are those features of meaning derived from a particular context which are attached to a word in a particular context, but do not make up a new meaning as such. "How Do Words Mean -- If They Do?" Filologia Neotestamentaria 4 (1991): 137. Louw explains that the Bauer Lexicon is an usage or contextual meaning dictionary, while the Louw and Nida Lexicon deals primarily with lexical meaning. Although words usually represent a relatively small number of meanings, as presented in the Louw and Nida Lexicon, they have numerous usages or contextual meanings, as described in the Bauer Lexicon. Ibid.
 kills.

\[ \text{Pneuma} \] could be anything from Holy Spirit to man's inner being or spiritual nature, to wind or breath. In this context, and in the light of the \[ \text{Pneuma \ Theou} \]
\[ \varepsilon \alpha \nu \tau o\varsigma \] of 2 Cor. 3:3, it is certainly the Holy Spirit.

A difficult question, which is up to the reader to answer, is with what \[ \text{gamma mutos} \] and \[ \text{Pneuma mutos} \] go. Grammatically they could be dependent on either \[ \text{diakonous} \] or \[ \text{kaih kia theou} \], or even on the phrase as a whole. Many readers take it as qualifying \[ \text{dia theou} \] and elaborating on \[ \text{kaih} \]. In other words, the \[ \text{dia theou} \] is \[ \text{kaih} \] inasmuch as it is \[ \text{Pneuma mutos} \] and not \[ \text{gamma mutos} \]. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor disputes this view, arguing that it qualifies \[ \text{kaih kia theou} \] and that Paul is making a distinction between two types of new covenant, one characterized by \[ \text{gamma} \] and the other by \[ \text{Pneuma} \].

From the viewpoint of this reader, however, the flow of the text suggests that the genitives depend on \[ \text{diakonous} \], in the sense of "we are ministers of the new covenant, ministers not of the letter, but of the Spirit."

Verse 6b, to yap gamma apoktenne to de pneuma zepoi e, sounds like a proverb, which is

---

easily memorized and detached from the context. Both members of the pair have about the same number of syllables. There is also a double homoioteleuton, that is, πνεῦμα rhymes with γράμμα, and ζωοποιεῖ matches with ἀποκτέννει. The first half of verse 6b, τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτέννει, had not been announced in the context. The second half, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ, echoes the πνεῦματι θεοῦ ζῶντος of 2 Cor. 3:3. The articles (τὸ and τὸ) could be either generic or anaphoric, that is, they either point to γράμμα and πνεῦμα in general (any letter and spirit) or take up the γράμμα and the πνεῦμα mentioned in the first half of verse 6. They are best taken as anaphoric.

---

57 Hans Windisch refers to it as "ein fein geschliffene Gnome." Der zweite Korintherbrief (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), 108.


59 Windisch points out that 2 Cor. 2:15,16 might have prepared the way for this statement in verse 6. In subsequent verses Paul returns to this topic. Windisch, 110.

60 ζωοποιεῖ, "to make alive," provides a good example of a composite word that is relatively transparent. As Moises Silva explains, "the notion of transparency is applied rather broadly to all those words that are motivated, that is, words that have some natural relation to their meaning." Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning, 48. Elsewhere in Paul's letters, the connection between πνεῦμα and ζωή occurs in Rom. 8:2-11; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Cor. 5:4-5; and Gal. 6:8.
The typically Pauline γάρ . . . δέ antithesis,\textsuperscript{61} which is sometimes used to introduce a parenthetical statement, reinforces this view.

The Structure of the Section

Retrospecting, the reader now perceives that this section comprises two major assertions (verses 4 and 6a), each of which is followed by a clarification couched in the form of an antithesis (οὐχ ὅτι . . . ἀλλά, verse 5; οὐ . . . ἀλλά, verse 6b). The latter clarification (verse 6b) is again followed by an explanatory antithesis, which comes close to a parenthetical remark. Although the two antithetical clarifications do not appear to be related in any sense, one is tempted to suggest that the two major assertions (verse 4 and verse 6a) run parallel, the latter throwing light on the former.

Section Two: 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

Verses 7-8

Moving into the next section, we encounter the following statement: εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θεανάτου κτλ, which allows us to draw three conclusions: 1) the author seems to be stating a condition (εἰ); 2) the conversation continues and is in some sense related to the

\textsuperscript{61}The only exception seems to be Matthew 22:14. Other instances in Paul are 2 Cor. 4:18, Rom. 6:23, Rom. 10:10, and Gal. 5:17. 2 Cor. 4:18 is another case in which the γάρ . . . δέ antithesis is used to explain an immediately preceding antithesis.
context (ὅδε); and 3) there has been a shift in subject matter (ἡ διακονία).

The opening ὅδε establishes a condition, which may be either real or hypothetical, either actual or contrary to fact. The sequence of the text will probably indicate that the condition is real and actual. ὅδε may be taken as a marker of an additive relation, with the possible implication of some contrast. It shows that the discourse is not over yet. At the same time, it indicates that what is about to follow is not directly related to the subject matter of verse 6b. In fact, the topic is no longer τὸ γράμμα or τὸ πνεῦμα, but rather ἡ διακονία τοῦ θεόν.

The occurrence of διακονία in this context is, to a certain extent, surprising. Many a reader expects the author to elaborate on either the καὶνὴ διαθήκη or the γράμμα-πνεῦμα contrast, but instead he goes on talking about διακονία. Murphy-O'Connor points out that those who insist that the new covenant is Paul's subject in 2 Cor. 3:7-18 fail to see that Paul does not use καὶνὴ διαθήκη one single time in this pericope. He deliberately switches from covenant to ministry, giving the impression that he wants to avoid διαθήκη. Murphy-O'Connor, "The New Covenant in the Letters of Paul and the Essene Documents," 195-196.
occurred in the text of 2 Corinthians. Θάνατος had been employed in chapter one, verses 9 and 10, and in chapter two, verse 16.

If the use of ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου is surprising, it is that only to a certain extent, for on the semantic level both διακονία and θάνατος had been anticipated in the διάκονος and ἀποκτέννει of verse 6 respectively. Thus, what takes place is indeed a switch from one subject to another, although not to a subject that is totally foreign to the context. In view of this, the author's use of δὲ begins to make sense. It signals that, although the conversation is being carried on, it is not just the continuation of the immediately preceding discussion in verse 6b, namely, the contrast between γράμμα and πνεῦμα, but rather that the author is returning to the subject of the διάκονος/διακονία, which had been mentioned a little earlier in verse 6a.

What follows in verse 7 is meant to further qualify διακονία τοῦ θανάτου. Here the reader who is perusing a critical edition of the Greek New Testament has to decide what version of the account he is going to read. He has to choose between reading ἐν γράμματι ἐντευκμομένη λίθοις with Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Claromontanus (D), and a few other manuscripts, and reading...
ἐν γράμμασιν κτλ. with the rest and vast majority of the Greek manuscripts. The difference is more than just a switch from plural to singular or vice-versa, for it has semantic implications. ἐν γράμμασιν are letters, marks on stone. ἐν γράμματι has to do with the deadly τὸ γράμμα of verse 6. At first sight, the singular seems to be an attempt to assimilate or closely connect verse 7 to verse 6. And yet, what follows in verse 7 cannot be left out of the picture, for the option between singular and plural is bound up with the question of with what ἐν γράμμασιν/ἐν γράμματι goes. Does it go with the preceding ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου or with the following ἐντετοιμασμένη λίθοις? If joined to the preceding phrase, the sense would be: "the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου consisting in γράμμασιν." It is already apparent that the singular would make better sense. However, if ἐν γράμμασιν is linked to what follows, the text reads as follows: "the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου engraved on stones in the form of letters." The reader is now in position to draw some conclusions. First, he realizes that, were the singular original, it would quite naturally go with what precedes it.66 The plural, on the

66This is apparently the major argument in favor of the singular, namely, that it goes well with the preceding expression. According to Henry Alford (The Greek Testament, revised by Everett F. Harrison [Chicago: Moody Press, 1958], 644), the reading in the plural originated because "it was imagined that γράμματι belonged to ἐντετοιμασμένη." This argument also works the other way round, namely, that the singular resulted from the close connection that was seen between this phrase and the preceding ἡ διακονία
other hand, seems to be connected with what follows. The rhythm of the text points in that direction.\textsuperscript{67} Granted that the plural is text and the singular is variant, it follows that the participle $\text{έντετυπωμένη}$, sitting between $\text{έν γράμμασιν}$ and $\text{λίθοις}$, is clearly doing double duty, namely, the $\text{διακονία τοῦ θανάτου}$ is both $\text{έν γράμμασιν}$ $\text{έντετυπωμένη}$ as well as $\text{έντετυπωμένη}$ $\text{λίθοις}$.

$\text{έντετυπωμένη}$, which is perfect participle of $\text{έντυπον}$, a verb which appears only here in the New Testament, modifies $\text{ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου}$. This sounds awkward, for the reader hardly expects a $\text{διακονία}$ engraved on stones. It would be more natural for a $\text{διαθήκη}$ to be engraved on stones.\textsuperscript{68} The sign $\text{λίθοις}$, which stands for the $\text{έν πλαζιν λιθίναις}$ of verse 3 and reminds of the $\text{πλάκας τῆς διαθήκης}$ (Exod. 34:28, LXX), seems to support this view. Yet, this is not what the

\begin{verbatim}
tοῦ θανάτου, or, to be exact, between $\text{έν γράμματι}$ and $\text{θανάτου}$. The phrase $\text{τοῦ θανάτου} \text{έν γράμματι}$ would then be a sort of paraphrase of $\text{τὸ γράμμα ἀποκτέννει}$ (verse 6). The problem with this suggested connection is that, were it really intended, one would have expected the repetition of the article: $\text{ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου} \text{τοῦ} \text{έν γράμματι}$, which is not the case. Christian F. Kling, Corinthians, Lange's Commentary of the Holy Scriptures, translated and edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1949), 49.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{67}Windisch, 113.

\textsuperscript{68}Rudolf Bultmann is bold enough to say that the expression $\text{έντετυπωμένη λίθοις}$ "is incorrect to the extent it was of course not the $\text{διακονία}$, but rather the $\text{διαθήκη}$ which was $\text{έντετυπωμένη λίθοις}$."

Bultmann, 80.
The διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ. Ἐγενήθη, which is aorist indicative passive of γίνομαι, is usually referred to the coming or inauguration of the διακονία. However, it would also make good sense if taken as "it proved to be or showed itself to be in glory." This seems to be the case here, especially when the aorist is compared with the preceding perfect participle (ἐντευτημένη), and if the sequence of the underlying Old Testament narrative is taken into consideration. There is no reference to the origin or inauguration of the διακονία in the passage that is in the author's mind. The διακονία had been engraved on stones and was still there in the state of being engraved on stones. It showed or proved itself to be in glory when Moses' face shone, as the continuation of the text makes clear.

69 Γίνομαι in the sense of "to come into existence." Louw and Nida, Subdomain 13.80 [see John 1:3], p. 158. Most translations render it by "came with glory." Plummer translates it as "had a glorious inauguration." Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, International Critical Commentary (New York, Scribner, 1915), 89.

70 In this case, γίνομαι is part of subdomain 41.1, "to exist or to conduct oneself, with the particular manner specified by the context." See 1 Thes. 2:10. Louw and Nida, p. 504.

71 Δόξα is a polysemous sign. In this passage it could denote either "brightness" [Louw and Nida, Subdomain 14.49 (see Acts 22:11), p. 175], or "glorious power" [Louw and Nida, Subdomain 76.13 (see Rom. 6:4), p. 682]. The former is more likely.
What follows in verse 7b is a clause introduced by ὥστε. The construction is known as an accusative with the infinitive, that is, the subject is the accusative τοὺς ισραήλ, and the verb is in the infinitive. "Ὡστε is usually a marker of result, "so that." The result is an action, namely, ἀτενίσαι εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως, that could not be performed (μὴ δύνασθαι) by the children of Israel.

The ὥστε-clause is followed by a διὰ-clause, which gives the reason why the children of Israel could not gaze upon Moses' face. From a logical viewpoint, the διὰ-clause precedes the ὥστε-clause. In other words, the δόξα τοῦ προσώπου Μωϋσέως, which is the cause, resulted in the μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι. This may lead to the conclusion that the διὰ-clause, though somewhat removed from ἐγενήσθη ἐν δόξῃ, is actually an explanation of the latter, that is, the διακονία proved to be ἐν δόξῃ when Moses' face shone.

The attributive participle τὴν καταργομένην, due to its placement at the end of the sentence, looks like

---

72 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.52 [see 1 Cor. 5:7-8], p. 784.

73 This is the first explicit reference to Moses in 2 Corinthians, although his mediation of the law had been in view since verse 3. In 2 Corinthians, the sign Μωϋσῆς is going to recur only in verses 13 and 15 of chapter three. Elsewhere in Paul's letters, Moses is mentioned in Rom. 5:14; 9:15; 10:5,19; 1 Cor. 9:9; 10:2.

74 Διὰ, in this case used with the accusative, is a marker of cause or reason. Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.26 [see Acts 21:34], p. 780.
an afterthought. Paul could have introduced the participle within the phrase rather than after it, and it would have run like this: διὰ τὴν καταργουμένην δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ. However, this is not the case. In trying to understand why Paul used the word order he did, some readers suggest that the position of τὴν καταργουμένην is emphatic. Yet, the reader's first impression is that the author is throwing in something that has to be expressed, even if it is in the form of an afterthought, and that he will come back to it later on.

The whole explanatory phrase ὅστε... καταργουμένη seems to perform a double function. On the one hand, it further defines ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ. On the other hand, it helps the reader to locate the episode that is being referred to in the history of the people of Israel. It works like a cross reference. Were Paul writing today, he would probably have said something like this: "as you can read in Exodus 34:29-35." Paul assumes the readers' familiarity with the story, for he does not retell it in detail. He alludes to the story, reflects on it, but makes little effort to interpret specific details. In view of this, 2 Corinthians 3 can hardly be described as a

"Christian midrash on Exodus 34:29-35,"\textsuperscript{76} unless "midrash" is taken in a somewhat looser sense.\textsuperscript{77}

Verse 8, which is a continuation of verse 7, starts out with \textit{πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον} and is followed by \textit{ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος}, which is the second term of the comparison. Each sign in \textit{πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον} is significant. \textit{Πῶς}, which is technically "an interrogative reference to means,"\textsuperscript{78} and which is usually rendered by "how," tells the reader that the apodosis, if not the whole sentence, is actually a question. \textit{Οὐχὶ}, a marker for an

\textsuperscript{76}This designation goes back to Hans Windisch, who, in 1924, in his commentary in the Meyer series, described 2 Cor. 3:7-18 as a "christlicher Midrasch ueber Ex 34,29-35 zum Erweis der ueberragenden Herrlichkeit des neuen Amtes gegenueber der des Alten." Windisch, 112. After Windisch, it has become fashionable to refer to the passage as being a midrash. Some scholars, like Siegfried Schulz ("Die Decke Moses," \textit{Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft} 49 [1958]:1-30), even hold that Paul incorporated and corrected a midrash composed by his opponents in Corinth. They draw this conclusion on the basis of the unusual amount of unique vocabulary present in this pericope and from the internal tensions of the passage. However, as Richard B. Hays notices, "these reconstructions are conjectural attempts to explain certain gaps or disjunctions within the text that might be patient of other explanations." Hays, xii.

\textsuperscript{77}E. Earle Ellis explains that "as a literary expression midrash has traditionally been identified with certain rabbinic commentaries on the OT. However, in accordance with its use in Ben Sira and at Qumran, the term is now employed more broadly to designate interpretive renderings of the biblical text (=implicit midrash) and or various kinds of 'text + exposition' patterns (=explicit midrash)." "Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church," in \textit{Mikra: Text, Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity}, edited by Martin Jan Mulder (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 703.

\textsuperscript{78}Louw and Nida, Subdomain 92.16 [see John 4:9], p. 815.
affirmative response to questions, is designed "to elicit agreement with the intent of the question, even though it is seemingly negatively posed." It helps the reader to see the question, not as one of doubting, but rather as a rhetorical question. \(\text{Mάλλον}\) is a marker of contrast indicating an alternative, and may be translated as "on the contrary, instead, but rather." The whole expression, taken in its context, may be paraphrased as "if that is the case with the first \(\text{διακονία}\), then, on the other hand, it holds good also for the \(\text{διακονία}\) I am about to mention, and I expect you to agree with me."

The subject of the apodosis is \(\text{ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος}\). Much to the reader's surprise, especially in comparison to the \(\text{διακονία τοῦ θανάτου}\), no lengthy explanation is appended this time. An additional surprise is the future tense in \(\text{ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ}\). Readers have been perplexed by this \(\text{ἔσται}\). Some take it as a real, chronological, future tense, pointing to something that is still to come. Others take it as "a 'logical' future expressing result." A third possibility is a combination of logical and eschatological, as explained by James D. G.

\[79\text{Louw and Nida, 666, note 7. Οὔχι appears under subdomain 69.12 [see Matt. 5:46].}\]
\[80\text{Bultmann, 81.}\]
\[81\text{Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.126 [see Gal. 4:9], p. 794.}\]
\[82\text{Victor Paul Furnish, \textit{II Corinthians}, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 204.}\]
Dunn:

"\textit{\epsilon \sigma \tau \alpha i} should be taken as a logical future . . . ., although the still future eschatological sense is present also in so far as the glory increases as the consummation approaches (verses 8 and 18).

At this juncture, however, since he has not yet read verse 9, to say nothing about verse 18!, the reader is unable to solve the problem, and has to live with the ambiguity. All he knows is that a contrast is being established between two \textit{\delta i \alpha k o \nu i a i}, and that, compared to the \textit{\epsilon \gamma e n \eta \eta} of the former, the \textit{\epsilon \sigma \tau \alpha i} of the latter sounds much more impressive.

Verse 9

Verse 9a reads, \textit{\epsilon i \gamma \alpha \rho \; \tau \acute{e} \; \delta i \alpha k o \nu i a \; \tau \eta \varsigma \; k a \tau a k r i s e \varsigma \; \delta \acute{o} \xi a}. \textit{\Gamma \alpha \rho} is the marker of a new sentence.\(^{84}\) It appears that verse 9 is an explanatory restatement of verses 7 and 8. As shall be seen, it is much shorter than verses 7 and 8.\(^{85}\) And yet, the basic elements, \textit{\delta i \alpha k o \nu i a} and \textit{\delta \acute{o} \xi a}, are there.

The modern reader, unlike the Corinthian


\(^{84}\)Louw and Nida, Subdomain 91.1 [see Matt. 27:23], p. 811. It can also be "a marker of cause or reason between events" [Subdomain 89.23; see Mark 16:8], but this does not apply here. Windisch already sensed this, although he could not completely get rid of the logical force of \textit{\gamma \alpha \rho}. He writes: "Also darf die logische Kraft des \textit{\gamma \alpha \rho} hier (wie v. 11) nicht allzu streng genommen werden." Windisch, 116.

\(^{85}\)"V. 9 ist verkuerzte Wiederholung von V. 8." Windisch, 115.
readers/hearers who had access to the autograph, has to
decide whether he is going to read τῇ διακονίᾳ τῆς
catakrίσεως, with Papyrus 46, Codex Sinaiticus, some
other manuscripts and the 26th edition of Nestle-Aland, or
ἡ διακονίᾳ τῆς κατακρίσεως, with Codex Vaticanus,
the corrector of Codex Claromontanus, the Majority Text, a
few ancient versions, and the 25th edition of the Nestle
text. In either case, the sense would not be essentially
altered.\textsuperscript{86} Having decided to follow the 26th edition of
Nestle-Aland, which is supported by the so-called stronger
external evidence, the reader encounters a nice inverted
parallelism or chiasm, which may be outlined as follows:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Dative (τῇ διακονίᾳ) & Nominative (δόξα) \\
Nominative (ἡ διακονίᾳ) & Dative (δόξη)
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The second half of verse 9 is introduced by πολλῷ
μᾶλλον. The dative πολλῷ may come as a surprise to
many a reader. Yet, it is normal even in classical Greek,
where πολλῷ is often used with the comparative for
πολύ.\textsuperscript{87} The πολλῷ μᾶλλον shows that the

\textsuperscript{86}Granting that the dative is original, it may have been
changed to the nominative in assimilation to the nominative
in verses 7 and 8. On the other hand, if the nominative
were original, the only reason for an alteration would be
the difficulty found in the assertion that the διακονία
itself is δόξα.

\textsuperscript{87}Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, \textit{A Greek-English
Lexicon}, revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and
Roderick McKenzie, ninth edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1953), 1443. In the New Testament, this πολλῷ occurs in
Matthew 6:30, Mark 10:48, Luke 18:39, Rom. 5:9,10,15,17; 1
Cor. 12:22; 2 Corinthians 3; and Phil. 2:12.
opposition between the διακονία is no longer phrased as a question, but takes on the form of an assertion. This feature, together with the use of περισσεύω, provides the passage with a rising tone, a crescendo. Thus, it can be seen that verse 9 is not simply an abbreviated reiteration of verses 7 and 8. Although it is a variation on the same theme verbalized before, with new genitival phrases attached to each διακονία, it is a variation that is certainly added for the sake of emphasis.

Verse 10

Verse 10 runs like this: καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδοξασταὶ τὸ δεδοξασμένον ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει εἰνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης. The reader's first impression is that he is dealing with a very opaque text. The major problems are the function of the opening καὶ γὰρ, the referent of τὸ δεδοξασμένον, and the meaning of the phrase ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει.

Καὶ γὰρ comes with a bit of surprise, because the reader was expecting an additional εἰ γὰρ. The καὶ tells him that what follows is somehow appended to the preceding verse, the only question being what kind of relationship exists between the two verses. There seem to be two possibilities: καὶ γὰρ either adds something that runs parallel to verse 9, in the sense of "and furthermore," or

introduces a parenthetical remark, in the sense of "and by the way." It may well introduce a parenthetical remark that elaborates on verse 9.

**Où δεδόξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον** is an example of oxymoron, that is, a combination of contradictory words: "the thing that was glorified was not glorified."

The word order points out that **ὁ δεδόξασται** is being underscored. The major difficulty with this oxymoron is the referent of **τὸ δεδοξασμένον**. It could refer to either one of the **διακονία**. Most readers take it as referring to the **διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως** in verse 9.

The phrase **ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει** "is difficult and

---

89 Paul uses this **καὶ γάρ** three times in Romans (11:1; 15:3; 16:2), three times in the Thessalonian correspondence (1 Thes. 3:4 and 4:10; 2 Thes. 3:10), once in Philippians (2:27), and several times in the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 5:7; 8:5; 11:9; 12:13,14; 14:8; 2 Cor. 2:10; 3:10; 5:2,4; 7:5; 13:4). In some cases it has the force of an "for also, for even" (Rom. 11:1; Rom. 15:3). Sometimes it introduces a statement that runs parallel with a preceding one (1 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thes. 4:10). Its primary intention, says Edmund Hill, "is to introduce an aside, an illustration, a further point." Edmund Hill, "The Construction of Three Passages from St. Paul," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 23 (1961): 300.

90 Rudolf Bultmann says that verse 10 "gives the reason for the **πολλὰ μᾶλλον** in verse 9." Bultmann, 83. Carol K. Stockhausen presupposes that "verse 10 elaborates on one word of verse 9, the verb **περιεσεῦσθαι**." Stockhausen, 117. Yet, verse 10 appears to be a negative restating of verse 9 as a whole.

91 Windisch describes it as a paradox that is explained by what follows in verse 10. Windisch, 116.
many scholars are happy not to translate these words." Some take it as a redundant phrase. Martin H. Scharlemann, for instance, says that "the phrase en toutoi toi merei constitutes a redundance, probably referring back to dikaiosyne." Saint John Chrysostom took it in the sense of 'in this respect,' that is, in respect of the comparison. The phrase as such is rare in the New Testament.


93 Martin H. Scharlemann, "Of Surpassing Splendor: An Exegetical Study of 2 Corinthians 3:4-18," Concordia Journal 4 (1978): 116. Also Carol K. Stockhausen voices the opinion that the use of this "somewhat awkward expression" is "somewhat redundant with the etvexev that follows." She attempts to simplify [sic] Paul's Greek, representing it in English as "that is" [sic]. Stockhausen, p.88, note 5.

94 Chrysostom's words are taken from a homily on 2 Corinthians 3. They occur in this context: "Here he also shows the superiority, how great it is, saying, 'if I compare this with that, the glory of the Old Covenant is not glory at all; not absolutely laying down that there was no glory, but in view of the comparison. Wherefore also he added, 'in this respect', that is, in respect of the comparison. (διό καὶ ἐπήγαγε, Τούτω τῷ μέρει-τουτέστι, κατὰ τὸν τῆς συγκρίσεως λόγον.) Not that this doth disparage the Old Covenant, yea rather it highly commendeth it: for comparisons are wont to be made between things which are the same in kind." Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians: Homily VII - 2 Cor. III.7,8," in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, volume XII, edited by Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 310. For the Greek text, see S. Joannes Chrysostomus, "In Epist. II Ad Cor. Homil. VII," In Patrologiae Cursus Completus . . . Omnium SS. Patrum, Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum, qui ab Aeve Apostolico ad Tempora . . . Concilii Florentini (Ann. 1439) . . . Floruerunt, Edited by Jacques Paul Migne, Series Graeca Prior, Volume 61 (Paris: 1862), 444.
Testament, occurring only here and in 2 Cor. 9:3. In fact, the parallel of 2 Cor. 9:3 is an important clue for the understanding of 2 Cor. 3:10. In both cases the expression can be taken at face value, that is, in the sense of "in this matter." Paul is saying something like this: "And by the way, the δεδοξασμένον was not δεδοξασται in this matter I am referring to on account of." The concluding phrase in verse 10 gives the reason for the οὐ δεδοξασται. Paul writes: εἴνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης. The vocable εἴνεκεν is "a marker of a participant constituting the reason for an event." It belongs to the same semantic domain as διά followed by the accusative, and is best rendered as "because of."

Ὑπερβαλλούσης is classified with περισσεύω

95A third example can be found in 1 Peter 4:16, where the Majority Text reads ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ instead of ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ. It appears that the normal word order is ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτῳ, and that here the word order is reversed for the sake of emphasis.

96Few interpreters take it in this most obvious sense. One of them is Johannes Schneider, in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Translated and edited by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) s.v. "μέρος," 4:596, who takes it as "in this connection or instance."

97Louw and Nida, Subdomain 90.43 [see Matt. 5:11], p. 803. Εἴνεκεν, and the alternate form ἐνεκα are rare in Paul's writings, occurring only in Rom. 8:36, Rom. 14:20, 2 Cor. 3:10, and 2 Cor. 7:12.
in the same semantic domain, which indicates that the last phrase of verse 10 echoes the \( \text{πολλῷ μᾶλλον} \) \( \text{περισσεύει} \) \( \text{ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξη} \) of verse 9. The \( \text{περισσεύει} \) of the \( \text{διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης} \) is \( \text{ὑπερβάλλουσα} \) and overshadows any other glory. Or, as Alfred Plummer has it, "when the sun is risen, lamps cease to be of use; \text{orto sole lumen lucernae caecatur}".

Verse 11

In verse 11 the author comes back to the familiar \( \text{εἰ γάρ . . . πολλῷ μᾶλλον} \) construction. For the third time now he comes up with an \( \text{a minore ad maiorem} \) argument, that is, an argument from the lesser to the greater. What he says is probably not that much different from what he said before, for in this verse he restates his argument presented in verses 7-8 and repeated in verse 9. The astonishing thing, however, is that the \( \text{διακονίαι} \) have dropped out of the picture. They are replaced by \( \text{τὸ καταργοῦμενον} \) and \( \text{τὸ μένον} \). The former had been announced in the \( \text{τὴν καταργοῦμένην} \) of verse 7, while

---

98 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 78.33 [Comparative Degree; see Eph. 2:7], p. 689. Both signs are very frequent in the Corinthian correspondence. \( \text{Περισσεύω} \) occurs 25 times in Paul, 3 of which are in 1 Corinthians (8:8; 14:12; 15:58) and 9 of which are in 2 Corinthians (1:5 - twice; 3:9; 4:15; 8:2; 8:7 - twice; 9:8; 9:12). The \( \text{ὑπερβάλλω} \)- stem occurs 14 times in Paul, mostly in 2 Corinthians (\( \text{ὑπερβάλλω - 3:10; 9:14; ὑπερβηλή - 1:8; 4:7; 4:17; 4:17; 12:7; ὑπερβαλλόντος - 11:23} \)).

99 Plummer, 91.
the latter is unprecedented. This switch is very significant, for it tells the reader that the comparison is coming to a close, that this is the last item of the series.  

Two more aspects of verse 11 deserve special attention. First of all, the sentence is verbless, being one of the few examples of "a Pauline sentence having an articular participle as subject and no expressed verb."  

It provides a neat illustration of the principle that "all language usage is shorthand." In the use of language, it is very common that words or signs are elided, producing an economical but potentially ambiguous communication, whose full set of signs must be supplied by the reader. Another

---

100 This phenomenon has been noticed by Prof. Voelz and seems to be very common in the Greek New Testament. In other words, in presenting a sequence or chain of elements, be it a list of imperatives or a sequence of characters in a story, very often an author departs from his pattern when he comes to the last element of the series. The purpose of this device is apparently to help the reader/listener to realize that the series is coming to a close. James W. Voelz, "Paul, Seminary Professors, and the Pastoral Office," Unpublished Essay Delivered to the Joint Exegetical Departments of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (Terre Haute, IN: March 1990).

101 Daryl D. Schmidt, "The Syntactical Style of 2 Thessalonians: How Pauline is It?," in The Thessalonian Correspondence, ed. Raymond F. Collins (Leuven: University Press, 1990), 387. Other instances in Paul are Rom. 8:33-34; Rom. 12:7-8; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; and 2 Thes. 2:7.

102 James W. Voelz, "Biblical Hermeneutics: Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?," in Light for Our World: Essays Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, edited by John W. Klotz (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1989), 239.
way of referring to this would be in terms of 'gaps' or 'open spaces' in the text. The reader is enticed to close the 'openness' of the text, by supplying the missing information. How can the reader close the 'openness' of verse 11? For the first half of verse 11 he is likely to supply ἔγενηθα, whereas for the second half he can supply either ἐστίν or ἐσται, or both.

The second aspect is that in the first half of verse 11 Paul introduces the propositional phrase διὰ δόξης. Up to this point he had almost consistently used the phrase ἐν δόξῃ. Most scholarly readers or commentators agree that "St. Paul is fond of changes in prepositions." So, he can say both ἔγενηθα ἐν δόξῃ as well as ἔγενηθα διὰ δόξης. The switch from ἐν to διὰ may have to do with the series coming to a close, as referred to above. On the other hand, however, if the whole phrase is

---

103 The concept of 'open spaces' (Leerstellen) was developed by Wolfgang Iser and originally applied to the study of narrative texts. An open space occurs whenever the writer "breaks off his narrative at a certain point or leaves certain things unsaid." Bernard C. Lategan, "Current Issues in the Hermeneutical Debate," Neotestamentica 18 (1984), 12. This concept, as James W. Voelz explains, is "not necessarily useful for the analysis of argumentative texts," although it is there in the form of different types of ambiguity. James W. Voelz, quoted in Bernard C. Lategan, "Reception: Theory and Practice in Reading Romans 13," Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament, edited by P. J. Hartin and J. H. Petzer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 157-158. Thus, the elision of a word or sign is an 'open space' in a transferred sense, for it contributes to the potential ambiguity of the text.

104 Plummer, 92. Also Kling, 50; Alford, 645; Windisch, 117.
compared to the following τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ (verse 11b), διὰ seems to be the right choice. As Christian Friedrich Kling points out, "διὰ seems appropriate to the καταργούμενον, and ἐν to the μένον," for διὰ designates a point of transition, whereas ἐν implies that which is permanent. Yet, this can only be perceived on the basis of the context. In other words, it is the combination of διὰ with τὸ καταργούμενον and ἐν with τὸ μένον that yields this conclusion, and not the use of this or that preposition as such. Therefore, no major argument can be based on a minor grammatical detail taken in isolation. As Moises Silva explains,

no interpretation is worth considering unless it has strong contextual support. If it doesn't, then the use of the grammatical detail becomes irrelevant; if it does, then the grammar is at best a pointer to, not the basis of, the correct interpretation.  

Section Three: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Verses 12-13

This section begins with the participial clause ἐχοντες οἷν τοιαύτην ἑλπίδα. Apparently, that is, judging from the the surface structure, a change of subject is entailed. After all, the διακονίαι dropped out of the picture and the author is again talking about

105 Kling, 50.

106 Moises Silva, God, Language and Scripture (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 118.
himself.\textsuperscript{107} Yet, if Σιακοβίς is taken in the sense of "that which serves death," or "that which serves life," then verses 7-11 are not a digression and what follows in verse 12 is simply the carrying on of the argumentation started at the beginning of the chapter.

Verse 12 is tied to the context by means of ὅσον, which incidentally is the first (and only) ὅσον in the text. Such a sign should not be overlooked, for at times it can be of crucial importance. In Romans 12:1, for instance, as Peter Cotterell and Max Turner observe, it is a reminder that "if the sentence can be fully explicated grammatically from within itself, it cannot be explicated semantically without reference to chapter 11."\textsuperscript{108}

Lexically, ὅσον can be a discourse marker of emphasis, as in 1 Cor. 3:5.\textsuperscript{109} It can also be "a marker of result, often implying the conclusion of a process of reasoning."\textsuperscript{110} In this case it is translated as "so," or "therefore." Some readers, for example Martin H.

\textsuperscript{107}Or, the authors themselves, for ἔχοντες is plural. This participle could, in fact, refer to any persons in the plural (we, you, or they). It is only later on, with κρόμηθα, that it becomes clear that the subject of ἔχοντες is ημεῖς.


\textsuperscript{109}Louw and Nida, Subdomain 91.7 [see 1 Cor. 3:5], p. 812.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., Subdomain 89.50 [Relation of Result; see Matt. 7:24], p. 783.
Scharlemann, argue that it should be taken in this sense in 2 Cor. 3:12. Scharlemann states that ὅτι "gathers up into itself the previous arguments to introduce a further elaboration."\(^{111}\) ὅτι can also be "a marker of relatively weak contrast,"\(^{112}\) in the sense of "but." Sometimes, particularly in historical narratives, ὅτι may be used "to resume a subject once more after an interruption," in the sense of "so, as has been said."\(^{113}\) It appears that, in the context of 2 Cor. 3:12, one should not press the inferential use of ὅτι, particularly if this should lead to the conclusion that the whole preceding paragraph is somehow crammed into that one little sign. ὅτι is part of a larger transitional syntagm, namely, ἐξοντες ὅτι τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα, and in this syntagm it helps to signal that a new topic, different from the one tackled in the preceding paragraph, is about to be introduced. Thus, in this context ὅτι is to a certain extent contrastive. Since this new topic is again the person of the διάκονος rather than the διάκονίας, ὅτι also helps to point back to a certain extent contrastive.


\(^{112}\)Louw and Nida, Domain 89.127 [Relation of Contrast; see John 9:18], p. 794.

\(^{113}\)Bauer, 593. ὅτι is said to have this sense in 1 Cor. 8:4 and 1 Cor. 11:20.
to verse 4. It is almost tautological to say, as W. C. van
Unnik does, that ὥν "takes the result of the preceding
argument as a basis on which the new structure can be
built."114 From the viewpoint of the reader, this is quite
obvious. The text, like any text, is read in a linear
fashion, and once the reader is about to begin reading verse
12, he will have incorporated verses 7-11 as a basis for
what lies ahead. The ὥν helps him to realize this. It
helps him to see that the conversation continues, based on
what went on before, although not necessarily introducing
the conclusion of the author's argumentation.

As indicated above, readers who put too much emphasis
on the ὥν tend to overlook the whole phrase, ἔχοντες
oriously. In fact, what indicates that
something is put as the basis for that which is about to
follow is the participle ἔχοντες, and not so much the
ὁν. The participle is best taken with the force of
"since", "on the basis of."115 The basis is τοιαύτην
ἔλπιδα, an ἔλπις which is of such a kind as identified
in the context.

ἔλπις is another one of those event words, denoting
the act of ἔλπισεως, of looking forward with confidence

114 W. C. van Unnik, "'With Unveiled Face': An Exegesis

115 The force of ἔχοντες is somewhat similar to ἔι in
verses 7, 9, and 11.
to that which is good and beneficial. The major problem here is the problem of the referent, that is, to what does ἐλπίς refer. It might be something mentioned in verses 7-11. It might be the confidence expressed in verses 5-6. It might even be the whole of verses 4-11.

On the basis of τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα, the authors conduct themselves (χρώμεθα) in πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ. The verb χράομαι, which is somewhat rare in the New Testament, may be classified under different semantic domains, but in this context is best taken as indicating behavior. Its denotation is "to behave or to conduct oneself in a particular manner with regard to some

116 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 25.59 [Hope, Look forward to; see 1 Tim. 4:10], p. 296. Ελπίς can also be taken is the sense of either "that which is hoped for" [Subdomain 25.61; see Col. 1:5] or "that which constitutes the cause or reason for hoping" [Subdomain 25.62; see 1 Thes. 2:19].

117 The original readers were probably in a better position to fill in the blanks, that is, they were able to finish a sentence beginning with "we hope that . . ." or "we put our trust in . . .". This is so because they were conscious of the so-called "external entailment," that is, all that was implied by the sign ἐλπίς in that context and required no further explanation. Modern readers have a hard time with the text because they are not aware of that external entailment.

118 It is a middle deponent verb, which occurs in the New Testament mostly in Paul's letters (1 Cor. 7:21,31; 1 Cor. 9:12,15; 2 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 13:10; 1 Tim. 1:8; 1 Tim. 5:23). Besides Paul's letters, it occurs only in Acts 27:3,17.

119 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 41.4 [Behavior and Related States; see Acts 27:3], p. 505. Χράομαι is also part of subdomain 42.23 [Perform, Do; see 1 Tim. 5:23], but this does not apply here.
person. In 2 Cor. 3:12, this person could be God or the Corinthians. In view of the use of παρρησία, it is probably the latter.

The author acts or proceeds with πολλὴ παρρησία, a great deal of boldness and confidence. The text does not tell what is entailed in this παρρησία or how it is manifested. It could be boldness with respect to God, as in Ephesians 3:12, but here it is best read as referring to "the courage with which he [Paul] acts to fulfill his apostolic commission in relation to others." The original readers certainly were well acquainted with this παρρησία, so that the author had no need to further explain it.

Verse 13a reads: καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ. Καθάπερ is a marker of comparison. What is being

---

120 Louw and Nida, p. 505.
121 Ἐρωμέθα is present tense of connected action, stressing the agent rather than the action. It could be either indicative ("we act") or subjunctive ("let us act"), but in this syntagm it is clearly indicative.
122 Πολλὴ points to "the upper range of a scale of extent," and can be translated as "great, a great deal." Louw and Nida, Subdomain 78.3 [see Acts 21:40], p. 685. Παρρησία belongs to subdomain 25.158 [Courage, Boldness; see Heb. 4:16], p. 307.
123 Furnish, 230. Other instances of παρρησία in the sense of "to be bold to proclaim the gospel" are 2 Cor. 7:4; Phil. 1:20; 1 Thes. 2:2; and Philemon 8. On the semantic level it corresponds to the οὐ γὰρ ἑπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον of Rom. 1:16.
124 Louw and Nida, Domain 64.15 (Comparison), p. 619.
compared is Moses' act of putting a veil over his face. The question is: to what is it compared? The answer is: the text does not tell. There is a gap in the text. It appears that the main clause of the comparison is missing. After the opening καὶ οὖ one would have expected a verb like ποιοῦμεν, or a phrase like τίθεμεν κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἡμῶν.\(^\text{125}\) It is also possible to supply something after καθάπερ. One reader, Mathias Rissi, suggests that καὶ οὖ καθάπερ is an introductory formula to a quotation from Exodus 34, and that a verb like λέγει or γέγραπται is to be supplied after καθάπερ. In this case, Μωϋσῆς ἔτιθει κάλυμμα κτλ. would be the Old Testament quotation.\(^\text{126}\) The problem with this suggestion is that something is still missing after καὶ οὖ. Another reader, Lloyd Gaston, argues that the verb to be supplied is "they say," the subject of the verb being Paul's opponents at Corinth. In this case, the comparison would be between the apostolic πολλὴ παρρησία and the rhetoric of Paul's opponents.\(^\text{127}\)


\(^{126}\) Mathias Rissi, Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1969), 30.

problem with this view is that only the primary readers at Corinth could have perceived such a reference. Most secondary readers take it as a comparison between Moses' veiling and the apostolic παρπησία presented in verse 12.

Moses ἐτίθηκε κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ. The word κάλυμμα is in all likelihood drawn from the Septuagint text of Exodus 34. The fact is that in the New Testament the word appears only in this passage. The question that enters the reader's mind is how in the world the author can pass from the topic of the δόξα (verses 7-11) to the subject of the κάλυμμα. The most natural explanation is that the author is here following the sequence of the narrative in Exodus 34. One gets the impression that he cannot get away from the Old Testament narrative, for he keeps coming back to it. Not that the author necessarily had an open Greek Bible sitting in front of him. What James Barr has to say about the influence of the Septuagint upon the meaning of words in the New Testament can also be applied to this situation. Barr writes:

If LXX meanings influenced later language, it was not because they were there in the book on paper but because they were in someone's mind.\footnote{James Barr, "Common Sense and Biblical Language," Biblica 49 (1968): 379.}

If Paul comes to the κάλυμμα after having dwelt on the δόξα, a sequence which seems to have been influenced
by the Septuagint, this does not necessarily mean that he had the story on paper in front of him, but it certainly means that the story was embedded in his mind.

This same reasoning can be applied to the use of the imperfect \( \text{ἐτιθηθεί} \) in verse 13. Many readers find great significance in the use of this imperfect, which is interpreted as iterative in the sense of "Moses used to place a veil over his face,"\(^{129}\) or "Moses habitually wore a veil."\(^{130}\) Now, an imperfect may well be interpreted as iterative. Should this be the case in 2 Cor. 3:13, the question that naturally follows is: in which way or to what extent is this significant? The significance is usually seen in the contrast between the imperfect in 2 Corinthians 3 and the aorist \( \text{ἐπέθηκεν} \) in the Greek text of Exodus 34. Paul is seen as reinterpreting the Old Testament text, stressing that Moses had to habitually put a veil over his face. Paul, in this case, would be "rewriting" the Old Testament narrative only to put Moses down. Yet, the contrast does not seem to be one between the aorist of the Septuagint and the imperfect of 2 Corinthians 3, but rather between the present \( \text{xρόμεθα} \) of verse 12 and the imperfect \( \text{ἐτιθηθεί} \) of verse 13. Both the present and the imperfect are connective, that is, the writer that makes use

---

\(^{129}\) Hughes, 108.

of them "connects the verbal action to the person doing the acting." What, then, is the significance of the change from present to imperfect? The switch from the present to the imperfect appears to be simply a switch from the present to the past. The author is switching back from his present situation to the Old Testament episode narrated in Exodus 34. He wants to show that Moses was engaged in veiling his face, and he does so by using the imperfect.

Just as significant as the ἐτίθης κάλυμμα is the καὶ οὐ at the beginning of verse 13, provided that something like ποιοῦμεν is supplied after it. The author is saying that he does not use a veil like Moses did. This is surprising, not to say paradoxical, especially in the light of verses 7-11. If the δικαιοσύνης perisediai δόξα (verse 9), should one not expect the apostles to wear a veil much thicker than the veil of Moses, "since now the irradiation hazard must be infinitely greater"? As Morna D. Hooker explains,

This would be the logical conclusion of Paul's argument, but in fact Paul makes precisely the opposite point. Unlike Moses, Paul does not cover his face; he


132 This use of the imperfect could also be emphatic, in the sense of "as Moses actually placed a veil..." James W. Voelz, "Present and Aorist Verbal Aspect: A New Proposal," unpublished essay delivered at the 47th annual meeting of the Societas Novi Testamenti Studiorum (Madrid: July 1992), 6.

is in no way ashamed, and makes no concealment, but acts boldly— a sign of the liberty that comes through the Spirit.

What follows in verse 13 is very similar, but at the same time substantially different, from what was said in verse 7. Paul writes: πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς νιους Ἰσραήλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργομένου. Most of these signs, like μὴ, ἀτενίσαι εἰς, τοὺς νιους Ἰσραήλ, and καταργομένου, are familiar to the reader that went through verse 7. However, there are also significant changes. First, the ὡς τε μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι εἰς of verse 7 has given way to πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι εἰς. The former expresses result; the latter, purpose. Second, the object of ἀτενίσαι is no longer

134 Ibid.

135 The construction πρὸς τὸ μὴ + infinitive is somewhat rare in the New Testament, occurring only in Matthew 5:28; 6:1; 13:30; 23:5; 26:12; Mark 13:22; Luke 18:1; Acts 3:19 (variant reading); Eph. 6:11; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8; James 3:3 (variant reading); and 2 Cor. 3:13. Its force is "generally final, expressing the subjective purpose, 'with a view to,' 'in order that." Plummer, 97.

136 Some readers have a hard time with this construction. This is the case of R. C. H. Lenski, who is a good example of a resistant reader. Lenski recognizes that grammarians are reluctant to admit that this construction means result and not always purpose. And yet, says he, "in spite of this stand . . . . we confess that here result is better than purpose." R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937), 937. Result is certainly better than purpose, but that is not what the text is saying. It is also true that verses 7 and 13 are not necessarily contradictory, as if one motive were assigned to Moses in verse 7 and a different one in verse 13. As Carol Stockhausen points out, "the two verses are complementary."
68

tό πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως, but rather τό τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. The sign τό τέλος comes as a surprise,\textsuperscript{137} and has met with many a resistant reader. For instance, the copyist of Codex Alexandrinus (A) and some of the ancient translators, particularly of the Old Latin and of the Vulgate, changed it to τό πρόσωπον. This πρόσωπον was taken either from the previous line in verse 13 or, what seems more likely, from verse 7.\textsuperscript{138} On the other hand, the genitival phrase τοῦ καταργουμένου seems to be carried over, not from verse 7, but rather from verse 11. In verse 7 it is feminine and qualifies δόξα; in verse 13 it is neuter and seems to hark back to verse 11.\textsuperscript{139}

The whole phrase, τό τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου, is "one of the most disputed sentences

Stockhausen, 126, note 66.

\textsuperscript{137} Τέλος had been used in 2 Cor. 1:13, in the phrase ἐως τέλους, which is not at all related to τό τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου.

\textsuperscript{138} It is hard to see how τό πρόσωπον τοῦ καταργουμένου would have made better sense than τό τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου.

\textsuperscript{139} Τοῦ καταργουμένου could also be masculine, but there is no masculine antecedent in the context. Ralph P. Martin, however, argues that "the subject [sic] of τοῦ καταργουμένου . . . . is . . . . either κάλυμμα ("veil") or νόμος ("law") in agreement with the neuter or masculine participial ending." Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 68. Only an extremely sophisticated reader could think of νόμος as the antecedent of τοῦ καταργουμένου.
in this puzzling chapter.\footnote{Hays, 136.} To begin with, τέλος, like many other signs in this chapter, is ambiguous. In Paul's letters it occurs thirteen times and can denote temporal cessation;\footnote{"A point of time marking the end of a duration." Louw and Nida, Subdomain 67.66 [1 Cor. 15:24], p. 638.} outcome or result;\footnote{Ibid., Subdomain 89.40 [Rom. 6:21], p. 782.} purpose or goal;\footnote{Ibid., Subdomain 89.55 [1 Tim. 1:5], 784.} and even tax or revenue.\footnote{Ibid., Subdomain 57.179 [Rom. 13:7], p. 578.} In most passages the context helps the reader to decide which meaning makes the best sense. Two passages are much discussed by readers, namely, Rom. 10:4 and 2 Cor. 3:13. In the latter passage it could denote one of three: either temporal cessation, or goal, or outcome. It could be deliberately ambiguous.\footnote{This is the view of Frances Young and David F. Ford, \textit{Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 105.} Yet, the majority view among readers is that, in the context of 2 Corinthians 3, it denotes "end" in the sense of "cessation." Scharlemann, for instance, states that "the telos of this verse is not that of Romans 10:4. It occurs here in its simple sense of ending."\footnote{Scharlemann, "Of Surpassing Splendor," 116. One of the reasons why, in the case of Rom. 10:4 and 2 Cor. 3:13, it is so difficult to choose between the different meanings of τέλος is that such a choice "entails an overall judgment about the role of the law in Paul's theology." Hays, 137.}
The present passive participle τοῦ καταργομένου is best taken in the sense of "the thing that is being abolished or rendered ineffective."\textsuperscript{147} Many readers assume the meaning "to fade away."\textsuperscript{148} Yet, "in no case, either active or passive, does καταργέω refer to the gradual 'fading away' of some aspect of reality."\textsuperscript{149} Its semantic field is the realm of legal process rather than of visual images.\textsuperscript{150}

Thus far is this section the author has stated that his great παρηγορία, based on τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα, is different from what Moses did. His attention then moves from Moses to the children of Israel. The whole subsequent section, verses 14-18, is regarded as parenthetical by some readers, dealing as it does, not with the ministry, but with those to whom the ministry is directed.\textsuperscript{151} It remains to be


\textsuperscript{148}Such is the case of Charles H. Talbert, Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 151. Translations like the NIV and others also take it in the sense of "fading away."

\textsuperscript{149}Hafemann, The Glory and Veil of Moses in 2 Cor 3:7-14, 40.

\textsuperscript{150}Hays, 134.

\textsuperscript{151}Kling, 55. Dietrich-Alex Koch observes that this departure from the author's main track, namely, the apostolic διακονία, requires a sort of a new beginning at
seen how it is tied to the context.

Verse 14

At the beginning of verse 14 the reader comes across 

\[\text{αλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοηματα αὐτῶν}.\]  This statement is not easily linked to the context. There is a gap in the sequence of thought. The logical connection between the veil over Moses' face and the hardness of Israel's heart is far from obvious.\(^{152}\) As C. J. A. Hickling observes,

> there is a difference between inability to see a face which has been veiled and the 'hardening' of one's mind so as to be incapable of seeing what is there, be it veiled or manifest.\(^{153}\)

Much depends on how one is going to read the opening \[\text{αλλὰ}.\]  Semantically it is a marker of contrast, in the sense of "but, on the contrary."\(^{154}\) Its function at this juncture, however, is a matter of dispute. One possibility would be to link it way back to the \[\text{πολλὴ παρονσία}.\]

---


\(^{153}\) C. J. A. Hickling, "The Sequence of Thought in II Corinthians, Chapter Three," *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974), 391. In Hickling's view, the problem of Jewish failure to believe in Jesus . . . was one sufficiently painful and urgent in Paul's mind to be raised almost automatically by the thought of the inadequacy of the Mosaic dispensation. Ibid., 393.

\(^{154}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.125 [see Matt. 5:17], p. 794.
χρώμεθα of verse 12. The connection would be as follows: "in spite of our great παρηγορία, their minds were hardened." Yet, this attempt to connect ἀλλά to verse 12 seems far-fetched. Some readers insist that ἀλλά has a corrective sense, and that the author is stressing the guilt and culpability of the children of Israel and not of Moses. Others take it as saying that Moses had no need to hide anything for the minds of the Israelites were already hardened. Walter Bauer notes that, before independent clauses, ἀλλά may be used "to indicate that the preceding is to be regarded as a settled matter, thus forming a transition to something new." To this reader ἀλλά appears to form such a transition to something new. The reference to τοὺς νιῶν Ἰσραήλ in verse 13 triggered off a reference to their reaction to Moses' ministry in the wilderness. At first, it looks like a big jump, namely, from Moses' veiling to the people's dullness of heart. On further consideration, however, it is easy to perceive that there is a close relation between both events, a relation which is not necessarily logical, but which certainly is temporal. After all, both incidents belong to the same period in the history of the people of Israel. To


156 Plummer, 99. Plummer himself does not espouse this view, for, in his view, "this is a less obvious connexion."

157 Bauer, 38.
the veiling of Moses corresponds the dullness of heart on
the part of the people. And yet, the perceptive reader may
well suspect that the author is including this in
anticipation of something else that is about to follow.

What follows is a clear leap from the past to the
present. This is indicated by ἀχρὶ γὰρ τῆς σήμερον
ἡμέρας. With the exception of γὰρ, all the signs in
this phrase belong to the semantic field of time. "Ἀχρὶ,
which is an Attic form, \(^{158}\) points to "the continuous extent
of time up to a point," \(^{159}\) and may be rendered as "until." 
Σήμερον is "the same day as the day of a discourse." \(^{160}\)
Ἡμέρας appears to be redundant, and this may be one of
the reasons why it is missing in the Majority Text. \(^{161}\) The
phrase as a whole indicates that the preceding ἀλλὰ
ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοματα αὐτῶν belongs to the past.

Γάρ, in ἀχρὶ γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας, can
be taken as a marker of cause or reason between events,
though in this context the relation is somewhat remote or

---

\(^{158}\) In Hellenistic Greek it is spelled ἀχρὶς, and in the

\(^{159}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 67.119 [see Acts 20:11], p. 645.

\(^{160}\) Ibid., Subdomain 67.205 [see Matt. 21:28], p. 654.

\(^{161}\) Another reason might be the use of σήμερον without
ἡμέρας in the following verse. It is interesting that in
Paul's writings σήμερον occurs only three times (Rom. 11:8; 2 Cor. 3:14; 2 Cor. 3:15). In the two first instances it is used in combination with ἡμέρας.
tenuous.\textsuperscript{162} The χρό can be read as "I am saying this because . . . ."

In what follows in verse 14, the author declares that τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει. "Covenant" is clearly a reference to the books of Moses. Its use in connection with παλαιά is hapax legomenon, that is, the phrase does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The preposition ἐπί is best taken in the sense of "at the reading," or "during the reading."\textsuperscript{163} No indication is given as to where the old covenant is being read, although most readers assume that it refers to the worship of the synagogue.\textsuperscript{164}

The author is saying that the ἀναγνώσις of the παλαιά διαθήκη is veiled. Since there can be no ἀναγνώσις without a reader, it follows that what is actually veiled are the eyes of the readers. Thus, while in verse 13 the author says that the Israelites in the wilderness were prevented from seeing (πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀπενίσαι), and while in verse 14a he adds that they could

\textsuperscript{162} Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.23 [Relation of Cause and/or Reason, see Mark 16:8], p. 780.

\textsuperscript{163} This use of ἐπί of the occasion on which or circumstances in which something takes place occurs also in 2 Cor. 1:4 and 2 Cor 7:4. Plummer, 99.

\textsuperscript{164} An alternative would be a reference to "something read in the Corinthian church." Gaston, p. 239, note 63. Mathias Rissi takes it as referring to what was going on both in the synagogue and in the Corinthian church, although primarily in the church, for his assumption is that in this passage Paul is engaged in polemics with "Christian" opponents. Rissi, 34.
not see (ἐπορώθη τὰ νοηματα αὐτῶν), in verse 14b he switches to a new topic, declaring that the eyes of the readers of the παλαία διαθήκη are veiled. In the past the children of Israel could not understand what they saw; in the present they cannot understand what they read. The topic has shifted from seeing the glory to understanding the text.

How the latter part of verse 14 attaches to the context is a matter of dispute. To begin with, the comma before μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον is editorial, just as any other diacritical mark or accent in the text. Thus, J. H. Bernard takes it predicatively with the preceding μένει, in the sense of "it remains unlifted." His argument is based on word order, which, in his view, "seems to force us to take the present participle with μένει - it having a merely explanatory force and being almost redundant." In response to this one could argue that, if this were the case, the text should read οὐκ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον rather than μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον. Another possibility is to take it as an accusative absolute in the sense of "because it has not been revealed (to them) that .

---

165 Verse 15 clarifies that the veil lies over the minds of the readers (ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν). From a semantic viewpoint, to have one's mind hardened and to have a veil over the mind are closely related. The latter may well be the result of the former.

166 Bernard, 57.

167 Bultmann, 87.
The conclusion to this sentence usually runs like this: "... that the old covenant is done away with in Christ." The problem with this view is that the text does not read \( \mu \nu \ \upalpha \omicron \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \pi \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \mu \nu \), as one would expect in such a case, but rather \( \mu \nu \ \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \pi \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \mu \nu \). It seems better to take \( \mu \nu \ \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \pi \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \mu \nu \) in apposition to the preceding \( \tau \omicron \ \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \ \kappa \alpha \lambda \mu \mu \alpha \alpha \). reading the following \( \delta \tau \iota \) as causal ("because, in view of the fact that"). The reason why the \( \kappa \alpha \lambda \mu \mu \alpha \alpha \) is \( \mu \nu \ \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \pi \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \mu \nu \) is because \( \acute{\epsilon} \nu \ \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \phi \) \( \kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \rho \gamma \epsilon \iota \tau \iota \) is roughly equivalent to \( \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \pi \omicron \omega \), and the subject of \( \kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \rho \gamma \epsilon \iota \tau \iota \) is...

---

168 Blass-Debrunner-Funk, #424, p. 219. According to this Greek grammar, the only example, rather obscured, of an accusative absolute is \( \tau \omicron \chi \omicron \omicron \nu \) ('perhaps, possibly') in 1 Cor. 16:6 and Luke 20:13. In 2 Cor. 3:14 it is only a possibility, which the authors seem to reject, inasmuch as they ask if \( \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \pi \omicron \tau \omicron \omicron \mu \nu \) should not be referred to \( \kappa \alpha \lambda \mu \mu \alpha \alpha \). Ibid.

169 Bultmann, 87. The verb \( \acute{\alpha} \nu \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \pi \omicron \omega \) is rare in the New Testament, being found only in this verse and in 2 Cor. 3:18. Louw and Nida classify it under domain 79 ("features of objects"), and take it in the sense of "to cause something to be uncovered." Ibid., 705. Its use with \( \pi \omicron \rho \omicron \sigma \omicron \rho \omicron \omicron \nu \) in verse 18 seems to point in that direction.


171 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.33 [see Matt. 2:18], p. 781. The option would be \( \delta \tau \iota \) as a marker of discourse content ('that'). Ibid., Subdomain 90.21 [see 2 Cor. 13:6], p. 800.

172 The emphatic position of \( \acute{\epsilon} \nu \ \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \phi \) should not be overlooked.
Verse 15

Verse 15 is, to a large extent, an explanatory restatement of the second half of verse 14, as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Cor. 3:15</th>
<th>2 Cor. 3:14b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἐώς σήμερον</td>
<td>ἀχρὶ τῆς σήμερον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἡνίκα ἀν</td>
<td>ἑπὶ τῇ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀναγινώσκεται</td>
<td>ἀναγινώσει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Μωυσῆς</td>
<td>τῆς παλαιὰς διαθήκης</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κάλυμμα</td>
<td>τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κεῖται</td>
<td>μένει</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only phrase that is without parallel in verse 14b is ἑπὶ τῆν καρδίαν αὐτῶν, although on the semantic level part of the concept had surfaced in the τὰ νοὴματα αὐτῶν of verse 14a.¹⁷⁴

The opening ἀλλά is similar to the one in verse 14.

---

¹⁷³ This view is disputed by Bultmann, who takes the παλαιὰ διαθήκη (or its δόξα) as the subject of καταργεῖται. His argument, though, is weak. He indicates that κάλυμμα cannot be the subject because "the destruction of the veil is of no consequence." Bultmann, 86. Equally feeble, at least from a linguistic standpoint, is J. D. G. Dunn's view that "the subject of καταργεῖται must be determined by the subject of the same verb in verses 7, 11, and 13 -- i.e. the old dispensation and its δόξα, not the veil ..." Dunn, "2 Corinthians III.17," p. 311, note 7.

¹⁷⁴ Windisch, 123.
In other words, it is best taken as "Yes, even more!"\textsuperscript{175} "Εως belongs to the same semantic field as ἀρχι in verse 14.\textsuperscript{176} Ἠνικα ἀν, which in the whole New Testament occurs only here and in the next verse, conveys the idea of "indefinite and multiple points of time, simultaneous with other corresponding points of time,"\textsuperscript{177} and may be rendered as "whenever." The particle ἀν is omitted in some manuscripts, especially in the Majority Text, and this is certainly due to haplography.\textsuperscript{178} Μωύσης is a metonymy which stands for the writings of Moses. Κάλυμμα has no article, and some readers take this as an indication of a change of meaning.\textsuperscript{179} This change, however, is indicated more by the context than by the omission of the article. Already in verse 13 the author had moved from a literal

\textsuperscript{175}Scharlemann, 116.

\textsuperscript{176}Louw and Nida, Subdomain 67.119 [see Matt. 2:9 and Acts 20:11], p. 645.

\textsuperscript{177}Louw and Nida, Subdomain 67.36, p. 634.

\textsuperscript{178}In a case of haplography the scribe inadvertently omits one of a pair of letters or sequence of letters. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism, translated by Erroll F. Rhodes, second edition, revised and enlarged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 283. It could also be a case of dittography, that is, the repetition of one or more letters or a syllable by accident, but this seems less likely in this case. The source of the confusion is the identical beginning of the next word, ἀναγινώσκεται.

\textsuperscript{179}Plummer, 101. It would be more accurate to refer to this as a shift from literal to non-literal meaning. Κάλυμμα is still a veil, worn over the face and impeding clear vision, but one component is missing: it is no longer a piece of solid material.
κάλυμμα to a metaphorical one.

Verses 16-17

Verse 16, which seems to elaborate on the phrase ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται of verse 14, starts out with ἤνικα δὲ ἦν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον. The ἤνικα δὲ ἦν with the aorist subjunctive "points to repeated individual experience,"\(^{180}\) in the sense of "whenever, every time." In ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, which is simply another way of referring to conversion,\(^{181}\) it is not clear who is the subject of the verb nor who is the referent of κύριον.

The subject of ἐπιστρέψῃ is something or someone in the third person singular.\(^{182}\) There are several possibilities among which the reader can make a choice: Moses, the Israelites of the past, the Jews of Paul's time, the heart of the Jews (καρδία, verse 15), anyone who needs to turn to the Lord, or anyone who has already turned to the Lord, including Paul himself.\(^{183}\) On the basis of the

\(^{180}\) Scharlemann, 116.

\(^{181}\) This expression, in a slightly different form (ἐπέστρεψαν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον), occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament, namely, in Acts 9:35 and Acts 11:21. In both cases it refers to conversion.

\(^{182}\) Ἐπιστρέψῃ is being read as third person singular, aorist subjunctive active. It could also be read as second person singular, aorist subjunctive middle. In this case, the sense would be "whenever you turn to the Lord."

\(^{183}\) Emily Wong, "The Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor 3,17a)," Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses 61 (1985): 53.
context, it could well be καρδια, although an indefinite τις is perhaps the best suggestion.\textsuperscript{184}

Κύριος could be a reference to either Christ or Yahweh. Readers who argue that verse 16 is a quote from the Old Testament take it as a reference to Yahweh, the God of the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{185} One might even argue that this is what the author had in mind. And yet, once again, the reader has no access to the author's mind apart from the text. The fact is that this is the first occurrence of κύριος in this pericope.\textsuperscript{186} A Christian reader would naturally think of Christ, who had been mentioned in verse 14.\textsuperscript{187} In either

\textsuperscript{184} According to Origen, the subject is τις, "someone." Plummer, 101. This was also the view of Augustine. Tertullian said that the subject is Israel. Calvin picked Moses as subject. Hughes, 113, note 10. J. D. G. Dunn states that Paul does not specify the subject of the verb, so that its ambiguity might embrace both Moses and the Jews. Dunn, "2 Corinthians III.17," 313, note 1. It is quite clear that Dunn's view rests on the assumption that Paul is quoting the Old Testament and has the same subject of the Exodus passage in mind, namely, Moses. From the reader's perspective, though, this connection is far from obvious.

\textsuperscript{185} It is sometimes pointed out that Paul usually writes ὁ κύριος in reference to Christ and κύριος (without the article) in reference to Yahweh. The latter occurs mainly in Old Testament quotations.

\textsuperscript{186} In the context, κύριος had occurred in 2 Cor. 1:2; 1:3; 1:14; and 2:12. In every instance but 2 Cor. 2:12 the Lord is identified as Jesus Christ. In 2:12, ἐν κυρίῳ could refer to either God or Christ.

\textsuperscript{187} Scholarly readers are divided on this issue. Edmund Hill states that "in this context, the word 'Lord' must refer to Christ, since v. 14 clearly states that 'only in Christ is it (the veil) removed'." Hill, 278. Victor P. Furnish replies that "the reference to Christ at the end of v. 14 cannot be used as an argument in favor of a christological interpretation." Furnish, 211. A possibility that cannot be ruled out is that this is a case of double
case, as he moves on in the text the reader will probably be disappointed, for in verse 17 the author instructs his readers that the κύριος is no other than τὸ πνεῦμα.

Whenever one turns to the Lord, περιαρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα. With this statement, the author begins to turn his attention to those who are not veiled.188 Περιαρέω is "to remove something which is around something else."189 What is removed is τὸ κάλυμμα. Wherefrom it is removed is something the reader has to supply. In the light of the context, the veil is removed from the heart. And yet, one could also think of the veil ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης (verse 14). In fact, the veil has wandered from Moses' face (verse 13) to the reading of the παλαιὰ διαθήκη (verse 14), to the heart of the reader (verse 15). In traveling from Moses' face to the heart of the reader, the veil has not ceased to be a veil, but it certainly changed from a literal veil to a metaphorical veil.

Verse 16 as a whole is hardly an exact quote from the entendre.

188 Verse 16 can be taken as the beginning of a new sub-unit. Wong, 60.

189 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 15.204 [see Acts 27:40], p. 207. The compound verb περιαρέω, which is rare in the New Testament, occurring only in Acts 27:20, Acts 27:40, Acts 28:13, 2 Cor. 3:16, and Heb. 10:11, is classified by Louw and Nida under four different semantic fields: take from around (Subdomain 15.204), lift anchor (Subdomain 54.24; see Acts 28:13), do away with (Subdomain 13.38; see Heb. 10:11), and stop (Subdomain 68.43; see Acts 27:20).
Greek Old Testament, for in the Septuagint Exodus 34:34 reads as follows: ἡνίκα δὲν εἰσπορεύετο
Μωυσῆς ἐναντίον κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ,
περιήγετο τὸ κάλυμμα ἐως τοῦ
ἐκπορεύσθαι. Yet, the structural similarity, that is, the identical beginning and ending as well as other parallel elements, allows the conclusion that this is a modified quotation from Exodus 34:34. Today most scholarly readers take it as a quotation. One must add, though, that only readers well acquainted with the Old Testament are able to perceive this. Verse 16 makes perfect sense when read as a piece of Paul's own writing.

Scholarly readers who take verse 16 as an Old Testament quotation refer to verses 16 and 17 as an example of pesher exegesis, such as is often found in rabbinic

190 Septuaginta, edited by Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979, 147.


192 This does not mean that Paul is not making use of the language of the Exodus 34 passage. He seems to be doing just that, although not necessarily alluding to the incident depicted in that text. As Wong explains, "if by 'allusion' we mean a reference to the content of a text, then we cannot really say that Paul is alluding to Ex 34,34 in 2 Cor 3,16." Wong, 59.
exegesis. In pesher exegesis, the interpreter briefly quotes the Old Testament and then provides an exegetical gloss, usually identifying one of the elements in the text he has cited. Even if verse 16 is not an Old Testament quote, which seems to be the case, verse 17 is nonetheless an interpretative comment. It almost looks like a parenthesis, made up of two abrupt sentences, which "might be omitted without loss to the argument," for verse 18 would follow well immediately after verse 16. Given the complexity of verse 17, many a reader would rather treat it as a parenthesis. And yet, read verse 17 one must.

In the first half of verse 17, one element of verse 16 is singled out for explanation, and that element is κύριος. The author's exegetical note is attached by means of ὁ δέ. The article is usually taken as anaphoric, that is, as directing the reader's attention to the κύριος in verse 16. The coupling of the article with δέ is fairly common at the beginning of explanatory remarks, especially following quotations from the Old Testament. Some refer

---

193 Van Unnik, "With Unveiled Face," 165.
194 Stockhausen, 112.
197 See 1 Cor. 15:56; Eph. 4:9; see also 1 Cor. 10:4, and Gal. 4:25.
to it as the "exegetical ὁ δὲ."198 Τὸ πνεῦμα, which seems to occupy an emphatic position, is certainly the predicate. The whole sentence, then, can be rendered as: "The Lord referred to in the preceding verse is the Spirit."

The second half of verse 17 adds a short and pithy remark about the πνεῦμα, saying that ὁ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κύριον, ἑλευθερία. Past and present readers have had difficulty with this statement, as the textual tradition and some proposals of textual emendation and of a different punctuation well indicate. Codex Angelicus (L), for instance, which is a ninth century A.D. Byzantine manuscript,199 has πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον instead of πνεῦμα κύριον. One eleventh century manuscript (323) has just τὸ πνεῦμα. In more recent times, as Philip E. Hughes reports, the famous text critics Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort suggested that κύριον was "probably a primitive error for κύριον."

If this bold suggestion were accepted, the sense of the text would be: "Where the Spirit is sovereign, there is liberty."

Another reader, Ernst von Dobschuetz, proposed κύριος for κύριον, in which case the second half of verse 17 would be a repetition and expansion of the first half in the sense of: "The Lord is the Spirit; but where the Spirit is the

198 Bultmann, 89.
199 Aland and Aland, 113.
200 Hughes, 116, note 16.
Lord, there is liberty." Jean Hering came up with a different proposal, namely, to change the punctuation of verse 17b to ὁ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα, κυρίου ἐλευθερία. What is exactly the problem with this text? It is this: In the preceding statement the author had equated κύριος and πνεῦμα. Now he writes πνεῦμα κυρίου, in which κύριος is no longer equated with πνεῦμα but rather modifies it. This phrase, πνεῦμα κυρίου, though very common in the Old Testament, is rare in the New Testament. In Paul it is hapax legomenon.

Of the suggestions above, the one by Jean Hering is no doubt the most attractive. It does make sense and serves as a reminder that, since there were no commas in the original text, all commas are negotiable. One almost feels tempted to suggest that the comma should be altogether omitted, so that κυρίου could do double duty, qualifying both πνεῦμα and ἐλευθερία. This possibility, though, would be ruled out in case the next variant, the insertion of ἐκεῖ before ἐλευθερία, were accepted. Yet, this is only a remote possibility. The variant is found in some Greek manuscripts (D, F, G, Ψ, The Majority Text) as well as in a few ancient versions, and was probably added under

---

201 Ibid.

202 Hering, 27.

203 It occurs elsewhere only in Luke 4:18, a quotation from Isaiah 61, and in Acts 5:9 and Acts 8:39, passages which reflect the vocabulary and style of the Septuagint.
the influence of analogous passages like Matthew 18:20, Matthew 24:28, and James 3:16. Paul does not commonly use ἐκεῖ after ὁδός, as can be seen in Rom. 4:15 and Rom. 5:20. Yet, this does not mean that the ἐκεῖ cannot be mentally supplied. Much depends on how one takes ὁδός, which can be either "a reference to a position in space" or "a relative reference to a set of circumstances." If ὁδός is a reference to a position in space, then the ἐκεῖ follows naturally, for it also belongs to the domain of spacial positions. If ὁδός is a relative reference to a set of circumstances, which seems to be the case in this and other Pauline passages, then ἐκεῖ is less likely to be expected.

The last sign of verse 17 is ἱληθερία, which comes as a big surprise. It had not been mentioned before in this letter. Neither is it further explained. It stands there, and the reader is left wondering as to what it refers or to what in the context it is related. Is it

204 Kling, 54.
205 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 83.5 [see Luke 4:16], p. 713.
206 Ibid., Subdomain 92.28 [see Rom. 4:15], p. 817.
207 Ibid., Subdomain 83.2 [see Matt. 26:36], p. 713.
208 It will not be mentioned later on either, for "this is the only occurrence of this noun in 2 Cor., and there are no instances of the cognate verb or adjective." Furnish, 213. Elsewhere in the Pauline letters the ἱληθερία occurs in Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:29; Gal. 2:4; Gal. 5:1,13; and ἱληθερόω occurs in Rom. 6:18,22; Rom. 8:2,21; and Gal. 5:1.
equivalent to the removal of the veil, which is referred to in verses 14 and 16? Could it be the resurgence of the παρπησία of verse 12, in which case it would amount to "freedom of speech"? Is it freedom in a broad sense, or should it be taken in a more technical way as "freedom from the law?" An unsophisticated modern reader will naturally take it in the light of the context (verses 14-16). Chances are that the following verse will confirm his insight.

Verse 18

Verse 18 begins with ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες. Δὲ is best taken as "a marker of an additive relation, but with the possible implication of some contrast." It signals both the continuation of the discourse as well as a contrast with those who have their faces veiled. This contrast, however, as well as the nature of the contrast can only be clearly perceived as the discourse unfolds in verse 18.

ἡμεῖς, which is the real marker of contrast, is again a reference to the writer and those associated with...

---

209 It is interesting that both ἐλευθερία and καταργέωμαι are grouped in the same semantic domain in the Louw and Nida Lexicon, namely, "Release, Set Free" (Subdomains 37.133 and 37.136). Louw and Nida, p. 488-489.

210 This use of ἐλευθερία must have made a deep impression on the first readers of this letter, the Christians at Corinth. In the light of Paul's dealing with this topic in 1 Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 9:1,19; 10:29), his use of this sign in 2 Corinthians would have made a lot of sense.

211 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 89.94 [see Titus 1:1], p. 790.
him, either including or excluding the audience. In a sense, it is a return to the εχοντες of verse 12. Here the main question is not whether ημεις includes or excludes those associated with the writer, but rather whether the audience is included or not. The reader readily perceives that ημεις, besides being emphatic is followed by παντες. This combination of ημεις and παντες is rare in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. 12:13, which is the only other instance of this phrase in Paul, the audience is included. Most readers take ημεις δὲ παντες as inclusive, that is, the author is referring to himself, his associates, and his audience.

The reader may expect a main verb to follow immediately after ημεις δὲ παντες, but what follows instead are two participial clauses. This turns verse 18 into a long, though well structured, sentence, "with ideas piling up one on top of another."

212 Ibid., Subdomain 92.4, p. 814.

213 "The omission of παντες in Papyrus 46 may safely be ignored." Wright, 144, note 18.

214 It occurs only in John 1:16; Acts 2:32; Acts 10:33; 1 Cor. 12:13; and 2 Cor. 3:18. In the two Acts passages, the sequence is παντες ημεις.

215 A few exegetes, like Erasmus, Bengel, and some others, "have taken it to indicate other ministers of the Gospel rather than all believers without discrimination." Hughes, 117.

216 Wong, 70.
are familiar to the reader. The participle takes up the ἀνακαλυπτόμενον of verse 14, and shows that "there has been a veil and that it has been removed."217

Προσώπον comes with a bit of surprise, for the reader might have expected καρδία rather than πρόσωπον.218

The last reference to something veiled had been the κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τήν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται in verse 15. Thus, this participial clause may be seen as "a positive qualification of what was mentioned negatively in 3:13: καὶ οὗ καθάπερ . . ."219

217 Plummer, 105.

218 In 2 Corinthians 3, this is the fourth occurrence of πρόσωπον, which had appeared twice in verse 7 and once in verse 13. As a matter of fact, 12 out of 22 occurrences of πρόσωπον in the Pauline corpus are found in 2 Corinthians, namely, 2 Cor. 1:11; 2:10; four references in chapter 3; 4:6; 5:12; 8:24; 10:1; 10:7; 11:20. Charles F. D. Moule, in "Peculiarities in the Language of II Corinthians" [in Essays in New Testament Interpretation (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), 158-161] calls attention to what he describes as "the almost obsessive frequency with which the word πρόσωπον occurs" in 2 Corinthians as a whole. This applies also to other words, like διακονία, περισσεύω, ὑπερβάλλω and cognates. Moule's explanation to this phenomenon is, to say the least, interesting.

It is a common experience, probably for most persons, that they get into the habit of over-working certain words or expressions, and continue to do so until they realize for themselves what they are doing or are laughed out of it by others. Is it possible that the proliferation of πρόσωπον-phrases in II Cor. is due largely to some psychological chance of this kind? (159-160)


Bultmann's understanding of this phrase sounds strange. He states that "it is easy to assume that the Christians are not seen in parallel with the Jews, but with Moses himself." (Bultmann, 90) But then he goes on:

According to the context, the Christians can certainly
struck by the use of the perfect aspect in 
\( \text{ἀνακεκαλυμμένον} \), certainly "to express state or condition consequent upon action."\(^{220}\) This action must be the removal of the veil dealt with in verses 13-15.\(^{221}\) We, says the author, have had the veil removed and now live in a state or condition characterized by an unveiled face. The dative is a dative of manner.

The second participial phrase is τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι. Τὴν δόξαν κυρίου occupies an emphatic position in relation to the participle. \( \text{Κατοπτριζόμενοι} \) is a present participle, indicating that the verbal action is connected to the persons doing the acting. Having had the veil removed, we now are engaged in τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζομεθαί. The sign δόξα had appeared in section two, that is, verses 7-11. Now it resurfaces, no longer as the δόξα of this or that διακονία, but rather as δόξα κυρίου.\(^{222}\) This

not be paralleled with Moses, but only with Jews, and for good or ill the \( \text{ἀνακεκαλυμμένον} \text{ προσώπῳ} \) must be construed in terms of the \( \text{ἀνακεκαλυμμένη καρδία} \) of verse 15. (Ibid., 91)


\(^{221}\) Louw and Nida point out that "the symbolic significance of \( \text{ἀνακεκαλυμμένον} \text{ προσώπῳ} \) 'unveiled face' in 2 Cor 3.18 needs to be understood only in terms of the preceding discussion in 2 Cor 3.13-15." Ibid., p. 705.

\(^{222}\) The expression δόξα κυρίου is rare in Paul, occurring only here and in 2 Cor. 8:19. In the latter passage it reads τὴν τοῦ κυρίου δόξαν and apparently refers to Christ.
κόριος could be either God or Christ. The semantic classification of the hapax legomenon κατοπτρίζεσθαι is hotly debated. There are two possibilities, both registered in the Louw and Nida Lexicon. The first option is to place it in subdomain 24.44, "to see indirectly or by reflection as in a mirror -- 'to see as in a mirror, to see by reflection'."\(^{223}\) The text could, then, be translated as follows: "And we all with uncovered faces behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror (or, by reflection)." The alternative is to put it under subdomain 14.52, "to reflect light or visual patterns coming from some source -- 'to reflect'."\(^{224}\) A possible translation would be: "All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces."

Which meaning is to be preferred: to see as in a mirror or to reflect as in a mirror? Could it be both?\(^{225}\) Could it be simply to see or to reflect, without any mentioning of a mirror?\(^{226}\) What is at stake here? Where

\(^{223}\)Louw and Nida, 281-282.

\(^{224}\)Ibid., 176. Louw and Nida register both possibilities and leave it at that. Subdomain 24.44 (See by Reflection"), however, is letter a, whereas subdomain 14.52 (Reflect) is letter b, which may indicate that their first option is "see by reflection."

\(^{225}\)This is the view of Stockhausen, who asserts that both are correct and that this is a deliberate word-play on both possible meanings. Stockhausen, 11.

\(^{226}\)Some readers take it in the sense of "beholding as in a mirror" [Jan Lambrecht, "Transformation in 2 Cor. 3,18," Biblica 64 (1983), 250], others simply as "beholding" [Martin, 71]. Some take it in the sense of "reflecting as in a mirror" [Lenski, 948], others simply as "reflecting" [van Unnik, "With Unveiled Face," 167].
does this notion of a mirror come from?

The notion of a mirror is there, at least for some readers, by way of etymologyzing. They argue that, since it is an hapax legemenon, we are allowed to resort to the study of the etymology of the verb. As Scharlemann explains, "at the heart of the word, etymologically speaking, there seems to be the suggestion of a mirror."227 Or, as Lambrecht puts it, "already because of its very raresness it can be presumed that κατοπτρίζομαι in 2 Cor 3,18 most probably retains its original force, i.e., the mirror-notion."228 Yet, this may be just another instance of a dead metaphor. In this case, the mirror metaphor "is no longer any more a live force than when we speak of 'losing heart.'"229 Besides this, there is an additional reason why the notion of a mirror should, perhaps, be left out of the picture and this has to do with what is sometimes called "the rule of maximal redundancy," namely, "the best meaning is the least meaning."230 In other words, in trying to decide what a hapax legomenon most probably means, the reader should define it in such a fashion as "to make it [the hapax] contribute least to the total message derivable from the

227 Scharlemann, 117. "Mirror," in Greek, is κάτοπτρον.

228 Lambrecht, "Transformation in 2 Cor 2,18," 248.


230 Silva, Biblical Words, 153.
passage where it is at home." 231

Even if the notion of the mirror is left out of the picture, the reader still has to choose between "to reflect" and "to behold." Or, he can come up with a different solution. Before anything else, however, he has to know what is at stake, or, why some readers prefer "to reflect," while others favor "to behold." It appears that those who take the verb in the sense of "to reflect" try not to lose sight of the fact that the immediately preceding expression is τῆν δόξαν κυρίου, and that in the remote context (verse 7) this glory is said to have been on Moses' face. As a result, verse 18 is taken as if it were saying that Christians take on the role of Moses, that they reflect the glory of the Lord as Moses did in the past. 232 On the other hand, those who take it in the sense of "to behold" relate the verb κατοπτρίζομαι to the phrase ἀνακεκαλυμμένος προσώπῳ in verse 18 and to the immediately preceding context of verses 14-16. As a result, the force of the verb is seen in establishing a contrast between unveiled Christians, who are able to see, and veiled

---

231 Ibid., 154. Silva adds that such a statement may appear strange or even unacceptable to exegetes, for exegetes tend "to assume that an odd word must have some odd sense, the odder the better." Ibid. Yet, a moment's reflection on the redundancy of natural language seems to suggest that the principle of "the best meaning is the least meaning" is reasonable.

232 As van Unnik puts it, "Christians are in communion with God. They are therefore permanently in the same situation which Moses, according to Exod 34, only temporarily enjoyed." van Unnik, "With Unveiled Face," 167.
Israelites, who are unable to see.

The reader may well dispute the presence of such a contrast in verse 18. Yet, this does not mean that he is not allowed to read *κατοπτρίζομαι* as "to behold" or "to see." To this reader, the notion of beholding or seeing makes good sense. In this case, *κατοπτρίζομαι* echoes the ἀτενίζειν of verses 7 and 13.233

The phrase τὴν αὐτῆν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα goes with the ἤμεις δὲ πάντες of the beginning of verse 18, so that the author is basically saying that "we all are being transformed τὴν αὐτῆν εἰκόνα." *Μεταμορφούμαι* is a rare verb in the New Testament, occurring, in Paul, only in Rom. 12:2 and in the present passage.234 It is being used here probably in the basic sense of "to change the essential form or nature of something," and can be rendered as "to be changed into, to be transformed."235 The verb is in the passive form, as

---

233 This is also the view of Bultmann, 95. It is interesting that, in later Patristic literature, *κατοπτρίζομαι* is used in the sense of seeing or beholding. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 734. As Cotterell and Turner explain, it is not totally unlikely that some senses only certainly attested in the period shortly after the NT might actually have been current in the NT period itself, although not witnessed to it in any extant writing. Cotterell and Turner, 134-135.

234 Besides these instances, it occurs only in the narrative of the Transfiguration of the Lord (Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2).

235 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 13.53 [Change of State; see Rom. 12:2], p. 155. The other possibility listed by Louw and Nida is *μεταμορφούμαι* in the sense of "to take on
always in the New Testament, and in the present tense. The present conveys an action which is contemporaneous with the preceding participle, \textit{κατοπτριζόμενοι}. In other words, we are being transformed while (or as) we are \textit{κατοπτριζόμενοι}.

This idea of "being transformed as we see or as we reflect" is unique in the New Testament. The reader may well wonder how the author comes to this transformation topic, or what led him to write \textit{μεταμορφούμεθα}. Jan Lambrecht came up with the suggestion that the immediate reason is the Moses parallel. In his view,

\begin{quote}
just as by contact with God Moses' face was glorified and transformed, so, too, by beholding the glory of the Lord the Christians are being transformed.
\end{quote}

\textit{Τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα}, which is placed in an emphatic position vis-a-vis \textit{μεταμορφούμεθα}, is an accusative with a passive verb. It is usually taken as an "accusative of the thing," and is rendered as "into the a different form or appearance, to change in appearance."

\begin{quote}
Ibid., Domain 58.16 [Appearance as an Outward Manifestation of Form; see Mark 9:2], p. 587. While this latter sense does not apply in 2 Corinthians 3, it certainly is the sense of the verb in the Transfiguration narrative.
\end{quote}

\textit{236} Actually it is the other way round, namely, the action expressed by the participle is contemporaneous with the main verb.

\textit{237} This can be inferred from the fact that \textit{κατοπτριζόμαι} is hapax legomenon and \textit{μεταμορφοῦμαι} occurs only twice in the Pauline corpus.


\textit{239} Blass and Debrunner, #159.
same image. Jean Hering translates "according to the same image," noting that it could also be translated "to become the same image," in which case it would denote the result of the transformation. A further possibility is to read τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα as an apposition to the preceding τὴν δόξαν κυρίου. This is, perhaps, unlikely, especially because both phrases are separated by the participle κατοπτριζόμενοι, unless, of course, the participle, which is placed between the two phrases, is doing double duty. The merit of this suggestion is that it calls attention to the connection between δόξα and εἰκών. In Paul's letters, it is not uncommon to find both mentioned in one breath, as it were. Εἰκών occurs eight times in his letters, four times being in a context where δόξα is also mentioned. It may well be that εἰκών cannot be properly understood unless δόξα is also taken into consideration. This is more likely so in view of the surprising αὐτὴν that goes with εἰκόνα. Αὐτὴν indicates that the εἰκών into which we are being

---

240 It is actually a retained accusative in a double accusative construction.

241 Hering, 27.

242 Thus Lucien Cerfaux, as noted by Lambrecht, "Transformation," 244, note 5.

243 Rom. 1:23; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 11:7; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Col. 3:10. Underlined are those passages where εἰκών is used in conjunction with δόξα.
transformed is identical to something. The question is: identical to what? It is up to the reader to fill in the blank. It might be "the image of Christ reflected in the mirror." It may also be the δόξα, "the glorious image the believers see (or reflect)."

This seems to be confirmed by the expression that follows, namely, ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν. It can be read as indicating sequence, in the sense of "from divine glory (as source) to glory (as gift)." Furthermore, it can be read as suggesting continual and gradual progress, in the sense of "from one degree of glory to another." The phrase might also be taken as an idiom, in the sense of "very glorious." Be that as it may, the rhetorical effect of ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is certainly tremendous, particularly for readers who still recall the

---

244 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 58.31 [Same or Equivalent Kind or Class; see Mark 14:39], p. 589.

245 Plummer, 106. This quote shows clearly that, for Plummer, the referent of κυρίου is Christ and the sense of κατοπτρίζομαι is "to reflect."


247 Stockhausen, 90, note 12. Also Scharlemann takes it in this sense. He writes: "The glory moves from the Lord to us. . . . The splendor leaps from our glorified Lord by way of the Spirit to us." Scharlemann, 114.

248 Idioms are "complex lexemes acting as a single semantic constituent." D. A. Cruse, quoted in Cotterell and Turner, 131. In other words, an idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts. If ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is an idiom, then one should not press the meaning of ἀπὸ and εἰς.
A phrase like this is certainly an appropriate conclusion to a series of references to δόξα in chapter three. All in all, δόξα occurs eleven times in twelve verses (verses 7-18), while δοξάζω in the perfect occurs twice in verse 10.

The concluding phrase of verse 18, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος, is as enigmatic as many other expressions in 2 Corinthians 3. To begin with, καθάπερ, which had been met in verse 13, is an "emphatic marker of comparison between events and states,"250 and can be rendered as "just as," or "precisely as." The question that remains is: what is just as or precisely as what? The reader is enticed to fill in the blanks somewhat along these lines: "this whole transformation business takes place just as one would expect ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος." In ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος, two genitives stand side by side after the preposition ἀπὸ. This should pose no difficulty, for it is as grammatical and acceptable in Greek as ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρός (2 Cor. 1:2). The problem is that, in contrast to Θεός and πατήρ, κύριος and πνεῦμα are rarely (or never) used in such a combination. The reader has to decide whether one genitive is dependent on the other or not. If the former, which one is dependent

249 Victor Paul Furnish points out that "the permanence and even the increase of the splendor are being emphasized over against the diminishing splendor of Moses." Furnish, 215.

250 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 64.15 [Comparison; see 1 Cor. 10:10], p. 619.
on the other? Grammarians have it that "an anarthrous gen. dependent on a preposition, if it governs another gen., must stand first (to avoid misunderstanding)."\textsuperscript{251} In this case, one should render it as "from the Lord of the Spirit." Yet, as F. Blass and A. Debrunner observe, this rule is not without exception, and an attributive genitive may well come first.\textsuperscript{252} Thus, \textit{ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος} might be translated as "from the Spirit of the Lord."

The reader might as well decide, on the basis of the opening statement of verse 17, that one genitive is not dependent on the other, but that they stand in apposition. The sense, then, would be "from the Lord, that is, the Spirit."\textsuperscript{253} In the light of the context, which is always primarily the preceding context, this is the most natural way of taking it.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{251} Buttmann, referred to in Blass-Debrunner, \#474.4, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{252} Blass and Debrunner, \#474, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{253} This view is taken, among others, by Barrett, 126; Scharlemann, 117; and Stockhausen, 151.

\textsuperscript{254} Stockhausen explains that "the ambiguous \textit{κυρίου} and \textit{πνεύματος} of verse 18c point unmistakably to verse 17 for their explanation if indeed one exists at all in Paul's text." Stockhausen, 151. The phrase \textit{ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος} can be translated in at least six different ways: 1. by the Spirit of the Lord (Latin commentators, KJV); 2. from the Lord, the Spirit (most modern translations); 3. from the Spirit which is the Lord (Chrysostom); 4. from the Lord of the Spirit; 5. from the Lord who is spirit (Plummer); 6. from a sovereign Spirit (Westcott and Hort, taking \textit{κυρίου} as an adjective). Plummer, 108.
CHAPTER III

EXPLORING SOME CONCEPTS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 3 IN THE LIGHT OF
THE NARROW CONTEXT AND OF THE PAULINE CORPUS

Since not every aspect of the text could be analysed and described in chapter two, for my aim in that chapter was a more linear reading of the text, in this chapter I am going to focus on some topics or concepts of 2 Corinthians 3 that deserve further investigation. In a sense I will be going over 2 Corinthians 3 for a second time, with a different purpose in mind. It will not be a reading in a linear or temporal fashion, but will basically consist of "reading" some phrases or clusters of ideas in a narrower and a wider context. In other words, some select topics will be "read" intratextually and intertextually. By "intratextual" I mean "within the confines of 2 Corinthians 3:14-18," and by "intertextual" I mean "within the canon, particularly the Pauline corpus."  

1It has to be pointed out that my role as a reader will be as important as ever, although the reading I am about to begin is of a different kind. Furthermore, my role as a "critical reader" will be clearly evidenced. After all, a reader who is able to matrix signs and concepts of 2 Corinthians 3 with similar or different signs and concepts elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, and who interacts with other readers of the same material, is certainly more than a
Four topics will be considered. The first is the use of διάκονος in verse 6 and its connection with the two contrasting διακονίαι of verses 7-11. The second is the καινὴ διαθήκη of verse 6, its relation to the immediate context, as well as its connection with the παλαιὰ διαθήκη of verse 14 and with other instances of διαθήκη in Paul's letters. The third topic is the γράμμα-πνεῦμα opposition, with special emphasis on the relationship between γράμμα and νόμος. The last topic is κάλυμμα. Here I am going to deal with questions such as: Does the text tell what the κάλυμμα hides and what can be seen when it is removed? Where else does the hardening motif play a role in Paul's writings? What is the hermeneutical significance of 2 Corinthians 3, in particular of verses 14-18?

Διακονία τοῦ θανάτου // Διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος

Since Paul's primary concern in 2 Corinthians 3 is the apostolic ministry, particularly in contrast to what he calls, among other things, the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου, this seems to be the appropriate topic with which to start this exercise in reading intratextually and intertextually.

The Connection Between διάκονοι and διακονίαι

Beginning with what, for the sake of convenience, is termed "intratextual matrixing," the reader is initially simple reader; he is a critical reader.
faced with the question of what in 2 Corinthians 3 relates to the assertion in verse 6, [*Θεός* ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους. In glancing over the context, the reader is able to spot a parallel in verse 3, where Paul writes that the Corinthian church is an epistle from Christ διακονηθείσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν. Looking ahead in the text, the reader is likely to assume that verses 7-11 hang together with verse 6. In other words, the διάκονοι of verse 6 and the διακονίαι in the next section appear to be closely related.

The connection between verse 6 and verses 7-11 appears to be very obvious on the level of sense, for nothing could be more natural than a transition from servants to service. Yet, this connection needs to be stressed because some modern translations tend to obscure it. The Revised Standard Version, for instance, translates διακονία by "dispensation," in an attempt, so it seems, to relate διακονία to διαθήκη. The result is that it conceals the connection with διάκονοι. The same criticism applies to the Today's English Version, which renders ἣ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου (verse 7) as "the Law, which brings death when it is in force." Ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως (verse 9) comes out as "the system which brings condemnation," and ἣ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος (verse 8) is translated as "the activity of the Spirit."

Assuming the connection between verse 3, verse 6, and verses 7-11, the reader is able to draw the following
picture: The service rendered by the ministers is the "delivery" of the letter of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God (verse 3). To be able to do this, the ministers have to be qualified. Thus, verse 6 indicates who qualified the ministers for their task, namely, God himself. In addition, the same verse explains that they are ministers of a new covenant of the Spirit. In verses 7-11, there is a switch from διάκονοι to διακονία, a move which may be interpreted as an attempt to deal with the subject in a more detached or objective manner. Here the focus is on the surpassing glory of the ministry of the Spirit as compared to the ministry of death and condemnation.

The Modifiers of διάκονοι and διακονία

The term διάκονοι is modified by the adjectival phrase καινὴς διαθήκης. One exercise in intertextual matrixing is to set the latter phrase in paradigmatic relation to similar phrases in the Pauline corpus. In other words, one may compare that syntagm with other syntagms in which διάκονοι occurs, only followed by different genitival constructions. Phrases like θεοῦ διάκονοι in 2 Cor. 6:4, διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης in 2 Cor. 11:15, and διάκονοι Χριστοῦ in 2 Cor. 11:23 stand

---

2 The paradigmatic relation is also known as substitutional or associative. Words stand in paradigmatic relation when, in a given syntagm, they can be fit into the same slot, that is, substituted for each other. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 155.
in paradigmatic relation with \( \text{διακόνος καὶ νής διαθήκης} \) and could have been chosen in place of the latter. Elsewhere in the Pauline corpus the following two genitival phrases modify \( \text{διάκονος} \), when used of the apostles: \( \text{ἐναγγελίου} \) in Eph. 3:7 and Col. 1:23, and \( \text{τῆς ἐκκλησίας} \) in Col. 1:25. In applying \( \text{διάκονος} \) to Christ, Paul asserts, on the one hand, that the Lord is \( \text{διάκονος περιτομῆς} \) (Rom. 15:8) and denies, on the other hand, that he is \( \text{ἀμαρτίας διάκονος} \) (Gal. 2:17).³ That the author wrote what he did can only mean that he brought up this topic of the new covenant on purpose, either reacting to something that was going on at Corinth, or, what seems more likely, simply because he felt the need to introduce it at this point.

An analysis of the context of 2 Corinthians raises the question whether the author could have used any other term instead of \( \text{διάκονος} \), and, since he did not, why he refrained from doing so. The first candidate is \( \text{ἀπόστολος} \), which occurs in the opening verse of the epistle. Yet, this word could probably not have been used in the context of 2 Corinthians 3 because one is either an apostle of Christ, as indicated in 2 Cor. 1:1 and 11:13, or of the churches, as shown in 2 Cor. 8:23, but never of a

³All references have been checked in Kurt Aland, ed., *Vollständige Konkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament unter Zugrundelegung aller modernen kritischen Textausgaben und des Textus receptus*, two volumes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983).
covenant or of the gospel. One wonders if δοῦλος, which occurs in 2 Cor 4:5, could have been used instead of διάκονος. The answer is "probably not," for one is either a servant of a person ("you," 2 Cor. 4:5; "Christ," Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10, Phil. 1:1) or a servant of a personified power ("sin," Rom. 6:16-20). In keeping with this, the Louw and Nida Lexicon classifies ἀπόστολος and δοῦλος under different semantic domains, 53 and 87 respectively.4

The διακονία to which the ministers of the new covenant of the Spirit belong is described as τοῦ πνεύματος, and τῆς δικαιοσύνης, besides being characterized as τὸ μένον. This cluster of ideas may help to interpret the genitive in ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος (2 Cor. 3:8). Since διακονία is an event word which denotes the action of διακονεῖν, the following genitive can be taken either as the subject or as the object of the event word.5 If according to the deep structure the genitive is the subject, then the sense is something like "the ministry which is carried out by the Spirit." If the genitive of the surface structure conceals the object of the event word as far as the deep structure is concerned, then

---


5 In traditional grammar the genitive is described as either "subjective genitive" or "objective genitive."
the phrase can be rendered as "the ministry which delivers the Spirit." In the light of the context, the latter seems to be the case. The parallel expression "the ministry of righteousness", which is best taken as "the ministry that bestows righteousness," points in this direction. It follows that the ministers of the καὶ η διαθήκη πνεύμαtos deliver the Spirit and righteousness.

The connection between πνεῦμα and δικαιοσύνη, which is established by the fact that both words stand in paradigmatic relation, is confirmed elsewhere in Paul's letters. It is detectable, for instance, in Galatians 3, particularly in verses 5, 6, and 14, as well as in Romans 8, especially in verses 4 and 10. This warrants the conclusion that "for the apostle, justification and the Spirit are inseparable and coincidental."

The Semantic Field of διάκονος

Moving beyond the confines of 2 Corinthians 3, that is, engaging in intertextual matrixing, we take into consideration the semantic field of διάκονος. In looking up semantically neighboring terms, we become aware of the lexical options available to the writer. A look at Domain

---

6 See also Gal. 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:11, and Rom. 14:17.

35 in the Louw and Nida Lexicon reveals that ἑράπων, which in the Pauline literature occurs only in 1 Cor. 4:1 in combination with Χριστοῦ; and λειτουργός, as used in Rom. 15:16 in combination with Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, fit into the same semantic domain with διάκονος. What this means is that the author could have used either one of these terms instead of διάκονος. That he used the latter rather than any other may be due to the fact that in this context he is dwelling upon a series of cognate words, beginning with διακονέω in verse 3 and continuing with διακονία in verses 7-11.

Before moving on, it is necessary to point out that the context clearly indicates that the διάκονοι of this passage are not just any kind of servants of God or of the church, servants in a general or watered-down sense. Far from that, they are messengers who are on assignment from God and their primary task is the communication of the

---

8 Louw and Nida, 458-465. In reality, these words belong to subdomain B - Serve (35.19-35.30), p. 460-461.

9 This word is an hapax legomenon used of Moses in Hebrews 3:5.

10 In Luke 1:2 ὑπηρέτης is followed by τοῦ λόγου.

11 Even a cursory investigation of the semantic field of διάκονος shows that this word, whenever used in a context like the one of 2 Corinthians 3, comes closer to ὑπηρέτης and λειτουργός than to the same sign διάκονος used in the sense of "deacon," as seems to be case in Rom. 16:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8. In the Louw and Nida Lexicon, this latter διάκονος belongs to Subdomain 53.67, where it is classified with ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος, and others. Louw and Nida, 541-545.
In a time in which διακονία tends to be taken in a generalized sense as "any kind of service to the world", this is a point that requires emphasis.\(^\text{13}\)

**Ικανόω**

The text also states that the διάκονοι are qualified by God, and the reader wonders whether this pattern can be discerned elsewhere. Since the verb ικανώω is rare in the New Testament\(^\text{14}\) and ικανότης is an hapax legomenon, the reader is prompted to investigate the semantic domain of these words. The result is that words from the δύναμις group turn out to be closely related to ικανόω. Thus, passages like 2 Cor. 4:7, 2 Cor. 12:9b, 2 Cor. 13:4b, Phil. 4:13, and 1 Tim. 1:12 may be

\(^{12}\)This is not explicitly stated by the text. Yet, it is part of the so-called external entailment.

\(^{13}\)This point is well made by Karl Paul Donfried in "Ministry: Rethinking the Term Diakonia," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 56 (1992):1-15. Donfried points out that the Greek term diakonia is quite analogous to the term hoplon ("weapon," "tool," "instrument") that Paul uses in Romans 6:13; we can use our bodies either as instruments of sin or as instruments of righteousness. Diakonia, like hoplon, is a neutral term waiting to be placed in a context. (4)

At the same time he indicates that Paul, in a wide range of texts, 2 Cor. 3:6 included, "is not talking in some imprecise way about 'servants' of God or of Christ" (6-7), but about those engaged in a ministerium docendi evangelii, as the Augsburg Confession puts it.

\(^{14}\)It is used only here and in Col. 1:12, a passage where it refers to the calling of Christians in general.
set in parallel to 2 Cor. 3:5, 6. One can gather from this that the God who qualified the apostles continues to supply the all-surpassing power which manifests itself in the frailty of their mortal existence (2 Cor. 4:12, 13). Furthermore, Paul can do everything in his apostolic ministry through the one who gives him strength (Phil. 4:13).

**Kαινὴ διαθήκη // Παλαιὰ διαθήκη**

In attempting to throw some light on the components of meaning of these two concepts the reader should probably start out with what may be called "intratextual matrixing," that is, he can look for parallels and contrasts in the pericope itself. Subsequently he can proceed with "intertextual matrixing," bringing into the discussion parallels and contrasts from elsewhere in the Pauline corpus.

**The Connection Between Verses 6 and 14**

Paul explicitly mentions the Kαινὴ διαθήκη in

---

15 Louw and Nida place ἰκανόν in domain 75, "adequate, qualified," while ἐνδυναμόω is found in domain 74, "able, capable." Yet, in a note on p. 679 they explain that it would be possible to combine these domains, for the meanings are closely related.

16 Passages like 2 Cor. 5:18 and Acts 20:24 also have a bearing on this topic. 2 Cor. 5:18 points out that God gave the apostles the ministry of reconciliation, and Acts 20:24 is Paul's declaration that the Lord Jesus gave him the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.
verse 6 and the παλαιά διαθήκη in verse 14. Both phrases are in the genitive, following event words, and may thus be paraphrased as "we serve the new covenant," "they read the old covenant." Though it is true that Paul does not set both covenants in opposition to each other in either verse, at least not on the level of sense, it is also a fact that the reader almost instinctively draws a line between them, establishing a connection between both. The question that can be raised is whether this procedure is justified or not. In answer to this, it must be pointed out that the absence of the expression "old covenant" from verse 6 does not mean that the concept is not there. In fact, readers have tended to take the γράμματος of verse 6 as a reference to the old covenant. Furthermore, the connection between "letter" and "old covenant" seems to be substantiated by the fact that the old covenant is read.

---

17 The former occurs, in Paul, only here and in 1 Cor. 11:25. The latter is hapax legomenon.


While the new covenant is πνεύματος rather than γράμματος, the old covenant is read. And since writing and reading belong to the same semantic domain, the latter being a type of semantic converse of the former, the connection between παλαιά διαθήκη and γράμμα opposed to καινή διαθήκη seems to be warranted. In this case, the contrast between both covenants spills over into the discussion of the γράμμα-πνεῦμα opposition and the διακονία pertaining to each one of them.

The Modifiers Καινή and Παλαιά

This previous discussion has some bearing on the understanding of "new" and "old." The question whether these modifiers entail more than merely "new in time" and "old from a chronological viewpoint" is intimately bound up with the question whether the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου is still in force or not. Put another way: is there a substantial difference between old and new covenant, or is the new covenant simply a refurbishing of the old?

There is anything but consensus on this issue among scholars. Many of them come down on the side of continuity. They follow in the footsteps of W. D. Davies, who came to the conclusion that "the new covenant of Paul . . . . offers reinterpretation of the old." Actually, Davies reads the

---

20 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 33.68, p. 397, note 15.

first half of 2 Corinthians 3 in the light of the discussion of the veil in the second half, and concludes that

Paul as minister of the new covenant was not founding a new religion or a new people, and not dismissing the old covenant but revealing a new meaning and character in it.²²

This new meaning, according to Davies, is the revelation of the purpose of God to include all, both Jews and Gentiles, in his promise.

Given the complexity of the issue, it may be wise to investigate how the concept of a "new covenant" was understood in the Judaism of that time and what Paul has to say about the διαθήκαι elsewhere.

Διαθήκη Outside the New Testament

The theme of the covenant, which is so common in the Old Testament, is much less frequent in post-exilic Judaism, at least in explicit references. This fact has led some scholars to the conclusion that covenant was not an

²²Ibid., 12. Davies argues with the use of "new" in connection with the phases of the moon. He states that the adjective hadasah in Jer. 31.33, translated καινή by Paul, can be applied to the new moon, and that this is simply the old moon in a new light. Yet, phenomenologically, that is, apart from any scientific sophistication, the new moon is indeed a brand new moon.

²³Διαθήκη occurs some 270 times in the Septuagint. It is not uncommon to come across with statements like this: "The covenant concept is a foundational theme of the Old Testament as a whole." Carol Kern Stockhausen, Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3,1-4,6 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 43.
important concept in Rabbinic Judaism. Yet, as E. P. Sanders points out, "the covenant, especially God's side, is more presupposed than directly discussed." What is particularly conspicuous by its absence is any talk about a "new covenant." This applies to Rabbinic Judaism and in particular to Jewish apocalypticism, where one would have expected new covenant terminology being used in the depiction of the new aeon. However, this is not the case.

Qumran seems to be the only exception, for in Qumran there is mention of a new covenant. An example is the following passage from The Damascus Rule (CD 6:19):

None of those brought into the Covenant shall enter the Temple to light His altar in vain. They shall bar the door . . . . They shall take care to act according to the exact interpretation of the Law during the age of wickedness. They shall separate from the sons of the Pit, and shall keep away from the unclean riches of wickedness acquired by vow or anathema or from the Temple treasure; they shall not rob the poor of His people, to make of widows their prey and of the fatherless their victim (Isa. x, 2). They shall distinguish between clean and unclean, and shall proclaim the difference between holy and profane. They shall keep the Sabbath day according to its exact interpretation, and the feasts and the Day of Fasting according to the finding of the members of the New

---


Covenant in the land of Damascus.26

The drift of this passage clearly indicates that the "new covenant" of Qumran is nothing but a renewal of the old covenant, that is, the old covenant interpreted by the Teacher of Righteousness and put into practice in all of its aspects.27 Joining the "new covenant" is equivalent to returning to the law of Moses.28 It seems that the Pauline antithesis of law and new covenant is without parallel in Judaism, Qumran included.

Καινὴ διαθήκη in 1 Corinthians 11

In Paul, there is only one reference to the new covenant besides 2 Cor. 3:6, namely, 1 Cor. 11:25: τοῦτο τὸ ποιήμαν ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἑμῶν αἵματι. This text is part of the eucharistic tradition and liturgy which Paul himself had transmitted to the Corinthian church,29 and of which he reminds them in writing the letter known as 1 Corinthians. It is true that 1 Corinthians 11 is usually left out of consideration when

---

26 Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, third edition (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 87. Other references to the new covenant are CD 8:21; CD 19:33; CD 20:12; 1QpHab 2:3.

27 Lang, "Gesetz und Bund bei Paulus," 312. As Carol K. Stockhausen puts it, "the 'new covenant' remains essentially only a radical renewal of the Mosaic covenant." Stockhausen, 44.

28 Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, 241.

29 Paul uses the expression ὁ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, 1 Cor. 11:23.
it comes to Paul's view of the new covenant, because it is thought that Paul was simply passing on traditional material with which he did not necessarily identify. This raises the question of whether Paul could simply pass on a tradition without identifying with it in the sense of appropriating it for himself. There is a clear indication that Paul took this "tradition" seriously, and this is the phrase παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου at the beginning of 1 Cor. 11:23. Paul is not saying, "I am passing on an old piece of tradition," but rather, "this is what I received from the Lord himself." This "receiving from the Lord" may be read in different ways, either as an immediate reception through revelation or as a mediated reception through the church. What seems clear, however, is that for Paul this block of teaching was very important. This is

30 Erich Graesser, for example, treats 1 Cor. 11:25, not in the section called "Die expliziten Diatheke-Stellen bei Paulus," but in a section titled "Diatheke in den Abendmahlstexten." The reason why Graesser does not take this as part of Paul's view is because "Paulus and dieser Stelle nur zitiert, nicht interpretiert." Erich Graesser, "Der Alte Bund im Neuen: Eine exegetische Vorlesung," in Der Alte Bund im Neuen: Exegetische Studien zur Israelfrage im Neuen Testament (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985), 117.

31 Some scholarly readers, inasmuch as they relegate 1 Corinthians 11 to the discussion of the Eucharistic Words of Jesus -- where they, in fact, do belong, although not exclusively -- give the impression that Paul transmitted this tradition in a detached manner, more or less like an agnostic pastor who teaches the Creed without personally believing in it, or maybe as a concession to those traditionalists who would insist that this is what has to be taught in every church! Paul will hardly fit into this category.
corroborated by Gal. 3:15-18, Gal. 4:21-28, which indicate that for Paul the concept of covenant was more than a mere traditional motif.\(^32\) One even has to raise the question if 1 Corinthians 11 could not be the source and interpretive key to what Paul has to say about covenant in general and new covenant in particular. This is an hypothesis that should not be dismissed out of hand. From the viewpoint of the reader, it is easy to establish the connection between 1 Corinthians 11 and 2 Corinthians 3. Even the original readers could have made the connection, for 1 Corinthians is chronologically prior to 2 Corinthians.\(^33\)

1 Corinthians 11 may help to elucidate whether the καινὴ διαθήκη is new indeed or simply a rehashing of the old covenant. The answer seems to be that the covenant is in fact a new or different covenant, for the blood of Christ (verse 25) and his death (verse 26) bring the old covenant to a conclusion and mark the beginning of the new covenant. The newness of the covenant is witnessed to by Christian worship, which began as table fellowship with the risen Lord and is, therefore, centered around the Eucharist.

---


\(^33\) It could be asserted that Paul does not go into the pains of explaining καινὴ διαθήκη in 2 Cor. 3:6 because he is dealing with a traditional expression, known to the Corinthians from the eucharistic liturgy.
If anything is new in Christian worship, as compared to the worship of the Synagogue, that is the Eucharist, accompanied by the preaching of the Gospel.

*Διαθήκη* Elsewhere in Paul

Broadening the focus the reader can also take into consideration those passages in which Paul uses covenant language, even though the adjective "new" is lacking. All in all there are 9 occurrences of *Διαθήκη* in Paul: two in Gal. 3:15-18, one in Gal. 4:21-28, one in 1 Cor. 11:25, two in 2 Corinthians 3, one in Rom. 9:4, one in Rom 11:27, and one in Eph. 2:12. Of these passages, the ones in Galatians are particularly important, not only in view of the thematic parallelism, but also because of the chronological proximity between Galatians and 2 Corinthians.

**Galatians 3:15-18**

In Gal. 3:15-18, Paul introduces the term *Διαθήκη*

---

*34 In the New Testament as a whole, *Διαθήκη* occurs 33 times: 17 in Hebrews (particularly in Heb. 8:6-13; 9:11-22; 10:4; and 13:20); 9 in Paul; 4 in the Synoptic Gospels; 2 in Acts; and 1 in Revelation.*

*35 Although it is usually assumed that Galatians is early, even the oldest preserved Pauline epistle, it may also be argued that it was penned in about the same time as 2 Corinthians. Thus Werner Georg Kuemmel: "The composition fo Galatians cannot be chronologically far from that of II Corinthians and Romans." Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kuemmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. A. J. Mattill, Jr., 14th revised edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 197.*
in verse 15 and comes back to it in verse 17. He is talking about a covenant προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, a covenant previously established by God.\(^{36}\) This covenant was established when the promises were spoken to Abraham and his descendant. This descendant is Christ, as indicated in verse 16. Thus, in this context the covenant is roughly equivalent to the promises spoken to Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The law (νόμος) is introduced in verse 17 and set in contrast to the promise, particularly in what follows in verse 18. Yet, it is interesting that Paul does not refer to the coming of the law, 430 years after the covenant with Abraham, as the establishing of another covenant.\(^{37}\) It is also noteworthy that the law, which, in the light of 2 Corinthians 3, is the "old covenant," and the promise, which is the "new covenant," are not set in a strict historico-salvific continuity, as if one were to follow upon another. On the contrary, Paul shows that the "new covenant" is actually the oldest, for it coincides with the promise spoken to Abraham.\(^{38}\) The law "slipped in" later on, as he explains in Gal. 3:19. Thus, if there is any continuity it

\(^{36}\) Προκεκυρωμένην is a participle perfect passive. The prepositional prefix προ- brings out the notion of "in advance." The perfect "tense" fits well into a context were juridical language is being used. The covenant was established and remained in effect.

\(^{37}\) He does it, though, in the Galatians 4 passage.

\(^{38}\) Graesser, 68.
is the continuity from Abraham to Christ. The "new covenant" can by no means be a mere rehashing of the "old covenant" established at Mount Sinai.

Galatians 4:21-28

In Galatians 4, Paul recalls a historical narrative recorded in the law,\(^{39}\) namely, that Abraham had two sons, one born of the slave woman κατὰ σάρκα, the other born of the free woman δι' ἐπαγγελίας (verses 22-23). The name of the slave woman, Hagar, is mentioned later on, in verse 24. The name of the free woman, Sarah, is never brought up explicitly.\(^{40}\) Paul takes this figuratively as standing for δύο διαθήκαι (verse 24). In what follows, he introduces the first covenant as being ἀπὸ ὅρον Ἐσσαὶα ("from Mount Sinai") and εἰς δουλεῖαν γεννῶσα ("bearing children for slavery"). Later on, in verse 25, this covenant is associated with the νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ, the "present Jerusalem." The other covenant is not formally introduced, at least not in the same manner as the first one had been introduced by μία in verse 24.\(^{41}\) All Paul does is to identify it with ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ ("the Jerusalem

\(^{39}\) Νόμος is being used here in a clear reference to the Pentateuch.

\(^{40}\) The name Σάρρα occurs, in the New Testament, only at Rom. 4:19; Rom. 9:9; Heb. 11:11; and 1 Pet. 3:6. Aland, Vollstaendige Konkordanz, 1199.

\(^{41}\) Graesser suggests that one might supply either "the covenant of mount Zion" or "the covenant of mount Calvary." Graesser, 77.
above"), which is ἐλευθέρα ("free") and is our mother.

It may be helpful to summarize this passage by drawing two columns, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abraham's son born of the slave woman according to the flesh</th>
<th>Abraham's son born of the free woman through promise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One covenant</td>
<td>Another covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The one covenant from mount Sinai bearing children into slavery</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This corresponds to the present Jerusalem, which is in slavery together with her children</td>
<td>The Jerusalem above which is free and is our mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several aspects of this passage are of significance. First of all, in this passage Paul inverts the exegesis which he probably had learned in Judaism, namely, that the people of Israel descends from Sarah and that the gentiles are the offspring of Hagar. In Paul's interpretation "it is the people of the law who are the offspring of the slave woman; the offspring of the free woman is found in those who embrace the gospel of salvation by faith."\(^{42}\)

It is also noticeable that there is no mention of νόμος or πίστις in Galatians 4. The same holds good for "old covenant" and "new covenant," although it may be argued that the whole discussion presupposes the concept of a new

---

covenant versus an old one. What Paul does contrast is σάρξ and ἐπαγγελία (verse 23), as well as δουλεία (verse 24) and ἐλευθερία (verse 26; see Gal. 5:1). These antitheses recall the νόμος x ἐπαγγελία contrast of Galatians 3 and anticipate the series of contrasts in 2 Corinthians 3. The theme of freedom in particular ties in with 2 Cor. 3:17.

Noteworthy is the fact that in Galatians 4 Paul does apply the term διαθήκη to the covenant of mount Sinai. In an earlier chapter, Galatians 3, he had applied it to the promise spoken to Abraham.

Surprising yet at the same time illuminating is the contrast between the "now or present Jerusalem" and the "Jerusalem above." By ἡ νόν Ἱερουσαλήμ Paul seems to refer, not to the literal city, but to "the whole legal constitution of Judaism, which then had its world-center in Jerusalem." Similarly, ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ is not a place located in the realms above the sky, but stands for the "new age." Particularly significant is the fact that this Jerusalem is the Jerusalem from above (ἄνω), and not,  


44 Bruce, "Abraham Had Two Sons," 79.

45 Hans Dieter Betz points out that "as in Jewish apocalypticism, for Paul the 'heavenly Jerusalem' is virtually identical with the 'new age'." Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 247. Bruce takes it as standing for the community of the new covenant. "Abraham Had Two Sons," 79.
as might have been expected in the light of the preceding υἷον, the Jerusalem to come (μέλλοντα). As Ronald Y. K. Fung points out, what Paul has done is to mingle the two forms, the temporal and the spatial, in such a way as to indicate that the Jerusalem that is to come has already arrived (,. . .) in the form of a heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem. 46

This being so, the "two Jerusalems" stand side by side, in opposition to each other. Translated into covenant language, it means that there is no smooth transition from one covenant to another, as if the new covenant were merely a renewal of the old covenant. Paul explicitly mentions δύο διαθήκαι, and both are present realities. 47 He never says that there is only one covenant, the Sinai covenant, and that the Gentiles should be allowed to get into this covenant by faith rather than by works of the law. As J. Louis Martyn puts it, "when Paul contemplates Gentile entry into the Sinai covenant, he sees only enslavement under the power of the Law." 48 What Paul actually does is


47 J. Louis Martyn remarks that here, for the first time, Paul takes the unprecedented step of placing opposite one another two covenants, one the promising covenant of Sarah, the covenant that liberates, the other the Sinai/Law covenant of Hagar, the covenant that enslaves. Martyn, "Events in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism Versus God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel: A Response to J. D. G. Dunn and B. R. Gaventa," in Pauline Theology I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, ed. Jouette M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 175.

48 Ibid.
to posit a second covenant over against the Sinai covenant "in order to deny that it is God's intention to bring the Gentiles into the Sinai covenant on any conditions."\textsuperscript{49}

In matrixing this with 2 Corinthians 3, the reader comes to the following conclusion: the two covenants and the two types of ministry which pertain to each one of them are clearly antithetical, as much as killing and bringing to life are antithetical. The two covenants are two competing realms, \textit{νόμος} opposed to and competing with \textit{ἐπαγγελία} (Galatians 3), the \textit{νῶν Ἱερουσαλήμ} opposed to and competing with the \textit{άνω Ἱερουσαλήμ} (Galatians 4), the \textit{διακονία τοῦ θανάτου} opposed to and competing with the \textit{διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος} (2 Corinthians 3).

This polarity, one should add, is not dialectical, at least not in the sense in which the polarity of law and gospel is commonly understood in Lutheran theology. Paul does not say that "the letter kills in order that the Spirit may give life." The antithesis is not strictly \textit{heilsgeschichtlich} either. Paul does not envisage two consecutive epochs in God's dealing with his people, namely, first the law and then the faith. On the contrary, God's original plan is his promise to Abraham. The law was added later on.

This whole discussion sheds some light on the question of whether Paul saw the old covenant based on the \textit{νόμος}

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
as gone or abrogated. The answer is: Paul does not explicitly say so. The "present Jerusalem" and the "ministry of death" are still there, in full swing. Yet, Paul also says, and this should not be overlooked, that the ministry of the old covenant is καταργοῦμενον (as opposed to μένον) just as the glory on Moses' face was καταργουμένη, and that the δόξα of the ministry of the new covenant is overflowing (ὑπερβαλλούση, verse 10). Should Paul's readers ever be faced with the choice between these two covenants, they would have been told enough to know which one to prefer!

**Covenant in Paul**

Summarizing, one may say that Paul knows of διαθήκαι in the plural, as he indicates in Rom. 9:4. Of the different covenants mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, three receive attention in his letters: a. the covenant with Abraham (Galatians 3); b. the covenant through Moses

---

**50** The singular, ἡ διαθήκη, which is read by Papyrus 46, B, D, F, G, some ancient versions, and Cyprian, is rejected on the grounds that it is an assimilation to the context, which is basically singular. Bruce M. Metzger in his *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, corrected edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975) explains that copyists would have been likely to assimilate the plural to the pattern of instances of the singular number in the series. Certainly there is no good reason why the singular, if original, should have been altered to the plural. (519)
(Galatians 4); and c. the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3).\textsuperscript{51} The covenant with David (2 Samuel 7) is not central to Paul's thought.

Two covenants, the one with Abraham and the new covenant, are highly valued by Paul, while the importance of the Mosaic covenant is minimized by the apostle. The covenant with Abraham was important because it provided Paul with a scriptural way of arguing that justification through faith had been God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles from the very beginning. The Mosaic covenant was seen by Paul as a temporary phase in God's dealings with his people. As Charles H. Talbert explains,

Paul does not deny that Israel as a sociological reality for whom the Mosaic covenant is constitutive continues to exist. What he says is that such a sociological reality has ceased to have positive soteriological significance in God's plan because it has not recognized and responded positively to the new thing God is doing since Jesus.\textsuperscript{52}

Another important observation is that Paul does not develop a "covenant theology" on its own right. In

\textsuperscript{51}Some readers, like Charles H. Talbert in his Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary of 1 and 2 Corinthians (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 147, almost automatically add "of Jeremiah 31." As indicated above, it is debatable whether or not Paul derived the concept of a new covenant from Jeremiah 31. Since Paul does not quote Jeremiah 31 -- only the author of Hebrews does it (Heb. 8:8; 10:16) -- but quotes the Verba Domini in 1 Corinthians 11, the reader is more likely to establish the latter connection than the former. In other words, Paul may have taken the new covenant terminology and concept from the Eucharistic liturgy, and not necessarily from Jeremiah 31.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 153.
Galatians 4 and in 2 Corinthians 3 the covenants are not the topic as such, but rather a subsidiary idea which is introduced to support a different topic: in Galatians, that the law cannot be placed alongside the gospel as a way of salvation, and in 2 Corinthians, the indisputable glory of Paul's apostolate. It is also clear that Paul does not treat any of the covenants in isolation, but always in relation to one of the others. In Galatians, the covenant with Abraham is brought together and contrasted to the Mosaic covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3, the new covenant is set over against the old covenant.

Judging from the scarcity of διαθήκη in Paul, one might draw the conclusion that "covenant" was not a fundamental building block of his theology. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor goes as far as saying that "the concept of a new covenant was fundamentally alien to Paul's theology, and . . . . his use of it was a grudging concession to external pressure." In Lloyd Gaston's view, the concept of covenant was characteristic of Jewish Christianity, and thus "it was also apt to be very congenial to the rival

---


missionaries."\(^5^5\) Maybe the reason for this reluctance on the part of the New Testament writers was the close connection between covenant and law in the Jewish tradition, so that the mention of covenant would immediately bring to mind the concept of law.\(^5^6\) As John Reumann puts it, perhaps the fact that the term 'covenant' had legal and legalistic connotations in the world of the day causes New Testament writers to shy away from it.\(^5^7\)

\(\gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha \// \pi\nu\epsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\)

The word \(\gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha\), which is rare in the New Testament and amazingly cryptic when used in the singular,\(^5^8\) is a clear example of a word that, in order to be properly understood, needs to be matrixed both intratextually and intertextually.

In seeing it in its intratextual matrix, the reader


\(^5^6\) This point was brought out by Walter Eichrodt, "Covenant and Law: Thoughts on Recent Discussion," *Interpretation* 20 (1966):302-321.


\(^5^8\) It is used 14 times in the New Testament, 9 times in the plural (Luke 16:6,7; John 5:47; 7:15; Acts 26:24; 28:21; 2 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:15) and 5 times in the singular (Rom. 2:27; 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6 [twice]).
notices that it occurs in a syntagm with ἀποκτέννει, and that it is set in contrast to πνεῦμα. Particularly striking is this relation between γράμμα and πνεῦμα, which may be described as a relation of complementarity or of two-way exclusion, in which "the denial of the one involves the assertion of the other, and vice versa." This being so, and considering that γράμμα is so elusive, the reader may well start out with πνεῦμα in order to understand γράμμα. This will not necessarily simplify our task, but it provides us a different and, perhaps, more appropriate approach to the problem.

Γράμμα in the Light of πνεῦμα

That this move in no way facilitates the inquiry into the meaning of γράμμα can be seen in the fact that πνεῦμα itself is a polysemous sign. The same sign stands for different meanings which are relatively far apart in semantic space. Louw and Nida classify it in five different semantic domains: 1. Domain 12 (Supernatural Beings and Powers): πνεῦμα as either Holy Spirit, spirit, evil

59 Thiselton, "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation," 90-92. According to Thiselton, "grace" and "works" also stand in a relation of complementarity, deriving their semantic value from this very relation.

60 Quite apart from any linguistic theory, Mathias Rissi already observed, back in 1969, that in order to understand γράμμα one has to start out with πνεῦμα. "Um zu verstehen, was Paulus mit Gramma meint, muessen wir vom Gegensatzbegriff des Geistes ausgehen." Mathias Rissi, Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1969), 24.
spirit, or ghost. 2. Domain 26 (Psychological Faculties): πνεῦμα as inner being. 3. Domain 30 (Think): πνεῦμα as way of thinking. 4. Domain 14 (Physical Events and States): πνεῦμα as wind. 5. Domain 23 (Physiological Processes and States): πνεῦμα as breath. 51

It is readily apparent that, in the context of 2 Cor. 3, πνεῦμα can be either some living, inner force, or a supernatural being, more precisely the Holy Spirit. Most readers take it in the sense of Holy Spirit. They reach this conclusion, so it seems, by matrixing the πνεῦμα of verse 6 with the phrase πνεῦματι θεοῦ ζῶντος in verse 3, 62 and with the πνεῦμα of verse 17. Readers in general tend to agree with Ferdinand Hahn, who asserts that it is very clear that the πνεῦμα of verse 6 is the Spirit of the Lord (verse 17b), the Spirit of the risen and exalted Christ. 63

Yet, there are some dissenting voices, most notably Philip Edgcumbe Hughes and R. C. H. Lenski. Hughes finds no direct reference to the Holy Spirit in 2 Cor. 3:6.

61 These are actually eight different meanings, as the authors point out in the Introduction (p. x). For a similar categorization, see Thiselton, "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation," 90-91. Thiselton proposes four semantic fields: 1. wind or breath; 2. men's spirit; 3. the Spirit of God; 4. spirit-beings.

62 This connection is established via ξοφοποιεῖ in verse 6.

63 Ferdinand Hahn, "Bibelarbeit ueber 2. Korinther 3,4-18," in Erneuerung aus der Bibel, ed. Siegfried Meurer (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982), 86.
suggesting that 'spirit' should be written "with a small and not a capital initial letter." He interprets the letter-spirit contrast as the difference between the law as externally written at Sinai on tablets of stone and the same law as written internally in the heart of the Christian believer.

Hughes takes his clue from 2 Cor. 3:3, where external and internal are contrasted, and finds confirmation for his view in Rom. 2:28,29.

Lenski in turn argues that πνεῦμα is "spirit," the opposite of the "letter" of the law, an inward, living force, and not the Holy Spirit. It is unmistakable that Lenski's procedure is diametrically opposed to that of most interpreters. He starts out with a definition of γράμμα and then interprets πνεῦμα accordingly, and this is certainly the main reason why he reaches a different conclusion.

Πνεῦμα is an important word in Paul's letters, occurring more than 130 times. Out of these many references those in the context of 2 Corinthians are particularly


65 Ibid., 100.

pertinent. In 2 Corinthians \(\pi\nu\varepsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\) occurs 16 times,\(^{67}\) three of them before the pericope under consideration, namely, 2 Cor. 1:22; 2:13; 3:3. The first instance is a reference to Paul's own spirit or inner being. The passage of 2 Cor. 3:3 has been given some consideration already. Most illuminating and relevant is 2 Cor. 1:22, where Paul introduces the \(\pi\nu\varepsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\) as the \(\varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\) given by God.\(^{68}\)

\(\varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\) occurs three times in the New Testament, two times in 2 Corinthians (1:22; 5:5) and once in Ephesians (1:14). Taken literally it is "the first or initial payment of money or assets, as a guarantee for the completion of a transaction or pledge."\(^{69}\) In the New Testament it is always used figuratively in reference to the Holy Spirit, who, as the eschatological gift par excellence, "anticipates, but without fully realizing, the glory that belongs to the future."\(^{70}\) As F. F. Bruce has it, "for Paul, the Spirit is


\(^{68}\) The genitive in the phrase \(\tau\omicron\nu\ \varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\alpha\ \tau\omicron\nu\ \pi\nu\varepsilon\omicron\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) is best taken as epegegetical, that is, the Spirit is the \(\varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\).

\(^{69}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 57.170 [see Eph. 1:13-14], p. 577. A near synonym of \(\varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\) is \(\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\chi\omicron\nu\), which is applied to the Holy Spirit in Rom. 8:23. Louw and Nida classify both terms in the same semantic domain, indicating that \(\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\chi\omicron\nu\), when used in the sense of "foretaste, pledge," parallels closely the meaning of \(\varphi\rho\rho\alpha\beta\omicron\nu\). Ibid.

distinctively the herald and sign of the new age."\textsuperscript{71}

Applied to the covenant, one may say that the Spirit is the gift and sign of the new covenant.\textsuperscript{72} The new covenant is centered on the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor. 3:3), is the one who makes alive (ζωοποίει). He is ὁ θεός ὁ ἐγείρων τοὺς νεκρούς (2 Cor. 1:9).\textsuperscript{73} He is the vivifying Spirit. This theme of the vivifying Spirit had already appeared in Paul's earlier correspondence with the Corinthians, particularly in 1 Corinthians 15, where the apostle stresses that in Christ all will be made alive (verse 22), and that the last Adam became a Spirit who makes alive (verse 45). Later on, in Rom. 8:2, Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ζωῆς).\textsuperscript{74}

A comparison between 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 3 discloses that the act of making alive is


\textsuperscript{72}Stockhausen, 132.

\textsuperscript{73}Εγείρω and ζωοποίεω belong to the same semantic domain, as indicated in Louw and Nida, p. 262-263. Ζωοποίεω, meaning "to cause to live," seems to be more general, whereas Εγείρω, in the sense of "to cause someone to live again after having once died," appears to be more specific. The connection or parallelism between both verbs is most clearly seen in Rom. 8:11: ὁ ἐγείρας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ζωοποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ζῆσον.

\textsuperscript{74}Another pertinent parallel, from outside the Pauline corpus, is John 6:63: τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστὶν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν.
ascribed both to Christ and the Holy Spirit. This raises the question of the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, which is so acute in the light of 2 Cor. 3:17. Although it may sound like an attempt to oversimplify a very complex matter, it is nonetheless true that this apparent lack of differentiation between Christ and the Spirit coheres with what Paul has to say elsewhere. One has to keep in mind that Paul is not engaged in defining the relationship between the persons of the Holy Trinity. His view, seen in the light of later developments, is much more dynamic and functional than essential. Put in dogmatic terms, Paul's statements about Christ and the Holy Spirit could be described as emphasizing the dogmatic principle, opera ad extra indivisa sunt. In other words, when it comes to giving life, the whole Trinity is engaged. Thus, for Paul, to be "in Christ" and to be "in the Spirit" is one and the same thing. Both statements are interchangeable. All the same,

the rule of the exalted Christ and the activity of the Spirit are so much one and the same ruling that the sentence, "the Lord is the Spirit," can mean both "the Spirit is "Lord" and "Christ is the Lord who is active as Spirit".

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the exalted Christ (Acts 16:7), and he is the vivifying Spirit. In contrast to this, the letter, which is also envisaged as a power,

---

75 Edmund Schlink, The Doctrine of Baptism, translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 60-61.
134

kills. The text, however, does not tell whom or what the letter kills neither how it kills. There is no direct answer to these questions. Also open to dispute is the question of the meaning and possible referent of γράμμα. In order to shed some light on this issue, the reader has to move on and bring into the picture other passages in which the γράμμα-πνεύμα opposition plays a role. Two passages call for investigation: Rom. 2:27-29 and Rom. 7:6.76

Romans 2:27-29

In the Romans 2 passage, γράμμα occurs in a context where νόμος figures prominently. The νόμος is something to be done (πράσσω, verse 25), kept (φυλάσσω, verse 26), or fulfilled (τελέω, verse 27). The one who fails to do so constitutes himself in a παραβάτης νόμου (verses 25 and 27). In verse 27, the apostle contrasts the physically uncircumcised who keeps the νόμος with the one who διὰ γράμματος και πειριτομής is a παραβάτης νόμου. Two details stand out: γράμμα is used in tandem with πειριτομή, and γράμμα is distinguished from νόμος.

76Considering that Romans is chronologically later than 2 Corinthians, and considering that this theme recurs in Romans, the reader is entitled to infer that the γράμμα-πνεύμα opposition was not merely an ad hoc formulation prompted by the situation at Corinth. In other words, it seems to have played a significant role in Paul's theology, the more so if this opposition is taken as a variant of the νόμος-Χριστός polarity.
Somewhat puzzling is the διά in the phrase διά γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς. It could be taken as instrumental, in the sense of "you who through or by means of the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law." On the other hand, it can be seen as indicating the accompanying circumstance, namely, that the "you" who does not keep the νόμος is a transgressor in spite of γράμμα and περιτομη. No matter how the διά is taken, what seems clear is that γράμμα is distinguished from νόμος. Furthermore, γράμμα is paired with περιτομη. If one takes into consideration that these two were the badges of Judaism in those days, one may render περιτομη as "the sign of circumcision" and γράμμα as "the possession of the written commands of the law." 77

In Rom. 2:29 Paul presents the circumcision of the heart ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι. 78 This circumcision is contrasted to the circumcision which is ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκί (verse 28). If ἐν πνεύματι is taken in the sense of "brought about by the Spirit," οὐ γράμματι can only mean: "not effected according to the written precept of the law."


78 Contrary to 2 Cor. 3:6, in Rom. 2:29 πνεῦμα occurs before γράμμα.
In Rom. 7:6, **γράμμα** appears to be closely coordinated with **νόμος**. The text says that now, namely, in the present eschatological situation (**νονι δέ**), which contrasts with the former time when "our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death," we are fully freed from the **νόμος**. The result of this freedom is **δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καίνιτη πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος**. Again, two details stand out: 1. The Spirit sides with what is new (**καίνιτης**), while **γράμμα** is bound up with what is old (**παλαιότητης**). 2. 'Letter' and 'Spirit' mark different ways of rendering service (**δουλεύειν**), one belonging to what is "old," the other pertaining to what is "new." This matches with the teaching of 2 Corinthians 3, where service (**διάκωνοι/διακονία**), newness (**καίνη διαθήκη**), and Spirit (**πνεῦμα**) are closely related.

This investigation of the Romans passages leads to the conclusion that the **γράμμα-πνεῦμα** opposition is used in basically the same sense as in 2 Corinthians 3, which makes a coherent interpretation of these passages perfectly feasible. **Γράμμα** and **πνεῦμα** are in all instances opposed to each other and sharply distinguished from each other. They point to different orders or ages. This fits well into the scheme of Paul's theology, for, as Ralph P. Martin has put it,
Paul loves to set 'old' and 'new' in antithesis as marking the transition from the old order of sin and death to the new, eschatological age of fulfillment in Christ.

A Synonym for Γράμμα

Turning to the investigation of potential synonyms and referents for γράμμα, one must say that the reading history of 2 Corinthians 3, in particular of verses 5 and 6, reveals a certain consensus that γράμμα is somehow related to νόμος. This identification is suggested by the context of 2 Corinthians 3 and seems to be corroborated by passages like Rom. 2:15 and Gal. 3:21. Rom. 2:15 teaches that the Gentiles have "the work [demanded] by the law (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου) inscribed (γραπτόν) in their hearts." In Gal. 3:21 it is implied that the νόμος is unable to give life (Ξαποιήσαι). Since, according to 2 Corinthians 3, this is something the Spirit can do, which implies that the γράμμα is not fit for such a task, the connection between γράμμα and νόμος is easily established.

This connection between γράμμα and νόμος is frequently assumed, although rarely explained or substantiated. The following quotations illustrate the point:

79 Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 54. Martin points to passages like 1 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 7:6; Gal. 4:24; Col. 3:9,10; and Eph. 4:22,24. To this one should certainly add the important passage of 2 Cor. 5:17.
when Paul speaks of the law as \( \gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha \).\(^{80}\)

There [in 2 Corinthians 3] the contrast between the old and new covenant is described as the contrast between the 'killing' letter and the life-producing (ἐνζωοποιεῖ) Spirit (v.6). The law [sic] thus has nothing to do with life; quite the contrary.\(^{81}\)

Given that it is so easy to switch from letter to law, one has to raise the question of whether \( \gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha \) and \( \nu\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \) are synonyms or not. A good definition of "synonyms" is

words which share several (but not all) essential components and thus can be used to substitute for one another in some (but not all) contexts without any appreciable difference of meaning in these contexts.\(^{82}\)

If this is the case, then it follows that there can be no a priori answer to the question above. It all hinges on the contexts in which those words appear.

If it were necessary to examine the numerous contexts in which \( \nu\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \) occurs in the Pauline epistles, one would be carried way beyond the scope of this dissertation. Yet, there is no need of doing that, for the meaning and use of \( \nu\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \) is not the issue here. Seldom or never has it been suggested that \( \gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha \) is the key to the understanding of Paul's use of \( \nu\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \), while, as indicated above, many a reader has tried to throw some light on \( \gamma\rho\alpha\mu\mu\alpha \) by

---


understanding it in terms of νόμος. The question, then, is: could νόμος replace γράμμα in 2 Corinthians 3?

Such a question, to begin with, can only be raised by readers who are acquainted with the whole Pauline corpus. In case we had only 2 Corinthians, this question would never be posed, for νόμος does not occur in this letter. However, in reading intertextually, it is not improper to ask if νόμος could stand for γράμμα.

In trying to tackle this matter, the reader cannot overlook the fact that in the New Testament γράμμα is always set in contrast to πνεῦμα. Thus, the right place to begin is the investigation of those passages in which πνεῦμα occurs in the same context with νόμος. This should indicate if νόμος can stand for γράμμα. The result of such an investigation is that there are some passages, as, for instance, Gal. 3:2,5 and Gal. 5:18, where νόμος and πνεῦμα are presented as being at odds with each other, reminding of the γράμμα-πνεῦμα opposition. On the other hand, Paul can also say that the νόμος is πνευματικός (Rom. 7:14), and that the righteous requirement of the νόμον is fulfilled in those who walk κατὰ πνεῦμα (Rom. 8:4). This leads to the conclusion that, while γράμμα is clearly something negative and is always set in contrast to πνεῦμα, νόμος can be coordinated with πνεῦμα in a positive way and it can be played off against it. This seems to indicate that νόμος is sometimes set in opposition to πνεῦμα, and therefore
could well replace γράμμα in 2 Corinthians 3.  

This leads to several more questions: Is the reader justified in substituting νόμος for γράμμα, or, at least, in trying to understand the latter in the light of the former? Is there any real advantage in establishing this connection? In the light of the heated debate over the meaning and use of νόμος in Paul, it is hard to see what could be gained by trying to understand γράμμα in the light of νόμος. Νόμος is certainly more widespread and more familiar than γράμμα, but it is not in and by itself the key to the understanding of γράμμα.

Besides being synonymous in the sense described above, νόμος and γράμμα could also be co-referential. In other words, they could in certain contexts point simultaneously to the same referent.  

It follows that one cannot evade the matter of trying to nail down the possible referent of γράμμα.  

---

83 This would not be the case in Rom. 2:25-29, where νόμος is distinguished from γράμμα. In Rom. 7:6, on the other hand, νόμος and γράμμα seem to be used interchangeably.

84 Cotterell and Turner, Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation, 161. The authors cite as an example of co-referentiality the use of faith and gospel in some contexts of the Pauline epistles. "Faith" and "gospel" do not carry the same sense; they merely apply at the same time to the same referent.

85 Meaning and reference are intertwined, and it is not easy to separate one from another. Eugene A. Nida describes the difference as follows: The meaning (Bedeutung) of a word consists of the set of distinctive features which makes possible certain types of reference, while reference itself is the process of
The Referent of Γράμμα

There are those who take Γράμμα as a reference to γραφή. Ralph P. Martin, for instance, asserts that "the term Γράμμα naturally refers to the O[ld] T[estament] as Scripture."\(^{86}\) Robert Grant is more careful, stating that Γράμμα refers, not the Old Testament as such, but to "the Old Testament as a legal document, as the unconverted Israelites interpret it."\(^{87}\) Similar to this is Ernst Kaesemann's view that "Γράμμα is the written O[ld] T[estament], which is separated from the Spirit and from the exposition which the Spirit makes possible."\(^{88}\)

In response to this one must say that, although both Γράμμα and γραφή share the common component of meaning of "something written," the fact is that Paul never identifies Γράμμα and γραφή, either in 2 Corinthians 3 or in the Romans passages. On the contrary, in what follows in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul begins to cite and interpret Scripture, which shows that "Paul's rejection of gramma is

designating some entity, event, etc. by a particular symbol. Cited by J. P. Louw, Semantics of New Testament Greek (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 50.

\(^{86}\) Martin, 2 Corinthians, 55.


\(^{88}\) Ernst Kaesemann, Commentary on Romans, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 77.
by no means a rejection of *graphe.* Rather than rejecting or calling into question the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul clearly indicates that those scriptures functioned for him authoritatively even when he was making a negative point about the law. . . . He knew of a greater glory revealed in the gospel (2 Cor. 3.11), but that did not negate his commitment to the scriptures.  

To this one must add that Paul never plays *γραφή* off against *πνεῦμα*. On the contrary, his use of the Old Testament suggests that *γραφή* sides with *πνεῦμα* rather than the other way around.

Perhaps the most prevalent view is that *γράμμα* refers to the distortion of the law, either in the form of a Jewish legalistic misinterpretation of the law or as a certain interpretation of the law which prevailed at Corinth. The problem with the law, then, is not so much the law itself, but rather its misinterpretation. In other words, the problem is seen as a hermeneutical one.

Although this view seems to be supported by the latter part of 2 Corinthians 3, which has to do with hermeneutics,

---


91 The latter view is espoused by C. E. B. Cranfield in his commentary on Romans, while the former, which is much more popular, is represented, among others, by Rudolf Bultmann and C. K. Barrett in their commentaries on the passages where *γράμμα* occurs.
it is also true that Paul nowhere explicitly indicates that the problem with the law is its misinterpretation. What kills is not the misunderstanding of the law, but the fact that, as Paul himself explains in Romans 7, it encounters man, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν (verse 14), as an instrument of ἁμαρτία (verse 11).92

The most recent view on γράμμα is closely tied up with the so-called "new perspective on Paul." James D. G. Dunn is perhaps the main representative of this position. In Dunn's opinion, "when Paul speaks of the law as γράμμα, what he has in view is precisely the law as the visible definition of the covenant people."93 Γράμμα is the law as fixing a particular social identity, as encouraging a sense of national superiority and presumption of divine favour by virtue of membership of a particular people.94

Again, on this view Paul's quarrel is not with the law as such, not even with the law understood literally, but with "a particular attitude to the law as such, the law as a whole in its social function as distinguishing Jew from Gentile."95 For Dunn, it is the law understood in this way, namely, as defining the covenant people with the physical

---

92 Koch, Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums, p.339, note 43. A concept like "legalism" cannot be found in Paul, unless it is subsumed under either νόμος or γράμμα.

93 Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)," 530.

94 Ibid., 531.

95 Ibid.
visible rite of circumcision (as in Rom. 2:29), "which is so destructive of the life of the Spirit."

This view is actually nothing but a new version of an old thesis, namely, that Paul is attacking, not the law as such or as a whole, but just "the law as viewed in some particular perspective, a particular attitude to the law, or some specific (mis-)understanding of it." Since this view of γράμμα is intimately tied up with the whole matter of νόμος in Paul, one could only reach a more balanced conclusion after having examined what Paul has to say about these topics in all of his extant letters. For the time being it is enough to point out that Dunn's view, when applied to 2 Corinthians 3, does not seem to do justice to the sharp contrast between γράμμα and πνεῦμα, to say nothing about the assertion that the letter kills. It is questionable whether the ἀποκτέννει of 2 Cor. 3:6 can be watered down to something like "to be destructive of the life of the Spirit." The contrast between killing and making alive is much more radical than that, just as the contrast between letter and Spirit is sharper than Dunn would be willing to allow. This view is corroborated by Galatians 3 and 4, which cannot be read as an attack on just a particular attitude to the law.

96 Ibid., 532.

Another suggestion of referent for γράμμα, this one put forth by Lloyd Gaston, is that in the context of 2 Corinthians 3 "the power that kills is a certain type of ministry." In answer to this one has to say that the existence of a ministry related to or pertaining to γράμμα does not mean that this ministry coalesces with γράμμα, and so the question of the referent of γράμμα has not yet been answered.

Stephen Welterholm takes γράμμα as a reference, not to a perversion or a misunderstanding of the Old Testament law, but rather "the law of God in its written form, made up of concrete commands." He argues that the reference to the 'ministry of death carved in letters on stone' (v.7) would seem more naturally to refer to the concrete demands of the law, which were so inscribed, than to a perversion of them. The very references to a 'ministry' (διακονία) and a 'covenant' (διαθήκη) of which Moses was a representative seem to preclude the possibility that a perversion of that covenant is meant.

Is it possible to be even more specific than that? Heikki Raisanen thinks it is. Taking his clue from 2 Cor. 3:7, namely, that the killing letter was found carved in

---


100 Ibid., 240.
stone tablets, Raisanen asserts that γράμμα is "a clear reference to the Decalogue."

The fact is that "Paul made surprisingly sparse reference to the Decalogue," which does not mean that he never did. 2 Corinthians 3 may be seen as one of those few passages in which Paul does refer to the Decalogue.

κάλυμμα μένει // κάλυμμα περιαίρειται

Although 2 Corinthians 3 does not aim at providing hermeneutical guidelines, it is certainly a text laden with hermeneutical implications.

To begin with, the γράμμα-πνεῦμα opposition in verse 6 is hermeneutically significant, although not in the sense in which that verse was read by many of those who theorized on Biblical hermeneutics in the past, particularly in the Middle Ages. Verse 6 does not warrant a distinction between two different senses of Scripture, the literal and the spiritual. Yet, it is significant inasmuch as it can be seen as the basis for the Law-Gospel hermeneutics, which lies at the heart of Lutheran hermeneutics. Πνεῦμα stands for the Law that kills. Πνεῦμα stands for the

---

101 Raisanen, Paul and the Law, 25.


103 Hays, 146.
Spirit, who makes alive through the Gospel.  

However, the most significant hermeneutical implications of 2 Corinthians 3 are to be found in verses 14-18, particularly in the phrases το αυτο καλυμμα επι τη αναγνωσει μενει in verse 14, and periaperetai to kalumma in verse 16.  

Paul writes that the veil remains when the old covenant is read. Verse 15 makes it plain that the veil hangs over the heart of the reader. Καρδια is described by Louw and Nida as "the causative source of a person's psychological life in its various aspects, but with special emphasis upon thoughts."  

Closely related to καρδια, that is, belonging to the same semantic domain, is τα νοηματα, which occurs in verse 14 and is best taken in the sense of "the mind" or "the psychological faculty of understanding." This seems to indicate that the phrase ἐπωροθῃ τα νοηματα αυτων in verse 14a runs parallel to καλυμμα επι την καρδιαν αυτων κειται in verse 15b. To say that the heart is veiled is, from a semantic point of view, equivalent to say that the mind is hardened.

---


105 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 26.3 [Psychological Faculties; see Matt. 22:37], p. 321.

106 Louw and Nida, Subdomain 26.14 [Psychological Faculties, 2 Cor. 11.3], p. 325.
It is interesting that both νόημα and πωρόω are rare in the New Testament, which is an indication that 2 Corinthians 3, in particular verses 14-18, is a unique passage in the New Testament. Νόημα occurs only six times in the New Testament.\(^{107}\) Πωρόω is equally rare, occurring, in Paul, only at Rom. 11:7 and here.\(^{108}\) Louw and Nida describe its components of meaning as follows: "to cause someone to be completely unwilling to learn or to accept new information."\(^{109}\) It is used when "a situation of unbelief or misunderstanding is involved, an obtuseness toward God's revelation in Christ."\(^{110}\) This concept of obtuseness, expressed either by the verb or by the noun, is found in the New Testament almost exclusively in contexts where the hardening of the Israelites is being referred to. The only exception seems to be Eph. 4:18.

In looking for parallels elsewhere, it appears that 2 Cor. 3:14 and Romans 11, in particular verses 7b-10 and 25, are closely related. In Rom. 11:8-10 Paul quotes two Old Testament proof-texts for this idea of hardening of the heart, namely Deut. 29:3 and Isa. 29:10. In an indirect

\(^{107}\) All instances are in Paul, five in 2 Corinthians (2:11; 3:14; 4:4; 10:5; 11:3) and one in Philippians (4:7).

\(^{108}\) Elsewhere it occurs in Mark 6:52 and 8:17. The cognate πωρῶσις is found only in Mark 3:5; Rom. 11:25; and Eph. 4:18.

\(^{109}\) Louw and Nida, Subdomain 27.51 [Be Willing to Learn, John 12:40], 333.

\(^{110}\) Stockhausen, 135.
way he answers the question of who hardened the Israelites, a question to which there is no answer in 2 Corinthians 3. The passage of Deut. 29:3 refers to God as giving them a spirit of bewilderment, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear.\textsuperscript{111}

Another question to which no answer is given in 2 Corinthians 3 is, "in what exactly does this dullness of mind consist and how does it manifest itself?" An intertextual reading, that is, a reading of 2 Corinthians 3 in the light of other passages in the Pauline corpus, reveals that such a dullness of heart is basically ἀπίστια (Rom. 11:23). This can also be inferred from the use of the ἐν Χριστῷ formula in 2 Cor. 3:14 and is stated explicitly in verse 16. In the light of 2 Cor. 3:17, it can be described as the lack of the Holy Spirit. To have a hardened heart, to have a veil over the heart, to lack faith, to be without Christ, to be without the Spirit - all these phrases are semantically parallel.

What comes as a surprise and turns out to be very significant in the phrase τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει (verse 14) is that the veil is no longer on Moses, but rather on the reading of Moses, and on the heart of the readers. John Chrysostom had already called attention to the fact that

\textsuperscript{111}The parallelism between 2 Cor. 3:14 and Rom. 11:7-10 is further corroborated by the similarity between ἄξι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας (2 Cor. 3:14) and ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας (Rom. 11:8).
Paul does not say that the veil remains on the writing, but rather "in the reading." As Stockhausen has put it, since Moses, whom it originally covered, has become a book, logically the veil should now cover the books of Moses. Instead, it is the reading of the book by Israel that is veiled, and not the book itself, in 2 Cor 3:14, and the readers of the book whose understanding is veiled in 2 Cor 3:15.

In which way is this switch from Moses to the reading of the books of Moses, and then to the readers of the books of Moses significant? In Paul's day the significance probably resided in this:

If the veil of Moses still lay upon his book, no one in the contemporary scene could see it properly . . . . (Yet,) Paul is quite confident . . . . that he and his associates are well able to read Moses' book.

At the time of Chrysostom this was important because it could be used as an argument against those who, assuming that the Bible was an obscure and veiled book, felt free to engage in all sorts or allegorizations.


113Stockhausen, 146.

114Stockhausen, 147.
In the contemporary scene, its significance lies in the fact that it calls attention to the importance of being the right kind of reader. Here, reader-response criticism\textsuperscript{115} can be of help. Reader-response criticism insists that, in order to actualize a literary work one must be the right kind of reader, one must assume a specific role, the role of the implied reader.\textsuperscript{116} This implied reader is the person who by accepting the pre-conditions of the text brings the potentialities of the text to actuality.\textsuperscript{117} Unless the reader enters into the value system of the text, he will be unable to read it with understanding. In Paul's view, the old covenant can be read properly, that is, read with real understanding, only by those who have the right value system, that is, by those who, in Christ, as a result of the conversion operated by the Spirit, have the veil removed from their eyes. Terence J. Keegan explains:

According to Paul the Jews are unable to read Moses. Why? Because their minds are veiled. They can read the words of the Pentateuch but they really cannot

\textsuperscript{115} In Terence J. Keegan's definition, Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics (New York: Paulist, 1985, 170, reader-response criticism is a methodology which maintains that the meanings of a text are the production of the individual reader. Arising in the 1960's, reader-response criticism shifts the perspective from the literary work as an achieved structure of meaning into an activity on the stage of a reader's mind.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 168.
appreciate them. They are unable to assume the role called forth from them by the text. Christians, however, can. Why? Because Christians have the Spirit . . . . Christians are being changed into God's likeness from one degree of glory to another. It is only by being changed into another being that Christians are capable of reading Moses with unveiled minds. The way reader-response criticism would express this idea is that Christians are capable of assuming the role called for by the text of the Pentateuch. Having been changed into God's likeness, they can become the reader of that text.

It should be pointed out that such an emphasis on the implied reader is nothing new in the life of the church. In the early church, theologians such as Irenaeus and Tertullian already anticipated this principle. They did not use the term "implied reader," yet, in their struggle with unbelievers and heretics, they contended that the heretics had no right to the use the Scriptures against the church in their argumentation. In their view, a valid interpretation depends on Christian faith, in the sense of accepting the regula fidei or creed accepted by the believing community.

A further and related question is, "what does the veil prevent the reader from seeing?" No answer is provided by the text. Once again the reader is called upon to fill in the blanks. Some would say that the veil prevents the

---

118 Ibid., 89.
119 Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses 1.1.20; Tertullian, De Praescriptione Haereticorum, 15-18.
reader from perceiving "that the period of the old covenant has passed."\textsuperscript{121} Seen in the light of verse 18 and 2 Cor. 4:6, it could also be the image or the glory of the Lord on the face of Jesus Christ.

Much more important than the question of what the veil prevents the reader from seeing, at least from the viewpoint of what the text explicitly says, is the possibility of unveiling, of the removal of the veil. Paul asserts that the veil is rendered ineffective or abolished in Christ.\textsuperscript{122}

This \( \epsilon \nu \chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \o \phi \) phrase is somewhat vague, and perhaps deliberately so. A. J. M. Wedderburn disputes the view that "in Christ" is a formula that is used in one way only in Paul's writings. In his view, it is a rather characteristic, and versatile, phrase of Paul's. The sense of the phrase will vary from instance to instance, and the decision is usually reached on the basis of an overall interpretation of Paul's theology into which the interpretation of the \( \epsilon \nu \) phrase is then fitted.\textsuperscript{123} Is it possible to indicate in more precise terms what this "in Christ" of 2 Cor. 3:14 entails? Peter Richardson takes it

\textsuperscript{121}This is the view of Westerholm, "Letter and Spirit," p. 247, note 33.

\textsuperscript{122}I am reading \( \mu \iota \ \alpha \nu \alpha \kappa \alpha \lambda \upsilon \nu \alpha \tau \o \mu \o \eta \nu \alpha \nu \eta \) in verse 14, as an attributive participle referring back to \( \tau \o \alpha \upsilon \tau \o \kappa \alpha \lambda \mu \iota \mu \alpha \). 

as indicating the means whereby the veil is removed, as well as a pointer to the Christian community as the place where the unveiling takes place. On the basis of what follows in verse 16, the reader may conclude that to say that the veil is abolished in Christ is equivalent to saying that the veil is removed whenever someone turns to the Lord, the Spirit.

This raises two questions: 1. Is Paul saying that Christ can be found in "Moses," that is, in the old covenant, if only it is read by an unveiled reader, by a reader "in Christ?" 2. What exactly is the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics?

Paul gives no explicit answer to either of these questions. Yet, regarding the first question, the tenor of the text suggests that this is, indeed, the case. Our observation that Paul does not disparage the Scriptures points in the same direction. The critical reader, the reader who has access to Paul's remaining letters, can find endorsement for this view in Paul's handling of, to give just two related examples, Gen. 15:6 in Rom. 4:3,9 and in Gal. 3:6. It is no overstatement to say that the assertion, δοσιν γὰρ ἐπαγγελίαι θεοῦ, ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναι (2 Cor. 1:20), applies also to the promises that are found in the books of Moses.

Paul's hermeneutical principle spelled out in the latter part of verse 14 and in verse 16, as well as his handling of Scripture in general and in 2 Corinthians 3, indicates that he is clearly operating with a so-called "hermeneutical circle."\textsuperscript{125} In other words, he reads the old covenant "in Christ," that is, with unveiled eyes, and then he finds Christ in the old covenant. His starting point is his being in Christ. He then goes to the old covenant and finds Christ there. His use of Exodus 34 in 2 Corinthians 3 is a case in point. He does not start with an exegesis of Exodus 34. His starting point is Christ and the apostolic ministry of Christ. He can use Exodus 34 to substantiate his view only because he has already interpreted it "in Christ." This is nowhere more evident than in 2 Cor. 3:10. It is from the viewpoint of the surpassing glory of the new covenant, that is, in Christ, that the glory of the old covenant is οὐ δεδόξασται.

One question remains: What is the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics? This is obviously a question that goes far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Yet, it is not inappropriate to ask if 2 Corinthians 3 gives a clue in this regard. It appears that 2 Corinthians 3 corroborates the view of those who hold that here we should strike the middle course. It is neither that the work of the Holy Spirit is irrelevant, nor that it is the only thing that

\textsuperscript{125}Koch, \textit{Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums}, 339.
matters. Paul refers both to reading, which is a process in which human rationality is involved, and to the Holy Spirit. Anthony C. Thiselton's comments are very appropriate:

It in no way diminishes the crucial importance of the role of the Holy Spirit to say that the Spirit works through the normal processes of human understanding, and neither independently of them nor contrary to them. . . . The Holy Spirit does not bypass human rationality, or make questions about the nature of human language irrelevant.126

The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for knowledge of grammar and reading. His role is to form the implied reader, that is, the reader that is called for by the text and is "congenial" to the text.

126 Thiselton, The Two Horizons, 90, 91.
A text or a discourse is not only a texture of signs used to convey information or to express meaning, but it is also an instrument to get things done. A discourse usually has a function, a pragmatic or rhetorical dimension. People use language to influence their environment, to name it and to change it. There is power in words.¹

This could almost go without saying in the case of the Biblical authors, particularly the authors of the New Testament epistles.² It needs to be stressed, though, because Biblical scholars tend to emphasize the semantic dimension of the text to the exclusion of its pragmatic

¹Jeffrey A. Crafton observes that there is a sort of verbal magic involved in symbol use, for through language we are able to affect the world. We speak, and things change. Crafton points to Kenneth Burke, who drew a parallel between magic and rhetoric. Magic is the attempt to 'induce motion in things,' while rhetoric is the power to 'induce action in people.' Jeffrey A. Crafton, The Agency of the Apostle: A Dramatistic Analysis of Paul's Responses to Conflict in 2 Corinthians (Sheffield: University Press, 1991), 29.

²John explicitly states that he wrote ἰναπιστεύω [σ]νε (John 20:31). Paul's reasons for writing to the Corinthian church are spelled out in passages like 1 Cor. 4:14; 5:11; 9:15; 2 Cor. 2:1-4,9; 13:10.
dimension. As Jan Lambrecht puts it,

a content-oriented reading of the Bible neglects too much its faith argumentative character. Biblical language is provocative, apologetic, missionary, persuasive. That language is meant to be an instrument of influence on others.

Thus, although scholars sometimes give the impression that texts exist only to convey meaning, the truth of the matter is that more often than not the syntactic/semantic dimension of a text or discourse stands in the service of pragmatics. In other words, a text or discourse is structured in a meaningful way in order to accomplish some end.

Speech-act Theory

Words are used to do things. People in the ancient world were well aware of this. They understood language primarily as a matter of pragmatics or rhetoric. They "did not view language as a way of conveying meaning; they looked upon language as power." 4 Since this dimension of human language had been almost entirely forgotten (at least it was not reflected upon for many years in scholarly circles), sooner or later it had to be reclaimed. It was the British philosopher of language John Langshaw Austin who brought this quite self-evident truth to the attention of modern


Austin reacted against the view of philosophers assuming more or less as a matter of course "that the sole business, the sole interesting business, of any utterance - that is, of anything we say - is to be true or at least false." In his view, language is used to do many different things. It may serve to report, describe, or otherwise make certain facts apparent, but this rather simple operation represents only one form of communication. Some statements are intended "not to report facts but to influence people in this way or that." Others are used to actually accomplish something. For example, if, in the context of a wedding, a man says, "I do take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife," he is doing something rather than merely saying something. He is not reporting on a marriage; he is indulging in it. Austin labeled utterances like that as "performative utterances."

Austin's seminal work was carried on by others,

---


7Such statements were labeled by Austin as "constatives." Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 3.

8Austin, "Performative Utterances," 234.

9Ibid., 235.
especially John R. Searle, and is known today as speech-act theory. According to this theory, there are three components of the total speech act: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act "is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense." The illocutionary act is what the speaker/writer does in saying/writing something, and the perlocutionary act is "what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading."

For our purposes, what is most significant is the distinction between the meaning of what we say and the force of what we say, between meaning in the traditional sense (the locutionary act) and the added components of illocution and perlocution. The difference can be perceived in a statement like this: "I understand what you are saying, but I don't understand why you are saying it." The "I understand what you are saying" refers to the meaning the words and phrases have within the language system. The "I don't understand why you are saying it" has to do with the


11 Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 109.

purpose of the communication and the effects of the utterance as communication, that is, its pragmatic.\textsuperscript{13}

In trying to distinguish between illocutionary act and perlocutionary act, it may be said that the illocution has to do with the speaker's intention and that the perlocution refers to the action or actions of the addressee.\textsuperscript{14} In other words, the illocution is what the text 'counts as' for the speaker, whereas the perlocution is what the text or discourse 'counts as' from the viewpoint of the reader or listener.\textsuperscript{15} Whenever the hearer/reader fails to perceive why something is being said, there is a breakdown in communication, not on the semantic level, but on the pragmatic level. Technically this is described as the lack of illocutionary uptake. As Kevin J. Vanhoozer has put it, "illocutionary uptake involves understanding not merely the meaning of a sentence but the force with which that meaning


\textsuperscript{14}Du Plessis, 131.

\textsuperscript{15}This description of "illocutionary force" and "perlocutionary force" in terms of what the discourse 'counts as' is expounded by James W. Voelz in "Biblical Hermeneutics: Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?," in \textit{Light for Our World: Essays Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri}, ed. John W. Klotz (St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, 1989), page 254, note 28.
is to be taken."\textsuperscript{16}

As can be observed, speech-act theory operates on the assumption that there is a pragmatic intentionality inherent in any utterance. This can be conceived of as part of authorial intentionality, inasmuch as the author is the one who tries to achieve something by means of his discourse. Yet, in order to avoid misunderstandings, it must be pointed out that, if and whenever the author himself is not available or does not elaborate on the illocutionary force of his discourse, the "intention" will always be something perceived by the reader/hearer. The intention is embedded in the text and can be perceived by the reader in things like the selection of signs/signifiers, the genre used, the way the text is structured, and so on. The reader is expected to decode the illocutionary force of the text, as much as he is expected to decode the locutionary force. The role of the reader at this point is as important as it is in dealing with the sense of a text.

Rhetorical Criticism

In the field of New Testament studies, the counterpart of speech-act theory is rhetorical criticism.\textsuperscript{17} Rhetorical


\textsuperscript{17}Both speech-act theory and rhetorical criticism fall into the category of what text-linguists call pragmatics.
criticism, too, is interested in the effect of language-in-use and is based on the assumption that all language is rhetorical.

Rhetorical criticism as a reading strategy applied to the New Testament may appear to be a new discipline, but it is more accurate to say that rhetoric is undergoing a renaissance of attention among biblical interpreters. This means that prior to the twentieth century it was not at all uncommon to read the New Testament from a rhetorical perspective. Particularly in the sixteenth century interpreters like Philip Melanchthon, John Calvin, among others, interpreted the Bible in the light of the so-called studia humanitatis.

Of the interpreters from the time of the Reformation, nobody surpassed Melanchthon in the application of the principles of classical rhetoric and dialectics to Biblical interpretation. He wrote at least three books on the subject of rhetoric, and his 1532 commentary on Romans is based on the assumption that Paul penned that letter following the rules of rhetoric.

---


Rolf Schaefer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik im Roemerbrief-Kommentar von 1532," Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche 60 (1963), 217. Melanchthon broke the Epistle to the Romans up into four sections or "books," of which the first one (Rom. 1:8-5:11) was considered by him as the most
Noteworthy in Melanchthon is that he did not stick to
the rules laid down in the ancient manuals on rhetoric, but
rather supplemented and expanded them as he saw fit. The
ancient manuals acknowledged only three species of rhetoric,
namely, judicial, deliberative, and epideictic. Since the
Epistle to the Romans did not fit neatly into any of these
categories, Melanchthon came up with a fourth species of
rhetoric, namely, the genus didaskalikon, an offshoot of
epideictic or demonstrative rhetoric which is used for
didactic purposes. Melanchthon placed the Letter to the
Romans into this category.

With regard to 2 Corinthians, the last and probably
important. See Schaefer, 220-221.

20 In the words of Carl Joachim Classen,
wie sich die Regeln der Theorie in der Antike zunachst
aus der Praxis entwickelten und von den grossen
Praktikern souveraen variiert wurden . . . ., so
bedient sich Melanchthon der Vorschriften nicht nur mit
grosszuegiger Ueberlegenheit, sondern ergaenzt und
erweitert sie, soweit es ihm hilfreich und nuetzlich
erscheint." Classen, 26 (emphasis added).

21 As Aristotle explains, in Rhetoric 1.3, the elements
of judicial or forensic speaking were accusation and
defence, and the aim of judicial pleaders concerned justice
and injustice. As for the deliberative species, the
elements were exhortation and dissuasion, and the aim of the
deliberative speaker concerned advantage and injury. The
elements of an epideictic speech were praise and blame, and
the aim of those who praised and blamed concerned honor and
dishonor. Lane Cooper, The Rhetoric of Aristotle: An
Expanded Translation with Supplementary Examples for
Students of Composition and Public Speaking (Englewood
practice, however, "a given speech might contain all six
forms of argumentation at given junctures, depending on the
circumstances." Burton L. Mack, Rhetoric and the New
Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 34.
major investigation of its rhetorical dimension was done by Carl Friedrich Georg Heinrici in his commentary published in 1887.\textsuperscript{22}

Shortly after the turn of the century the interest in rhetorical analysis faded out, to be revived only in the latter part of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{23} In Old Testament studies the rise of the rhetorical-critical perspective is associated with James Muilenburg, whose 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature opened up a whole new field of investigation.\textsuperscript{24} In the area of the New

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{22}Carl Friedrich Georg Heinrici, \textit{Das zweite Sendschreiben des Apostel Paulus an die Korinther} (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1887).
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{23}To no surprise, this decline of concern for the rhetorical dimension of New Testament texts was bound up with the depreciation of rhetoric in general. In an essay written in 1963 ["Language is Sermonic," in \textit{Language is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric}, ed. Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland, and Ralph T. Eubanks (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 201-225] Richard M. Weaver explains what happened. He points out that in the nineteenth century rhetoric had been regarded as the most important humanistic discipline taught in the universities. Yet, with the rise of scientific or positivistic thinking it came to be believed that to think validly was to think scientifically, and that science had nothing to do with emotional and subjective components. After all, science must be objective, faithful to what is out there in the public domain and conformable to the processes of reason. Since rhetoric appeals not only to man's reason but also to his emotions, and since "a speech intended to persuade achieves little unless it takes into account how men are reacting subjectively to their hopes and fears and their special circumstances," rhetoric passed "from a status in which it was regarded as of questionable worth to a still lower one in which it was positively condemned." (Ibid., 205)
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\end{flushleft}
Testament studies, the new perspective is associated with names like those of George A. Kennedy, Hans-Dieter Betz and others.\textsuperscript{25}

This renewed interest in rhetorical studies in New Testament circles is due to several factors. In Bernard C. Lategan's view, it was and still is stimulated from at least two sources, namely, the rediscovery and re-evaluation of the rhetoric of classical antiquity, and developments in modern literary theory and especially work relating to the pragmatic dimension of texts.\textsuperscript{26}

Some Distinctions and Clarifications

Before moving into a rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians 3, it is important to establish some distinctions and to clarify some concepts.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish between rhetoric, especially classical rhetoric, and rhetorical criticism. In the ancient world, rhetoric was understood broadly as the art of persuasion. Or, put in different words, "rhetoric has to do with the way in which language is...


used to be persuasive." The goal of ancient rhetoric was to teach how to convince and to persuade. It was designed to help the speaker/writer to produce a persuasive discourse. As for rhetorical criticism, its purpose is descriptive and analytical. It is the hearer/reader's attempt to discover the persuasive dimension of a text as a finished product. In other words, rhetorical criticism is analysis carried out from the viewpoint of the reader. It is a reading strategy.

Another important observation is that rhetorical criticism is not a monolithic system, for there are different brands or versions of rhetorical criticism. While some critics, like Kennedy, are more interested in classifying texts according to the different species

---

27 Ibid., 415.

28 This should come as no surprise, given the fact that there were also different versions of rhetorical theory in the ancient world. For ancient Greek and Roman theorists, rhetoric was a very flexible art. Quintilian, for instance, claims that an orator must be very flexible when adapting rhetorical rules to different situations. In his Institutio Oratoria, Book II.xiii.1-2 [The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, The Loeb Classical Library, 4 volumes, translated by H. E. Butler (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), volume 1, p. 289-91] he writes:

Let no one however demand from me a rigid code of rules such as most authors of textbooks have laid down ... . which some speakers follow as though they had no choice but to regard them as orders and as if it were a crime to take any other line. If the whole of rhetoric could be thus embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy task of little compass: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability . . . .
(judicial, deliberative, epideictic), others, like Burton Mack, focus on the analysis of patterns of argumentation. These different versions or emphases are not necessarily at odds with each other, but may be described as complementary. After all, texts are complex phenomena, and not every text will lend itself to the same type of analysis. As C. Clifton Black II has it, "while rhetorical models may function as heuristic guides, particular texts often resist preset patterns." 29 The corollary of this is that the text is king, and that "rhetorical criticism should not be made into a new kind of form-critical strait jacket into which letters should be forced." 30

The Rhetorical Situation

An important move in rhetorical criticism, particularly in the so-called new rhetoric, 31 is the attempt to determine the rhetorical situation. Rhetorical situation, in the classical definition of Lloyd F. Bitzer,


is

a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.\(^{32}\)

Simply put, the rhetorical situation is the situation in which the hearer/reader finds himself and which calls for the intervention of the speaker/writer. The situation controls the rhetorical response in the same sense that the question controls the answer. This notion that there can be no rhetorical analysis without at least an implicit analysis of the rhetorical situation goes back to Aristotle. Aristotle states that the three kinds of rhetoric, namely, forensic, deliberative, and epideictic correspond to the three kinds of hearers to which speeches are addressed.\(^{33}\) In other words, the rhetorical situation determines the form and content of the discourse.

Rhetorical situation is roughly equivalent to extra-textual context of the discourse. Yet, the two are not identical. The rhetorical situation, as understood in rhetorical criticism, is not something to be found behind the text, but is the situation revealed by the text. While a purely historical analysis, which envisages the text as a window into historical realities, raises the question of the

---


\(^{33}\)Rhetoric 1.3. Cooper, 16-17.
original, historical, real readers of the real author, rhetorical criticism pays attention to the rhetorical situation revealed by the text. It focuses on "the text as a more or less independent argumentative entity. It is interested in the situation of the text for the sake of argumentation." In other words, rhetorical criticism gives precedence to the information which the text as such lets the reader assume about the author's view of the addressees.

This may sound strange, yet it follows from the recognition that "the reader, or audience, is a construction of the author and must be recognized as such." The contemporary reader has no access to the ancient author's audience, or, for that matter, to the historical situation, except for what he is able find in the text. The rhetorical situation is always the situation as the author perceived it and which is now encoded in the text. This does not mean that the Corinthians were a figment of Paul's imagination

---

34 Lauri Thuren, The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter with Special Regard to Ambiguous Expressions (Abo: Academy Press, 1990), 55.

35 Lategan, "Is Paul Defending His Apostleship?," 414.

36 Elisabeth Shuessler Fiorenza ("Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians," New Testament Studies 33 [1987]: 388) indicates that rhetorical criticism must distinguish between the historical argumentative situation, the implied or inscribed rhetorical situation as well as the rhetorical situation of contemporary interpretations. What concerns us here is primarily the implied or inscribed rhetorical situation.
and not persons of flesh and blood, or that the apostle was not faced with a real problem at Corinth. What it means is that, as Lategan explains,

the exegete should always be aware that such an historical identification depends on an intermediate step, that is, on a reconstruction of Paul's construct of his audience.\(^{37}\)

It also means that the transition from the world of the text to the real world demands a separate move. The world of the text, of which the rhetorical situation is a part, may coincide with the real world, although it is not always easy to determine that this is the case.\(^{38}\)

Is 2 Corinthians 3 aimed at Paul's Opponents?

This whole discussion has its bearing on the vexing question of Paul's so-called 'opponents' in Corinth. It is no secret that scholars have spent much effort in trying to reconstruct the historical situation that prompted Paul to write 2 Corinthians 3. The identity of Paul's opponents in particular has always haunted interpreters.\(^{39}\) There are

\(^{37}\)Ibid.

\(^{38}\)It is interesting to observe that, while scholarly readers of the Gospels are prone to point out that "the world of the text" does not coincide with "the world of Jesus," scholarly readers of Paul's epistles tend to muddle the difference between "the world of the text" and "the real world out there."

\(^{39}\)Some of the different opinions are listed in John J. Gunther, St. Paul's Opponents and their Background (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 1. These are some of the suggestions: Wandering Jewish Preachers (H. Windisch), Jewish Christian Gnostics (R. Bultmann), Pneumatic-libertine Gnostics (A. Schlatter), Gnostics (J. Schniewind), Hellenistic Jewish
even those who go as far as Mathias Rissi in asserting that it is impossible to understand 2 Corinthians 3 unless it can be established what kind of opposition Paul was facing in Corinth. Should this be true, then nobody could have properly read 2 Corinthians 3 before the rise of historical criticism in modern times. And since there is no agreement on the identity of Paul's 'opponents' this would make it almost impossible to understand that chapter. The fact is that 2 Corinthians 3 has had its impact on readers who never had a single clue of the identity of Paul's opponents. This is so because there is no need to move beyond or behind the text, for the rhetorical situation is embedded in the text itself. The text reveals its context, and it is the purpose of rhetorical criticism to determine how the text functions

Christians (G. Bornkamm, D. Georgi, H. D. Betz), Palestinian Jewish Christian Gnostics (W. G. Kuemmel), Jerusalem Judaizers (F. C. Baur, E. Kaesemann, C. K. Barrett). As Carol K. Stockhausen observes, "there are nearly as many theories about the identity of Paul's opponents as there are books and articles on the subject." Carol Kern Stockhausen, Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3.1-4.6 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989) 7, note 17. The proposals fall into two major categories: Jewish or Gnostic.

Rissi says that "es unmöglich ist, den Brief zu verstehen ohne den Charakter der Gegnerschaft des Apostels in Korinth zu kennen." Mathias Rissi, Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1969), 7. Rissi's project founders not only because all we have is the text, but also because, as G. B. Caird observes, we cannot solve the problem of whether Paul is being descriptive, that is, reproducing his opponents' views, or evaluative, that is, mainly depicting his reactions to their views. G. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 8.
as such, for any reader in any age.

Closely related to the quest for the identity of Paul's opponents in Corinth is the view that in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul is carrying on a polemic with those opponents. The traditional view on this topic is voiced by Ralph P. Martin in his gloss on ἡ ἰκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (2 Cor. 3:5):

We cannot avoid concluding that this remark is polemically slanted and addressed to Paul's adversaries who made it their boast that they were the 'well-endowed ones', with pneumatic gifts and imposing credentials to support their claim.

Others are more careful, as is the case with Victor P. Furnish and Richard B. Hays. Furnish states that "these paragraphs [3:7-18] are most accurately described as theological exposition with a polemical edge." Hays declares that "the third chapter of 2 Corinthians is framed by Paul's thinly veiled counteraccusations that his opponents are 'hucksters' (2:17) who 'adulterate the word of God.'"

The opposite view is maintained by G. Dautzenberg, who disputes the view that it is possible to explain 2 Cor. 2:14-

---


7:4 on the basis of an alleged polemic with opponents.\textsuperscript{44} He acknowledges that the text presents some allusions to other missionaries or opponents and their behavior (2 Cor. 2:17a; 3:1b), but he concludes that this evidence is insufficient to allow one to postulate a situation of fierce polemics, let alone to delineate the historical and theological profile of the 'opponents.' G. Dautzenberg winds up saying that

Recht betrachtet stehen diese Anspielungen nur im Dienst der positiven Abgrenzung des Paulus und seiner \textit{ικανότης} von allen möglichen Konkurrenten.\textsuperscript{45}

Similar to this is Thomas R. Schreiner's view:

To read Paul's defense of his ministry as a response to opponents is to practice what is called mirror reading. In this case one could argue that since Paul was defending his integrity, some opponents must have been questioning it; . . . . Paul's sustained defense of himself was intended to amplify his argument, and it does not necessarily suggest that he was responding to opponents.\textsuperscript{46}

It appears that Hays is on the right track when he hints at the possibility that "Paul's juxtaposition of himself and Moses is of his own devising, spontaneously

\textsuperscript{44}G. Dautzenberg, "Motive der Selbstdarstellung des Paulus in 2 Kor 2,14-7,4," in L'\textit{Apostre Paul: Personnalite, Style et Conception du Ministere}, ed. A. Vanhoye (Leuven: University Press, 1986), 158.

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46}Thomas R. Schreiner, \textit{Interpreting the Pauline Epistles} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 44-45.
generated out of rhetorical momentum." Hays adds, though, that we lack evidence that this is so. In fact, there is no evidence either way, that is, one cannot be one hundred percent sure that Paul is deliberately engaging in polemics with opponents that are active in the Corinthian church nor that his discourse is spontaneously generated out of rhetorical momentum and nothing else. The only way to overcome this dilemma is to focus on the rhetorical situation encoded in the text, which allows the conclusion that polemics is part of the picture but not the whole picture.

What scholars concerned about the polemical edge of 2 Corinthians 3 tend to miss is precisely that aspect which rhetorical criticism helps to reveal, namely, that Paul is addressing the Corinthian church and that the so-called opponents, whoever they are, are only part of the background. Much more important than the identity of Paul's opponents, which entails stepping beyond or behind the text, is the investigation of the force of the text. In other words, our primary task should be to explore, on the basis of the structure and content of the text, where Paul is leading his readers, what kind of new perspective he is trying to open up for them, and not to attempt to establish

47 Hays, "Echoes of Scripture," 126. Hays' observation is important in view of Georgi's thesis that 2 Cor. 3:7-18 is the opponents' interpretation of Exodus 34, into which Paul has interpolated his own critical remarks.
against what kind of opponents he was reacting, if at all.

Rhetorical Analysis and 2 Corinthians

As we approach the task of analyzing the rhetorical dimension of the text as such, we have to point out first of all that it lies beyond the scope of this investigation to come up with a complete and detailed rhetorical description of 2 Corinthians as a whole. The purpose of this study is to probe the rhetorical dimension of chapter three. Yet, since chapter three is only a part of a larger whole, one cannot simply evade the question of the letter as a whole.

The first aspect to be determined is the species of the epistle. It could be judicial, deliberative, or epideictic. According to Kennedy, "second Corinthians . . . provides the most extended piece of judicial rhetoric in the New Testament." This conclusion is corroborated by countless scholars who, like Stephen B. Heiny, describe 2 Corinthians, in particular chapters 1-7, as "an apologia, a defense not so much of Paul the person but of Paul the

48 George A. Kennedy explains that the species is judicial when the author is seeking to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events occurring in the past; it is deliberative when he seeks to persuade them to take some action in the future; it is epideictic when he seeks to persuade them to hold or reaffirm some point of view in the present, as when he celebrates or denounces some person or some quality. (Kennedy, 19)

49 Kennedy, 86. "Second Corinthians . . . is largely judicial except for chapters 8 and 9, which are deliberative." Ibid., 87.
apostle and an interpretation of apostleship that supports this defense.⁵⁰

Having defined 2 Corinthians 1-7 as judicial, Kennedy outlines this part of the letter as follows:

1:1-2 - a relatively simple salutation;

1:3-8 - a proem which is intended to reveal his (Paul's) goodwill toward them (the Corinthians) and secure their goodwill toward him;

1:8-2:13 - a narration;

2:14-17 - the proposition and a partition of the elements which will provide his proof;

3:1-6:13 - the proof, the "working out" of the headings of 2:17;

6:14-7:1 - an apparent interpolation;

7:2-16 - an epilogue.⁵¹

---


⁵¹Kennedy, 87-89. In Kennedy's view the letter is rhetorically complete at this point. What follows in chapters 8 and 9 appears to be "a complete rhetorical unit of the deliberative species." Ibid., 91. As for 2 Corinthians 10-13, its rhetorical species is "clearly judicial." Ibid., 93. Kennedy's outline of 2 Cor. 1-7 matches with his description of a judicial speech:

A judicial speech usually begins with a proem or exordium which seeks to obtain the attention of the audience and goodwill or sympathy toward the speaker. It then proceeds to a narration of the facts, or background information, and states the proposition which the speaker wishes to prove, often with a partition of it into separate headings. The speaker then presents his arguments in the proof, followed by a refutation of
Such an outline is certainly debatable. For instance, not everybody would agree that the whole section from 1:8 to 2:13 qualifies as a narration. Yet, some paragraphs of this section, in particular verses 12-21, can be described as a narration of the facts, for they provide background information the purpose of which is to justify Paul's course of action. For our purposes, however, it is important to notice that, in Kennedy's outline, chapter 3 is part of the probatio or proof. In other words, in this section Paul is working out his proposition of 2 Cor. 2:14-17.

A different outline can be found in Heinrici's 1887 commentary on 2 Corinthians. Oddly enough, Heinrici does not subject the whole letter to a rhetorical investigation. His rhetorical analysis proper sets in only with chapter 3. He describes the first seven chapters as "Paul's experiences and resolutions; the new covenant and the apostolate." The first two chapters comprise "Paul's experiences and resolutions." "The new covenant and the apostolate" is the subject of chapter 3 and the following, a section which is also titled "how Paul appraises, substantiates, and carries out his ministry."

Heinrici takes his clue from Mosheim who had remarked opposing views; here he may incorporate what was called a digression, often a relevant examination of motivations or attendant circumstances. Finally comes an epilogue or peroration, which summarizes the argument and seeks to arouse the emotions of the audience to take action or make judgment. (Ibid., 23-24. Emphasis by the author)
that in the arrangement of chapters 3-5 Paul imitates the orators.\textsuperscript{52} He does not use language like "judicial species," but he describes 3:1-7:4 as "the apologetic section."\textsuperscript{53} He outlines chapters 3-7 as follows:

3:1-6 - the introduction ($\pi\rho\omicron\omicron\iota\mu\iota\nu\omicron$, principium or insinuatio);
3:6 - the theme or subject matter ($\pi\rho\omicron\theta\varepsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$);
3:7-18 - the proof ($\pi\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$, $\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\epsilon\iota\xi\iota\varsigma$, argumentatio or confirmatio);
4:1-15 - the refutation ($\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, $\alpha\nu\alpha\sigma\kappa\kappa\epsilon\nu\eta$, refutatio);
4:16-5:21 - the digression (\textit{egressus in causa});
6:1-7:4 - the epilogue.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52}Heinrici quotes Mosheim:
Er faengt in einem Eingange an, worin er sich Gunst bei seinen Lesern zu verschaffen sucht. Er traegt den Hauptsatz vor und fuehrt ihn mit seinen Gruenden aus. Er wendet sich zu den Einwuerfen und giebt durch deren Widerlegung der erwiesenen Wahrheit mehr Gewicht. Er haengt endlich den ganzen Nutzen an und zeigt, was fuer Trost und Pflicht in der ausgefuehrten Lehre liegen. So pflegen es die Redner zu machen. (152)

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{54}Heinrici's text, in our own translation, runs as follows:
The introduction ($\pi\rho\omicron\omicron\iota\mu\iota\nu\omicron$, principium or insinuatio) has to do with the apostle as a person, inasmuch as it describes him vis-a-vis his opponents as the bearer of the saving message of the new covenant commissioned by God (3:1-6). The axiomatic description of the essence of the covenant furnishes the theme (the $\pi\rho\omicron\theta\varepsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$) for the proof ($\pi\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$, $\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\epsilon\iota\xi\iota\varsigma$, argumentatio or confirmatio) which substantiates the truth he has just introduced (3:7-18). This, in turn, is followed by the rejection of rival interpretations of the value of his teaching and the scope of his authority ($\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, $\alpha\nu\alpha\sigma\kappa\kappa\epsilon\nu\eta$, refutatio). On top of this he
Also in this analysis chapter 3 is mainly part of the probatio or proof.

It is readily apparent that both Heinrici and Kennedy assume that Paul was in some sense familiar with the rhetorical principles formulated by the Greeks and then taken over and further developed by the Romans. This was probably the case, for Greek education, which consisted of three successive stages: grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, had become universal in the Roman empire. Yet, even if it could be established that Paul had not been formally trained in what we know as classical Rhetoric, this would not yet mean that rhetorical theory is of no avail in reading Paul. For, as Kennedy explains, rhetoric is "a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society." On the other hand, the suspicion that Paul was not as familiar with rhetorical rules as it is often assumed points to the inner power of the saving message proclaimed by him, which, compared to the topics he had presented before, is done in a summarizing fashion (4:16-5:21. Egressus in causa. Quintil. inst. 3,9). He closes with a very affectionate epilogue, in which the worth and the moral θεος of the writer are forcefully and emphatically highlighted (6:1-7:4). (152-153)


56 Kennedy, 10. This opinion is shared by Classen, "Paulus und die antike Rhetorik," 2-3: "Das Instrumentarium der griechisch-roemischen Rhetorik kann mit Gewinn zur Analyse jedes geschriebenen oder gesprochenen Textes verwendet werden."
should serve as a reminder that one should proceed with caution, lest by trying to force Paul's letters into a preset pattern one end up overinterpreting him. Outlines like those of Heinrici and Kennedy come close to such an overinterpretation. As Carl Joachim Classen observes, the fact that different parts of the text fit into the pattern outlined in this or that Greek or Roman manual of rhetoric does not warrant the conclusion that all the elements of the outline will be found in that particular text. In other words, "wo ein exordium, eine confirmatio und eine peroratio vorkommen, muss nicht auch eine narratio zu finden sein." 57 This is the more so if one keeps in mind these three factors: a. Paul writes letters and not speeches; b. there was flexibility both in the formulation of the rules of rhetoric as well as in their application; c. one of the key rhetorical principles was the dissimulatio artis, namely, the challenge to camouflage the fact that the praeccepta were being followed at all, particularly in the area of the dispositio and the elocutio. 58

The Rhetoric of 2 Corinthians 3

The use of the first person plural

In analyzing the rhetoric of 2 Corinthians, one aspect

57 Classen, 28.

58 Classen points out that "die deutlich erkennbare Verwendung der Regeln [wirkte] als Zeichen mangelnder Erfahrung oder Faehigkeit." Classen, 31.
that needs to be considered is the use of the first person plural throughout the pericope. Here what matters is not so much the meaning and referent of "we", but rather the presumable reason and the effect of this use.

The first person plural in 2 Corinthians 3 is particularly significant in view of the fact that 2 Cor. 1:23-2:13 is phrased for the most part in the first person singular.

How is this switch to the plural to be interpreted? One way of taking it is to regard it as an attempt by the author to focus attention away from himself toward himself and his associates, or toward apostles in general, or even toward the apostolic office. It could no doubt be argued that this switching back and forth from singular to plural is nothing but a stylistic variation. It certainly is a stylistic variation. Yet, instead of simply registering the fact, rhetorical criticism tries to come up with a reason for this, and the reason that is being proposed here is that Paul is making an effort to point away from his person. This view seems to be corroborated by the fact that "practically every statement concerning Paul's work is qualified by a phrase which sets it in the context of God's activity." In other words, he has or, rather, they have such a confidence διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν (2 Cor. 3:4). Their ἰκανότης is ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (2 Cor.

59 Crafton, 69.
3:5). The veil is removed ἐν Χριστῷ (2 Cor. 3:14). The transformation from glory to glory is ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος (2 Cor. 3:18). It is not a matter of what or who we are, but what God does.

The switch from διάκονος to διακονία

Part of the same picture is the switch from διάκονος to διακονία, from minister or messenger to office, at the beginning of verse 7. This switch helps to create the impression, shared by most commentators, that 2 Corinthians, in particular chapter 3, is marked by an abstract theological nature. As Jeffrey A. Crafton observes, "large portions of the argument seem comparatively abstract, not tied directly to congregational or personal situations." Yet, this abstract character is not necessarily indicative of formulation apart from a particular congregational setting. On the contrary, "it is fundamental to Paul's rhetorical response designed specifically for that setting."61

The rhetorical situation

This leads us directly into the question of the contours of that setting. What kind of actual or potential exigence called for a discourse like that? In other words, what is the rhetorical situation of the text?

---

60 Crafton, 68. 2 Corinthians 3 is sometimes called a 'digression.'

61 Ibid., 68, note 1.
According to Heinrici, it was the suspicion that Paul was commending himself, that he was being impelled, not by the gospel or by his sense of apostolic mission, but rather by a pursuit of personal gain at the expense of the church. This comes through in 2 Cor. 2:17, where Paul distinguishes himself and his companions from o\i\ πολλο\ι\ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. To this one should add the suspicion that Paul was unreliable (2 Cor. 1:15-22), and the impression that he was a troubled apostle (2 Cor. 1:6 - θλιβόμεθα). In rhetorical-critical jargon, what was at stake was Paul's ethos or character.

Paul responds to this situation by explaining what actually drives him (2 Cor. 2:17) and what or who recommends him as an apostle, namely, the church (2 Cor. 3:1-3) and God himself (2 Cor. 10:18). But above all

Paul brushes aside and counters all reproaches leveled

62 It is important to notice that this was not necessarily how the Christian church at Corinth felt about Paul, but it certainly indicates how Paul thought they would feel. The rhetorical situation embedded in the text is the author's construction. As indicated above, it may match with "the world out there," but this is not necessarily the case.

63 In ancient rhetoric, there were three important factors in the communication equation from the point of view of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos had to do with the character of the speaker. He "had to be perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable just to get a hearing." Mack, 36. Pathos, "affection," had to do with knowing the audience. The speaker had to know "how to play the audience." Ibid. Logos had to do with the content of the speech. It "referred to the ideas, structure, and logic of a speech evaluated in terms of their persuasive force." Ibid.
against him and his cause by pointing to the freedom and
glory of the gospel, which has its source in the Spirit,
and is accompanied and laid bare by the same Spirit.\textsuperscript{64}

Paul points away from himself to the freedom and glory
of the gospel. That is his rhetorical strategy. Jeffrey A.
Crafton explains this strategy in terms of a shift from
agent to agency.\textsuperscript{65} An agent is one who acts. An agency is
a means through which another acts. To direct attention to
the apostle himself as actor is to emphasize the role of the
agent. To focus on the means by which God works through the
apostle is to stress the role of agency. It is obvious that
Paul sees his ministry in terms of agency, while the
Corinthians, at least in Paul's perception of the situation,
saw it in terms of the role of the agent. That is why,
according to Crafton, Paul establishes

his own distinctive agency-ethos . . . . by consistently
diverting attention away from his own individuality and
person, toward the one acting through him, toward the
results of and the reason for his apostolic ministry.\textsuperscript{66}

In Paul's agency orientation God is the agent. God is
the source of Paul's sufficiency and God is the purpose and
goal of Paul's ministry. Adequacy belongs to God and can
only be attributed to the apostle by association (2.16b-17;

\textsuperscript{65}Crafton derived the concepts of "agent" and "agency"
from Kenneth Burke, whose rhetorical-critical method known
as 'dramatism' furnished the theoretical foundation for his
analysis.

\textsuperscript{66}Crafton, 66.
The Argumentation in 2 Cor. 3:7-11

When it comes to the second section (verses 7-11), one gets the distinct impression that it is argumentative through and through. The opening εἰ may even be dubbed as argumentative. What needs to be investigated is the nature of the argument in this section.

According to both Heinrici and Kennedy, 2 Cor. 3:7-11 is part of the proof (probatio or confirmatio). In Classical rhetoric, this part of the speech was meant to present the supporting arguments, or to supply the data for constructing the rhetorical argument. There were two major forms of proof: example and analogy or comparison. In 2 Cor. 3:7-11 Paul is clearly drawing such a comparison, a comparison between two διακονιά, one marked by death and the other determined by the Spirit.

In drawing a comparison, the author can have one of three purposes in mind: to demonstrate equality, or superiority, or inferiority between two parties or things.

---

67 Mack, 41-43.

68 This kind of comparison between persons or things was a widespread feature of the hellenistic world, and was technically known as synkrisis. As C. F. Evans explains, "it was connected with the encomiastic tradition in oratory and literature in praise of those who excelled." C. F. Evans, The Theology of Rhetoric: The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1988), 5. George A. Kennedy describes verses 7-18 as "a synkrisis, a comparison between the dispensation of Moses and that of Christ." Kennedy, 89.
Equality is demonstrated by praising both, thus indicating that they are equal in all respects. The author can also praise both, but place one ahead of the other, or praise the inferior so that the superior will seem to be even greater. Another way of indicating superiority and/or inferiority is to praise one and blame the other.69

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul is clearly demonstrating the superiority of the διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος over against the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου by praising both, yes, but at the same time by placing the former ahead of the latter. Paul moves from what is glorious to what is yet more glorious. He asserts that what is true of the inferior member of the comparison must be true also of the superior, and that to a superior degree. In the end, as Frances Young and David F. Ford observe, Paul "produces not so much a contrast as a 'capping'."70

It is important to notice that the force of the comparison stands or falls on the truth of the premise, taken to be common ground between the parties in the

---


70 Frances Young and David F. Ford, Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 105. Young and Ford point out that "any exegesis which attempts to suggest that Paul is simply doing Moses down, is not true to his form of argument." Ibid. In fact, Paul acknowledges the glory of the old covenant, and he has to do that for his comparison to work.
discussion. In 2 Corinthians 3, this common ground is expressed in the first half of verse 7. Paul assumes the glory of Moses' ministry and he takes for granted his readers' agreement to this proposition. Thus, Paul's comparison, as any other comparison, is a neat example of how "rhetorical discourse is a joint endeavor involving speaker and audience as together they arrive at conclusions." It necessarily involves the active participation of a speaker and an audience in the communal creation of meaning and interpretation; there are no passive parties.

The awareness that in 2 Corinthians 3, particularly in verses 7-11, Paul is drawing a comparison mostly for rhetorical purposes helps the reader to understand why the 

\[ \deltaιακο\nuία \ τοῦ \ θαυμάτου \]

is brought into the picture at this point. This probably has nothing to do with a particularly Pauline interest in the old covenant as such, nor is it prompted by the need to respond to the theological viewpoint of some alleged opponents who were active in the Corinthian church. Seen from a rhetorical perspective, Paul's reference to the 

\[ \deltaιακο\nuία \ τοῦ \ θαυμάτου \]

is necessary for the sake of the comparison. His real concern

---

71 Crafton, 18. A comparison is, therefore, a kind of enthymeme, which is the rhetorical counterpart to the syllogism in logic. An enthymeme is "fundamentally a form of logical argumentation in which the audience provides some, if not all, of the premises, as well as helps to reach conclusions." Ibid.
is the διακοινία τοῦ πνεύματος and its surpassing glory. Yet, in order to make his point, he decides to draw a comparison. To draw a comparison, he has to have two elements. What he needs is an example of ministry which is glorious, and nothing could be more handy than the episode narrated in Exodus 34.

Is Paul's way of arguing typically rabbinic?

Paul's way of arguing, particularly in verses 7-11, is commonly described as an a minore ad maiorem argument. Actually it is a set of three arguments from the lesser to the greater, each one beginning with an εἰ statement and ending with the πώς or the πολλῷ μᾶλλον conclusion.\(^72\) It is also said that Paul's way of arguing, which is found also in Romans 5:9,10,15,17 and in Romans 11:12,24, betrays a Rabbinic background and training. Some go as far as suggesting that Paul's reasoning is indebted to the exegetical method established by Rabbi Hillel, particularly to one of his seven middot, namely, the drawing of conclusions gal wahomer.\(^73\)

\(^72\) The first argument is introduced by εἰ δέ, while the two following are appended by means of εἰ γάρ. It appears the the purpose of εἰ δέ in verse 7 is to indicate a major break with the context, while the subsequent pair of εἰ γάρ signals that the author's reasoning is carried over to the next sentences.

\(^73\) Tradition has it that the rabbinic exegetical method was established by Rabbi Hillel in the first century A.D. Yet, as C. F. Evans observes, quoting 'an expert in the field,' "the problems attending the recovery of the historical Hillel are such as to leave the problems of the
Qal wahomer literally means "the light and the heavy," but it refers to an argument based on the inference from the lesser to the greater. The argument functions according to the following pattern:

If A, which lacks y, has x, then B, which has y, certainly must have x as well. If the inferior member of a pair possesses a characteristic, then its superior partner must necessarily possess it as well.

The big question at this point is whether and, if so, to what extent this type of argumentation is peculiarly rabbinic. Many scholars simply assume that here Paul is reflecting one of Hillel's seven middot. Yet, the fact of the matter is that, as Carol K. Stockhausen observes, "this rule of syllogism is familiar in Greek rhetoric of the New Testament period as an argument a minore ad maius." There is nothing peculiarly rabbinic about this way of reasoning.

As Philip S. Alexander explains,

the fact that some of the middot of Rabbi Ishmael are found in the NT is no evidence that the NT writers engaged in Rabbinic-style midrash, nor is the fact that some of Hillel's middot are apparently used by Paul evidence that Paul knew Hillel's list, or was in any sense a Hillelite, unless it can be shown that the middot are peculiar to Hillel or to Ishmael, and exclusive to Rabbinic midrash. . . . From their very nature the rules in question may be "natural" to human discourse or argument, or typical in general of historical Jesus standing." Evans, 15.

74 Stockhausen, 110.
75 Stockhausen, 28.
Thus, to say the least, great caution is necessary in using Hillel to explain Paul. Richard B. Hays may well be right when he says the "it is more valid methodologically to use Paul as a background source for the study of rabbinic traditions than vice versa."  

The Force of the Text in New Contexts

2 Corinthians 3 was originally a part of an ongoing communication between Paul and the church at Corinth. Although Paul and the Corinthians did not agree on a series of issues, it must also be said that they shared a more or less common background of culture, knowledge, and belief. Whenever communication occurs between persons who have such a common background, an author does not always have to spell out explicitly all that he intends the reader to understand by the message. He selects some of the information and makes it explicit; the rest he leaves implicit, trusting the reader to supply it to complete the message. In other words, vital things 'said' in conversation are often left implicit.

---


77 Hays, 11. C. F. Evans makes the same assertion with regard to the author of Hebrews: "he derived his method more directly from the original hellenistic rhetorical tradition rather than from any rabbinic adaptation of it." Evans, 15.

'unspoken.' Besides the explicit text there is an invisible text. To understand properly one must be able to read and understand the invisible text properly.\textsuperscript{79} This invisible text can be conceived of as Leerstellen or open spaces. It is up to the reader to fill them in, reconstructing the non-verbal situation.\textsuperscript{80}

Only the original readers, the Christians at Corinth, were fully aware of the communicative setting of Paul's correspondence. They were in a privileged position to fill in the blanks. Any other reader will always be to a large extent an outsider that overhears another's conversation. Nobody, not even a person fully at home in the history of Corinth, will be able to hear or read the text of 2 Corinthians as if he were a first century member of the church at Corinth. He can read the text, but he will be reading it in a new context, a context different from the original one. With respect to the original context, the text has become decontextualized. In fact, as J. G. Davies explains,

\begin{quote}
  every text in course of time becomes decontextualized. It assumes the character of an atemporal object which has broken free from its moorings in the period of history when it originated. It achieves a measure of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79}Du Plessis, 133.

\textsuperscript{80}In oral communication, facial expressions and vocal intonations are part of the non-verbal situation. Much of the illocutionary force of a discourse depends on these factors, which cannot be inscribed in the text.
autonomy; it can be read by anyone at any time. Like it or not, the fact is that this applies also to Biblical texts. Biblical texts have been decontextualized and read by anyone at any time. Paul's letters in particular were by and large addressed to specific situations and are, therefore, sometimes referred to as "occasional documents." They have an intrinsic particularity, which was felt as a problem in the early church. As Nils A. Dahl explains,

the theological problem raised by the Pauline epistles was not their plurality [as in the case of the Gospels], but their particularity.

Yet, in reading Paul's letters as part of the canon, the church through the ages has not simply read them as historical documents, addressed to a specific situation. They were and are still read as Scriptures relevant to the whole church. This has led to a tendency towards generalizing them.

At first glance this may seem to be a bad move. Yet, it is unavoidable. Besides being unavoidable, it is also legitimate, for "there is an implicit catholicity of the

---


Pauline letters.\textsuperscript{83} Second Corinthians, for instance, was written to the church of God in Corinth as well as to all the saints in Achaia (2 Cor 1:1). This is not always taken at face value, but Paul clearly envisions a wider readership. Besides this explicit statement, there are other indications that Paul had a wider readership in mind than is usually assumed. One such indication is "Paul's tendency to develop a broad theological argument, even when he is dealing with a comparatively small or trivial matter."\textsuperscript{84} Thus, the text was addressed to more than one situation right from the beginning, namely, a specific occasion, which accounts for the particular or "occasional" character of the letter, and a more general occasion. Afterwards Paul's letters were read all over the world in new and different contexts. Believers read it in the context of the church. Scholars read it in the context of the Pauline corpus, and so on.

Being read in new and different contexts, the text of 2 Corinthians has had and is still having its impact on its readers. This is no doubt due to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the Spirit operates in and through the text. Though we tend to think only of the content of the text, it is nonetheless true that the rhetorical situation embedded

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 271.

in the text as well as the way in which the text is couched
to meet the exigence of that rhetorical situation (form, if
you will) contributes significantly to the impact of the
text. In other words, the Holy Spirit avails himself not
only of the content of the text, but rather he makes use of
the text as a whole, both form and content.

Having been read throughout history, and having had
its impact, Second Corinthians, like any other Biblical
book, has a long and rich reading history. It is a
history - to come back to concepts of speech-act theory - of
illocutionary and perlocutionary uptake, as well as the lack
thereof. In other words, it has a Wirkungsgeschichte, a
history of how readers have reacted and still react to the
illocutionary and perlocutionary forces of the text. That
history can and perhaps should be investigated. 85 Part and
parcel of this is the history of textual transmission.
Variant readings are not just what they are, but they also
"reflect broad interpretive frameworks and specific
exegetical traditions."86 Many variant readings reflect
what the scribes believed was the meaning of the text.

Essays, commentaries, and dissertations fall into the same

85 On the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6 in
particular, see Bernardin Schneider, "The Meaning of St.
Paul's Antithesis 'The Letter and the Spirit'," The Catholic
Molina, "La Remocion del Velo o el Acceso a la Libertad:

86 Moises Silva, God, Language and Scripture (Grand
Rapids: Zondervan, 1983),133.
category: they are recorded readings of particular readers reading in the context of their own interpretive communities.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to approach the text of 2 Corinthians 3 from the viewpoint of a reader, a "critical reader." My reading can be summarized as follows:

1. My stance as a "critical" reader was to a large extent shaped by concepts derived from modern semantics, and from pragmatics, in particular rhetorical criticism. As it turned out, semantics helped me to perceive, among other things, that words are never used in isolation; that synonymity is context-dependent; and that awareness of the semantic domain of a sign is helpful in describing its range of meaning. Semantics helped me, further, to realize that most signs or words, even the "little words," such as οὖς, ἐκ, and γὰρ, are polysemous, and that signs or clusters of signs that are phonetically and morphologically different may be closely related from a semantic viewpoint. On the other hand, pragmatics, in particular rhetorical criticism, called my attention to the fact that 2 Corinthians 3 is not only loaded with "content," but has a pragmatic dimension. It was written not only to convey important information, but also to affect its readers. It is a discourse structured in a meaningful way in order to accomplish some end.
Furthermore, rhetorical criticism increased my awareness of the importance of aspects such as the rhetorical situation, and the argumentation embedded in the text.

2. 2 Corinthians 3 is, indeed, a text that is not easily read. It demands a great amount of effort on the part of the reader. All the way through the reader is faced with problems such as vagueness, ambiguity due to polysemy and uncertainty as to what goes with what else, difficulty in describing the components of meaning and in determining the referent of signs, and so on. Yet, it is not utterly impenetrable. My rendering of it runs as follows:

"And we (that is, Paul and Timothy) are actively engaged in holding such a view of confidence in our qualification for ministry before God through the agency of Christ. Not that on our own we are in a position to hold such a view of confidence, as if we were trying to give the impression that it derives from ourselves, but our qualification for ministry comes from God. It is God who qualified us to be ministers who deliver the new covenant, ministers not of the 'written thing,' that is, the law of God in its written form, made up of concrete demands, but of the Holy Spirit. (The 'written thing' kills, but the Spirit makes alive.) And - to come back to the topic on the ministry - if the ministry that dispenses death, which was engraved on stones in the form of letters, showed itself to be in glory, so that, because of the glory of Moses' face (a glory which, by
the way, is being abolished), the children of Israel could not gaze upon Moses' face, is it not so that the ministry which delivers the Spirit is even more glorious? Of course, it is. And if there is glory for the ministry which brings condemnation, how much more will the ministry which brings righteousness abound in glory! (And, by the way, in this matter which I am referring to the thing that was glorified, namely, the ministry of death, was not glorified on account of the surpassing glory of the ministry of the Spirit.) And if that which is being abolished came in glory, then that which endures will be much more glorious! But since we have such a hope, we conduct ourselves with great boldness toward you, and we do not act like Moses who put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel could not look at the cessation of the thing that was being rendered ineffective. Yet, their minds were hardened. I am saying this because up to this very day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant. It is not lifted, because only in Christ is it done away with. Yes, even more! To this day, whenever the writings of Moses are being read, a veil lies on their hearts. But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed from the heart of the reader. (Now the Lord referred to in the preceding verse is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the freedom that comes from the Lord.) But we and you, while we are engaged in gazing on the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, we all
are being transformed into the same exceedingly glorious image, precisely as one would expect from the Lord, that is, the Spirit."

3. In terms of "content," these are some of the conclusions that can be drawn from reading 2 Corinthians 3 intratextually and intertextually:

3.1. The new covenant of the Spirit is, indeed, a covenant different from the old covenant of death. There is no smooth transition from one covenant to another, and the new covenant is not simply the renewal of the old covenant. In the light of 1 Corinthians 11, which may be the source and interpretive key to what Paul has to say about the new covenant, the death of Christ brings the old covenant to a conclusion, and marks the beginning of the new covenant. This newness is witnessed to by Christian worship, in particular by the Eucharist. In the light of Gal. 3:15-18, the new covenant is actually the oldest, for it coincides with the promise spoken to Abraham.

3.2. In 2 Corinthians 3, πνεῦμα is always the Holy Spirit, and this element helps to describe and define γράμμα. The same applies to the passages of Rom. 2:27-29 and Rom. 7:6, where the γράμμα // πνεῦμα opposition occurs in basically the same sense as in 2 Corinthians 3. The "written thing" is neither the Old Testament as Scripture, nor a distortion of the law. It is the law of God in its written form, made up of concrete demands.
4. Read from a rhetorical viewpoint, 2 Corinthians 3 yields the following conclusions:

4.1. In 2 Corinthians 3, polemics is part of the picture, but it is not the whole picture. Rather than arguing with so-called "opponents," Paul is addressing the Corinthian church. He is trying to open up for them a new, or, at least, more accurate, perspective on what his apostolic ministry is all about.

4.2. In terms of species-analysis, 2 Corinthians 3 is part of a discourse that may be described as primarily judicial. Put in more traditional terms, it is part of Paul's apologia. Paul is apparently reacting against the suspicion that his motivation for ministry was the pursuit of personal gain, and that he was an unreliable apostle. At stake was Paul's ethos or character. Paul responds to this by pointing away from himself to God, and by indicating that what really mattered was what God was accomplishing through the apostolic office (agency), and not so much the person of the minister (agent). The use of the first person plural throughout the pericope, as well as the switch from ministers to ministry, in verse 7, are part of this rhetorical strategy.

4.3. 2 Corinthians can be viewed as mainly judicial rhetoric. If this is so, then 2 Corinthians 3 is part of the probatio or confirmatio (proof). The probatio is the presentation of the supporting arguments for a case. Paul's
major argument in 2 Cor. 3:7-11 is couched in the form of a synkrisis, that is, a comparison. Paul compares two διακονίαι in order to demonstrate the superiority of the διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος. This explains why the ministry of death is brought into the picture to begin with, namely, it is necessary for the sake of the comparison.

4.4. Paul's argumentation in verse 7-11 does not necessarily betray any Rabbinic background and training. Although his technique may be described as the application of Rabbi Hillel's gal wahomer principle, it is more likely that both Paul and Rabi Hillel were influenced by the cultural context in which they lived. In other words, both Paul's practice and Hillel's principle may derive from what in rhetorical circles was known as the a minore ad maiorem argument.

4.5. Although part of an "occasional document," that is, a letter addressed to a specific situation, 2 Corinthians 3, being part of the church's canon, has had an impact on readers other than the original addressees. This decontextualization, or, rather, this reading in new contexts, had been originally envisioned by Paul himself, for he addressed the letter to a wider readership than the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 1:1). Yet, the impact of the letter on new readers is certainly due to the fact that the rhetorical situation, that is, the situation in which, according to Paul's perception, the readers find themselves,
and which calls for the intervention of Paul, is embedded in the text itself.

5. From a hermeneutical viewpoint, 2 Corinthians 3 allows the following conclusions:

5.1. The \( \gamma ράμμα / \pi νεδμα \) opposition in verse 6 can be taken as a basis for the Lutheran emphasis on Law-Gospel hermeneutics.

5.2. 2 Cor. 3:14-16 calls attention to the importance of being the right kind of reader, that is, the implied reader called for by the text. The old covenant can be read properly only by readers who, in Christ, have the veil of unbelief removed from their eyes.

5.3. The veil that hinders the proper reading of the old covenant is removed in Christ, that is, through conversion by the Holy Spirit, in the Christian community.

5.4. An unveiled reader finds Christ in the book of Moses. The best example of such a reader is Paul himself. He interprets Exodus 34 "in Christ," and then uses it to substantiate his view on the apostolic ministry.

5.5. The Holy Spirit is the unveiler. He is not a substitute for knowledge of grammar and reading. His role is to form the implied reader, that is, the reader that is "congenial" to the text.
Tools


S.v. "διατίθημι, διαθήκη," by Gottfried Quell and Johannes Behm, 2:104-134.


Hermeneutical Resources

Books


Voelz, James W. "Basic Introduction to Semantics for Exegetical Courses at Concordia Seminary." St. Louis, Missouri, 1990.

_______. "Biblical Hermeneutics: Where Are We Now? Where Are We Going?" In Light for our World: Essays Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, ed. John W. Klotz, 235-257. St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1989.


Commentaries on 2 Corinthians


Books on Paul and 2 Corinthians


**Articles on Paul and 2 Corinthians 3**


Ulonska, Herbert. "Die Doxa des Mose." Evangelische Theologie 26 (1966):399


