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PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY
IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Biblical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
Robert Arnold Hausman
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Approved by:

40414

Edgar M. Kreitzer

Advisor

John H. G. Miller

Reader

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SHORT TITLE: ESCHATOLOGY IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The pericope 2 Cor. 5:12-18 is very important for our understanding of Paul's eschatology. Along with 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 and 1 Cor. 15:12-58, it is one of the most significant Pauline discussions of life after death.

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1. Margaret E. Thrall, The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians in The Cambridge Bible Commentary, edited by V. E. Dreyfus and others (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), p. 42: "These are some of the most difficult paragraphs in the whole of Paul's correspondence. There is no general agreement about how they should be interpreted, and no entirely satisfactory solution of the problems they raise."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The pericope 2 Cor. 5:1-10 is very important for our understanding of Paul's eschatology. Along with 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 and 1 Cor. 15:12-58, it is one of the most significant Pauline discussions of life after death.

This pericope is not only important, but also extremely difficult to interpret. When it is discussed, it is almost always referred to as a problem.¹ Because of its difficulty, commentators have given it a great variety of interpretations. The passage has been treated as a reference to the interim state, the parousia and the eternal bliss of the dead. It is possible to find reputable scholars disagreeing on just about every point of interpretation in these verses.

The difficulty of these verses is compounded by the difficulties inherent in the epistle itself. The interpretation of the pericope is affected by complex questions about the nature of the Corinthian correspondence, the identity of

¹Margaret B. Thrall, The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians in The Cambridge Bible Commentary, edited by P. R. Ackroyd and others (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), p. 142: "These are some of the most difficult paragraphs in the whole of Paul's correspondence. There is no general agreement about how they should be interpreted, and no entirely satisfactory solution of the problems they raise."

the Corinthian opponents, and ultimately the whole question of the historical background to Paul's ministry.

In view of these problems, it is not the purpose of this paper to produce a definitive interpretation of this passage or a final solution to its many difficulties. An attempt can be made, however, at clarification and analyzation. The purpose of this paper, then, is to compare and contrast the various interpretations in an attempt to discover their strengths and weaknesses. If possible, some guidelines will be suggested for the interpretation of this passage and probabilities will be noted where answers are unavailable. The complex question of historical background will be discussed as it relates to the various interpretations, but it cannot be treated in depth.

In order to understand this passage, a brief history of its interpretation is valuable. The interpretation of 2 Cor. 5:1-10 in this century has been definitely influenced by the ongoing controversy over the sources of Pauline thought. New Testament scholars have been divided over the question of whether Paul's thought patterns are Hellenistic, Judaistic, or a combination of the two. The passage under discussion has been used as support for most of the differing views and it has received a wide variety of interpretations.

The belief that Paul's thought is essentially Hellenistic has been promoted in this century by Rudolf Bultmann and most

of his students. Bultmann understands Paul against the background of Hellenistic Judaism and Hellenistic Christianity, and more specifically, against the background of Gnosticism.² According to this viewpoint, the influence of Gnosticism on Paul led him to modify his terminology and at times even his theological concepts.

In his Theology of the New Testament, Bultmann finds in this passage an anthropological understanding which is very close to Hellenistic-Gnostic dualism.³ The figure of the body as a tent or a garment is Gnostic in nature, according to Bultmann, as is the thought of the body as an undesirable shell inappropriate to the self (5:1-4). This dualism is heightened by the opposites posed by Paul of being either "at home in the body and away from the Lord" or "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (5:6-8). Bultmann points out, however, that Paul's thought is not entirely Hellenized. His insistence upon a "building from God" (5:1) is supposedly an "indirect polemic" against the Gnostic view that the naked self soars aloft free of any body. This anti-Gnostic motif is also seen by Bultmann in the word *ἐπιεσυστασθαι* in 5:4.

²Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated from the German by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 187-352; Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes (Second edition; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), passim; Walter Schmithals, Die Gnosis in Korinth (Second edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), passim.

³Bultmann, Theology, p. 201.

The Christian does not desire escape from the $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$; but he desires a garment, put on by God, which will replace the $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$.⁴

These Hellenistic reconstructions of Paul have not gone unchallenged. Already in the early years of this century Albert Schweitzer was rejecting a Hellenistic viewpoint and grounding Paul's teaching in the thought world of Late-Judaism.⁵ According to Schweitzer, Late-Judaism assumed that after death the soul carries on an individual, corporeal existence. This existence is viewed as a period of nakedness or a kind of shadowy existence between the natural existence and the supernatural. Paul is supposedly in accord with this view in 2 Cor. 5:1-10. Paul assumes that the soul is something corporeal which is first united with a fleshly body and afterwards with a glorified body. He thinks of the period of nakedness, which must be undergone by those who have fallen asleep, as a miserable existence (5:1-4). He would therefore rather be alive at the parousia in order to be reclothed with the glorified body without being first unclothed in death.

More recently, W. D. Davies also has rejected the

⁴Ibid., p. 202.

⁵Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated from the German by William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), pp. 130-135. "Late-Judaism" is Schweitzer's term. It apparently refers to the inter-testamental period.

Hellenistic interpretation of Paul.⁶ He insists that Paul can be understood completely within the framework of rabbinic Judaism. Taking as his clue the rabbinic teachings on "This Age" and the "Age to Come," Davies concludes that since for Paul the "Age to Come" had already begun with the resurrection of Christ, it was possible for him to speak of receiving the resurrection body at death (5:1). The Greek concept of the reception of the supernatural life at death, then, Davies explains as a logical deduction from Paul's rabbinic understanding of eschatology.

Still a third approach to the passage is that of the interpreters who see in Paul a rather drastic development from a Jewish view to a Hellenistic view of eschatology.⁷ This view claims that Paul's Jewish hopes for the parousia gradually faded, causing his eschatology to take on Greek overtones.

According to this interpretation, 2 Cor. 5:1-10 represents the final stage in the Hellenization of Paul's eschatology. Paul started out with a Jewish eschatological belief

⁶W. D. Davies, St. Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (Second edition; London: SPCK, 1962), pp. 311-318.

⁷Cf. R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life, in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity (Second edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), pp. 455-461; C. H. Dodd, New Testament Studies (Manchester: The University Press, 1953), pp. 108-118; Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: The University Press, 1939), pp. 128-145.

containing strong futuristic and apocalyptic elements (1 Thess. 4:13-18), but by the writing of 2 Corinthians he has abandoned his futuristic eschatology for a realized eschatology. Paul no longer expects the advent of Christ in his lifetime, but he comforts himself with the belief that he has a house with which he will be clothed when he dies.

Finally, there are those who do not interpret this passage against any particular background and who do not see a development in Paul's theology. These men find the passage consistent with the rest of Paul's eschatology; therefore, they treat it somewhat like a meditation on the state of the Christian after death.⁸

The motivation for this passage is usually found by these men in Paul's apparent concern about his physical condition. Operating with the belief that Paul shows great doubt about surviving to the parousia, they see in this passage the following elements: (a) A fear of the nakedness which the dead man must endure between death and the parousia; (b) A desire to be alive at the parousia to escape this unhappy experience; (c) A statement of confidence that even if he does die, he will be with the Lord.

These various interpretations of 2 Cor. 5:1-10 cannot be

⁸Cf. H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things (Second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), pp. 262-272; Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther I-II, supplemented by Werner Georg Kummel (Fourth edition; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), pp. 117-121.

understood and evaluated by themselves. They must be seen against the background of the major thrusts of Pauline eschatology. For this reason we must take a brief look at Paul's eschatology in general.

Albert Schweitzer has emphasized that eschatology is not just an appendix to Paul's theology, but a critical aspect of it which conditions all of his thought.¹ Throughout Paul's correspondence we meet with the conviction that the Lord is at hand; it is this ardent expectation which gives a sense of urgency to all of Paul's teaching and exhortation.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul's concern is that the congregation may be found holy and blameless when the Lord appears

¹ Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated from the German by William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), pp. 53-54. In more recent days this has been underscored by Ernst Käsemann in a number of articles, all reprinted in Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen (second edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), II: "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik," pp. 128-131; "Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus," pp. 161-162. This has led to a dispute with G. Kelling, "Der Grund christlicher Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LXXII (1961), 227-244; J. Luchs, "Über die Aufgabe einer christlichen Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LXXII (1961), 245-267; and R. Bultmann, "Apokalypsis," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXIII (1956), 12-16; "Die Apokalypsis als Mutter der christlichen Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter, 1954), pp. 44-66. The argument turns around the question of whether there is actually a future aspect to Paul's thought which concerns us today.

² For a recent bibliography of Pauline eschatology see Rudolf Schnackenburg, Neutestamentliche Theologie: Der Stand der Forschung (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1953), pp. 104-105.

CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY

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²For a recent bibliography of Pauline eschatology see Rudolf Schnackenburg, Neutestamentliche Theologie: Der Stand der Forschung (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1963), pp. 104-105.

with all his saints (2:19; 3:13; 5:23). In Galatians Paul looks forward to a rescue from this present evil age (1:4). I Corinthians begins with a concern for the steadfastness of the Corinthians as they wait for the revealing of the Lord (1:7-8), and it closes with a prayer for the coming of the Lord (16:22; confer 7:29-32; 10:11; 11:26). 2 Corinthians also contains frequent references to this day of the Lord (1:14; 5:10; 11:2). In Romans, the redemption for which the whole creation yearns (8:19) is nearer than before (13:11), and in Philippians Paul's concern is that his faithful ones may be his boast in the day of the Lord which is at hand (1:6,10; 2:10; 3:20-22; 4:5).

This eschatological expectation of Paul's was prompted by his conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who had inaugurated the new aeon. Paul believed that the Messianic age had arrived with Jesus. Jesus gave himself to deliver mankind from the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), from the principalities and powers (Col. 2:15), and from the powers of darkness (Col. 1:13). He is the second Adam who has reversed the deleterious effects of the first Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12-21), replacing the reign of death with the reign of life. His death, resurrection and exaltation marked the advent of the age to come; Paul looked for the consummation of that age in the second advent of Christ.

The Christian, by virtue of his baptism, shares in the blessings of this new age (Rom. 6:1-11). He is already

justified (Rom. 8:30). He is transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13). He lives a new life in the new age because he has already died with Christ to the old aeon (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-10). The Christian's solidarity with Adam in sin and death has been replaced by his solidarity with Jesus Christ, Adam's antitype, in righteousness and life (Rom. 5:15-17).

The Christian's participation in the resurrection age, however, does not mean that he is completely freed from the old aeon. The Christian's life is one of tension between the old and the new aeon. He is being continually transformed into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6), but he is not yet delivered from the body of death (Rom. 7:24).³ He has received the Spirit, but it is only the down payment and guarantee of the glory which is to be his (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13). He has been made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7), but he still awaits fulfillment in the "revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

What the Christian awaits is the final actualization of

³Certain commentators deny that this is a reference to Paul's post-conversion existence. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann, edited and translated by Schubert M. Ogden (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 147-157; W. G. Kümmel, Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1929); Franz J. Leenhardt, The Epistle to the Romans, translated from the French by Harold Knight (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 180-199.

his resurrection at the parousia. At the parousia the new spiritual body will replace this body of death, and mortality will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:54). Then the Christian will know in full the glory of the new aeon inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

Paul gives us a glimpse of this consummation in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians. In reply to the concern of the Thessalonians about their dead brethren, Paul points out that the resurrection of Jesus assures the resurrection of those who believe in him (4:14). Speaking by the authority of the Lord (4:15), Paul outlines the events of the parousia as follows: (a) The Lord Himself will descend from heaven; (b) The dead in Christ shall rise; (c) Then they, together with the Christians who are still alive at that time, will meet the Lord in the air (4:16-17). The hope of resurrection which the Christian knows as a member of the resurrected Body of Christ will be realized in his personal resurrection at the parousia.

Paul discusses this resurrection hope more thoroughly in 1 Cor. 15:12-58. Speaking to a congregation which apparently had difficulties with the concept of resurrection, Paul elaborates more fully on the nature of the resurrection body and the events of the last day. He uses the analogy of the development of a sown seed in order to describe the resurrection body (15:36-38). Just as the body of the grown plant is different from the seed which was originally sown, so the

resurrection body is different from the body of flesh which is sown in the earth. Different kinds of seeds yield different kinds of products. So there are different kinds of bodies and different kinds of glory. The body of flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God (15:50). There must be a change from physical to spiritual (15:44), from perishable to imperishable, from mortal to immortal (15:53). This change will take place at the parousia, when both the living and the dead will be transformed (15:52). The Christian can be confident that just as he has borne the image of the "man of dust," so he will be changed to bear the image of the "man of heaven" (15:49).

This brief survey has attempted to show that Paul's eschatology centers around his belief in the resurrected Christ and in the deliverance of the whole man at the parousia. Christ is the head of redeemed mankind; as the "first-born of the dead" he leads us to a bodily resurrection. In this life, the new aeon which has dawned in the resurrection of Christ is experienced only incompletely by the Christian as a member of the Body of Christ. He still awaits the redemption of his body (Rom. 8:23) which will occur only at the parousia, when the body of death gives place to the new spiritual body of the resurrection. Only then will the Christian live entirely in the new aeon.

CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF THE PASSAGE

The wide context of this passage deals with the Apostolic office. In 2:14-7:2 Paul discusses his understanding of the ministry. His ministry is a life-giving one (2:16; 3:6) which is characterized by the glory of the new aeon (3:7-18). Paul is full of confidence in this ministry, for the God who has called him to it has also qualified him for it (3:4-6).

The glory of Paul's ministry, however, is hidden under the mask of death. He has his treasure in an earthen vessel (4:7). In his sufferings and perils he shares in the death of Jesus (4:8-10). But it is just when he is given up into death that the life of Jesus is at work in his work (4:10-11). Paul concludes this thought--the working of the death and life of Christ in his body--with the assurance of the final life-giving work of Jesus. "He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence" (4:14). Paul sees the resurrection at the parousia as his ultimate destiny.

This thought gives Paul new courage (4:16), for it reminds him that his slight momentary affliction is preparing him for an eternal weight of glory (4:17). Even though his outer nature is wasting away, his inner nature, his solidarity with the new aeon in Christ, is being renewed day by day

(4:16). By keeping his eye on the realities of the new aeon, he is sustained in his sufferings in this aeon (4:18).

It is in the light of these verses that our passage should be studied. Paul seems to be carrying his argument one step further when he discusses the destruction of our earthly tent (5:1). If the decomposition of the flesh is carried to its limit in death, we have a building from God.

With the term οἶδαμεν in verse 1, Paul seems to be introducing a well-known Christian concept as an explanation for what has been just stated.¹ The explanatory γὰρ also reinforces this idea. Paul had already spoken to the Corinthians on matters of eschatology (1 Cor. 15:12-58) and here he may be alluding to this earlier teaching. Paul does not lose heart (4:16) because of his sure conviction that "if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The conditional sentence formed by εἰάν with the aorist subjunctive καταλυθῆν indicates what Paul expects to occur under certain circumstances, namely, the circumstance of the death

¹"The formula οἶδαμεν ὅτι is frequently used to introduce a well-known fact that is generally accepted." Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted from the fourth revised and augmented edition by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 558. Hereafter this work will be referred to as B-A-G. Cf. Rom. 3:19; 6:9; 7:14; 8:22,28; 1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:8; see also Rom. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6:2,3,9; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:15; 1 Thess. 3:3; 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:7.

of the Christian. Since the aorist subjunctive appears both in general conditions and in those referring to something impending, the grammar here does not let us say for certain whether Paul expects to die before the parousia.² He does conceive of the possibility, however, and states his assurance in the face of this possibility.

This verse presents no great textual or grammatical difficulties. The problem is rather with the vocabulary. First of all, what does Paul mean by ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκῆνους? The figure seems to refer to the mortal body we bear on earth, as opposed to the future heavenly body.³ The word ἐπίγειος certainly refers to something which exists on earth in contrast to what is not on earth.⁴ That something is the οἰκία. In Greek thought, the word οἰκία was often used to refer to the human body; that is probably the

²F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and revised from the 9th-10th German edition by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), par. no. 373. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Bl-D-F.

³Cf. Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther I-II, in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, supplemented by Werner Georg Kummel (Fourth edition; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), IX, 117; Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, Die Briefe an die Korinther, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, edited by Paul Althaus (Fifth edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1946), VII, 127.

⁴Cf. Hermann Sasse, "ἡ ἐπίγειος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), I, 680-681. Hereafter this work will be referred to as TDNT.

meaning here.⁵

The background and meaning of τοῦ σκῆνους, a genitive of apposition, is not so clear. According to Michaelis, in Greek literature it often means simply the human body.⁶ Understood against this background, the term σκῆνους would not be emphasized in order to stress the impermanence of the body. It would be understood as a synonym of οἰκία and nothing more. The whole phrase, then, would mean "the earthly tent we live in."

Other commentators, however, understand the figure against a Jewish background which stresses the impermanence of the tent. P. E. Hughes thinks that Paul had in mind the wilderness experiences of the children of Israel when they lived in tents.⁷ A more likely suggestion is that of T. W. Manson, who feels that the allusion is to the Feast of Tabernacles which commemorated the wilderness wanderings.⁸

⁵Philo used this word in an anthropological sense to mean the body as the prison of the soul, e.g., Som. I, 22; Praem. Poen., 120; cf. Otto Michel, "οἰκία," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1954), V, 133-136. Hereafter this wordbook will be referred to as TWNT.

⁶W. Michaelis, "σκῆνους," TWNT, VII, 383-385. Cf. Corp. Herm. 13,12.

⁷Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 162.

⁸T. W. Manson, "ἸΑΛΕΤΗΡΙΟΝ," Journal of Theological Studies, XLVI (January 1945), 1-10. See also W. D. Davies,

At this feast the celebrants occupied huts for a short period of time and then returned to their homes. The parallel would be to man's brief life in his body, conceived of as a temporary dwelling. This emphasis on the impermanence of the body would seem to be supported by 2 Peter 1:13 and Is. 39:12, where the transiency of man's tent house is stressed. With this interpretation, the emphasis on the transiency of the tent contrasts well with the eternal character (αἰώνιον) of the heavenly οἰκία; for this reason it is perhaps to be preferred.

The verb καταλυθῆ is often used to describe the destruction or dismantling of buildings.⁹ It is therefore not inappropriate to describe the tearing down of a "tent-house."¹⁰

In opposition to the figure of the tent-house Paul sets the οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ, the οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον

St. Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (Second edition; London: SPCK, 1962), p. 313.

⁹B-A-G, p. 415.

¹⁰Hughes, p. 162, n. 18: "In general, καταλύειν and ἀναλύειν are synonymous verbs, and the latter was sometimes used of the operation of striking camp, that is, the dismantling of tents (cf. Polybius, V, xxviii, 8; II Macc. 9:1)." Cf. L. Brun, "Zur Auslegung von II Cor. 5:1-10," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums, XXVIII (1929), 207-229. He makes the interesting suggestion that καταλυθῆ is not to be understood of death in a literal sense, but of the dying which takes place in the apostolic work (4:7-18). This would mean that Paul is merely speaking for himself here; however, we have already shown that Paul is speaking general truths here. Supra, p. 14.

ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. This figure also presents difficulties. Most interpreters refer the οἰκοδομὴν to the individual resurrection body of the Christian. There is support for this idea of individual corporeality in the Greek background of the term.¹¹

J. A. T. Robinson, on the other hand, interprets οἰκοδομὴν against a Hebrew background. He claims that the Hebrew idea of "body" is one of solidarity rather than individuation. He also suggests that Paul's use of οἰκοδομὴ elsewhere (1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21; 4:12,16) indicates that here it ought to be understood as the corporate Body of Christ, not the individual resurrection body.¹²

The verb ἔχομεν is used to support both of the above interpretations. If οἰκοδομὴν refers to the Christian's individual resurrection body, then the ἔχομεν may mean that Paul conceives of those bodies as already prepared for the Christian in heaven.¹³ Another possibility is that the

¹¹Corp. Herm. 10,17; 13,3,14; cf. Philipp Vielhauer, Oikodome; das Bild vom Bau in der christlichen Literatur vom Neuen Testament bis Clemens Alexandrinus (Heidelberg: Karlsruhe-Durlach, 1940).

¹²John A. T. Robinson, The Body (London: SCM Press, 1952), pp. 76-78. Cf. E. Earle Ellis, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 41-42. Ellis also cites A. Feuillet, "La demeure céleste et la destinée des chrétiens (II Cor. v. 1-10)," Recherches de Science Religieuse, XLIV (1956), 161-192, 360-402.

¹³Wendland, p. 127: "Offenbar hat Paulus die Vorstellung, dass dieser neue Leib im Himmel fertig daliege."

present tense of the verb could be understood in a futuristic sense. Paul is so confident of the future condition that he construes it as a present reality (for example, Mt. 26:45; Mk. 10:33; Jn. 21:3; 1 Cor. 16:5).¹⁴ Robinson, however, feels that the present tense of the verb excludes the possibility that the resurrection body is referred to here.¹⁵ It is the corporate Body of Christ which is our real possession now, and not the individual resurrection body. Paul's use of the verb *ἔχομεν* in this epistle could confirm this stress on present possession (confer 3:4,12; 4:7). Finally, the present tense of *ἔχομεν* is also stressed by those who feel that here Paul has changed from a futuristic to a realized eschatology. They point to *ἔχομεν* as an indication that Paul expected to receive his resurrection body upon death and not at the parousia.¹⁶

¹⁴Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), XXXIV, 144.

¹⁵Robinson, p. 77.

¹⁶R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life, in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity (Second edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), p. 458. A small group of commentators interpret the *οὐρανὸν* as the "heavenly abode" of God's people which they enter upon death; cf. Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1859), pp. 106-128, R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), pp. 995-1017, and R. V. G. Tasker, The Second Epistle of Paul to the

This οἰκοδομήν, which Paul says we have, is ἐκ Θεοῦ . Although it is true that the material body is also from God (1 Cor. 8:6; 11:12; 12:13,24), the spiritual body is in the strictest sense God's creation. The ἐκ Θεοῦ could easily be applied either to the individual resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:38) or to the corporate Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:9).

This οἰκοδομή is further qualified as an οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. These terms all stress the God-given qualities of the "building from God," in opposition to the frail, earthly body. While the earthly body is a tent-like dwelling (τοῦ σκηνῶν), the building from God is eternal (αἰώνιον) and not made with hands (ἀχειροποίητον). It is permanent, not temporal. Unlike the earthly (ἐπίγειος) body, its proper environment is heaven (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).

It can be seen, then, that the indefiniteness of Paul's language in this verse leaves it unclear whether his assurance is in his membership in the corporate Body of Christ, or in his receipt of a resurrection body at death, or at the parousia. Our previous study of the context, however, would seem to indicate that Paul's eyes are focused on the realities of the new aeon to be actualized in the last day, and

Corinthians, in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 77-83. This interpretation is hardly acceptable, since throughout the passage Paul is clearly setting up a contrast between two "bodies," the present body and the future body.

not just on his own personal destiny.¹⁷ He looks to the parousia, when he will be raised and enter into the glory of the Lord with his brothers in Christ (4:14; confer Rom. 8:11). He contrasts the momentary afflictions of this aeon with the glory which belongs to the new aeon (4:17; confer 3:18, Rom. 8:17). He looks not to the visible things of this aeon, but to the invisible realities of the new aeon (4:18; confer Rom. 8:23-25, 1 Cor. 13:12). Paul seems more concerned with the actualization of the new aeon and his participation in it, than with the theoretical question of life after death.

In verse two Paul gives an explanation (καὶ γάρ) of his affirmation in verse one. It is uncertain whether ἐν τούτῳ looks back to σκηνῶν, in which case it would mean "in this tent-house," or forward to ἐπιποθεῖντες, in which case it would mean "in this fact." Although there are parallels for the latter use of οὗτος (confer Jn. 15:8; 1 Jn. 2:3,5), the former interpretation is the simplest here. The parallel use of στενάξω in verse four, where Paul specifically speaks of groaning "in this tent," gives good support for a similar interpretation here.

The groaning which Paul speaks of here can be paralleled in Rom. 8:18-27, the only other place where Paul uses the verb στενάξω. In that passage Paul speaks of a threefold groaning. The whole creation (8:22), the Christian (8:23)

¹⁷Supra, pp. 13-14.

and the Spirit (8:26) all groan as they look forward to God's redemptive action at the parousia. In Rom. 8:23 the Christian already has the first fruits of the Spirit (confer 2 Cor. 5:5) and what he longs for is the redemption of his body (ἀπολύτρωσις τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν). If this passage is accepted as a parallel to 2 Cor. 5:1-10, then it is unlikely that the groaning in 5:2 could be caused by a fear of death. It is rather the painful but hopeful longing for the final redemption of the body.¹⁸

Paul says that he has a desire (ἐπιποθῶντες) to put on his building from heaven. The verb ἐπενδύσασθαι is a double compound which means literally "to put on over." If this meaning is stressed, then Paul apparently desires to put his heavenly body on over his earthly body. In other words, he wants to be alive at the parousia in order to put his heavenly body on without having experienced death.¹⁹

An alternative interpretation is possible, however, if one understands ἐπενδύω as synonymous with ἐνδύω. Simple and compound verbs were often used interchangeably in the Hellenistic world (for example Rom. 15:4; Eph. 6:13; 1 Pt. 1:10). It is possible that Paul used ἐπενδύω here either for

¹⁸Cf. Johannes Schneider, "στεινάξω," *TWNT*, VII, 600-603.

¹⁹Cf. Lietzmann, p. 117; Plummer, p. 145: "The more permanent dwelling is to be drawn over the less permanent one, as one garment is drawn over another, and is to take its place."

variety or for the sake of alliteration (ἐπενδύσασθαι , ἐπιποθεῖντες). If this is the case, then there is no reference here to a desire to be alive at the parousia. There is only a longing for a heavenly body to replace the earthly one.

This heavenly body is spoken of here with the term οἰκητήριον. If it is a diminutive, it could be an indication that the οἰκοδομὴν in verse one is to be understood individually rather than corporately.²⁰ The word implies an inhabitant, which οἰκοδομή does not; that may be Paul's reason for using it here.

The third verse is a very difficult one.²¹ It has therefore yielded a wide variety of interpretations. The first difficulty is with the term εἴγε.²² By this term does Paul mean to state uncertainty or confidence? C. F. D. Moule says that it depends on the context whether εἴγε implies doubt (for example Gal. 3:4) or confident assumption (for example Col. 1:23; Eph. 4:20-21; 1:13; 3:2).²³ It could mean

²⁰Plummer, p. 145, says it is not a diminutive.

²¹"Daran gesellt sich nun 5,3 das eigentliche Rätsel der Periode." Philipp Bachmann, Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, edited by Theodor Zahn (Fourth edition; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909), VIII, 223.

²²The textual variant εἴπερ has some strong support in P46, B, D and G with minor variations. It is chosen by Westcott-Hort, but does not seem to be preferred by any of the commentators.

²³An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Second edition; Cambridge: The University Press, 1960), p. 164. B1-D-F,

either "if indeed" or "inasmuch as," depending on the interpretation one gives to the rest of the passage.²⁴

The word ἐνδυσάμενοι gives us similar problems. It has a textual variant, ἐκδυσάμενοι, which is not well supported at all (D*, G with minor variations, it, Mcion, Chr). Rudolf Bultmann has chosen this variant reading, nevertheless, because he feels it makes better sense out of the sentence.²⁵ ἐνδυσάμενοι, being clothed, is the same fact as οὐ γυμνοὶ, not naked; the sentence as it stands, then, seems to include a tautology. In order to avoid this, Bultmann chooses the variant reading. With this reading, Paul is saying that even if we put off our earthly body we shall not be found naked, for we have a heavenly body awaiting us.

From a textual-critical point of view it would seem likely that the very reason which leads Bultmann to choose the variant reading, namely the tautology, might well be the reason the variant arose in the first place. A better approach would be either to accept the tautology or find an

p. 237 says that εἴ γε implies a more definite assumption than εἰπέρ.

²⁴For a thorough discussion of εἴ γε here see Margaret Thrall, Greek Particles in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 82-95. She decides that here it indicates assurance.

²⁵Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes (Second edition; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), p. 11.

explanation for it.²⁶

If we accept the reading ἐνδυσάμενοι, several interpretations are possible. The first is to refer it to the clothing with our earthly body.²⁷ The meaning then would be: "If indeed we are clothed with the garment of the body, we shall not be found naked, that is disembodied, at the parousia." This interpretation is consistent in its differentiation between the simple verb ἐνδύω and the compound verb ἐπενδύω in this passage. On the other hand, the future verb εὐρεθνησόμεθα would seem to indicate that Paul is speaking of some future clothing which, when it takes place, will keep Paul from being found naked.²⁸

A second possible interpretation refers ἐνδυσάμενοι to the same fact as the ἐπενδύσασθαι in verse 2. Then Paul finds the simple verb adequate to express the clothing with the resurrection body at the parousia. The verse then would mean: "Inasmuch as being clothed with the resurrection body, we shall not be found naked." In this case, the clothing could be understood as happening either at the parousia or at death.

A third possibility is offered by Margaret Thrall. She

²⁶The suggestion that ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ should be treated as a case of asyndeton is structurally inadmissible. Plummer, p. 147.

²⁷E.g. Hughes, p. 169.

²⁸Plummer, p. 147.

suggests that ἐνδυσάμενοι could refer to the moment of baptism.²⁹ She cites Gal. 3:27 and Col. 3:9-10 (confer Col. 2:11) as two other instances where the same verb is used in a baptismal context. If οἰκοδομὴν in verse 1 is the Body of Christ, then ἐνδυσάμενοι here would refer to the putting on of that Body in baptism. By thus referring ἐνδυσάμενοι to a different moment from the impossibility of being γυμνός, the tautology is removed.

With our interpretation of the word γυμνός, we introduce still another possible interpretation of the verse. The above interpretations interpret γυμνός in the sense of being disembodied in death. This use of the term γυμνός is frequent in Greek literature.³⁰ Albrecht Oepke, however, interprets the term against a Jewish background in which nakedness is a condition of guilt or judgment.³¹ In the Old Testament, nakedness was the condition of slaves and war captives. Since defeat and captivity were viewed as the judgment of God upon sin, the term nakedness came to have connotations of guilt and judgment (Is. 47:3; Ez. 16:37; 23:29; Dan. 4:30b LXX; Hos. 2:3; Amos 2:16). The Jews had a cultic horror of

²⁹Thrall, pp. 92-94.

³⁰Plato, Crat. 403b; Philo, Virt. 76; Leg. All. II, 57-59; III, 55; Porphyrius, Abst. I, 31.

³¹"γυμνός," TDNT, I, 774. Oepke refers to a Samaritan Liturgy for the eve of the day of Atonement and the following passages: Ex. 20:26; Rev. 3:18; 16:15; Jos. Bell., 2,148; T. Ber. II, 14-15.

nakedness (Ex. 20:26; Jn. 21:7; Rev. 3:18; 16:15); to be *γυμνός* was for them a great evil (1 Macc. 1:14; 2 Macc. 4:12-15). It is therefore conceivable that *γυμνός* is used here with the same overtones of guilt and shame. If this interpretation is accepted, Paul is saying that if we are clothed with the heavenly body at the parousia, we shall not be found guilty (*γυμνός*) at the judgment which follows. This interpretation also has the advantage of removing the tautology. In this case the *γυμνός* refers to an ethical condition, and not to a metaphysical condition synonymous with *ἐνδυσάμενοι*.³²

We have seen, then, that Paul's language is not immediately clear, but is capable of a variety of interpretations with greater or lesser plausibility. The suggested interpretations are: (a) Paul hopes to be clothed with his physical body until the parousia, and so escape death; (b) He assumes that he will receive his heavenly habitation at death; (c) Being-baptized and having received the down-payment of the Spirit, he is certain to obtain the resurrection body;

³²On *γυμνός* see also J. N. Sevenster, "Some Remarks on the *γυμνός* in II Cor. V. 3," Studia Paulina: Festschrift for Johannes deZwinn, compiled by J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1953), pp. 202-214. He denies either a Greek or a Hebrew background to the word *γυμνός*. It is just a word to denote the state of the dead between death and the parousia. Paul does not say how he conceived of that condition. His interest lies, instead, in "the eschatological sequence of the history of salvation" (p. 212).

(d) When clothed with his heavenly body, he will not be found guilty in God's judgment.

The *καὶ γὰρ* in verse 4 indicates that Paul intends to explain his thought further. This verse presents us with many of the same difficulties as the previous verse, however, since the same uncertain vocabulary is used.

The expression "we who are in this tent" clearly refers to those Christians alive with Paul at that time. They are the same as those in the *οἰκία* in 5:1. These Christians sigh (confer 5:2) because they are burdened (*στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι*). The meaning of *βαρέω* here is determined by the interpretation given to *ἐφ' ᾧ*. *ἐφ' ᾧ* could be causal (confer Rom. 5:12; Phil. 3:12). In this case, Paul feels oppressed (*βαρούμενοι*) because he does not want to be divested of his body (*ἐκδύσασθαι*) in death. The verb *στενάζω*, however, could be a clue that *ἐφ' ᾧ* here is to be interpreted simply as "wherefore" or "for indeed." In 5:2 and in Rom. 8:23-24 *στενάζω* refers to Paul's longing for the redemption of his body. If that is the meaning here, then *βαρούμενοι* would refer to the burden of existence in our tent-dwellings in this aeon (confer Wisdom 9:15). This burden causes Paul to sigh as he longs for the redemption of his body. The *ἐφ' ᾧ*, then, does not give the cause of Paul's sighing, but introduces a further statement of the same longing for the redemption of the body: "For indeed, we do not want to be unclothed, but clothed."

Here we are faced once again with the problem of interpreting the verb ἐπενδύσασθαι. It could mean "put on over," in which case Paul is expressing fear of death and a desire to receive the heavenly body before the earthly one is taken away. It could also mean simply "put on." This interpretation has the support of Rom. 8:23-24, where Paul's sighing is due to his desire for the redemption of his body. In that passage Paul shows no fear of death, but only a longing for his heavenly body.

The term ἐκδύσασθαι presents us with the same problems discussed under the term γυμνός. It could refer to the Greek idea of discarding the garment of the body at death, with the resultant nakedness. Paul would then be expressing fear of such disembodiment. On the other hand, it could reflect the Hebrew background of guilt and judgment. Then Paul's concern would be that he not be found guilty in the last judgment.

Paul's ultimate concern in all of this is that what is mortal might be swallowed up by life. The mortal (θνητόν) is for Paul the σὰρξ, or that which characterizes our earthly existence (4:10-12).³³ When we are clothed with our heavenly body, this mortal will be consumed by life (ζωή). This life is characteristic of the new eschatological

³³Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated from the German by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 234.

existence which we will enter at that time. The parallel with 1 Cor. 15:54 is an obvious one and may suggest that Paul is thinking of the same parousia experience, not of a change at death.

In verse five Paul points to the source of his assurance in this matter. He points out that God is the cause of our ultimate investiture with the glorified body. He is the one who has prepared us for "this very thing" (εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο). The thing which he has prepared us for is the sure hope of the mortal being swallowed up by life, spoken of in the previous verses.

Paul says that God has prepared us for this by giving us the down payment of the Spirit (ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος). The down payment of the Spirit is the first installment of the heavenly habitation which awaits us (confer 1:22; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:23). As individuals, we have our portion in the resurrection body now only in the ἀρραβῶνα; we share only in the first fruits (Rom. 8:23). This down payment is to become determinative of the Christian's new existence (4:16; Gal. 5:16-18, 22-26; Rom. 8:13-14).

Most commentators refer the down payment to the assurance of an individual resurrection body at the parousia (confer Rom. 8:11). It should be noted, however, that for Robinson the ἀρραβῶνα is the pledge of our incorporation into the new corporeity, the Body of Christ, which will be ours in the

new aeon.³⁴ It is through the Spirit that we have our portion in this new solidarity now, but only at the parousia will we share completely in the solidarity of the recreated universe in Christ. The interpretation of this verse, then, depends greatly upon one's interpretation of the *οἰκοδομὴν* in verse 1.

With the *οὖν* in verse 6, Paul looks back to verse 5 for the cause of his confidence of which he will speak. "Therefore," because we have the Spirit as a down payment, we are always of good courage (*θαρροῦντες*). If verses 1-4 are understood as expressing Paul's fears, then here he has apparently overcome his fears and experienced a great change of attitude.

Paul is confident and knows (*εἰδότες*) that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. Existence in this earthly body means absence from full communion with the Lord (Phil. 3:20). Here Paul interrupts his sentence with the further insight that we walk by faith and not by "what is seen" (*εἶδους*, v. 7). Even though we have the Spirit, we are still deprived of the full vision of God.³⁵ Absence from

³⁴Robinson, pp. 78-79.

³⁵"Paulus betont vielmehr, dass das Schauen von Angesicht zu Angesicht im gegenwärtigen Christenleben noch nicht Wirklichkeit ist, und damit ist 5:7 deutlich die eschatologische Begrenzung zu 3:18. Weil die Christen jetzt noch das, was sie einst sehen sollen, nur in Hoffnung haben (Rom. 8:24f.), sehnen sie sich aus dieser Vorläufigkeit heraus nach der Heimkehr zum Herrn." Kümmel on Lietzmann, p. 2-3. Cf. also Numb. 12:8; 2 Cor. 4:18.

the Lord does not mean that the believer is entirely cut off from him, however. Faith bridges the gap between the Christian and him. In this life the Christian's communion with him is under the conditions of faith and not under the conditions of what is seen. It is not until the parousia (1 Thess. 4:17) that the Christian will participate completely in the realities of the new aeon. Only then will he see the Lord face to face (1 Cor. 13:12).

In verse 8 Paul picks up where he left off in verse 6. He repeats the *ὑπαρροῦντες* in the form of *ὑπαρροῦμεν* before he expresses the main verb *ἐὐδοκοῦμεν*. Having pointed out that we are presently at home in the body and away from the Lord, he expresses the preference for being away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The difficulty in interpreting these verses lies in the verbs *ἐκδημέω* and *ἐνδημέω*. Used by Paul only in these verses, they admit of differing interpretations. The traditional interpretation understands "at home in the body" to refer to life in the earthly body, while "away from the body" refers to the naked intermediate state (confer Wisdom 3:1-5).³⁶

It is possible, however, that here Paul is not referring to the interim state at all. He may be speaking of the

³⁶See also Philo, Leg. Alleg. 3,14; Migr. Abr. 34,466. Bultmann considers this idea so dualistic as to be very close to Gnosticism, Theology, I, 201-202.

contrast between life in this body and life in the resurrection body. In that case he is expressing the same hope as he expressed in verses 1-4.³⁷

Finally, it has been suggested that the contrast is not between individual states of existence, but between corporate realities which inhere in Adam and in Christ.³⁸ According to this interpretation, "at home in the body" means at home "in the solidarities and securities of earthly existence."³⁹ In this case, the term $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ is interpreted as the self in its solidarity with sin and death.⁴⁰ The opposite of being in the $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$, then, is the life of the $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ πνευματικόν (1 Cor. 15:44) in which the solidarities of the new aeon are realized. Paul's desire in verse 8, then, is identical with that of verse 4. It is a desire to be clothed with the Body of Christ at the parousia.

The $\delta\iota\delta$ with which verse 9 begins looks back to $\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\delta\sigma\kappa\tilde{\omega}\mu\epsilon\tilde{\nu}$ $\mu\tilde{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\nu$ in verse 8. Since we would rather be at home with the Lord, therefore we make it our aim to please him ($\varphi\iota\lambda\omicron\tau\iota\mu\omicron\mu\epsilon\tilde{\nu}\epsilon\tilde{\theta}\alpha . . . \epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\iota \alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\tilde{\tau}\tilde{\omega} \epsilon\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\nu}\alpha\iota$). In this manner the Spirit gets his due already in the present.

³⁷Lietzmann, p. 121: "Die Sehnsucht des Pls richtet sich durchweg auf die Parusie."

³⁸Ellis, p. 46.

³⁹Robinson, p. 29.

⁴⁰Ellis, p. 46 gives the following references: Rom. 6:12; 6:6; 7:23; 8:13; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:43-44; Col. 2:11.

Paul holds this ambition, to be found acceptable to God, whether at home or away from home (*εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε ἐκ σώματος*). The problem which these alternatives raise is whether the participles refer to the Lord or to the body. Paul could be saying that he strives to be pleasing whether at home with the Lord or away from the Lord. The order of the participles is against this interpretation, however, since it is unlikely that Paul would mention the future condition before the present one. The other alternative is best. We strive to be pleasing to him whether at home in the body or away from the body.

Once again we are faced with the question of what Paul means by "away from the body." He may mean the disembodied state of the dead. In that case, Paul's meaning would be: "We aim at winning the Lord's approval, whether at his coming he finds us in the body or already out of it." On the other hand, he may equate being away from the body with being in the heavenly body. Then Paul would be saying: "It is our aim to please him, whether we are in this body or in our heavenly body in the new aeon."

In verse 10 Paul notes that we have good reason for being pleasing to God, for "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." God has decreed (*δει*) that we must all be made manifest (*φανερωθῆναι*) before the judgment bench

(βήματος).⁴¹

Paul does not say specifically when this appearance before the judgment seat must take place. In the New Testament the judgment is intimately tied up with the last day. In that day Christ will sit as judge (1 Cor. 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:10) and he will deliver the judgment according to the mandate of God (Rom. 2:16; confer 1 Thess. 3:13). God, who after judgment distributes the commendations (1 Cor. 4:5), can also be designated as judge (Rom. 3:6; 14:10).

Paul says that at this judgment seat each one must receive a recompense (κομίσεται) for what he has done (πρὸς ἃ ἔπραξεν) during his life in the body (τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος), whether good or bad (εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον). It is interesting to note the aorist ἔπραξεν, which seems to suggest that all of man's past can be summed up into one action committed in the past. This suggestion seems even more plausible in view of the change from the plural to the singular (ἀγαθὸν, φαῦλον). It would seem that when one stands before the judgment seat, his judgment takes place on the basis of a single principle which makes him either good or bad. If Paul's dichotomy throughout this passage has been between those clothed in Christ and those naked in guilt at the judgment, then this change could be readily understood as

⁴¹On δεῖ see E. Fascher, "Theologische Beobachtungen zu δεῖ," Neutestamentlichen Studien für R. Bultmann (Second edition; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1957), pp. 249-252.

a further application of this dichotomy.

We have discovered many difficulties in our interpretation of this passage. The language and syntax are flexible, and the vocabulary is uncertain. Many of the important terms are not used elsewhere by Paul; so it is not possible to establish a Pauline usage. This problem is further complicated by the fact that for many of the terms both a Greek and a Hebrew background can be discovered. This flexibility has led to a variety of interpretations which are, at first glance, all more or less valid. None of them does great violence to the text.

In order to evaluate these interpretations, we must discuss each one as a whole. We must consider not only faithfulness to the text, but also the internal consistency of each interpretation and its relation to the rest of Paul's eschatology.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAJOR INTERPRETATIONS

The Traditional Approach

The traditional view of this passage is that here Paul is discussing the interim state.¹ In his previous

¹Proponents of this view include Floyd V. Filson, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick and Others (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), X, 326-332; H. L. Goudge, The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928), pp. 45-54; R. P. C. Hanson, II Corinthians, in Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1954), pp. 45-49; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 160-185; Wilfred Henry Isaacs, The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 51-52; H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things (Second edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), pp. 262-272; Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther I-II, supplemented by Werner Georg Kümmel, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Günther Bornkamm (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), IX, 117-123; Allan Menzies, The Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), pp. 34-37; C. L. Mitton, "Paul's Certainties. V. The Gift of the Spirit and Life beyond Death," The Expository Times, LXIX (June 1958), 260-263; Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915), XXXIV, 140-164; J. N. Sevenster, "Einige Bemerkungen über den 'Zwischenzustand' bei Paulus," New Testament Studies, I (1954-1955), 291-296; "Some Remarks on the $\chi\upsilon\mu\nu\omicron\varsigma$ in II Cor. V. 3," Studia Paulina: Festschrift for Johannis deZwann, compiled by J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1953), pp. 202-214; Joseph Sickenberger, Die Briefe des Heiligen Paulus an die Korinther und Römer (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932), p. 113; R. H. Strachan, The Second Epistle of Paul to the

eschatological instruction (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:12-58) Paul had spoken only of the sowing of the physical body in death and the resurrection of the glorified body at Christ's coming. This instruction left a gap between the sowing and the reaping, and it is this gap which Paul is supposedly filling here.

According to this interpretation, the thought that he might die before the parousia had become a great concern for Paul. He knows that if his earthly body (οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους) dies, he has a heavenly body (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ) awaiting him at the parousia (5:1). But death before the parousia means a time of waiting in a disembodied state (γυμνός, 5:2); this is a thought which Paul finds extremely distasteful. He therefore expresses the wish that he might remain alive until the parousia. At that time, then, he will put the resurrection body on over (ἐπιενδύσασθαι) his present body, and what is mortal will be swallowed up by life (5:2-4).

Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, edited by James Moffatt (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935), pp. 99-105; L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ (Second edition; Westminster: Dacre Press, 1944), pp. 284-285; Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), pp. 186-198; Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, Die Briefe an die Korinther, in Das Neue Testament Deutsch, edited by Paul Althaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1946), VII, 126-132; Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson (Revised edition; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 238-239; Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body (London: The Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 52-55; G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The New Testament Doctrine of the End," Evangelical Quarterly, XVI (July 1944), pp. 202-218.

Adherents to this view differ as to whether the *ἐνδύσαμενοι* of 5:3 refers to the clothing with the heavenly body at the parousia² or to man's present clothing with the earthly body.³ In either case, Paul's desire is to be alive at the parousia in order to escape the dreaded interim state of nakedness.

In 5:6-8, however, this interpretation finds a change of attitude on Paul's part. He goes from fear to confidence (*ἠγαλλήματα*, 5:6). This change is activated by the thought that we have the down payment of the Spirit (5:5). This down payment is our assurance that the power which effected the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is also at work within us preparing us for the redemption of our bodies at the parousia.

This confidence is enhanced by the recognition that if we leave the body in death, we will be closer to the Lord (5:8). As long as we are in this body we are absent from the Lord. This is undesirable. If absence from the body means to be at home with the Lord, then death is welcome, even though it means a period of nakedness. The result is that, upon further consideration, the thought which suggested sighing and groaning to Paul in 5:2-4 now suggests confidence.

²E.g., Plummer, p. 147.

³E.g., Hughes, pp. 169-170.

Because of this desire which Paul has to be with the Lord, his wish is to please him with his life (5:9). Whether the parousia finds him still alive (εἴτε ἐνδύμουντες), or, because of death, in a state of nakedness (εἴτε ἐκδύμουντες), his consuming ambition is to be well-pleasing to the Lord.

This ambition is buttressed by the further consideration that even for the Christian there is to be a day of reckoning (5:10). The thought that all our works are to be made manifest before the judgment seat of God ought to be our incentive to live a life which will be found acceptable in the eyes of God.

This interpretation, although very popular, has a number of inherent difficulties. The greatest difficulty is that it involves such a great change of attitude on Paul's part within the scope of ten verses. What Paul shrinks from in 5:2-4 he is said to embrace in 5:6-8. This contradiction cannot be hidden. Instead, it leads commentators to strange attempts to reconcile the two attitudes. Hughes, for example, speaks of the state after death as one of peace and bliss, and in the next paragraph says that "death, although no longer feared, is still repulsive to the Christian."⁴ It is difficult to see how something which is "no longer feared" and which leads to a state of "peace and bliss" can be described with the term "repulsive."

⁴Hughes, p. 171.

A second difficulty with this interpretation is the anthropological dualism which it presupposes. By interpreting *ψυρός* as the disembodied soul or the bodiless spirit it introduces an unPauline dualism into the passage. The concept of a "naked soul" leading a separate existence apart from the body is foreign to the rest of Paul's anthropology.⁵

There are other lesser difficulties which, taken collectively, also argue strongly against this interpretation. First of all, the question can be asked: If Paul has spoken so confidently of the condition of the dead as a sleep (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:13) and if he has the certainty of a heavenly body at the parousia (5:1), why should he suddenly be filled with such a fear of death? If it is argued that his recollection of the Spirit brings him new confidence (5:5), then how could this fundamental truth have escaped him when writing 5:1-4, especially since the down payment was in his mind already in 1:22? It should also be pointed out that what Paul allegedly shrinks from is the naked interim state, while what the Spirit assures him of is embodiment at the

⁵"Just as Paul does not know the Greek-Hellenistic conception of the immortality of the soul (released from the body), neither does he use psyche to designate the seat or the power of the mental life which animates man's matter, as it had become the custom to do among the Greeks. Rather, psyche in Paul means primarily the Old Testament נְפֶשׁ (rendered psyche in the LXX)--'vitality,' or 'life' itself." Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated from the German by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 204. Cf. Rom. 11:3; 16:4; 2 Cor. 1:23; Phil. 2:30; 1 Thess. 2:8.

parousia. How could this assurance produce the radical change of attitude towards the interim state which Paul displays in 5:6-8?

It can also be noted that the *εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο* which Paul says God has prepared us for (5:5) refers back to the *ἐπενδύσασθαι* of 5:4. If one understands 5:4 to mean that Paul desires to avoid death and be clothed with the resurrection body at the parousia, the 5:5 would mean that Paul feels assured of living to the parousia and has the down payment of the Spirit to bring that about. For Paul, however, the Spirit was a manifestation of the new aeon, not a guarantee of continued life in this aeon.⁶ This interpretation would also require us to take the *οἶδαμεν* in 5:5 as referring to Paul alone, since all the Corinthians certainly would not be alive at the parousia. The *οἶδαμεν* of 5:1, however, suggests that Paul is speaking of a general truth applicable to all Christians.⁷

Finally, this interpretation makes a great deal of the verb *ἐπενδύω*. It insists that *ἐπενδύω* must be understood as a clothing over of the body at the parousia. This stress on the prefix is not mandatory, however, for the distinction

⁶Cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13. See also Eduard Schweizer and Others, "*πνεῦμα, πνευματικός*," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1959), VI, 413-436.

⁷Supra, p. 14.

between simple and compound verbs was not rigid in Hellenistic Greek.⁸ It should also be noted that in 1 Cor. 15:56 Paul finds the simple verb ἐνδύω sufficient to describe the putting on of the resurrection body.

We have seen that this interpretation, although traditional, presents us with a great number of difficulties. It results in a confusing inconsistency in Paul's thought and language within the short scope of ten verses. For this reason it is not a very attractive approach.

Realized Eschatology

There are a number of commentators who believe that in these verses Paul is expressing the conviction that the Christian will receive his resurrection body at death.⁹ Those who

⁸Supra, pp. 22-23.

⁹These include R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life, in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity (Second edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), pp. 455-461; W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: SPCK, 1962), pp. 311-320; C. H. Dodd, New Testament Studies (Manchester: The University Press, 1953), pp. 108-118; H. A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things' (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 117-128; C. F. Georg Heinrici, Der zweiten Brief an die Korinther in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Seventh edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1890), pp. 132-157; Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: The University Press, 1939), pp. 123-145; H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man (Third edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), pp. 128-131; Paul Wilh. Schmiedel, Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher und an die Korinther in Hand-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Second edition; Freiburg: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr, 1892), pp. 236-241; Hans Windisch, Der

hold this view see a development in Paul's theology from a Jewish, futuristic eschatology to a type of "realized" eschatology. In 1 Thessalonians 4:12-18 Paul indicates that he expects the advent of Christ almost immediately. Since the new age had dawned with the resurrection of Christ, Paul can expect the consummation of this new age to occur very soon.

In 1 Corinthians Paul still evidences the conviction that he and some of his converts will be alive to meet the Lord when he comes. In 15:51-52 he says "We shall not all sleep." The emphatic "we" seems to indicate that Paul places himself among the survivors. He still expects the advent of Christ within his lifetime. According to this view, there is a slight development from the expectation of 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians Paul considers it very exceptional for a Christian to die before the parousia, but in 1 Corinthians he has to assure his readers that not all Christians will die. The advent is not quite so imminent in Paul's thought as before.

In 2 Cor. 5:1-10 the alleged development has proceeded much further. Paul no longer is confident of living to the parousia; his hope is no longer fixed on the receipt of a resurrection body at that time. Instead, he focuses on the

Zweite Korintherbrief in Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, edited by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer (Ninth edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), pp. 158-175.

moment of death. He notes that if we die, we have a heavenly body. In other words, we receive our spiritual body upon death, and not at the parousia. As long as we are in the body, we are away from the Lord, but when we die we shall be at home with the Lord (5:6-8). At that time our commerce with God will be by sight rather than by faith. In other words, 5:1-5 and 5:6-8 supposedly affirm basically the same truth from different points of view. In 5:1-4 Paul describes the future state as a deliverance from the limitations of the flesh, while in 5:6-8 he describes it as a deliverance from the limitations of faith.

Scholars who hold this basic view differ on the cause and background of Paul's development. C. H. Dodd sees Paul's changed eschatology as the result of the delay of the parousia and Paul's realization that he would probably not live to see it.¹⁰ The extreme dangers which he had confronted in Asia Minor (2 Cor. 1:8-9) had helped him to realize that he would probably die soon. This realization led him to focus on the future of those who die, rather than on the parousia. He concludes that when he dies he will be clothed with his house from heaven.

W. L. Knox finds the motivation for Paul's changed eschatology in his concern to restate the gospel in terms

¹⁰Dodd, pp. 109-110.

which could be understood by the Hellenistic world.¹¹ His experience at Athens had convinced Paul that the Jewish, futuristic eschatology would not prevail in the Gentile world. He therefore set about to adapt his message to the Hellenistic thought patterns.

Part of this alleged process of Hellenization can be seen in 1 Cor. 15:42-50, where Paul "spiritualizes" the resurrection by claiming an immaterial nature for the resurrection body. In 2 Cor. 5:1-10 this revision of Paul's eschatology goes even further. Paul refers to the body with the Hellenistic term *οἰκία*. He also regards the body as a burden from which he longs to be delivered (5:1-4). Paul conceives of the Spirit as a present possession (5:5), supposedly in terms of the divine afflatus of Hellenistic belief. Finally, Paul's description of earthly life as an exile (5:6-8) is seen by Knox as distinctly Hellenistic.

W. D. Davies, on the other hand, sees the background for Paul's change in the thought world of rabbinic Judaism.¹² Paul's change from a futuristic eschatology to a realized one is supposed to be understood with reference to the Judaistic distinction between "This Age" and the "Age to Come." According to the rabbis, the "Age to Come" was not only the final consummation of all creation, but also, in a certain sense, a

¹¹Knox, pp. 128-145.

¹²Davies, pp. 311-320.

heavenly possession awaiting the righteous at death. For Paul, this heavenly "Age to Come" had already appeared in its initial stages in the resurrection of Christ. As a member of the resurrected body of Christ, Paul was already being transformed. At death, then, Paul would already be in possession of another body. Both on this side of the grave and on the other, Paul would be embodied. For Davies it is unnecessary to go outside of rabbinic Judaism to account for Paul's thought expressed in 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

Unlike the traditional interpretation, which was plagued by internal inconsistencies, the main problem with this interpretation is a lack of consistency with the rest of Pauline thought. First of all, it should be noted that if this passage teaches a realized eschatology, it is in contradiction to the teaching of Paul both before and after the writing of 2 Corinthians. It is acknowledged by all that in the earlier epistles (for example, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-57) Paul thought of resurrection and the receipt of the resurrection body as occurring at the parousia. In 2 Corinthians there seem to be references to a parousia hope which includes the resurrection (4:14; 5:10). Finally, in the later epistles Paul still expects the glorified body to be received at the parousia. In Romans 8:23 Paul places the redemption of our bodies at the parousia (confer Rom. 13:11-14).¹³ In

¹³Proponents of this view usually point out that in Rom. 8:19 Paul speaks of the "revealing" (ἀποκάλυψιν) of

Phil. 3:20-21 Paul expects the Christian to receive his glorified body at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴

These passages seem to indicate that Paul's resurrection hope was pinned on the parousia both before and after the writing of 2 Corinthians.¹⁵ This interpretation, then, involves the difficult assumption that Paul makes a radical change from a futuristic to a realized eschatology and then returns to a futuristic eschatology.

This change seems somewhat unlikely in view of the fact that nowhere in our passage does Paul indicate that he has changed his mind. On the contrary, he begins the passage with *οἶδαμεν*, which elsewhere in Paul refers to a commonly accepted teaching, possibly even that of Paul himself.¹⁶

In connection with this point, it should also be noted

the sons of God, and not of their resurrection (e.g. Charles, p. 460). Rom. 8:19 is parallel to 8:23, however, and 8:23 speaks of a "redemption" (*ἀπολύτρωσις*) of the body, and not just of a revealing of bodies already redeemed. They also find it significant that after 2 Corinthians Paul never speaks of "resurrection." This could be due simply to the fact that in the later letters the resurrection was not a particular problem.

¹⁴Cf. also Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16; 4:6. The end of the age is very much in evidence in Philippians.

¹⁵"Nowhere in the New Testament has the resurrection of the body anything specifically to do with the moment of death. The key 'moments' for this are baptism and the Parousia." John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 79. Cf. also Wendland, pp. 129-131 and Lietzmann, pp. 118-119.

¹⁶Supra, p. 14.

that as an apostle, Paul was the bearer of a unique office which would affect the way he presented his message. The New Testament concept of apostle is similar to the rabbinic shaliah, an authorized agent equivalent to the sender himself.¹⁷ The apostle was conscious of being the bearer of apostolic traditions (Gal. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:1,11) which had their origin in the Lord himself (1 Thess. 4:2,15). If he were to make a change in this tradition, we should expect him to announce and support such a change.

In conclusion, then, the difficulty of harmonizing this interpretation with the rest of Paul's eschatology makes it very difficult to accept.

Parousia Eschatology

There are a group of interpreters who hold that this passage does not deal with the interim state at all, but should be interpreted consistently within the framework of Paul's "parousia eschatology."¹⁸ According to this

¹⁷Cf. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "ἀπόστολος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), I, 430-437. Hereafter this wordbook will be referred to as TDNT.

¹⁸Cf. Philipp Bachmann, Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, edited by Theodor Zahn (Fourth edition; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909), VIII, 215-244; E. Earle Ellis, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 35-48; Wilhelm Mundle, "Das

interpretation, Paul is concerned neither with the "when" nor the "how" of the receipt of our heavenly bodies, but only with the fact that they assuredly will be ours.

The proponents of this view point out that 5:1-10 is a logical progression from 4:7-13. In chapter four Paul has been speaking of the passing away of the body, and here in these verses he speaks of the ultimate passing away of the body in death. To do this he uses the metaphor of the dismantling of a tent. Mundle suggests that the *καταλυθῆ* should not be limited simply to death, but should include the whole "swallowing up of the mortal" (5:4) which occurs at the parousia.¹⁹ Understood this way, the *καταλυθῆ* would refer to the same occurrence which Paul speaks of with the word *ἀλλαγῆσόμεθα* in 1 Cor. 15:51.

Paul has confidence in the face of this destruction of the body for he knows that "we have a building from God" (5:1). While Mundle refers the *οἰκοδομῆν* simply to the resurrection body of the individual, Robinson and Ellis suggest that it means more than that. They hold that it ought to refer to

Problem die Zwischenzustandes in dem Abschnitt 2. Kor. 5,1-10," Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1927), pp. 93-109.

¹⁹Mundle, pp. 95-96; cf. also Rudolf Bultmann, Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes (Second edition; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), p. 10.

the corporate Body of Christ, the Messianic community.²⁰

They point to the other instances where Paul uses οἰκοδομή to refer to the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21; 4:12,16) and see no reason to change the interpretation here.

According to Ellis, there are a number of other things in this passage to support such an interpretation. First of all, Paul uses the present tense ἔχομεν, which would seem to be inapplicable to individual resurrection bodies. We do not have them now.²¹ Second, Ellis suggests that ἀχειροποίητον is a "quasi-technical" term for the corporate realities of the new aeon (confer Jn. 2:19; Acts 17:24; Col. 2:11; Eph. 2:11). Third, the term δίδαμεν suggests that Paul is introducing a well-known concept such as that of the corporate Body of Christ. This corporate Body of Christ is equivalent to the New Temple corporeity of the Christian community (6:16). Ellis points out that the three key words of 2 Cor. 5:1 are found in Jesus' reference to his resurrected body as the new temple (Mk. 14:58).²² It is not unlikely, therefore, that

²⁰Robinson, pp. 76-77; Ellis, pp. 41-43. Cf. also Margaret E. Thrall, The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians in The Cambridge Bible Commentary, edited by P. R. Ackroyd and Others (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), pp. 145-147. She suggests this interpretation as "perhaps the most satisfactory."

²¹Supra, pp. 18-19.

²²Mk. 14:58 "I will destroy (ἐγὼ καταλύσω) this temple that is made with hands (χειροποίητον), and in three days I will build (οἰκοδομήσω) another, not made with hands

Paul is alluding to this dominical saying and making the equation between the body of Christ, the temple not made with hands, and the οἰκοδομή, the New Temple, the corporate Body of Christ. Ellis concludes that οἰκοδομήν refers to those in Christ "as they are incorporated into the Body of Christ in whom the new aeon has been fully actualized and who alone is individually present in the heavenlies."²³

Whether one takes the οἰκοδομήν corporately or individually, Paul's hopes are still focused upon the parousia. According to this view, 5:2-4 is not to be understood as a longing to escape death and be alive at Christ's coming. It is rather to be understood as parallel to Romans 8, where the Christian's groaning (στενάζωμεν) is due to his longing for the redemption of his body (Rom. 8:23). Here, too, Paul groans (στενάζωμεν) because he wants deliverance from his earthly body, and not because he fears death.

The alternatives which are posed by Paul (ἐρδύω - ἐκδύω, 5:2-4) are to be viewed as the fate of the believer and the unbeliever respectively. Oepke has contended that to be unclothed (ἐκδύσασθαι) or naked (γυμνός) in the Hebrew

(ἀχειροποίητον)."

2 Cor. 5:1 "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed (καταλυθῆ), we have a building (οἰκοδομήν) from God, a house not made with hands (ἀχειροποίητον)."

²³Ellis, p. 42.

mind had the connotation of guilt and judgment.²⁴ The opposite of being clothed with the house from heaven, then, is to stand in the judgment naked in guilt and shame.²⁵ If Paul is found in the οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ he will not be found naked. This interpretation equates ἐπενδύω and ἐνδύω, and gives as support for this the opposition of ἐκδύσασθαι to ἐπενδύσασθαι in 5:4.²⁶

According to this interpretation, 5:6-8 refers to the same desire which Paul expresses in 5:4, namely, to be away from our earthly existence and at home with the Lord. Robinson and Ellis both interpret "at home in the body" to mean at home "in the solidarities and securities of earthly existence."²⁷ "Away from the body," then, would mean merely the absence from the solidarities of the mortal body which exists when one is in the οἰκοδομὴν, or "at home with the

²⁴Cf., Albrecht Oepke, "δύω, ἐκδύω, ἀπεκδύω, ἐνδύω, ἐπενδύω, ἀπεκδύσθαι," TDNT, I, 318-321; "γυμνός," TDNT, I, 773-774. Cf. also Is. 47:3; Ezek. 16:37; 23:29; Dan. 4:30b LXX; Hos. 2:3; Amos 2:16; Is. 3:17; Hab. 3:13; Zeph. 2:14; Gen. 3:10.

²⁵Robinson, p. 77, n. 1: "It looks as if ἐνρεθεσόμεθα is almost a technical term for being 'dis-covered' at the Parousia. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:14."

²⁶Cf. also Margaret E. Thrall, Greek Particles in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 92-95. She refers the ἐνδυσσόμενοι to the clothing with the Body of Christ which takes place at baptism. Cf. Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:9-10.

²⁷Robinson, p. 29; Ellis, p. 46. Cf. also Rom. 6:12, 6; 7:24; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:43; 15:44; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 8:13; Col. 2:11.

Lord." This is supported by the contrast in 5:7 between "faith" and "sight." In this body we participate in the new aeon only by faith, for the vision of God is realized only at the parousia (confer Rom. 8:24; 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 Jn. 3:2).

The view that Paul's thought is focused on the parousia is furthered by 5:10, where he is apparently thinking of the judgment at the last day. In view of the fact that we must all appear before the judgment seat, we want to be pleasing to God already in this present life, as well as in the future life.

This interpretation is interesting, but it has not gone unchallenged. Objections have been raised against it which must now be considered.

The first objection is against interpreting *οἰκοδομῆν* as the corporate Body of Christ. It is claimed that the paucity of other references to *οἰκοδομῆν* shows that they cannot be determinative of the meaning here.²⁸ Against this it could be maintained that though the references are few, they certainly should not be ignored in seeking to interpret the word here. They serve as a pointer towards an interpretation which is supported in other ways within the passage itself.

Another objection is that *οἰκοδομῆν* is modified by the

²⁸Hughes, p. 184.

word οἰκία in 5:1, and οἰκία does not seem to be a corporate word.²⁹ Although this is true, it could be maintained that the emphasis ought to be placed on the meaning of οἰκοδομὴν, rather than on its modifier, οἰκία. In other words, οἰκία does not necessarily remove the idea of corporeity from οἰκοδομὴν. It should also be pointed out that Ellis does not exclude the "individual perspective," but he says that this must be understood "within the larger framework of the ἐν Ἀδάμ and ἐν Χριστῷ corporeity."³⁰

It is also argued that although in certain contexts γυμνός is connected with those upon whom God's judgment has fallen, it is not correct to say that the word itself comes to mean "liable to God's judgment."³¹ If this is true, it is still a question of whether one should interpret this word against its Hebrew background or accept a Greek meaning which seems to be foreign to Paul. Certainly the word is closely associated with the concepts of guilt and judgment, so such an interpretation cannot be ruled out here.

²⁹D. E. H. Whitely, The Theology of St. Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 256.

³⁰Ellis, p. 42. Thrall, I & II Corinthians, p. 147 solves this problem differently. She admits that οἰκία is not the same corporate idea as οἰκοδομή, but she says: "We may describe the state of the Christian after death (verse 1) as a temporary form of membership of the Body of Christ, and his resurrection state (verse 2) as the final and permanent form of membership. Therefore the use of almost identical images is understandable."

³¹Whitely, p. 257.

If *γυμνός* does mean guilty, it is asked by some how Paul could even consider such a fate for himself or his fellow Christians.³² This objection overlooks the fact that Paul always recognized a tension between the Christian's assurance of salvation and the possibility that he could be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27; confer 2 Cor. 6:1; 13:5; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 3:12f.; 1 Thess. 3:5).

A further objection is that Ellis misinterprets *σῶμα* (5:6-8) when he refers it to the self in its solidarity with sin.³³ It is true, as Ellis points out, that usually when *σῶμα* is used in this sense it has a qualifying phrase such as the mortal body (Rom. 6:12), the body of sin (Rom. 6:6), of death (Rom. 7:24), of humility (Phil. 3:21), of dishonor (1 Cor. 15:43), or the natural body (1 Cor. 15:44-51). Ellis gives three exceptions, but these too have been challenged. Rom. 8:13 reads: "But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body." It is claimed, however, that the words "put to death" constitute a qualifying phrase. Col. 2:11 speaks of "putting off the body of flesh (*τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός*)," but it is claimed that the term "flesh" is the qualification here. These "qualifying phrases," though, are really only pointers to the fact that *σῶμα* can be understood as more than just the body alone. We have such a pointer in

³²Lietzmann, p. 119.

³³Whitely, pp. 257-258.

verse 10 of our passage. Ellis points out that the deeds done "in the body" (*διὰ τοῦ σώματος*) are deeds done in the mortal, earthly life.³⁴ The possibility that *σῶμα* in 5:6-8 means more than the physical body, then, cannot be excluded.

The last objection is that Paul should explicitly introduce the teaching of "corporate solidarities" if that is what he is talking about.³⁵ This is really an objection to the lack of clarity in the passage; in fact, it can be raised against any interpretation which one chooses. Perhaps Paul's readers would have grasped the corporate emphases more easily than we who are not used to thinking in those terms.

This interpretation is not without its weaknesses, as we have seen. It does, however, understand the passage as a consistent whole which is in harmony with the rest of Paul's thought. Therefore it cannot be lightly dismissed.

Anti-Gnostic Polemics

Certain exegetes contend that this difficult passage can be understood only as a polemic against false Gnostic teachings

³⁴Ellis, p. 46. Cf. also Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted from the fourth revised and augmented edition by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 807. Here this phrase is interpreted as "during the time of one's mortal life," understanding the *διὰ* temporally. Hereafter this work will be referred to as B-A-G.

³⁵Hughes, pp. 184-185.

in Corinth.³⁶ They hold that these verses should not be treated as a meditation on the afterlife, but as the product of controversy. They claim that the language is Gnostic in character and the syntax polemical (for example οὐ . . . ἀλλ', 5:4; εἰς αὐτό τούτο , 5:5).

If Paul is contending with Gnostic opponents, it is argued, then it is only natural that he would use the language and concepts of his opponents as much as possible in order to be better understood by them. This does not mean that Paul necessarily changed his theology on the basis of a Gnostic anthropology.³⁷ It only means that Paul was willing to become all things to all men, and that he would even adapt his language to his opponents in order to win them.

The Gnostics considered the idea of a resurrection of the body absurd, it is alleged, and they hoped instead for a deliverance from the body at death. They looked upon the physical body as a tent, or as the prison house of the soul, so they longed to be delivered from the body in order that the soul might be freed and ascend to heaven naked.³⁸ It is against this background that these interpreters understand

³⁶Bultmann, Exegetische Probleme, pp. 3-12; Walter Schmithals, Die Gnosis in Korinth (Second edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 246-261.

³⁷Schmithals, p. 248. In fact, Schmithals claims that Paul never really understood the Gnostic anthropology.

³⁸For references, cf. Bultmann, Exegetische Probleme, pp. 5-6; Schmithals, p. 249.

5:1-4.

Although Paul uses the language of the Gnostics, he still insists that if our earthly body is destroyed, we have another body, a building from God, eternal in the heavens (5:1). Paul is therefore not concerned about when this body is received, or what condition the person is in between death and the parousia.³⁹ He is simply saying that the life after death is a bodily existence, not one of nakedness as the Gnostics claimed. As Schmithals says, for Paul "Lebendigkeit = Leiblichkeit."⁴⁰ Since the Gnostics depreciated the weakness and finitude of bodily existence, Paul takes care to stress the divine qualities of the heavenly body--it is ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. The sighing which Paul speaks of in 5:2 is supposedly Paul's proof that man was not created for this confining earthly existence, but for a heavenly body.

Bultmann and Schmithals differ on how 5:3 is to be understood. Bultmann sees the tautology in the phrase ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ, and therefore he chooses the variant reading ἐκδυσάμενοι. He says that the verse is to be understood against the Gnostic claim that if we put off the body,

³⁹Bultmann, Exegetische Probleme, p. 10 suggests that the destruction of the body (5:1) and the swallowing up of the mortal by life (5:4) could refer to the same occurrence as that described by the verb ἀλλοτριούμεθα in 1 Cor. 15:51.

⁴⁰Schmithals, p. 248.

we shall be found naked. In answer to this, Paul says that if we put off the body (reading ἐκδυσάμενοι), we shall not be found naked. Bultmann finds the use of the variant necessary in order to make sense out of the passage.⁴¹ Schmithals, on the other hand, accepts the reading ἐνδυσάμενοι. He explains the apparent tautology as the result of Paul's inability to understand fully the dualism of his opponents.⁴² The Gnostics viewed the afterlife as a condition of nakedness, but for Paul that was a contradiction. To be naked is to be dead, not alive. Our longing for a heavenly existence is therefore a longing for a heavenly body, and if we are clothed with a heavenly body, of course we cannot be found naked. Paul shows that he thinks the Gnostic view leads one to an absurd position; this accounts for the tautology when Paul corrects their view. In 5:4 Paul continues along this same polemical line. He points out that we do not want to be unclothed (ἐκδύσασθαι, that is dead) but clothed (ἐνδύσασθαι, that is alive).

According to Schmithals, in 5:5 Paul turns from polemics to an acknowledgment of the grace of God. But even this verse reflects the controversy. For Gnosticism the spirit was life, while for Paul it is only the down payment on

⁴¹Bultmann, Exegetische Probleme, p. 11.

⁴²Schmithals, p. 251.

eternal life.⁴³

In 5:6-8 Paul supposedly attacks another aspect of Gnosticism, namely, their arrogant consciousness of having already experienced the consummation.⁴⁴ They thought that they walked in Christ and were therefore already with the Lord. To counter this, Paul says that we walk only "by faith" and not "by sight." He counters their "already" with his "not yet." According to Schmithals, Paul's language is decidedly Gnostic here. Since he knows that his opponents reject the idea of a spiritual body, he omits any reference to it. His point is that whether a new body awaits us or not, in this life we are not yet consummated.

The final verses, 5:9-10, are supposedly directed against Gnostic libertinism which was closely connected with their "consummation consciousness."⁴⁵ Since they were no longer of the flesh but of the spirit, they considered what they did in the flesh as a matter of indifference. This led to libertinism. In order to combat this, Paul was supposedly willing to concede that they were "at home with the Lord." His point, however, is that in either case, whether at home or away from home, we must be well-pleasing to the Lord, for the judgment seat awaits us all.

⁴³Schmithals, p. 253.

⁴⁴Schmithals, p. 256.

⁴⁵Schmithals, p. 259.

The difficulties of this interpretation stem not so much from its interpretation of the text itself, as from the background which it presupposes. It operates on the assumption that the passage is polemical and Paul's opponents teach Gnosticism or a type of syncretism with Gnostic elements. If the opponents are Gnostics, then this interpretation is helpful, but whether the opponents were Gnostics or not is a much debated question in New Testament scholarship.⁴⁶ The Gnostic approach has been rejected by such men as Ernst Käsemann, Dieter Georgi, Günther Bornkamm, and James M. Robinson.⁴⁷

This interpretation operates on the principle that Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians are the same as those in 1 Corinthians. Many of the characteristics of the opponents manifested in 1 Corinthians, however, are absent in 2 Corinthians. The glossalalia of 1 Cor. 14:26-33 no longer seems to be a problem, although the opponents are still enthusiasts (5:12; 12:10). The libertinism which was such a danger in

⁴⁶For an overview of the problem see James M. Robinson, "Recent Shifts in German Theology," Interpretation, XVI (January 1962), 76-82.

⁴⁷Ernst Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels. Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10-13," Das Paulusbild in der neueren Deutschen Forschung, edited by Karl Heinrich Rengstorff (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 475-521; Günther Bornkamm, Die Vorgeschichte des sogenannten Zweiten Korintherbriefes (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1961); Dieter Georgi, Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief (Neukirchen-Ulyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); James M. Robinson, "Kerygma and History in the New Testament," The Bible in Modern Scholarship, edited by J. Philip Hyatt (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 114-151.

1 Cor. 6:12-20 is not discussed in 2 Corinthians, except for the two general, stylized references to morality in 12:21 and 6:14. The problems of marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-16) and order in worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16) are not treated in 2 Corinthians. Important words from 1 Corinthians such as σοφία, γνῶσις, and πνεῦμα do not occur as frequently, and the γνῶσις no longer seems to be the cause of pride as in 1 Corinthians.⁴⁸ Although these are arguments from silence, they do present a problem for this interpretation.

It is also questionable whether this interpretation operates with a proper understanding of the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection. Certain scholars have claimed that the Corinthian opponents did not deny the possibility of resurrection, but believed that in their baptism they had already been resurrected (confer 2 Tim. 2:13).⁴⁹ They apparently believed that they were already in the rest of the blessed. If this was the false teaching in Corinth, then 2 Cor. 5:1-10 cannot be a polemic against a Gnosticism which denied the resurrection.

⁴⁸Gerhard Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," Abraham unser Vater: Festschrift für Otto Michel, edited by Otto Betz, Martin Hengel and Peter Schmidt (Leiden/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. 193.

⁴⁹Julius Schniewind, "Die Leugner der Auferstehung in Korinth," Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze, edited by Ernst Kähler (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1952), pp. 110-139. Cf. Kümmel on Lietzmann, pp. 192-193, 203; James M. Robinson, "Kerygma and History in the New Testament," The Bible in Modern Scholarship, pp. 123-125.

Still another problem is that some of the characteristics of the opponents in 2 Corinthians do not harmonize well with Gnosticism. The Gnostic hypothesis raises the following problems: If the opponents were Gnostics, why did they display letters of recommendation (3:1-3) and from whom did they get them? Why do they preach another Jesus (11:4), since for the Gnostics the earthly Jesus was unimportant? Since that is the case, where does Paul hope to get by maintaining that his lowliness is the result of his unity with the lowliness of Jesus (4:10-12)? This very emphasis on the weakness of the body would be the best proof to the Gnostics of Paul's unworthiness.

A further weakness of Schmithals' work is his habit of treating contrary evidence as a Pauline misunderstanding of his opponents.⁵⁰ He uses this approach in our passage to interpret 5:3.⁵¹

It is not within the scope of this paper to give a detailed study of the historical background to 2 Corinthians or to set forth conclusions in this matter. It is a subject of too great a complexity and difficulty for that. Our purpose is simply to show that the Gnostic background with which this interpretation operates is by no means sure. The

⁵⁰Schmithals, p. 318: "Man muss mit mangelnder Information und darum auch mit Missverständnissen des Apostels rechnen."

⁵¹Supra, p. 60.

validity of this interpretation, then, is to a great extent dependent on the weight of the evidence for a Gnostic opposition in Corinth.⁵²

⁵²At least two other theories, with variations, have been suggested for the background to 2 Corinthians. One of the most influential views has been that of Walter Bauer, Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1934), pp. 215-242. He maintains that the opponents were Judaizers of the type that plagued the Galatians. A similar view is proposed by H. J. Schoeps, Paul, translated from the German by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 74-87. This view is most unlikely, however, for 2 Corinthians gives no indication that the opponents stressed the Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or ritual purity. Paul does not seem to have to defend himself against charges of antinomianism, nor does he stress justification by faith. For a strong critique of this approach see Johannes Munck, Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, translated from the German by Frank Clarke (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 135-195.

A variation of this view is proposed by Ernst Käsemann, pp. 475-521. He suggests that the opponents are a delegation from the Jerusalem church with the commission to visit the Corinthian church and subordinate it to the guidance of the Jerusalem church. They were to test the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship against the Jerusalem canon. For a similar view see C. K. Barrett, "Cephas and Corinth," Abraham unser Vater: Festschrift für Otto Michel, edited by Otto Betz, Martin Hengel and Peter Schmidt (Leiden/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1963), pp. 1-12, and T. W. Manson, "St. Paul in Ephesus: The Corinthian Correspondence," Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXVI (1941-1942), 101-120. The problem with this view is that we have no certain evidence of such a rivalry between the Jerusalem apostles and Paul. Another problem is whether Palestinian Jews would designate themselves as "servants of Christ" (11:23) or be interested in "signs, wonders and mighty works" (12:12).

A third basic approach is suggested by Bornkamm and his pupil Georgi. They claim that the opponents of 2 Corinthians are different from those in 1 Corinthians. They are Christian preachers of Jewish descent who consciously imitated the style and form of the wandering Hellenistic preachers of that day. They considered themselves sent from God, and put great stress on revelations and mighty deeds. Cf. also James M. Robinson, "Kerygma and History in the New Testament," The Bible and Modern Scholarship, pp. 131-146 and Helmut Köster, "Häretiker

im Urchristentum," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart:
Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft,
edited by Kurt Galling and Others (Third edition; Tübingen:
J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), III, cols. 17-21.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The major difficulty in interpreting this passage is the vagueness of its language and the uncertainty of its syntax. The passage therefore permits a variety of interpretations. These interpretations have been narrowed to four basic ones: (1) Paul expresses a fear of dying before the parousia and experiencing the nakedness of the interim state (5:1-4), but overcomes this fear by remembering that if he dies, he will be closer to the Lord (5:6-8); (2) Paul has progressed from a futuristic to a realized eschatology, and in these verses expresses the confidence that he will receive his resurrection body at death; (3) Paul has not changed his thought or language, but both can be understood as a consistent expression of his hope for resurrection at the parousia; (4) Paul has not really changed his eschatology, but is adapting his language to his Gnostic opponents.

In evaluating these interpretations, several factors have been stressed. An interpretation has been sought which makes sense of the passage without putting too great a strain on the flexibility of the language. It has also been noted whether the interpretation involves Paul in contradictory statements or non sequiturs. Finally, it has been stressed that the interpretation ought to be reconcilable with the rest

of Paul's theology.

In line with these criteria, dissatisfaction has been expressed with the traditional view which sees Paul overcoming his fear of nakedness in the interim state by his recollection that such a state will mean closer converse with the Lord. This interpretation presupposes an unPauline anthropological dualism and assumes that Paul experienced a very great change of attitude in the short scope of ten verses. What he shrinks from in 5:2-4 he is said to long for in 5:6-8. This is unlikely.

The second interpretation, which proposes a change on Paul's part to a realized eschatology, has also been found unsatisfactory. Paul gives no indication that he might be expressing a changed viewpoint in these verses. Another problem is that Paul's eschatology contains strong futuristic elements after the writing of 2 Corinthians as well as before. It is difficult, then, to reconcile this interpretation with the rest of Paul's eschatology.

The third interpretation, which sees in this passage a consistent parousia hope, is more attractive. It interprets Paul's language against the background of Judaism. Paul is supposedly longing for incorporation into the Body of Christ so that he will not be found naked in judgment. That which the Gnostic interpretation considers polemical is seen by this interpretation as the tension in Paul between the old and the new aeon, between his "in Christ" corporeity and his

"in Adam" corporeity. Although this interpretation is interesting, it must be admitted that Paul is not as explicit as he might have been if he is discussing corporate realities here. If one believes that Paul's theological roots are sunk deep in Jewish thought patterns, however, this interpretation seems less strained than otherwise.

The fourth interpretation, which sees the passage as a polemic against Gnosticism, is also attractive. If the framework of Gnosticism is accepted, then this interpretation makes good sense out of the passage. The need to be understood by his opponents would explain Paul's difficult terminology. The uncertainty surrounding this interpretation is due to the fact that it cannot be conclusively shown that Paul's opponents in Corinth were Gnostics. Perhaps this interpretation presupposes too much.

It would seem, then, that further clarification of this passage awaits more progress in the historical reconstruction of the background to the Corinthian correspondence and to the whole of Paul's ministry. Without this progress, one can deal only in probabilities.

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