

A beauty that beckons. The glory of Christ and its perception in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6

by

ELIAS JOHANNES LANZ

Student Nr. 22943243

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Christoph Stenschke

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Theology and Religion

Research Office
Mrs Daleen Kotzé

16 January 2023

NAME: Mr EJ Lanz
STUDENT NUMBER: 22943243
COURSE: Masters
DATE: 16 January 2023
APPLICATION NUMBER: T115/22

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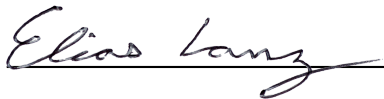
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Elias Lanz, 28. April 2023

Summary

This study is an analysis of the glory of Christ and its perception in Paul's apology of his apostolic ministry in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. The exegetical focus within the passage lies on the three verses that address the spiritual transformation of believers through their encounter with God: 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18 and 4:6. The study also presents a survey of spiritual perception and appearance in the Corinthian correspondence, a hitherto neglected perspective. The survey concludes that Paul desires the Corinthians to grow in spiritual perception and warns them of judgement by appearance only. In 2 Corinthians Paul is concerned with his relationship to the Corinthians. In light of accusations made against his person and ministry, he intends to correct the Corinthians' misperceptions. He explains that, contrary to appearance, his ministry does have glory. The study concludes that Paul uses the perception of the glory of Christ to explain the paradoxical nature of his ministry. The glory of his ministry is like the glory of Christ: it is unassuming and therefore not appreciated by everyone. But those who see Christ's glory are transformed by the Spirit. They accept the paradoxical self-revelation of God in the suffering servant and Messiah, Jesus Christ. In analogy, they also accept Paul and his ministry. A further conclusion is that Paul includes the Corinthians in his ministry as co-witnesses to the gospel and the glory of Christ. Their transformation into the image of Christ means that they (should) reflect Christ's glory. The transformation of believers is initiated by and results in the perception of the glory of Christ.

Key terms: Glory of Christ, Spiritual perception, Spiritual transformation, Divine revelation, Christ-likeness, Second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians), Paul the Apostle, Paul's apostolic ministry

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The life of the Apostle Paul exemplifies the transformative power of an encounter with Jesus. In his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul experienced a drastic change in his perspective. He saw Jesus in a new light, both literally and figuratively. To the Corinthians, he would later write, “we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23 ESV). Pre-Damascus, a crucified messiah was such blasphemy (and folly) to Paul that he himself persecuted those who believed and preached such a message. But everything changed when “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ [...] shone in [Paul’s heart] to give the light of the knowledge of glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6 ESV).¹

A person who encounters Christ can, like Paul, be changed in their perspective of him in that encounter. They are a “new creation” and no longer see Christ “according to the flesh” (2 Cor 5:16-17).² What do people thus transformed actually see? Is it a beauty in Christ that beckons them? It has been suggested “Paul viewed his own conversion experience, [...] as a paradigm for all Christian conversion” (Harris 2005:337). What does it mean to receive “the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Christ” for all who do not literally see him?

This study is in New Testament Studies. I will not, therefore, analyse contemporary (subjective) encounters with Christ for their transformative effect. The elements of our initial curiosity — the perception of Christ, the perspective-transforming effect of encountering Christ, and the question of seeing beauty in Christ — will need to be placed in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, I find the apt home for my questions. Several verses before the ones already quoted, Paul writes the well-known words: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are

¹Many scholars make the connection to Paul’s Damascus Christophany. Duff (2008:770) writes, “Paul almost certainly refers here to his life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus.”

²Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are taken from the NASB 2020 translation.

being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18 ESV). Here appears the combination of the encounter with Christ,³ the transformation, and distinct visual language that invites parallels to the aesthetic.

What does a person who encounters Christ see? As per 2 Corinthians 3:18: glory. And therein lies the entirety of what became this research study. I seek to examine the perception of the glory of Christ in 2 Corinthians with an exegetical focus on 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 in the context of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6.

1.1 The exegetical challenge of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6

2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 presents considerable challenges to the exegete. The most cited characterisation of its difficulty is that of being “the Mount Everest of Pauline texts” (Hanson 1980:19, regarding ch. 3), but many others abound.⁴ Why is it that these chapters present such a challenge? What Stockhausen (1984:63) writes regarding 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 can stand for the whole passage:

In II Corinthians 3:1-6 we are presented with a text that is inexplicable as it stands. This fact is taken seriously. It therefore requires something from outside the text in itself to fully explain its meaning because its argument is incompletely expressed. No amount of analysis done on these six verses alone will completely clarify them because of insufficient data and an inarticulated logical structure. Presuming an intelligent author, even if not a perfect one, we are, I think, entitled to assume that II Cor. 3:1-6 is the way it is because Paul has allowed it and not entirely by mistake.

I, too, must work under the assumption that Paul is an intelligent author. The challenge lies in the need for external texts or concepts to clarify the meaning of the passage at hand. I will collectively call these “foreign imports”, as they impact the

³Whether κύριος in 2 Cor 3:18 refers to Christ is debated. The debate is addressed in the exegesis of the verse.

⁴To name just two: according to Barrett (2015:61) the difficulty has led to “a hermeneutical maze of literature almost impossible to navigate.” To von Balthasar (1969:460), Paul’s trains of thought in 3:1-6:10 “zeigen freilich eine bis zur Unerträglichkeit zerspannte, innerweltlich nur als zerfahrene, unkenntliche, nicht nachvollziehbare, schließlich in lauter Widersprüche (6,8ff) zerfallene Gestalt.”

meaning of the text from outside the text itself. These considerations also serve as a preparation for our methodological approach.

The *first* exegetical challenge regards the least foreign of the foreign imports, namely the textual context within 2 Corinthians. However, it is unclear what constitutes the context of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, as the composition of 2 Corinthians is fraught with debate. Some consider Paul's apology (2:14-7:4) to be part of an entirely separate letter (Thrall 1994).⁵ While the theory has difficulties and is growing out of favour, the fact that it held currency bears witness to how disconnected our section is (or appears to be) from the rest of what is the canonical letter of 2 Corinthians.

Second, it is not clear against what situational background the text is to be read. It is evident that the relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church has experienced strain, but that is where the certainty ends. As to what caused the strain, how pronounced it was, and what the sequence of events were that unfolded between Paul's founding of the Corinthian church and his writing of this letter, little can be said with certainty. It is also hard to determine who opposed Paul in Corinth. Attempts have been made to ascertain the profile of Paul's opponents from his defence.

Third, Paul incorporates external cultural and textual sources in his argument. These include the Roman triumph in 2 Corinthians 2:14 and letters of recommendation in 3:1-3 as cultural foreign imports. The extensive use of Exodus 34:29-35 in 2 Corinthians 3:7-14 and the quotation of Genesis 1:3 in 2 Corinthians 4:6 are examples of Old Testament imports. The question is what elements of the cultural or textual sources Paul intended to transfer. How they function in Paul's argument is not always apparent.

Fourth, Paul makes extensive use of metaphors and picture language in the passage. This is a challenge as the inner-textual and outer-textual referents of the metaphors are often ambiguous. Clear mapping of metaphorical phrases to their referents is further complicated by the fact that some metaphors, such as the veil, are reused throughout the text. Furthermore, establishing the referents to metaphors

⁵Within 2 Cor 2:14-7:4, the verses 6:14-7:1 are considered non-Pauline insertions by some. See Arzt-Grabner (2014) for a summary and evaluation of partitioning theories.

in a text is only the preliminary step. Unravelling how the metaphors function within the text is further complicated by overlapping and nested metaphors.

Finally, the text contains many theological concepts that invite the import of larger categories of Pauline and systematic theology. These include but are not limited to covenant theology (Nathan 2020), Pauline hermeneutics (Hays 1989), Paul's apostolic ministry (Hafemann 1990), conversion (Chester 2005), and the Trinity (Bernard 2016). Each time the text of 2 Corinthians is interpreted to ascertain their relevance and contribution to these larger theological questions, assumptions are (often anachronistically) imported that bias judgement.

To conclude, 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:20 presents a particular challenge as it requires (and invites) many foreign imports that each impact the meaning of the text. A "shadow was cast by the common conviction that the key to Paul's thought was to be found outside the text" (Hafemann 2019:95). This has led to interpretations that rely more on evidence in foreign imports than from evidence found within the text itself. To avoid over-interpretation, imports must be justified. They should not contradict the surface meaning of the text. I agree with Hafemann (2019:95) that "[w]e must begin with the text we have before attempting to reconstruct the tradition we lack."

1.2 Glory, Christ, and perception

The human experience motivated the research of this study, but it is not its object. Rather, the object is the *theology* of the human experience. More specifically, the object is Paul's theology of the human experience in an encounter with Christ as expounded in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. Similarly, though the beauty of Christ as expressed in His glory drew me to this passage, Christ is not the subject of my investigation. Rather, the subject is the *perception* of Christ and of his glory, as expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6.

The goal of this study is to understand the function of the glory of Christ and its perception in the argument of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. However, this is impossible if I do not first understand Paul's argument. This, in turn, requires me to understand his flow of thought and intent in these verses. Furthermore, I must con-

sider how Paul's intent in these verses fits into his larger aims with this letter. This last element requires an understanding of Paul as a person, of his theology and self-understanding.

The challenge, and promise, in this study is that the passage I am analysing is not *primarily* about glory, Christ, and perception. Rather, it concerns Paul's ministry relationship and standing before the Corinthians. As Frances Back (2002:88) notes, "In der Forschung zum zweiten Korintherbrief ist man sich weitgehend darüber einig, daß der Gegenstand von 2 Kor 2,14-4,6 das apostolische Amt des Paulus ist und Paulus den Korinthern hier seine Legitimität als Apostel nachweisen will." While scholars come to different conclusions in specific questions, there is agreement regarding the general topic of the passage being the apostolic ministry of Paul.

What stands to be shown, therefore, is how the glory of Christ and its perception serve Paul's larger aim in the defence of his apostolic ministry toward the Corinthians. However, in order for my study to bear fruit, I must be justified in asking my research questions of this text. If 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 has nothing to say regarding glory, Christ, or perception, then my investigation would be misplaced. It stands to show, therefore, that this text does bear upon these subjects and my investigation is sound.

Taking the three elements of my research topic in turn, I find that they are present throughout 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 and that they are connected at key verses. 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 present the densest usage of the word δόξα in the NT and the subject of "glory" continues through the end of the fourth chapter. This alone justifies an inquiry into "glory". What is more, glory is said to accompany Paul's ministry of the new covenant in express contrast to Moses' ministry and covenant, connecting the accompaniment with glory directly to Paul's argument *for* his ministry.

Of particular interest to this study is that Christ is named nine times in 2:12-4:6 with a preposition (3x "in Christ" 2:14, 2:17, 3:14; 5x "of Christ" 2:12, 2:15, 3:3, 4:4, 4:6; 1x "through Christ" 3:4). Only once does "Christ" simply denote the person of Christ ("For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord"; 2 Cor 4:5). Of the nine mentions of Christ in adjuncts, "the gospel of Christ" in 2:12 is closely associated with the preaching of Christ in 4:5. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 4:6 Paul ascribes glory

to Christ. Christ glorified is the message Paul proclaims – and the ministry he is answering for.

Perception language also permeates the passage. From the “fragrance of Christ” and aroma to death and life (2 Cor 2:15-16), to the imperceptibility of the glory on Moses’ face and the old covenant being read (2 Cor 3:6-15), to beholding the Lord/Christ (2 Cor 3:18, 4:6) and the “blinding of minds of the unbelievers” (2 Cor 4:4). Paul seems to employ perception language to describe the mysterious nature of the acceptance and rejection of the self-revelation of God. The success of Paul’s apostolic mission is dependent on the removal of veils and God “shining light” into hearts. There is reason to believe, therefore, that it is the *perception* of the glory of Christ on which Paul’s argument for his ministry hinges.

1.3 Limits of the study

As explained in the previous section, my analysis of glory, Christ and perception in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 is focussed on their connection to the main topic of the passage – Paul’s apostolic ministry. Several common topics of discussion in 2 Corinthians thereby lie outside the scope of this study. In this section I name the limits of the study and state the assumptions that underlie this study.

Concerning the text and composition of 2 Corinthians: the Greek text of the NA28 is the basis for my study.⁶ The key text-critical questions regarding manuscript variants within 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 will be addressed briefly. But a discussion of the textual integrity of 2 Corinthians lies beyond scope of this paper. There is no manuscript evidence that 2 Corinthians is a composition of multiple letter fragments. With a growing number of scholars I consider the letter of 2 Corinthians a unified letter.⁷

As with the partitioning theories, so the chronology of events leading up to the writing of 2 Corinthians is a topic that lies beyond the scope of this paper. Without partitioning any canonical letters, scholars still understand there to be four epistles writ-

⁶The English translation used, unless noted, is the NASB 2020.

⁷For a thorough treatment of the question of the unity of 2 Cor on papyrological grounds see Arzt-Gabner (2014).

ten by Paul to the Corinthians and there to have been two visits prior to the one announced in 2 Corinthians 12-13. My position in regards to these events is a minority position. I follow Hyldahl Hyldahl (1986), Riesner (1994), and Long (2004) in that Paul made no visit to Corinth between the writing of the first and second canonical letters and that the “letter of tears” in 2 Corinthians 2:4 refers to 1 Corinthians. Without the “difficult visit” and “severe letter” I understand the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians as having been less strained than often assumed. However, this does not have a material effect on the subject of my research as by the time of the writing of 2 Corinthians the conflict between Paul and the Corinthians had been mediated through Titus (2 Cor 7:6-16).

The relationship between the covenants is a topic within 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 that receives much attention. I address the glory of the covenants and the perceptibility of that glory. However, the relationship of the testaments, supercessionism, and the anti-jewish reception history⁸ of 2 Corinthians 3 require individual treatment and are outside the scope of this paper.

1.4 Chapter overview

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2, I outline my approach by introducing four disciplines or tools that support my exegesis: Bayesian confirmation theory, lexical semantics, metaphors, and intertextuality. In Chapter 3, I present a brief literature review regarding the subject of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 in its context before presenting existing literature on glory. Chapter 4 is a survey of perception and appearance in the Corinthian correspondence.

Chapter 5 contains the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 with a focus on glory, Christ, and perception. First, I connect the passage to the opening of the letter and 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. Based on similarities among the three verses 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18, and 4:6, I start with an analysis of the letter metaphor in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. Following a detailed exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6, I compare the three verses and formulate a preliminary result. I then turn to the passage as a whole and exegete it in subsections, highlighting each passage’s relevance to glory, Christ, and

⁸For a brief history of the anti-jewish reception of 2 Cor 3 see Nathan (2020:174).

perception. The chapter closes with a summary of the results of the exegesis. Chapter 6 concludes this study, summarising my findings.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

As outlined in the introduction, the passage of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 presents considerable challenges to the exegete. In this chapter, I will lay out my approach to understanding Paul's intent in the passage and the function that perception and the glory of Christ play in it. In my socio-rhetorical analysis of the text, I will incorporate four disciplines or tools that have come to aid New Testament scholars in their exegesis.

The *first* is Bayesian confirmation theory as applied to exegesis by Christoph Heilig. It supplies a framework with which to better judge the weight of arguments for and against specific interpretations of a text. The *second* is lexical semantics, which supplies an understanding of how the semantic elements in language function and convey meaning. The *third* is an understanding of metaphors, what constitutes a metaphor and how they convey meaning distinct from non-metaphorical writing. And the *fourth* is intertextuality, or the use of the Old Testament in the New, which outlines how to understand the incorporation of Scripture citations and allusions in a passage.

The application of any one of these methods to our text would be a valuable study in itself, but as it is not our research focus to showcase these methods, their introduction and use will be limited to their relevance to understanding the perception of the glory of Christ in our text.¹

¹Such studies do exist. For an analysis of metaphors in 2 Cor 2-5 see Kuschnerus (2002), *Die Gemeinde als Brief Christi: die kommunikative Funktion der Metapher bei Paulus am Beispiel von 2 Kor 2 - 5*. Hays (1989:122–153) devotes a chapter to intertextuality in 2 Cor 3 in *Echoes of scripture in the letters of Paul*. Regarding the application of Bayes (and lexical semantics), Heilig (2022, 2017) has two works on 2 Cor 2:14 and its context.

2.1 Bayesian reasoning

Bayesian confirmation theory (Bayes) is part of probability theory and offers a method to model the updating of beliefs in light of new evidence. Fundamentally, Bayes provides a tool for evaluating hypotheses. It can be applied to exegesis, as “on its most fundamental level, an exegetical analysis is the equivalent to evaluating the probabilities of different hypotheses for what Paul wanted to communicate” (Heilig 2017:6, regarding 2 Corinthians 2:14). With or without the use of Bayes, New Testament scholars find themselves judging whether one interpretation of a given text is more or less *probable* than another given internal and external evidence. Bayes simply provides a framework for better weighing the evidence and evaluating these probabilities (Heilig 2021).

What it means to apply Bayes to exegesis is described by Heilig (2022:11) in his most recent work:²

It can be deduced from probability theory that whenever we make claims about how “probable” a hypothesis is we need to take into account two parameters for the competing hypotheses: 1. Assuming that the hypothesis is true, how well does it explain the evidence in question? (The “likelihood” or simply “explanatory potential.”) 2. How plausible is the hypothesis against the background of the rest of our knowledge, regardless of the new evidence that is to be integrated? (The “prior-probability” of the hypothesis, or, in less technical language, its “background plausibility.”)

Heilig uses the terms “explanatory potential” and “background plausibility” as substitutes for their more technical counterparts in probability theory (“likelihood” and “prior-probability” respectively). These are the two parameters or criteria against which any hypothesis needs to be *evenly* measured. “Every good hypothesis has to be developed in the framework of these two poles of ‘explanatory potential’ and

²Heilig has, over the course of the application of Bayes to his work, limited its mentions to the minimum required. Where in *Hidden Criticism* he supplied the mathematical formula underlying Bayesian reasoning and included an excursus on the method discussion between Bayes and inference to the best explanation (Heilig 2015:27–49), in *Paul’s Triumph* the explicit mention of Bayes was relegated to a footnote (Heilig 2017:8). While I cannot assume familiarity with prior work (as perhaps Heilig does), I take my cue from Heilig’s later work and keep the explicit reference to Bayes to a minimum.

‘background plausibility’ of the hypothesis” (Heilig 2017:8). In this, there is a “danger of over-emphasising” one of these two “meta-criteria” (Heilig 2022:11).

The terms “explanatory potential” and “background plausibility” and how to employ them in reasoning can be described with an analogy. If we want to decipher an inscription that is damaged and missing words or parts of words, we intuitively consider both the background plausibility and explanatory potential. Take a section of the Delphi inscription (for illustrative purposes in English): “Gallio, my fr-----an-----sul” (Translation by Fitzmeyer 1990 cited from, Murphy-O’Connor 2002:161). In order to arrive at the reconstruction “Gallio, my fr[iend] an[d procon]sul”, we reason on the one hand from *background plausibility*: what we know about Gallio, the Roman proconsulship, and what we have come to expect from inscriptions similar to this one. On the other hand, we reason from *explanatory potential*: in order for “friend and proconsul” to be the correct reconstruction, it must fit into the gap of the inscription by character count and match all partial words present. Decidedly, in the case of background plausibility, we do not consider the wording of the inscription and in the case of explanatory potential, our knowledge of the Roman proconsulship does not factor in our reasoning.

In exegesis, we proceed similarly. Instead of reconstructing words from their surroundings, we reconstruct the meanings of unclear sections of a text from their surrounding clear sections. In the unclear sections, a hypothesis of meaning stands in a tension between the *wording of the text* and *other knowledge* that is relevant to its meaning. The exegete’s task is to articulate a hypothesis that relieves the tension in the best possible manner. The challenge in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 is that there are few sections of clear meaning — the inscription has many “gaps”. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to employ a structured methodology in evaluating hypotheses of meaning.

2.2 Lexical semantics

In this section, I will explain several aspects of lexical semantics and their relevance to New Testament exegesis and my thesis. In the analogy of exegesis as deciphering an inscription lexical semantics describes the “rules” of how an inscription can

be written. If an inscription has a gap of a certain width, I must know the typical letter width of characters to be able to determine if a proposed reconstruction is fitting. Similarly, there are rules general to the meaning of words and phrases in their context that govern the range of possible meanings of ambiguous or unclear sections in a text.

Words and phrases serve communication. But *how* individual words function in communication is not trivial. Words that simply denote an external referent in the world — such as *cat* and *tree* — present only a minority of cases, and even these words can carry more communicative weight than simply pointing to something in the world. Heilig (2017:12) gives the example of a “black cat” that conveys much more to a superstitious person than the words themselves suggest. The meaning of words is not simply a word-and-thing relationship and is dependent on many assumptions between the communicative parties.

Two examples from 2 Corinthians 3 will help make the application to exegesis clear. In 2 Corinthians 3:3, Paul uses the phrase “tablets of stone”, which on the surface could be seen as simply a reference to stone tablets. However, we must consider that the same phrase is used to refer to the tablets of Moses.³ As the “black cat” conjures up more than just an image of a cat that is black, so the tables of stone conjure up more than tablets that are made of stone. Paul is doing more than referencing the tablets of Moses but invoking the concept of what they stand for. Taking the understanding of words of the author and original recipient into account serves also to avoid inserting an anachronistic connotation into the text. Paul describes the covenant that Moses brought as “old” and the covenant in which he serves as “new”. Arzt-Grabner (2014:288–289) points out that παλαιός (“old”) did not carry the connotation of “outdated” but could suggest an increase in value, such as when referring to wine or trees.

Words only make sense in their context because they stand in a relationship with other words that limit their scope of meaning. Jobes’s (1994:202) example of the

³Cf. Arzt-Grabner (2014:278): “Mit den ‘steinernen Tafeln’ spielt Paulus natürlich auf den Sinai-Bund und die Gesetzestafeln des Mose an. Darauf nimmt nun Paulus ab hier immer wieder Bezug. Under πλάζ ist generell – im Gegensatz zu dem in den Papyri weitaus gebräuchlicheren δέλτος (‘schreibtäfelchen’) – eine verhältnismäßig große ‘Tafel’ zu verstehen, die allerdings nicht ausschließlich zum Beschreiben vorgesehen gewesen sein dürfte.”

word “strike” demonstrates this well.

It is difficult to give the meaning of the English word *strike* out of context. When someone uses the word *strike*, its meaning is unambiguous in context only because we know the topic under discussion: baseball, bowling, labor unions, lighting a match, or engaging in physical conflict. Because of its syntagmatic relationship to other words in the sentence, we know, for instance, whether the word *strike* is being used as a noun or as a verb. Such relationships narrow the possible meanings until the speaker’s unambiguous intent is clear.

What is true for the English word “strike” is similarly true for the Greek words τέλος and καταργέω — the meanings of which are contested within 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6. The ambiguity of words in general is “a valuable and even necessary aspect of all languages” as it prevents vocabulary from growing to “unmanageable proportions” (Silva 1990:94). But it “arises more frequently when we read literature distant in time and culture from us, since we are less familiar with the whole context in which the writing originated” (Silva 1990:94). This means “the selection of the most plausible meaning among several attested or postulated lexical senses or more vaguely defined contextual meanings of a word is probably the most difficult task for us as non-native speakers” (Heilig 2017:18–19). What we do intuitively in selecting the correct meaning of “strike” in its context becomes the “most difficult task” two thousand years removed.

What helps the exegete in this task is the lexicographical work done to classify Greek words into semantic domains and provide common usage. In English, “the expressions *deep thinker* and *profound thinker* are almost interchangeable, but whereas *deep water* is common enough, *profound water* is regarded as unacceptable” (Silva 1990:91). The same is true in Greek. The debate around Paul’s use of καταργέω in 2 Corinthians 3 hinges on whether it is legitimate for Paul to use a word from a legal domain in relation with “glory” or a “veil” and if so, what this would mean. For example, Garret (2010:741–742) states, “one can no more use καταργέω with that sense [to signify the physical removal of an object] in Greek than one can meaningfully say in English that a veil has been “nullified”. However, even if he is correct, the debate does not end there. Pointing out a mismatch in attribution

between two words does not rule out that Paul did intend to connect them. The challenge in Paul's adventuresome metaphorical writing is that he may have written the equivalent of "profound water" for rhetorical effect. Rules are there to be broken.

What I have so far described is the *syntagmatic relationship* between words. It is the relationship between a word and the other words in its context. In the words of Silva (1994:139), "the context does not merely help us understand meaning – it virtually *makes* meaning". This reflects the shift in linguistic understanding in the twentieth century that the meaning of words is to a far greater degree dependent on their use in context than on their etymological origin. Jobes (1994:202) writes:

Modern linguistic theory teaches that the meaning of a given word is not located primarily in the word itself but is determined by the relationship the word has to other words in the context of a given occurrence (syntagmatic) and by the contrast it forms with other words which share its semantic domain (paradigmatic).

Similarly relevant to the meaning of a word in context is the *paradigmatic relationship* between words. In contrast to the syntagmatic relationship, it is a relationship with words that are *not* present in the text. Rather, it is the relationship to the options of words that could have been used instead. "In the sentence, *The man is working slowly*, *man* is in a paradigmatic relationship with *woman*, *boy*, etc; *working* with *running*, *walking* etc; *slowly* with *fast*, *well*, etc" (Silva 1994:119, emphasis in original). To consider the context of a word — i.e., its syntagmatic relationship — in determining its meaning, is basic exegesis. However, considering the meaning of a word in contrast with alternative options of words — i.e., its paradigmatic relationship — is easily overlooked.

In 2 Corinthians 3, it is debated whether Paul describes the glory on Moses' face as "fading" with the word καταργέω. Garret (2010:745) argues, "had Paul in 2 Cor 3:7 meant that the glow on Moses' face was fading out, the proper word to use would have been μαρναίω. This is a common Greek verb; it is used of a fire that fades out." It stands to reason, then, that Paul chose καταργέω to communicate something more or differently than μαρναίω could have. Similarly curious is Paul's choice of the words for "seeing". Back (2002:136) notes: "[es] fällt auf, daß Paulus nicht nur in 2 Kor 3,18 sondern in 2 Kor 2,14-4,6 insgesamt ausgefallene Begriffe für den Vor-

gang des Sehens verwendet. Ἀτενίζειν kommt bei Paulus nur in 2 Kor 3 vor, und αὐγάζειν ist wie κατοπτρίζεσθαι Hapaxlegomenon im Neuen Testament.” Why does he not use βλέπω? We must ask: what is Paul’s communicative intent in his choice of odd or specific words? Why did he select them over those that would more natural or more general? Only in contrast with the other options available to him do we see what he decided *not* to say and can we be more certain of our understanding of his communicative intent.

In these considerations, it is important not to force a confession from Paul that he did not make. Paul may have been deliberately vague or used ambiguity for rhetorical effect. We must “be sensitive to the possibility that a biblical author, when using ambiguous syntax, has, in fact, produced a ‘vague’ expression. [...] We must carefully distinguish between, on the one hand, vagueness in the sense of sloppiness [...] and, on the other, vagueness that contributes to effective communication“ (Silva 1990:108). In some cases, “greater precision may mislead the reader or hearer to draw an invalid inference” (Silva 1990:108–109). Regarding deliberate ambiguity: all who acknowledge an allusion to Ezekiel 36:26-27 in the phrase “tablets of stone” in 2 Corinthians 3:3 rely on a double reference of “stones” in that verse. First, the stones, based on their being written on, relate to the tablet given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Second, the stones, based on their contrast to the “fleshy heart” refer to the heart of stone in Ezekiel 36. Similarly, Paul plays with the ambiguity of the word “Moses” when he uses it to refer to both the person of Moses (2 Cor 3:13) and the OT scriptures (2 Cor 3:14).

2.3 Metaphors

A key question regarding the interpretation of metaphors is stated by Müller (2012:228). When commenting on 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 he asks: “Was sagen die Metaphern mehr oder anders, als V. 17 es tut?” Stated differently: what communicative *surplus* does a metaphor contain over a literal rendering? This gets at the crux of the question of the communicative content of metaphors and their function within a text and — in our case — their role in the argument of Paul in 2 Corinthians.

Metaphors are surprisingly complex. Traditionally, metaphors have been considered

a comparison based on similarity: to say one thing in terms of another. Based on the “similarity between a leaf from a tree and a page from a book, [one] may ‘transfer’ the word *leaf* and use it with the meaning ‘page’; this is a metaphor” (Silva 1994:84–85). However, while this explains the origin of the use of “leaf” for “page”, this does not do justice to the scope of metaphorical language and what it conveys.

Lim (2017:18) gives an example originally made by Max Black. In “the example of ‘man is a wolf’ [...] the idea of ‘man’ interacts with the idea of ‘wolf’ to communicate new meaning about ‘man’”. “Wolf” does not simply *replace* “man” as “leaf” did “page”. Rather, “‘wolf’ evokes the attributes of the source domain: wolves are fierce, hungry, carnivorous, and treacherous, and these attributes that are compatible with “man” will be brought to the forefront when one thinks of ‘man is a wolf’ while those inconsistent will be filtered out and pushed the background” (Lim 2017:18).

Metaphors “can be graded from ‘dead’ to ‘alive’”. What makes a metaphor dead is its overly popular usage” (Lim 2017:21). Dead metaphors lose their effect. “The page is a leaf” does not evoke an image as “the man is a wolf” does. It is a dead metaphor. Hence, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “a sheet of paper, especially a page in a book”, as a *separate* definition for “leaf”, but there is no comparable entry linking “wolf” to “man”. Metaphors being alive or dead is relevant to the interpretation of a text, as more is transferred in a live metaphor and hence the communicative content is greater. For example, any interpretation of θριαμβεύειν (“to lead in triumph”) in 2 Corinthians 2:14 as a metaphorical reference to a Roman triumphal procession is predicated on θριαμβεύειν *not* being a dead metaphor. Heilig (2017:206) rules this out, writing: “That θριαμβεύειν had developed into a dead metaphor (where the original context is no longer evoked) seems especially implausible in light of its continual use as a *terminus technicus*” (emphasis in original).

In principle, however, it is possible for a word like θριαμβεύειν to no longer evoke images associated with the word. The extension of the word ἀδελφός (“brother”) beyond the bounds of the household is such an example. Hence, the *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und*

der frühchristlichen Literatur lists “die Angehörige desselben Volkes” as a separate meaning inherent in the term. However, when Paul uses the term ἀδελφός to refer to Titus, who was Greek, in 2 Corinthians 2:13, the metaphor is reawakened. Calling Titus his brother, “testifies to the truth of Paul’s affirmation in Gal 3:28” that there is no longer Jew nor Greek (Harris 2005:239). Yet, it would be an over-interpretation of the metaphor to consider Paul transferring elements of brotherhood from households into his relationship with Titus.

Live metaphors are not “linguistic ornamentation”, such as the replacement of “page” with “leaf”, rather they “allow us to creatively see the referent(s) of the metaphor in new ways” (Parris 2013:148). “When a metaphor with two thoughts interacts, it produces a meaning that goes beyond any literal meaning could express [sic], thus producing new meaning out of the interaction” (Lim 2017:18, with reference to Max Black). As Silva (1994) stated that the context makes meaning Black (1962) stated that metaphors make meaning.

2.3.1 Blending of source and target domains

While “metaphors link two or more objects or things together that are not conventionally related to one another” (Lim 2017:18), they “are based not so much on similarity between two concepts but operate by means of inferences and blending” (Parris 2013:150). Parris (2013:150–151) defines a metaphor as follows:

A metaphor is the result of a “blend” that draws from both source and target mental spaces. A metaphor is not just understanding one thing in terms of another but is the result of a new, blended mental space that selectively incorporates elements from both the source and target spaces and possesses its own unique structure, organization, and meaning.

To interpret metaphors, we identify the source and target spaces that are being blended and what they evoke. In the example of “the man is a wolf”, we transfer connotations from “wolf” in the domain of wild animals *and* connotations from “man” in the domain of human beings into the *new* “wolf-man” space. In doing so, we “blend” the two spaces. “Blending is always selective and partial” (Parris 2013:153). The blend created by “man is a wolf” transfers different aspects in

the blend than that created by “a man wolfed down (his meal)”. Whereas the first transfer occurs on the level of temperament, the second transfer occurs on the level of mannerliness. Identifying this “primary structure” along which the transfer occurs aids in understanding what the author intended to convey with the metaphor (Parris 2013:153).

To give an example from 2 Corinthians, in 2:17, Paul contrasts himself with “others” whom he metaphorically calls “peddlers of God’s word”. He blends the domains of merchant commerce and preaching. To understand what Paul intended to convey with this comparison, we can ask what the primary structure of the metaphor is and what aspects from source and target space are being transferred to the blended space, which we can call the “merchant-preacher” space. However, as Lim (2017:9) advises, “it is important that as we investigate Paul’s use of imagery in the Corinthians correspondence, we should not be importing or imposing our twenty-first-century understanding and practices and our theological grid onto first-century usage of these metaphors.”

We must be careful not to insert our modern understanding of merchants and preachers into this blend. “Metaphors often depend on culturally established patterns and conceptual associations” (Parris 2013:154), and “the importance of understanding the ancient social context cannot be downplayed” (Lim 2017:11). Parris (2013:154) calls the relevant context of the spaces in a metaphor “frames”. He writes, “‘Frames’ provide us with the background knowledge, or network of beliefs, that allow us to grasp the concepts within a mental space”. What he states about the physician in the metaphor in Luke 4:23 can be said of the κάπηλος (“peddler” or “huckster”) in 2 Corinthians 2:17: “Therefore, it is essential that we understand the semantic and conceptual frames that the terms “physician” and “healing” invoked in the social institutions and structures of experience in first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures” (Parris 2013:155).

Arzt-Grabner points out that the negative and even deceptive connotation of κάπηλος has been exaggerated in commentaries. Harris serves as a representative example. He explains that as “the ‘middle man’ between the wholesaler (ἔμπορος) and the general public” κάπηλος had “gained a reputation for manipulating prices

or tampering with goods for the sake of profit (Harris 2005:253). However, based on the papyrological evidence, Arzt-Grabner (2014:269) states that the “Berufsgruppe der κάπηλοι” is *not* “für ein ausgesprochenes betrügerisches Verhalten berüchtigt”. He notes that this is against many commentaries. It seems ill-advised to say, therefore, that “καπηλεύω gained the sense ‘sell at illegitimate profit’ or ‘adulterate’ ” (Harris 2005:253, emphasis added). Rather, “es hängt vom Kontext ab, ob καπηλεύω negativ konnotiert ist oder nicht” (Arzt-Grabner 2014:269). The negative connotation is *not* to be considered part of the sense of the word.

The blending of source and target spaces is presented in the following table. The “generic space” defines the attributes or categories along which transfers take place. In Paul’s use of this metaphor, it is novel that he inserts himself and his co-workers into the metaphor as the target space. It is not a generic preacher that Paul blends with “peddlers”, but himself as an “ideal preacher”. The “blended space” is a combination of source and target spaces and stands in contrast to the target space. The rhetorical power in this comparison lies in the fact that it is Paul’s having *less* than his opponents that makes him the better preacher. It is precisely the “peddler elements” in the preaching of his opponents that disqualify them in his mind.

Table 2.1: The blend of Paul’s peddler metaphor (2 Cor 2:17)

Generic Space	Source Space	Target Space	Blended Space
Agent	Peddler	Preacher (Paul)	Peddler-Preacher
Action	Sells (cheap) goods	Speaks God’s (precious) Word	Sells God’s Word (cheaply)
Result	Business profit	God made known (in hardship)	God made known with profit
Interaction	Transactional	Transparent	Self-serving
Judgement	Questionably trustworthy	More Trustworthy	Less Trustworthy

While κάπηλος carries a negative connotation in this context, it is better to conclude that the idea of adulteration of the ware lies beyond the scope of Paul’s intended comparison. Rather than accusing his opponents directly, he casts doubt on their integrity in this comparison. This fits better in the context, as Paul is not (yet) laying bare his thoughts regarding the actions and motives of those interfering with his

mission in Corinth. By presenting them in terms of a transactional and (possibly self-serving) relationship, he casts doubt on their integrity and presents himself as the more trustworthy of the two parties. This serves his argument of self-defence by revealing his opponents to be that which he is accused of and presenting himself as having a “better” and more personal relationship with the Corinthians, which he will expand upon in 2 Corinthians 3:1-3.

2.3.2 Extended metaphors and picture language

In light of Paul’s extended use of metaphorical language in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 it is worth considering how extended or complex metaphors function. In a metaphor, the “inexpressible and intangible may be made vivid and visible” (Lim 2017:8). This is especially true of complex metaphors. Heilig (2017:268) provides a good example:

When Paul speaks of himself and his co-workers being displayed in a triumph, this evokes a scenery in the minds of the readers and hearers of that “story,” for the procession is not simply an ‘image,’ or a ‘concept.’ It is a complex action with several parties participating and implying a movement that requires comprehension to take place by means of one’s faculty of imagination.

To provide a taxonomy of metaphors and their complexity goes beyond the scope (and need) of my research. But Heilig provides a good ad hoc signifier for metaphorical complexity, which will suffice for my purposes. A metaphor that evokes only an “image” is a simple metaphor, and one that evokes a “story” is a complex one. The “open door” that Paul and his co-workers experienced in Troas is a simple metaphor (and possibly, one of limited metaphorical weight, depending on whether it is “dead” by common usage). Paul’s metaphorical use of letters of recommendation in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, on the other hand, is similarly complex to the triumphal procession of 2 Corinthians 2:14.

If more than one point of reference is drawn between the picture and content side of a metaphor, it likely evokes a story. In Paul’s metaphor of the triumphal procession, there are two explicit and one implicit references between the picture and content side. God is the triumphator in the procession, Paul and his co-workers the captives,

and implicitly the Corinthians are the watching crowd (Heilig 2017:242–259). Here, the rhetorical elements of metaphor and analogy overlap. The distinction between story and image is important, as the story carries more content and to misattribute the images Paul is using will lead to over or under-interpretation of his metaphors.

As with the paradigmatic relationship of words to others in their semantic domain, we can ask: Why did Paul communicate using metaphors, and why did he choose the images in his metaphors that he did? Metaphorical language “is a powerful means of communication that not only enables an idea, concept, or message to be conveyed in a creative way, but also helps the audience grasp, feel or “see” ideas differently by evoking their senses, emotions and thinking” (Lim 2017:8). To what rhetorical effect did Paul employ his metaphors? Heilig’s (2017:248) proposition for Paul’s use of the triumphal procession metaphor in 2 Corinthians 2:14 is applicable to many metaphors:

Since Paul is countering here an unspoken attack, the use of metaphor has the advantage of allowing his readers to locate themselves within the picture and to identify with the watching crowd and their feelings, without having to acknowledge explicitly their intuitive reactions towards Paul’s narration of this travels.

2.4 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is “the study of how a given text is connected with other texts (broadly understood) outside itself and how these texts affect the interpretation of the given text” (Oropeza & Moyise 2016, xiii). While this definition, “moves beyond what is often referred to as the ‘Use of the Old Testament in the New’ ” (Oropeza & Moyise 2016, xiii), the scope of intertextuality in my research study concerns Paul’s references to OT texts in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. The inclusion of Jewish texts from the second temple period or from Qumran lie beyond the scope of this paper.

How does Paul interact with the OT in his writing? Does the OT serve as an appeal to authority and as a proof text with which Paul validates the arguments in his letters? While Paul presents the OT as authoritative for himself and the Churches he writes to (cf. Balla 2007:753–754), this characterisation does not do justice to Paul’s engagement with the texts he incorporates. Paul, “does not offer an exegesis of [the

OT]; rather, he uses it for the support of his argument, and while doing so, interprets it from the perspective of the Christ-event” (Balla 2007:759). His “turning to Jesus Christ must have entailed some fundamental reassessment of the meaning and use of these texts” (Hays 1989:122; cf. eds. Beale & Carson 2007, xxvii).

It is evident *that* Paul makes use of OT texts in his letters. However, it is not always clear *where* he does so, to *what* text (if any) he refers, and — most importantly — *how* a given OT reference serves the intended meaning of his communication. Furthermore, we can ask *why* Paul chose to make a reference to the OT in general and why he specifically chose to refer to the text that he does (over all other similar texts). These questions and how to proceed in answering them have been extensively discussed in NT scholarship. I can therefore only offer a brief introduction.

It is important to define the terms “reference”, “quotation”, “allusion”, and “echo”. The need for multiple terms arises from the need to distinguish between degrees of the connection between texts. I use “reference” as a general term for the connection from one text to another. It does not specify the degree and can refer to a quote, allusion, or echo. The difference between a quote and an allusion is that “one can allude to a particular passage, place, person, theme, action, or event, but one can only quote a text, whether written or oral” (Lucas 2014:110). The term “echo” was popularised by Richard Hays (1989) in his book *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* — with which intertextuality burst into New Testament scholarship — to refer to subtle references to other texts. He did, however, receive critique for failing to distinguish terms properly. Lucas (2014:110) argues that “although Hays rightly locates intertextual references along a continuum moving from the intentional (quotations and allusions) to the unintentional (echoes), his failure to distinguish systematically between use of these intertextual terms, while defensible to a degree, lends itself to a lack of clarity”. I adopt Lucas’s (2014:110) clarification of the definition of echoes as *unintentional* references:

Echoes are best regarded as unintentional references to a particular passage, place, person, theme, action, or event, that are, in principle, capable of recognition by the audience or even by the author/speaker. [...] What distinguishes

echoes from allusions, or evocations, is authorial intention, not audience recognition. Ordinarily, however, an audience, at least some portion of the original one, would recognize both.

The question remains how to determine *if* Paul is making a reference to the OT. Hays (1989:29–32) lays out seven criteria for determining an intertextual reference:

1. Availability: Was the supposed source of the echo available to the author/the original reader? The Hebrew Scriptures are assumed to be known to Paul on the grounds of many explicit quotes. On the other hand, this shows that Paul expects his readers to be familiar with this material.
2. Volume: The “volume” is mainly determined by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactic patterns, but there are other factors, such as the question of how important the source text was in the Jewish canon and how much the echo is emphasised.
3. Recurrence: How often does Paul quote the same scriptural passage or allude to it?
4. Thematic Coherence: This criterion analyses how well the supposed echo fits into the flow of Paul’s argument or with other quotes in his letters.
5. Historical Plausibility: Is it historically plausible that Paul would have intended the effect of the echo and that his readers could have understood it?
6. History of Interpretation: Has the echo been identified before? Since discoveries could be new and meanings lost for a long time, a negative test result is not a criterion for exclusion.
7. Satisfaction: This criterion asks questions like: Does the new reading make sense? Does it shed light on the discourse? Does it offer a good explanation for the supposed intertextual link?

While these are good questions to ask in principle, they have been questioned as a reliable method to determine intertextuality. Heilig (2015:42), for example, summarises, “it does not seem advisable to use Hays’s criteria as a methodologically sound way to identify echoes.” Heilig (2015:42) bases this judgement on the fact that, mapped to a bayesian framework, only one of Hays criteria examines explanatory potential while six examine background plausibility. He writes, “there is the dan-

ger of underemphasising the aspect of ‘Satisfaction.’ Most exegetes probably are not aware of the fact that this factor makes up half (!) of the overall plausibility of an echo because it is only one of seven tests in Hays’s list”.

Garland (2022:233), noting that the Corinthians did not have access to “computerized texts, concordances, and grammatical databases” doubts that, “Paul organized his arguments assuming that the Corinthians [...] were so biblically conversant that they could untangle the density of allusions and understand the recontextualizations that modern scholars might recognize.” However, we must principally allow for Paul’s texts to have a scope of communicative content that lies beyond what the recipients of his letters may (at first) have comprehended. One commonly understands *more* in a text upon rereading it. It would be wrong to conclude from this, however, that the communicative content *in the text* is limited to what is conveyed in the first reading. We must distinguish between what the text *contains* and what it *conveys*. And yet, in direct communication as in the case of Paul to the Corinthians, we mustn’t disregard the recipients’ understanding entirely. As Paul writes to people he knows and his aim is a text that *conveys* meaning, we should assume that he writes in a such a manner as to not hinder his communicative intent.

While it is true that “to follow Paul’s complex interplay with Scripture [...] it would seem that the audience required more than a ‘general level’ of knowledge of Scripture” (Garland 2022:232), tracing Paul’s “complex interplay with Scripture” can help the modern interpreter better understand how Paul theologises across the testaments. But in this paper, I will not discuss the reception of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 beyond its relevance to the scope of Paul’s possible intent. Hence, echoes, in their strict sense as unintended references by the author, lie outside the scope of my research.

In the introduction of Beale and Carson’s (eds. 2007, xxiv-xxv) *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* they outline six separate questions that they asked the contributing authors to consider:

1. What is the NT context of the citation or allusion? In other words, [what is] the topic of discussion, the flow of thought, and, where relevant, the literary structure, genre, and rhetoric of the passage?

2. What is the OT context from which the quotation or allusion is drawn?
3. How is the OT quotation or source handled in the literature of Second Temple Judaism or (more broadly yet) of early Judaism?
4. What textual factors must be borne in mind as one seeks to understand a particular use of the OT? Is the NT citing the MT or the LXX or a Targum?
5. [How is] the NT using or appealing to the OT? What is the nature of the connection as the NT writer sees it?
6. To what theological use does the NT writer put the OT quotation or allusion?

These questions serve as a good guide in how to approach intertextuality in a text. The first four questions provide the background for the final two. In the case of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 and the glory of Christ, the question is, why and how does Paul use the Old Testament references he does? As my research focus is not intertextuality in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, my assessment of these questions will be limited to their service of my aim in understanding the function of the glory of Christ in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6.

Hays (1989:142) notes that, “the more elaborately Paul develops the images spun from Exodus 34, the more the reader begins to wonder why he is telling us all this, if indeed his ministry is really so unlike that of Moses.” The question of “why” can aid in understanding Paul’s meaning in the same manner that considering the paradigmatic relationship of a word does. They both shed light on what Paul *chose not to say*. For example, some consider Paul to reference Moses in 2 Corinthians 3 in order to present himself as greater than Moses (e.g. Avemarie 2014:68–69). This fails to explain, however, why of all OT Moses narratives, Paul selected the Exodus 34 narrative and Moses’ shining face.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced Bayesian confirmation theory, lexical semantics, metaphors, and intertextuality and discussed each of their contributions to exegesis. The common theme throughout these methodological considerations is to prevent *overinterpretation*.

Bayes seeks to guide probabilistic reasoning to a balanced argumentation, relying on *both* background plausibility and explanatory potential. Interpretations that rely primarily on background plausibility tend to import meaning against the grain of the text. The methods presented in this chapter also serve to understand *how* Paul wrote and can be expected to write. As we need knowledge of *the expected content* of inscriptions in order to decipher them, so we need an understanding of what we would expect Paul to write in general and on a given topic, in order to make sense of what we read.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I review literature regarding the structure and subject matter of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. Amidst the many open questions regarding the text, there is a consensus that its subject matter is Paul's apostolic ministry and his defence thereof. In the third section I consider Paul's opponents in Corinth and the nature of his defence. In the final section I outline the meaning of δόξα in Paul.

3.1 The structure and context of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6

Florian Wilk (2020) has presented the most recent structural analysis of 2 Corinthians 3 and its place within the letter of 2 Corinthians. He opens his study with a statement concerning the value of context analysis and its limits (Wilk 2020:139, emphasis in original):

Um die Funktion und damit die *Aussageabsicht* einer bestimmten Passage innerhalb eines längeren Briefes zu erfassen, bedarf es der Verortung in jener Passage im literarischen Zusammenhang dieses Briefes. Gewiss muss ihr *Aussagegehalt* in detaillierter Exegese erhoben werden. Wozu sie mir ihrem *Aussagegehalt* im Rahmen der brieflichen Kommunikation zwischen Absendern und Adressaten *dient*, ergibt sich jedoch erst aus ihrer Stellung im literarischen Kontext.

Wilk aptly distinguishes between the task of detailed exegesis and context analysis. While exegesis provides the communicative *content* ("Gehalt") for a passage, it is context analysis that provides its *purpose* ("Absicht") and how it serves the larger communicative aims of the author. He goes on to present a structure of 2 Corinthians and its third chapter based on similarities that mark the beginning and end of each section. His proposed structure is shown in Table 3.1 (constructed from Wilk 2020).

Table 3.1: Wilk's structure of 2 Cor 3:4-18 in its context

1:1-2	Präskript
1:3-11	Proömium
1:12-13:10	Briefkorpus
1:12-14	Proposito
1:15-7:16	Hauptteil 1 : Rückblick (Reisen und Paulus Dienst)
1:15-2:2	Abschnitt 1: Reiseplanabweichungen vor Zweit-Besuch
2:3-7:16	Abschnitt 2: Reiseplanabweichungen nach Zweit-Besuch
2:14-7:3	Apologie
2:14-17	Einführung in die Apologie
3:1-5:10	Apologie Teil 1: Offenbar machen
3:1-4:6	Teil 1: Paulinischer Dienst
3:1-3	Rahmenstück vorne
3:4-18	Paulus unverhüllte Darstellung der Herrlichkeit Gottes
4:1-6	Rahmenstück hinten
4:7-5:10	Teil 2: Leibliche Existenz Paulus und seiner Mitarbeiter
5:11-7:1	Apologie Teil 2: Gottes Wort in Klarheit
7:2-3	Abschluss der Apologie
8-9	Gegenwart (Kollekte für Jerusalem)
10:1-13:10	Hauptteil 3: Zukunft (Anstehender Besuch)
12:19-13:10	Proposito
13:11-13	Postskript

Paul's Apologia (Apologia) refers in this paper as in academic literature to the section of 2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4. As Lambrecht writes (1983:344-345):

2 Cor 2,14-7,4, situated as it is between the autobiographical sections 1,8-2,13 and 7,5-16, is generally considered as a fairly independent part of this Pauline letter and often more specifically called Paul's Apologia, a defence of his ministry. Within this substantial unit it would seem that 2,14-4,6 forms a first major division.

Wilk's title "Paulus unverhüllte Darstellung der Herrlichkeit Gottes" is an apt description of the main part of the first "major division" of Paul's Apologia. However, considering Wilk writes that "der engere Kontext von besonderer Bedeutung [ist]", it is odd that he labels 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 and 4:1-6 only as "frame-pieces" ("Rahmenstück vorne" and "Rahmenstück hinten"). The detailed chiasmic structure presented by Lambrecht (1983:348-353) deals better with these "frame-pieces".¹ Lambrecht considers 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 not simply as an introduction but as part of the first section that runs until 3:6 (not 3:3). The section concerns Paul's sufficiency and parallels 2 Corinthians 4:1-6. 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, then, is a separate section in which Paul elaborates his ministry of the new covenant in contrast with that of Moses, triggered by the mention of "new covenant" in 2 Corinthians 3:6. 2 Corinthians 3:12 marks a new section as Paul draws a conclusion from what comes before ("since we have such a hope"). The same is true for 2 Corinthians 4:1 ("Therefore, since we have this ministry"). Wilk (2020:151) acknowledges the parallels between 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6 and 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 but does not structure the text accordingly. This is, in part, as he sees parallels between 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 and the whole Apologia (Wilk 2020:145-46). In my estimation, one function of 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 should not exclude the other. It stands at the beginning of Paul's Apologia and has a direct parallel in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6. 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 as a whole can be seen as the introductory act of the Apologia. Here, Paul lays the theological groundwork supporting his ministerial sufficiency and "how ministry works" in the new covenant.

¹While Lambrecht's chiasmic structure is impressive in its detail, I find it difficult to imagine Paul crafted his writing intentionally so.

What all three structures reveal is the presence of repetitive elements in Paul's writing. These should be connected and read together. They also acknowledge the different levels on which Paul's discourse occurs. Some of Paul's statements are comments or specifications of his previous statements and should be considered in this context.

3.2 Paul's apostolic ministry as the subject matter of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6

In this section I consider what Paul's *purpose* in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 is in the context of the Apologia. As mentioned in the previous section, Florian Wilk (2020:139) differentiates between a passage's purpose ("Absicht") and a passage's content ("Gehalt"). The former can be ascertained by considering a passage within its context and the document as a whole, while the latter requires detailed exegesis of the passage to be determined.² In his paper, Wilk lays out the purpose of Paul's communication in 2 Corinthians as a whole and works his way inward to 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

In Wilk's estimation, Paul's intent with 2 Corinthians as a whole is to come to a mutual understanding regarding his relationship with the Corinthians. By working through past and present differences, Paul desires to have the Corinthians understand that "we are your reason to be proud as you are ours" (2 Cor 1:14) (Wilk 2020:142). Within this larger intent of 2 Corinthians, Wilk (2020:145) states that the Apologia serves to address the right perception of Paul and his co-workers' apostolic office to the Corinthians:

Der Vergleich von Auftakt und Abschluss der "Apologie" lässt ihr Thema klar zutage treten: Sie zeigt, dass Paulus und seine Mitarbeiterschaft das ihnen gegebene Amt den Adressanten gegenüber sachgerecht wahrnehmen (und insofern dafür geeignet sind) – auf dass diese die Absender als die für sie zuständigen Gottesboten anerkennen.

²I cannot here enter into the hermeneutical debate of where meaning lies in the semantic elements that make up a text. But with Wilk it must be acknowledged that it is possible to understand Paul's overarching purpose in a passage independent of understanding individual points of in his argument.

The presentation and perception of Paul's apostolic ministry are common threads in scholar's summaries of the Apologia. To Hays (1989:149), the Apologia "upholds the legitimacy of his apostleship by expounding a vision of authentic ministry". Avemarie (2014:62) writes:

As to Paul's primary concern in this section [2 Cor 2:14-7:4] there can be no doubt: he defends the legitimacy of his apostolic ministry and thereby seeks to regain the approval of the Corinthian congregation, which had been shattered in the wake of the activities of other Christian missionaries during his absence from Corinth.

Both Hays and Avemarie mention legitimacy. The expounding of Paul's ministry is in service of its approval by the Corinthians. This is pronounced in the first part of the Apologia. Harris (2005:319) writes, "the grandeur and superiority of the apostolic ministry [...] is the theme of 2:14-4:6". 2 Corinthians 3:4-18 serves to portray the dignity of the apostolic office. Wilk (2020:154) writes:

2Kor 3,4-18 dient also in erste Linie dazu, den paulinischen Apostolat in seiner besonderen Würde zu erläutern; alle anderen Sinnaspekte sind dieser Ausrichtung zugeordnet. Gerade auf diese Weise trägt der Passus wesentlich dazu bei, die Brief-Adressaten nach allen Wirren ihrer Beziehungsgeschichte mit Paulus davon zu überzeugen, dass er und sein Mitarbeiterstab – und nicht etwa andere Verkündiger – ihr "Ruhm" (1,14) sind.

This dignity ("Würde") of Paul's ministry is defined by his unveiled presentation of the gospel, which is the glory of God in Christ. Wilk (2020:154) summarises:

Der Gedankengang 3,4-18 soll darlegen, dass Gottes Herrlichkeit als "Herrlichkeit Christi" (4,4) durch den paulinischen "Dienst" am Evangelium unverhüllt an dessen Hörerschaft wirksam wird – es sei denn, es werde durch eine wider-"göttliche" Macht dadurch "verhüllt", dass die Sinne derer, die es vernehmen, "verblendet" werden (4,3 f.).

Paul's apostolic ministry is in service of the gospel of Christ. It has "grandeur and superiority" for it reveals the glory of God in the glory of Christ. But it is characterised by a glory that not everyone can see. The self-revelation of God in Christ

as a model for the apostolic ministry is the thread through the Apologia. Baumert (2008:67) writes, “Er [Gott] verbirgt seine Herrlichkeit noch mehr in der menschlichen Gestalt des Christus und seines leidenden Apostels. Dies ist der ‘rote Faden’ der ganzen ‘Apologie!’”

3.3 Paul’s opponents in Corinth and the nature of his argument of self-defence

The study of Paul and his letters requires an understanding of those who opposed him throughout his ministry, as “Paul’s epistolary responses are often in rebuttal of opposition, whether to this person or his teachings” (Barnett 1993:644). By understanding against whom and what Paul is arguing, we can better understand the thrust and scope of his theology and the situation in which he is writing. In general, throughout church history, orthodoxy has often been defined first in response to religious deviants who oppose it. Similarly, we see Paul responding to false teaching and understanding in his letters – sometimes in direct opposition to false teachers and not just a misunderstanding of his gospel.

The opponents Paul faces in 2 Corinthians are considered both the hardest and the most important to determine. “So important is the question of the identity of the opponents in 2 Corinthians that C. K. Barrett (1993:644) declared it to be ‘one of the crucial questions for the understanding of the New Testament and origins of Christianity’”. In writing of the relevance of background information to the meaning of a text, Cotterell and Turner (1989:87–88) chose Paul’s opponents in Corinth as their example, providing a summary of options:

New Testament scholars might be willing to sacrifice a right arm to know the identity of the ‘false apostles’ referred to in 2 Cor. 11.13. For on their identity, and on the nature of their claims, hangs the interpretation of the whole 2 Corinthians 10-13 if not, indeed, of the whole of 2 Corinthians (and much of the New Testament beside). Does this term refer to the same people Paul calls ‘super-apostles’ in 11.5 and 12.11? And were they Judaizers (so Barrett), gnostic pneumatics (Bultmann, Schmithals), the Jerusalem apostles themselves (so F.C. Baur!), delegates from Jerusalem, championing Jewish Christianity, but

not directly authorized by the Jerusalem apostles (as most commentators hold), or triumphalist miracle-working Hellenistic Jews regarding themselves as ‘divine men’ (Friedrich, Georgi and R.P. Martin), or something else yet?

However, the matter seems at an impasse and the question arises of what can be gained by constructing a historic profile based only on limited information. The task has questionable value. “Given that we only meet Paul’s opponents in his own passing rebuttal of them, it is unlikely that a scholarly consensus will be reached. The evidence from Paul’s letters is too unsystematic and indeed polemical to permit ultimately secure historical decisions” (Barnett 1993:646). As far as a loose historic identity of Paul’s opponents is concerned, Harris (2005:87) summary is representative:

Our overall conclusion is this. Paul’s opponents were probably Jews from Judea—perhaps Jerusalem—who came to Corinth as self-appointed agents of a Judaizing program. They claimed to be Christian, illegitimately invoked the authority of the Twelve, and found common cause with a group of Corinthian “proto-Gnostics” in their attempt to undermine Paul and his apostolic work.

More relevant to my study than the identity of Paul’s opponents is the question: “what influence do the opponents of Paul in Corinth have on the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6”? In this regard, many scholars now shy away from a specific determination of Paul’s opponents or even reading Paul’s arguments as a direct counter to those of his opponents. So Hays (1989, xi) states in the introduction to *Echoes of Scripture*:

I approach the task of interpretation not by reconstructing the historical situation in the churches to which Paul wrote, not by framing hypothetical accounts of the opponents against whom Paul was arguing, but by reading the letters as literary texts shaped by complex intertextual relations with Scripture.

While Hays unnecessarily juxtaposes the historic and scriptural background to a text, which are *both* part of the “task of interpretation”, there are others who similarly shy away from the identification of Paul’s opponents. Rycke (2019:68) writes regarding 2 Corinthians 3:

Die Frage nach den Gegnern des Paulus beschäftigt uns in dieser Arbeit jedoch nicht, ebensowenig wie hypothetische Fragen, inwieweit etwa die Menschen, gegen die Paulus argumentierte (seien es andere Apostel oder Gläubige aus der Gemeinde) von einer philosophischen Sophistik, von Weisheitstheologie oder Gnosis geprägt sind, und welche Rolle das Motiv der $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ im Denken der Gegner gespielt haben könnte.

Witulski (2012:343) goes even further, claiming that even the two times Paul contrasts himself with others in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, there are no specific opponents in view:

Weder in 2Kor 2,17 noch in 2Kor 3,1 f agitiert der Apostel also gegen konkret fassbare in Korinth wirkende Gegner; vielmehr scheint er seine apostolische $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ in der Differenz zur Praxis anderer Missionare am Beginn seiner Apologie eher thetisch als polemisch definieren zu wollen.

The better route to a “profile” of his opponent is from the text of 2 Corinthians itself. What is striking — and of particular relevance to our study— is that throughout 2 Corinthians, Paul frames his opponents as having a wrong perspective and false presentation. Barnett (1993:646) writes, “In terms of their self-presentation the opponents came as ‘apostles of Christ,’ ‘workmen’ and ‘servants’, that is, on the same terms as Paul (2 Cor 11:12), having a vocabulary of ministry identical with Paul’s. Their ‘deceit’, their ‘disguise’ was that they purported to be ‘servants of righteousness (*diakonoi dikaiosynēs*).’ ”

Here also lies the contrast to Paul. “They are ‘sufficient’, triumphant figures; Paul is inadequate, a sorry figure as he limps from place to place in defeat (2 Cor 2:14—3:5; 4:1,16) [...] In all things he is ‘inferior’ (cf. 2 Cor 11:5), whereas they are superior, ‘better’ (*hyper*, 2 Cor 11:23)” (Barnett 1993:647). As “some Corinthians did not share the same appreciation of his selfless suffering”, they “were primed to accept readily boastful rivals” (Garland 2021:16). Their judgement of Paul was negative as they had messengers from the same God with the same message but a different appearance. “To them, Paul cut a shabby figure. Religion, in their mind, is supposed to lift people up, not weigh them down with suffering” (Garland 2021:16). Paul’s ministry with

its afflictions had a paradoxical character that the ministry of his opponents did not share (Schnelle 2012:315):

Den wohl schärfsten Gegensatz zu den Fremdenmissionaren markiert Paulus mit seiner Verhältnisbestimmung von Evangelium und Apostolat: Der paradoxen Gestalt des Evangeliums entspricht die paradoxe Gestalt des Apostolats. Der Apostel verkörpert in seinem Auftreten und seiner Arbeit die Knechtsgestalt des Evangeliums (vgl. 2Kor 4,7-18), in der sich die Freiheit des Apostels realisiert (1Kor 9,19).

For this reason some scholars consider the perspective of the Corinthians to be the real “opponent” of Paul. Garland (2021:17) goes so far as to say, that Paul’s legitimacy is not in question. He writes, “[t]he letter [of 2 Corinthians] is about Paul’s ministry, which the Corinthians fail to understand (not about the legitimacy of his apostleship, which is not in question). They understand him only in part (1:14) because they still evaluate things from the perspective of the flesh”. The spiritual immaturity of the Corinthians prevents their appreciation of the “paradoxe Gestalt” of Paul’s apostleship. Baumert (2008:59) connects the Corinthians’ imperception of Paul’s glory to the challenge of Paul’s self-defence:

Das alles nun wäre plausibel, wenn man diesen neuartigen Glanz sehen würde. Aber hier liegt das Problem. Die Korinther sagen: ‘Wir sehen nichts davon’. Und ‘gewisse Leute’ sagen sogar, das Gegenteil sei der Fall, da man an Paulus nur Bedrängnis, Leid und Verfolgung wahrnehme; das aber sei unansehnlich und sei ein Zeichen, daß Gott ihn verlassen und nicht bestätigt habe (vgl. Jes 53,4). So steht Paulus gewissermaßen mit dem Rücken zur Wand. Er weiß, daß Gottes Herrlichkeit in ihm ist; aber sie ist von der Art, daß man sie nicht wie einst den Glanz des Mose mit leiblichen Augen - wenn auch nur für kurze Zeit - sehen kann.

Baumert characterises Paul’s style of argumentation in 2 Corinthians as of someone “with his back to the wall” (“mit dem Rücken zur Wand”). Paul is faced with the predicament of having to defend himself, a person of “poor appearance”, against people of “good appearance” before people who care only for appearance. There

are two ways he can “win”. Either he must prove he is a person of “good appearance” after all and show it off in direct competition with his opponents. Or he must teach those who care only for appearance that something else – something that he possess – really matters. It is the second route that Paul takes in the Apologia and especially in 2 Corinthians 2:14-5:10.³

3.4 Δόξα and its semantic range in Paul

Δόξα is commonly translated glory, as in every case in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. However, not only does “glory” have a range of meanings, δόξα is a Greek word whose meaning in the NT and Jewish literature deviates far from its common usage in Greek writings of the time. Newman (2020:103) writes, “δόξα and δοξάζω are never used in reference to a god, or the gods, in the Greco-Roman world”. Rather, according to the *Brill dictionary of Ancient Greek*, δόξα meant “opinion, belief, expectation” or “opinion, reputation, rumor”. Only as a third definition, does it list “magnificence, splendor” and “glory, power” (ed. Montanari 2015:548). The wide range of meaning of the word δόξα *within* the NT is reflected in the eight different semantic domains it is a part of in Louw and Nida’s (1988:66) *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*.⁴

However, “Paul [uses] δόξα to express reverence to a god; [...] to characterize an

³However, it appears Paul makes use of the first strategy in chs. 10-12. 2 Cor 12:11 summarises this shift, “I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.” Paul refuses to fully engage in the one-upmanship of his opponents and qualifies his self-praise by with a meta-commentary calling himself out as foolish for what he is doing. He is determined to prove to the Corinthians that using their criteria he is a better qualified apostle than his rivals while at the same time not sanctioning their criteria for apostleship. Why Paul first uses one strategy and then another could be explained by initial self-restraint. Arzt-Grabner (2014:109), in his papyrological commentary on 2 Cor, compares the sudden change in tone between 2 Cor 9 and 10 to other letters. He suggests that pent up frustration can lead to such a sudden change in tone: “Zu fragen ist dabei, inwieweit es wahrscheinlich ist, dass Paulus seinen Ärger so lange (neun Kapitel lang entsprechend der heutigen Einteilung) zurückhält, bevor er ihm freien Lauf lässt. Der Fall von P.Oxy. VII 1070 [...] z.B. scheint so zu liegen, dass der Briefsender von Anfang an den Ärger im Hintergrund hatte, den er erst ab Z.47 kundtut. Ist es vorstellbar, dass für Paulus um Falle des 2Kor Ähnliches gilt? M.E. versuchen beide Briefsender – Paulus ähnlich wie der Briefsender von P.Oxy. VII 1070 – in aufrichtiger Weise ihren Ärger zurück- und einen höflichen Ton durchzuhalten, was aber eben doch nicht gelingt, so dass schließlich der Ärger durchbricht. In beiden Fällen ist das relativ spät.”

⁴The semantic domains listed are: 1. Features of Objects: splendor; 2. Physical Events and states: brightness; 3. Power Force: amazing might; 4. Communication: praise; 5. Status: honor, greatness; 6. Supernatural beings and Powers: glorious being; 7. Geographical Objects and features: heaven; 8. Attitudes and emotions: pride

appearance of a god; and [...] to describe the telos of both a god and human beings” (Newman 2020:104). What then does Paul mean when he writes of “the glory of the Lord” (δόξαν κυρίου; 2 Cor 3:18) and “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ χριστοῦ; 2 Cor 4:4)? Is glory simply an attribute of “Lord” and “Christ” describing them as magnificent and full of splendour? Frances Back (2002:76) opts for this in choice of translating δόξα:

Δόξα wird hier und im Folgenden mit “Glanz” wiedergegeben. Das Wort “Glanz” bringt deutlicher als der Begriff “Herrlichkeit”, mit dem “doxa” in 2 Kor 3 sonst häufig übersetzt wird, zum Ausdruck, daß hier wie in Ex 34,29-35 (LXX) an ein sichtbares Phänomen gedacht ist.

While this captures the aspect of the visible manifestation of glory in Paul’s figurative use of the Moses narrative, “shine” or “radiance” (“Glanz”) is an unwarranted limitation of the scope of meaning of δόξα. Newman (2020:113) writes (with reference to Exodus 24:7 and Ezekiel 1:28) that, “God’s glory is only *like* a fire and *like* a glistening rainbow. The known is used to describe the unknown and mysterious. Such language of approximation should caution against an all-too-easy equation of ἡ δόξα κυρίου with luminosity or radiance” (emphasis in original). Paul is not *only* concerned with the connotations of visible manifestation. His argument is such that these visible manifestations are a signifier of the greatness of the glory of the covenants. The glory is not dependent on the manifestation, rather the manifestation proves or displays a glory that is inherent. We must look further than visual manifestations as a meaning for δόξα in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6.

We can ask, “just how and why did Paul come to employ this linguistic curiosity in the first place?” (Newman 2020:107, regarding ascribing δόξα to God). δόξα carries a wealth of connotations that are transported through its use in the Septuagint that need to be considered. In fact, the Septuagint’s use of δόξα brings about in the meaning of the word “what is regularly described as ‘the most extraordinary semantic evolution’ in all of the Bible” (Newman 2020:109, with reference to the 1991 *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* entry for δόξα, δοξάζω, συνδοξάζω). As Rycke (2019:282) notes, “Nur eine Analyse des Textbefundes der Septuaginta und deren

hebräischen Vorlage kann die Semantik von δόξα im biblischen Sprachgebrauch und ihr Verhältnis zum profangriechischen Wortfelde erhellen.”

Key to the Septuagint’s influence on the semantic range of δόξα is the word’s use to translate the Hebrew word כבוד (“glory”). Newman (2020:109) summarizes:

It was the LXX that first introduced δόξα to God’s and—כבוד the resulting marriage stuck. Of the forty-three times where כבוד stands in a construct relationship with God in the Hebrew Bible, all forty-three are translated by ἡ δόξα κυρίου/θεοῦ. Of the thirty-three times when כבוד is used in conjunction with a possessive pronoun, when God is the referent, all thirty-three are translated by δόξα. In other words, the translators used a word that had absolutely nothing to do with deities in Hellenistic Greek and exclusively used it as the translation choice *de jure* for a word enduringly wedded to Israel’s god.

Considering the meaning of כבוד in those places it is translated by δόξα and refers to God we realize that δόξα carries the meaning of divine presence. “The LXX preserved, and even extended, the technical meaning of כבוד as divine presence—in particular, as visible divine presence” (Newman 2020:110).⁵ δόξα as divine presence carries the connotation of mobility. Newman (2020:111) states, “ἡ δόξα κυρίου is not only said to appear; ἡ δόξα κυρίου is depicted as moving, following along in the very tracks first laid down by God’s כבוד. Glory descends and ascends, comes and goes, arrives, dwells, hovers above, and fills.” As Rycke (2019:74) sums up, “Die biblische Vorstellung der Herrlichkeit Gottes ist eine Chiffre der Präsenz des transzendenten Gottes.”

Returning with this meaning for δόξα to the NT and Paul’s letters, we arrive at a coherent rendering for δόξα. Newman’s (2020:115) examples are worth listing in full (emphasis added):

Construing δόξα as divine presence, derived from an established and identifiable glory tradition read right out of the LXX, makes plausible sense of Paul’s ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ texts. God’s presence can be exchanged for images (ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ); one can be deprived of God’s presence

⁵Cf. Harris (2005:282): “In the OT δόξα (= Hebrew כבוד) refers principally to the visible manifestation of God’s nature, presence, and power.”

(ύστερούνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ); the hope of God’s presence can elicit confidence (καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ); God’s presence can raise Jesus out of the grave (ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς); God’s presence can be known (ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ); Christ can receive believers into God’s presence (ὁ Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ὑμᾶς εἰς δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ); *the knowledge of God’s presence can be discovered in the risen Jesus* (γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ); and in salvation believers can enjoy God’s presence (θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν).

Returning to 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ χριστοῦ) means “the gospel of the presence of God in Christ”, which is repeated in the phrase that follows, “who is the image of God” (ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ).

We can go further in specifying the glory. The divine presence of God has different connotations. Newman (2020:128) traces three distinct aspects:

Tracing the history of form— from theophany, to prophetic call, to throne vision— contextualizes glory’s morphology from cosmic and cataclysmic power to vanquish (in theophany) to visual and mobile divine presence to sanction and legitimize (calls) to mystical and noetic divine presence to disclose apocalyptic mystery (throne visions).

The divine presence referred to by glory in the context of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 does not have to be a presence of holy, unapproachable power. It could also, on the basis of Paul’s prophetic call and vision, be a legitimising and/or mystical presence that calls servants of God and discloses divine mysteries.

3.5 Summary

The passage of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 is the opening to Paul’s Apologia that ends in 2 Corinthians 7:4 before the return of a narrative section in 7:5. There are many parallels within Paul’s argument in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, such as those between 2:14-3:6 and 4:1-6. The subject matter of the Apologia is Paul’s defence of his apos-

tolic ministry. Paul's purpose is to change the Corinthians' perspective and evaluation of his apostolic ministry. However, the Corinthians' spiritual immaturity makes it difficult for them to appreciate the glory of his ministry due to its hidden nature. The word δόξα as "glory" in the NT is influenced by its use for the word כבוד in the Septuagint. In Paul δόξα refers to a "mobile divine presence" that is associated with but not limited to radiance (Newman 2020:128).

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTION AND APPEARANCE IN THE CORINTHIAN CORRESPONDENCE

Duff (2008:775) states that, “Paul’s attention to accurate and faulty perception throughout 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6—and particularly his claim that the clarity of one’s perception is tied to one’s status vis-a-vis salvation—recommends that this entire section is concerned with the distinction between appearance and reality”. In a corresponding footnote he comments, “In fact, this theme resounds throughout 2:14-7:4” (2008:775). I go further than Duff and consider perception, perceptibility, and the distinction between appearance and reality to be a prevailing theme throughout the entire (canonical) Corinthian correspondence. From the humanly unappealing wisdom of God and the consideration of the perception of the church gatherings by outsiders in the debate over church order in 1 Corinthians, to “walking by faith and not by sight” and the concern for how the collection for Jerusalem is perceived in 2 Corinthians, Paul has a particular concern for perception in the Corinthian correspondence. In preparation for the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, I will survey the Corinthian correspondence for Paul’s use of perception, perceptibility, and distinctions between appearance and reality.

Throughout the Corinthian correspondence, Paul is concerned with correcting misunderstandings regarding the gospel, Christian ethics and his apostolic ministry. Rhetorically, he portrays different understandings as differing perspectives of reality. He contrasts the false understanding and perception of the Corinthians, his opponents, and unbelievers with the true perspective that stems from a right perception. The use of perception language is also found in secondary literature to describe Paul’s aims. For example, Betz (1992:198) writes, “Since 1 Corinthians evidently did not achieve its goals, the fragments assembled in 2 Corinthians provide further insights into Paul’s monumental struggle to get the church *to understand and accept his theological viewpoint*” (emphasis added).

In this survey of perception in the Corinthian correspondence, I will take each of the two canonical letters to the Corinthians in turn by sections and close with a summary of findings.

4.1 1 Corinthians

4.1.1 1 Corinthians 1-4 – God’s mysterious wisdom

In 1 Corinthians 1-4 Paul addresses faction-building in the Corinthian church and defends his unimpressive preaching. He makes a categorical distinction between divine and human wisdom and their appearances. Paul is a “steward of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1) which is a wisdom which “God predestined before the ages for [people’s] glory” (1 Cor 2:7). The wisdom that Paul testifies to is not a more impressive version of the “wisdom of the world” (1 Cor 1:20). Rather, it is of an entirely other nature – it is “not of this age” (1 Cor 2:6). It requires revelation by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-11), cannot be accepted by the “natural man”, and must be “spiritually appraised (1 Cor 2:14). Therefore, he “came not with superiority of speech of wisdom”, but “determined to know nothing among [the Corinthians] except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” His message was not in “persuasive words of wisdom”, so that the Corinthian’s faith “would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5). Paul’s apparent deficiency in speech is not a failure of his person or a sign of weakness in his message. Rather, it was a deliberate choice of Paul’s to ensure a right understanding of that which he sought to communicate. Paul’s gospel requires an unassuming medium to deliver its message.

The mysterious wisdom of God results in paradoxical misperceptions. The same event or concept is seen differently by different groups of people. God’s wisdom appears as foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Cor 1:18). Yet, to those who are being saved, it is “the power of God”. The otherworldly wisdom of God has an unappealing appearance to those who “are wise according to the flesh” (1 Cor 1:26). “Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom” (1 Cor 1:22), but Paul’s message of a crucified Messiah is an affront to both. To the saved, God’s wisdom is so wise it makes the wisdom of the “wise man”, the “scribe”, and the “debater of this age” seem as foolishness (1 Cor 1:20) — “for the wisdom of the world is foolishness

before God” (1 Cor 3:19). The saved can see God’s wisdom in God choosing the weak to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27) and the crucified to shame the rulers who ordered his execution (1 Cor 2:2 & 2:8). The paradoxical wisdom of God’s actions and revelation bring about a reversal of appearances on earth. Not many Corinthians were “wise according to the flesh”, “mighty”, or “noble”, but God chose them and revealed Christ to them as “wisdom from God” (1 Cor 1:30). Why this reversal? Because it pleased God (1 Cor 1:21) and so that no “man may boast before God” (1 Cor 1:29, 31).

The understanding and acceptance of the “foolish” wisdom of God does not come all at once. There are degrees of God’s wisdom that are only for the “mature” and not for those who are “fleshly” (1 Cor 2:6, 3:1). Even those who “are in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:30), as the Corinthians are, can still be fleshly and not able to understand advanced wisdom of God (1 Cor 3:1). Paul writes, “I could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I gave you milk not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed even now you are not able, for you are still fleshy” (1 Cor 3:2-3). As an infant cannot take in solid food because of their physical immaturity, so the Corinthians cannot take in advanced spiritual wisdom because of their spiritual immaturity. They are lacking in the development of their spiritual faculties because their concern is for things of the flesh (1 Cor 3:3). It seems they have appropriated the Christian faith to bolster their status to be “superior” and “kings” (1 Cor 4:7-8). Paul responds to the Corinthian’s immature boasting and status-seeking by reminding them of their entire dependence on God — which precludes “boast[ing] in men” (1 Cor 3:21) — and explains that, in eternity, only God’s judgement matters (1 Cor 3:13, 4:5). God’s judgement alters values on earth. Additionally, he exhorts them to be “imitators of him” (1 Cor 4:16) and to be “foolish [in this age], so that [they] may become wise” (1 Cor 3:18). He urges them “not go beyond what is written” and sends Timothy to them, to “remind [them] of [his] ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor 4:17).

Paul’s self-description of his apostleship in 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 is in stark contrast to the immaturity of the Corinthians. While they seek to be “kings”, the apostles are

“exhibited” by God, a “spectacle to the world”, the “scum of the world”, and the “dregs of all things” (1 Cor 4:9, 4:13). As God chose the weak to shame the strong, so he has chosen to make his servants appear as “fools for Christ sake” (1 Cor 4:10). Throughout this contrast, Paul walks a line of urging the Corinthians to be more like him and maintaining a distinction between what he does himself and what he expects of the Corinthians. On the one hand, the Corinthians are to be “imitators” of Paul (1 Cor 4:16). This appears in the context of Paul being their spiritual father and their need to grow in maturity. On the other hand, Paul and his co-apostles are the exhibited ones, not the Corinthians. It is for the Corinthians’s sake that Paul is “hungry”, “thirsty”, “poorly clothed”, “roughly treated”, and “homeless” (1 Cor 4:11). While he is a “fool”, “weak” and “without honour”, they are “prudent”, “strong”, and distinguished (1 Cor 4:10).

The Corinthians’ boasting and one-upmanship prevents the Corinthians from being able to grow in wisdom. Their chief misunderstanding is not attributing actions to God: God’s choosing them (1 Cor 1:30), God’s causing growth (1 Cor 3:7), and everything they have being received (1 Cor 4:7). To counter the building of factions in Corinth, Paul explains that there is no room for partisanship and boasting in the church. Leaders have different roles and callings — such as baptising or preaching — but these do not make them superior. Christ is the only foundation and God is the one who “gave the growth” (1 Cor 3:6). “He who watered and he who planted are nothing” (1 Cor 3:7). The immaturity of the Corinthians appears to be rooted in faulty perception and not understanding how accepting the wisdom of God alters value judgements on earth.

4.1.2 1 Corinthians 5-8 – Christian conduct in view of the world

In 1 Corinthians 5-8 Paul responds to a number of moral and ethical concerns in the Corinthian church. The appearance of deeds before God, the church and the world feature in his argument throughout.

In ch. 5 Paul addresses the man who “has his father’s wife” as an “immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles” (1 Cor 5:1). He admonishes them to “remove the brother” “when they are assembled” as he has “already judged

him who has committed this” (1 Cor 5:3). What Paul is even more concerned with than the immorality present is the Corinthians’ reaction to it — or lack thereof. They are arrogant when they should mourn (1 Cor 5:1). An assumption of Christians being exemplars of higher morals underlies his argument. Paul’s critique is that the Corinthians exhibit a greater tolerance for immorality within the church than the Gentiles tolerate outside of it. In this case, Paul *is* concerned with the appearance of the Church. It should be a moral exemplar in contrast to the Gentiles.

The Corinthians, according to Paul, lack sound spiritual judgement in Church matters. After their failure to address the immorality in their midst, Paul admonishes them for going to court against one another and laments that “there is not among [them] one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren” (1 Cor 6:5). Akin to the wisdom of God in the first four chapters, Paul corrects the Corinthians’ wrong perception. A win in court against a brother is “already a defeat” for the church (1 Cor 6:7). They should rather “be defrauded” — and thereby be fools in this age — than to have lawsuits with one another. And they must not defraud, for the “unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God”, but they “were sanctified”, and “were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”. This new Christian identity brings with it a new God-centred perspective on the world. The Corinthians “are not [their] own”, they “were bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19-20).

4.1.3 1 Corinthians 9-10 – Paul’s apostolic authority

In 1 Corinthians 9-10, Paul speaks of his own apostolic authority and addresses matters of authority in the church. He opens ch. 9 with a vehement defence of his apostleship, stating he has “seen the Lord” (1 Cor 9:1). To Paul, his having seen Jesus are the foundation of his apostleship (cf. 1 Cor 15:8). The formulation in the form of a negative rhetorical question reveals Paul had reason to doubt the Corinthians’ belief in his apostleship. He therefore follows up his general claim to apostleship with one directed at the Corinthians, saying “if to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you” (1 Cor 9:2).

In ch. 10, Paul uses the immorality and idolatry of the Israelites in the wilderness

as a cautionary tale “written for our instruction” so that “we would not crave evil things as they craved” (1 Cor 10:11, 1 Cor 10:6). The purpose of this warning is to urge the Corinthians, who “think they stand”, to “take heed that [they do] not fall” (1 Cor 10:12). They are to “flee immorality” and not “provoke the Lord to jealousy” (1 Cor 10:22). Rather, they should “seek [not their] own good, but that of [their] neighbour” and “whatever [they] do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:24, 1 Cor 10:31). Again, they should take Paul as an example, “give no offence” and “please all men in all things, not seeking [their] own profit but that profit of the many” (1 Cor 10:32-33). It is evident that Paul is not apathetic towards outward appearance. On the contrary, he cares deeply about how he and the Corinthian church are perceived.

4.1.4 1 Corinthians 11-14 – Order of a church gathering

In chapter 11-14, Paul applies the principle of not giving offence to the order of a church gathering, for “God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor 14:33). Men and women should respect the natural law of decency in church regarding head coverings (1 Cor 11:14). The Corinthians should “seek to abound for the edification of the church” rather than speak in tongues no one can understand (1 Cor 14:12) — and be called “mad” by unbelievers (1 Cor 14:23). Paul is concerned with the perception of the Corinthian church by those outside it. Prophecy is preferable over tongues, not only for its intelligibility, but as it convicts the unbeliever, disclosing the “secrets of his heart” and causing him to “fall on his face and worship God” (1 Cor 14:25).

Paul admonished the Corinthians for their improper practice of the Lord’s supper. In their eating together, across social divides, they are to “proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor 11:26). But instead of uniting them, the supper serves as a platform for their factions that “those who are approved may become evident” (1 Cor 11:19). When they eat, “one is hungry and another is drunk” (1 Cor 11:21). Paul “shall not praise [them]” in this (1 Cor 11:22). In a similar response to the immoral brother, his incredulity is expressed at their wrong perception of their actions. They do not realise they “despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing” (1 Cor 11:22). Paul’s response is to admonish them to “wait for one other” (1 Cor 11:33) and to “examine [themselves]” before eating (1 Cor 11:28) that they not “drink

judgement to [themselves]” (1 Cor 11:29).

Contributions in the church gathering are to be edifying to the whole body and not the individual (1 Cor 14:3-4). This requires what is said to be intelligible that others can test and accept what is said (1 Cor 14:16-17). Using the example of musical instruments, Paul makes a distinction between what is heard and what is understood. “[E]ither flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp?” (1 Cor 14:7). In the congregation it is not the individual or a manifestation of tongues that is of value, but rather “five words with [one’s] mind so that [one] may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor 14:19). Determinate of a contribution’s appropriateness is its perceptibility.

4.1.5 1 Corinthians 15-16 – The eternal perspective of the gospel

In 1 Corinthians ch. 15, Paul gives a summary of the gospel, and addresses the importance of the resurrection. In both, he emphasises appearance. The gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is validated by the number of appearances of the risen Christ to people, many of whom “remain until now” and can corroborate Paul’s testimony (1 Cor 15:6). The mysterious wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1-4) that Paul preaches is not knowledge loosed from historical events or forensically untestable. Though the “things of the Spirit of God [...] are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor 2:14), the acts of God in history can be naturally tested. As with the distinction between tone and note, or language and intelligible speech, the acts of God in history are evident to all, but not discernible to all.

In 1 Corinthians 15:8-9 Paul again links his apostleship to his encounter with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:1). However, he calls himself “one untimely born” (1 Cor 15:8), and “the least of all the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle” (1 Cor 15:9) because he “persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor 15:9). Paul, in his self-description as an apostle, carefully mixes self-praise and self-deprecation. On the one hand, he has seen the Lord, belongs to the apostles, and “laboured even more than all of them” (1 Cor 15:10). Yet on the other hand, he was a “persecutor of the church”, is “not fit to be called an apostle”, and all his labours are not his, but thanks to “the grace of God

with [him]” (1 Cor 15:10).

Within Paul’s apology for the resurrection of the dead, several of his arguments rely on perception and appearances. *First*, he states that if the dead are not raised, he is a “false witness of God”. Paul is concerned with being a truthful witness and expounds the consequence of there not being a resurrection: his “preaching is in vain” and their “faith also is in vain” (1 Cor 15:14). *Second*, he explains that he and his co-workers are “of all men most to be pitied” if there is no resurrection (1 Cor 15:19). If their hope for resurrection did not materialise, they would be fools for placing their hope in a lie while enduring a pitiful existence on earth. Paul’s own actions are a testimony to the resurrection, as only someone who believes in the resurrection would act as he does. *Third*, Paul explains the difference in appearance between the earthly and resurrection body as a categorical difference in appearance and glory. The earthly body is like a “bare grain” and utterly different from “the body which is to be” (1 Cor 15:37). With this, he answers the apparent misunderstanding that the resurrection would be with the same body that died (1 Cor 15:35). The bodies given to seeds, animals, and humans on earth differ, but not to the degree that the body of a seed and that of a plant differ. As the heavenly bodies have an entirely other nature and glory than the earthly bodies, so the resurrection body will be different from the earthly body. The “perishable” “natural body” sown in “dishonour”, and “weakness” is raised in “glory” and “power” as an imperishable “spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:43). This will take place at “the last trumpet”, when the “dead will be raised imperishable” (1 Cor 15:52). *Finally*, Paul applies the different natures of bodies to Adam and Christ, the “first Adam” being the natural and the “last Adam” being the “life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45). In doing so, Paul gives the categorical distinction between the natural and spiritual a turning point in Christ as the origin of a new spiritual line of dependents into which he places the Corinthians, saying, “just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor 15:49). The Christ-likeness is to follow their Adam-likeness and if the image of the seed and plant is transferred to these likenesses, then the Christ-likeness is currently hidden inside their earthy nature, to be revealed on the last day.

4.2 2 Corinthians

4.2.1 2 Corinthians 1-2 – Comfort and change of plans

In the first two chapters of 2 Corinthians, Paul relates his hardship in Asia and explains why he changed his itinerary and did not come to the Corinthians sooner.

Paul is concerned with correcting the Corinthian's misperception of himself and his motives. The claim that Paul repeals, especially, is that he and his co-workers are insincere and would "purpose according to the flesh" (2 Cor 1:17). On the contrary, their "proud confidence is this: the testimony of [their] conscience, that in holiness godly sincerity, not in fleshy wisdom, but in the grace of God, [they] have conducted themselves in the world, and especially toward [the Corinthians]" (2 Cor 1:12). They are "not like many peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, [they] speak in Christ in the sight of God" (2 Cor 2:17). It was not insincerity that led Paul to change his plans, but his desire not to be made sorrowful by his visit to them, as he would have caused them sorrow – presumably by admonishing them for sin (cf. 2 Cor 13:1-3). His not coming and writing instead was to show the "love which [he] has especially for [the Corinthians]" (2 Cor 2:4).

Paul portrays his movements in trials (cf. 2 Cor 1:8-9, 2 Cor 2:13) as an instrument of God's self-revelation. There are three objects of perception present in this text: the Roman triumphal procession, the "sweet aroma of the knowledge of [God]", and the "fragrance of Christ". The first and second are a pair, both facilitated by God moving Paul and both perceived by the people around Paul (procession spectators or people "in every place"). Both are also a reason Paul gives thanks to God. The key distinction between them is in visual and olfactory perception. In 2 Corinthians 2:15, Paul shifts the metaphor of fragrance in two distinct ways. God is now also a perceiver of the fragrance and the other observers are divided into two groups: those who are saved and those who are perishing. In v. 16 the perception of the aroma is qualified as being "from death to death" for the perishing and "from life to life" for the saved.

4.2.2 2 Corinthians 3-7 – Paul defends his apostolic ministry

In chs. 3-7, Paul addresses his relationship to the Corinthians as a minister whose “adequacy is from God” (2 Cor 3:5). He and his co-workers are not “commending [themselves] again to the Corinthians but are giving them an occasion to be proud of them so that they will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12). Paul’s apology for his apostolic ministry toward the Corinthians is because of those who doubt his sufficiency as minister because of his appearance. His many trials and rejection by his countrymen did not commend him as a servant of God in the eyes of (some of) the Corinthians.

In several comparisons with the “old covenant” and its “ministry of death”, Paul explains how his “ministry of the spirit” must certainly “be even more with glory” (2 Cor 3:8). Glory is introduced into Paul’s argument as a visible manifestation on the face of Moses. Paul maintains the connotation of visibility through 2 Corinthians 4:6, where Paul and his co-workers see the “Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”. In addition to the visibility of the glory of God in the face of Moses and Christ, Paul addresses their invisibility. Moses “put a veil over his face” which “remains unlifted”, preventing Israelites in the past and present from seeing the glory of the Lord in Moses the person and Moses the book (1 Cor 3:14-15).

The gospel of Paul, too, is veiled, but not by his own actions. He does not “walk[...] in craftiness” or adulterat[e] the word of God” (2 Cor 4:2). Rather, as “ambassador for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20) he “uses great boldness in [his] speech” (2 Cor 3:12) to “persuade people” (2 Cor 5:11) and “by the manifestation of truth, [commends himself] to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor 4:2). If his gospel is veiled, “it is veiled to those who are perishing” (2 Cor 4:3, cf. 2 Cor 4:10). It is the unbelievers, whose minds have been “blinded” by the “god of this age” that do not see what Paul has seen, namely “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4).

Beholding the glory of God is transforming Paul and his co-workers into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18, cf. first and second Adam in 1 Cor 15). This transformation is one that alters their perception. They are “a new creature” and now “recognize no one according to the flesh” not even Christ, whom they “have known [...] according to the flesh” (2 Cor 5:16). Now they look “not at the things which are seen, but at

the things which are not seen” (2 Cor 4:18), and they “walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). Paul and his co-workers receive the glory they see in the face of Christ as a “treasure in earthen vessels”. They carry the “dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in [their] body” (2 Cor 4:10). This “life of Jesus” is a resurrection hope, that though their “outer man is decaying”, their “inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16). Paul has a “building from God, a house not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens” that he will be clothed with upon his death (2 Cor 5:1). It is this “eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” that features prominently in Paul’s peculiar perception, in which he looks at “things which are not seen” (2 Cor 4:17-18). In describing his perspective and its focus on the invisible and eternal, he challenges the Corinthians’ and their opponents’ “pride in appearance” (2 Cor 5:12) and challenges them in their immaturity in perspective despite being in Christ. Unlike Paul and his co-workers, they are still “fleshly” and not ready for the wisdom of the gospel (1 Cor 3:2).

From 2 Corinthians 5:20-7:16 Paul again turns his attention to the tensions in his relationship with the Corinthians. He “begs them” as “ambassador for Christ”, that they not “receive the grace of God in vain” but be “reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20, 2 Cor 6:1). His “mouth has spoken freely” to them and his “heart is wide” (6:11), but the Corinthians are “restrained in [their] own affections” (2 Cor 6:12). They should also “open wide” and “make room” for Paul and his co-workers. Paul states that he and his co-workers have done nothing to deserve this restrained treatment from the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor 12:11). They have “wronged no one”, “corrupted no one”, and “taken advantage of no one” (2 Cor 7:2) On the contrary, they “[give] no cause for offence in anything, so that the ministry may not be discredited, but in everything [they commend themselves] as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in sleeplessness, [and] in hunger” (2 Cor 6:3-5). A paradox of appearance characterises Paul’s apostleship. Carrying Christ, Paul and his co-workers are afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, but not crushed, despairing, forsaken, or destroyed (2 Cor 4:8-9). They endure “dishonour”, “evil report”, being “regarded as deceivers”, “dying”, “being punished”, sorrow, poverty, and “having nothing” while, on the other hand, they experience “glory”, “good report”, being “true”, being “well-known”, “liv-

ing”, “not [being] put to death”, “always rejoicing”, “making many rich”, and “possessing all things” (2 Cor 6:8-10). The positive spiritual reality of Paul’s apostleship enables him to endure all manner of earthly trials and maligning by those who misunderstand him.

4.2.3 2 Corinthians 8-9 – The collection for Jerusalem

In 2 Corinthians 8-9 Paul urges the Corinthians to partake in the collection for Jerusalem, having sent Titus to them to “complete in [them] this gracious work”. In this context, Paul argues from perception four times to encourage them to give. *First*, the act of giving is to be a demonstrative act proving the “sincerity of [their] love” (2 Cor 8:8). *Second*, the generosity of the Macedonians, even “beyond their ability” serves as an example for the Corinthians to follow. The Corinthians are to perceive the exemplary involvement of other Christ-believers. *Third*, Paul boasted to the Macedonians of the Corinthian’s generosity and now does not want himself or them to be shamed if his boast proves false (2 Cor 9:3-4). And *finally*, Christ also serves as an example, who, “though he was rich, for [their] sake became poor” (2 Cor 8:9).

While urging the Corinthians to prove themselves in their gift for the saints, Paul does not want it to appear as if the money were going to him. Rather, he writes: “taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor 8:20-21). To achieve this, a brother “appointed by the churches to travel with [Paul]” and whose “fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches” will go to Corinth and accompany the collection. Paul has so emphasised his regard for what is honourable in God’s sight – even over and against what is honourable in man’s sight – that he must clarify that he does indeed care for appearances in order not to discredit himself.

4.2.4 2 Corinthians 10-13 – Paul and the super apostles

Paul changes his tone in chs. 10-13. In preparation for his upcoming visit he admonishes the Corinthians “that when [he is] present [he] need not be bold with the confidence with which [he] propose to be courageous against some, who regard

[him and his co-workers] as if [they] walked according to the flesh” (2 Cor 10:2). When he comes, Paul “will not spare anyone” (2 Cor 13:2). Throughout the four chapters, Paul directly and indirectly addresses accusations that some Corinthians have against him. In response, he defends his actions as an apostle and makes accusations of his own.

The Corinthians fault Paul for his unimpressive presence and appearance as unapproved by God (2 Cor 10:10, 2 Cor 13:7). They believe him to be two-faced. His “weighty letters” “terrify people” but he is “meek when face to face” (2 Cor 10:1). They consider him a “crafty fellow”, who has taken them “by deceit” (2 Cor 12:16). They mistrust Paul’s motives for preaching free of charge, and even doubt Christ speaks through him (2 Cor 13:3). To the Corinthians, Paul’s motives are no different from other people’s. He also “walks according to the flesh” and “wars according to the flesh” (2 Cor 10:2-3). In addition, they are suspicious of Paul having preferential treatment of other churches and regarding them as inferior in comparison to other churches (2 Cor 12:13).

Paul’s harshest accusation is against the false apostles, who, as “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”, “[disguise] themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11:13). He criticises them for “boasting according to the flesh” and accuses them of devouring and taking advantage of the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:18, 2 Cor 11:20). They preach “another Jesus whom [Paul and his co-workers] have not preached” (2 Cor 11:4). They will be judged according to their deeds (2 Cor 11:15). The Corinthians, on their part, are accused of being concerned with appearances and considering the “eminent apostles” as superior to Paul (2 Cor 10:7, 11:5). Appearance can be deceiving. Paul warns the Corinthians that their choice of other apostles over him based on appearance is endangering them. His argument for the deceitfulness of false apostles is fourfold. *First*, it is theologically possible, as even Satan disguises himself (2 Cor 11:14). *Second*, they preach “another Jesus whom [he has] not preached” (2 Cor 11:4). *Third*, they serve themselves by accepting money (2 Cor 11:12). And *finally*, they do not serve the Corinthians, but “enslave” them (2 Cor 11:20).

Paul describes his way of ministry in contrast to that of the “most eminent apos-

ties” and counter to what the Corinthians’ think of him. He is not “of the flesh” as some accuse him of being (2 Cor 10:2). He “robbed churches” to serve them (11:8) and will save up for them “as a father for his children” (2 Cor 12:14). But they see in his financial independence grounds for mistrusting him (2 Cor 11:7). All the while, Paul carries the “daily pressure on [himself] of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). His care for the Corinthians — expressed as the care a father takes in betrothing his daughter to present her as pure to her husband (2 Cor 11:2) — is a key self-distinction of Paul from the false apostles. They are impressive in appearance but exalt themselves and take advantage of the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:20). Paul’s apostleship, however, is given him in order to “build up and not tear down” (2 Cor 13:10 cf 2 Cor 10:8). They lure the Corinthians from a devotion to Christ by taking the place that only Christ is to take — that of the lover (2 Cor 11:2-3). In contrast, Paul is “jealous for [the Corinthians] with a godly jealousy” (2 Cor 11:2).

One reason Paul continues to preach the gospel of God without charge (2 Cor 11:7) is to deprive false apostles the opportunity of comparing themselves to him (2 Cor 11:12). They are not false apostles because they accept wages for preaching. Paul states that it is an apostle’s prerogative to receive wages for preaching, and he himself accepted pay for his preaching from other Churches (cf. 1 Cor 9:7-12, 2 Cor 11:8). Rather, in competing against the false apostles in Corinth, Paul considered it best to clearly distinguish himself from them by not accepting any wages.

Beginning in 2 Corinthians 12:14, Paul addresses his upcoming visit to the Corinthians. He states he will continue to work without pay and “not burden them” and reiterates, that he has “not taken advantage of them”. Rather, what he and his co-workers have done has been for their “upbuilding” (2 Cor 12:19). However, part of the upbuilding that Paul sees as necessary is the correction of those who have “sinned in the past and not repented” (2 Cor 12:21). Paul does not want to correct them in person and so is “writing these things while absent, so that when present [he] need not use severity” (2 Cor 13:10). Paul hopes for the Corinthians to recognise him as being in Christ and thereby as coming with the authority of Christ, but ultimately what concerns him and he “prays to God” for is that the Corinthians “do no wrong”, “do what is right” (2 Cor 13:7), and “be made complete” (2 Cor 13:9).

4.3 Summary

The letters from Paul to the churches give us a window into each community's understanding and misunderstanding of the faith. Paul often wrote to correct misunderstandings that differed widely across his different churches. Barclay (1992:50) writes (emphasis added):

And yet these sibling communities [of Corinth and Thessaloniki] developed remarkably different interpretations of the Christian faith. Any careful reading of Paul's letters to these churches reveals that they had very different characteristics; and any thoughtful analysis of these differences shows how they diverged not just in superficial matters but *in their whole perception of the faith* they had learned from Paul.

As in Barclay's use, perception is a common metonym for understanding. In this general sense, both Paul's letter to the Corinthians and his letter to the Thessalonians deal with perception. In both, Paul seeks to correct faulty *perception* of the faith by expositing the correct *view* of the faith. Within these common uses of perception language for understanding, a person's metaphorical vantage point becomes determinate of their "whole perception of the faith".

However, in correcting the Corinthian's misunderstanding of the faith, Paul does not simply present the correct understanding of the faith but enters a meta discourse on the nature of human and spiritual perception (cf. 1 Cor 1-4). The nature of the problem with the Corinthians misunderstandings lies deeper than their vantage point. Paul could not simply explain the occurrences of the eschaton, as he did in his letters to the Thessalonians (1 Th 4:13-5:11, 2 Th 3), but within his teaching on the resurrection talks about the principles of human and spiritual bodies aided by analogies from the natural world (1 Cor 15). The Corinthians in their spiritual immaturity lacked a spiritual faculty of perception for comprehending these truths (cf. "we walk by faith, not by sight", 2 Cor 5:7).

From my survey of the Corinthian correspondence, two themes emerge regarding perception and perceptibility: the *contrast of fleshly and spiritual perception* and the *judgement of people by appearances*. In regard to the first, Paul and his co-workers

are exemplars of spiritual perception, expressed in the paradoxical statement of “seeing the invisible” (2 Cor 4:18, cf. “we have the mind of Christ” 1 Cor 2:16). The Corinthians, on the other hand, are fleshly in their perception and desires (1 Cor 3:1-3). This immaturity of the Corinthians, inhibits their understanding of the full wisdom of the gospel Paul is preaching. God’s self-revelation is characterised by a mystery that requires spiritual perception to be appreciated.

A distinct second aspect of perception is central to the Corinthian correspondence: *the judgement of people by appearances*. Paul considers himself misjudged by the Corinthians and defends himself to them. He specifically states, “but we are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12). He calls the false apostles servants of Satan who “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor 11:13-15). Appearances can be deceptive. However, there is also a positive side to the judgement of people by appearances in the Corinthians correspondence. In explaining his plan for the collection for Jerusalem, Paul wants to be seen as upright and states, “for we have regard for what is honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of other people” (2 Cor 8:21). Though his preaching “Christ crucified” is a “stumbling block” and “folly” to Jews and Greeks respectively (1 Cor 1:23), he does not take this as a licence to offend, rather he seeks to “please everyone” (1 Cor 10:32-33). Paul draws the line, however, at pleasing in self-service. He does not seek his “own benefit but the benefit of the many so that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:33). The pleasing of others is to be in their interest and not in self-interest.

What role do these two themes of perception play in the text of 2 Cor 2:14-4:6?

First, throughout the passage, Paul is concerned with how he is perceived. He is not a peddler but speaks the truth before Christ. He is sufficient, but not in himself. Furthermore, he is a minister appointed by God like Moses, but also not like Moses because he speaks the truth “boldly” (2 Cor 3:12). So while Paul often states he is not commending himself to the Corinthians and cares not how they judge him, his statements are defensive.

Paul does not, in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 address fleshy and spiritual perception

explicitly, but the dichotomy of distinct perceptions is present throughout. In 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, the same fragrance is perceived as death by some and life by others. The veil over the Israelites' hearts prevents a true understanding of Moses, while the presence of the Spirit brings freedom and leads to transformation in the sight of God. Furthermore, the same message Paul preaches — that of Christ Jesus as Lord — is heard by all, yet to the unbelieving the light of the glory of Christ therein is hidden. This variance in perception is due to the inability for some to perceive spiritually. What is more, throughout 2:14-4:16 Paul expresses a change in himself and his co-workers that enabled their spiritual perception and can be described as a conversion. This conversion was initiated in their encounter with Christ and led to a transformation. The result of this transformation is a changed ethical way of life, no longer deceiving others but being concerned for the sight of God. It can be argued that the passage of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 is the heart of the perception passages in the Corinthian correspondence. Here Paul explicates his own transformation and the resulting change of his perception and action.

In conclusion, Paul's wide-ranging statements concerning human perception and judgement by appearances can be brought together under two realities. The first is the ever-present reality for Paul to be one acting "before God" or "in sight of God" (1 Cor 1:29; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; 7:12; 12:19). This present state will eschatologically culminate in appearing "before the judgement seat of Christ" and being "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8, 5:10). The second reality is that in Christ Paul has a fundamentally altered perception. He is a new creation and sees a wisdom of God in the gospel of Christ where others see only foolishness. He looks to the invisible. Decidedly, Paul's "conversion" did not cause a change in the first of the two points. Paul, as a pharisaic Jew, did all his actions "in the sight of God" (cf. 2 Phlp 3). And yet, in that state, his perception could still be fleshly, and he perceived Christ as such (2 Cor 5:16). However, in the second point, he did change. Paul includes himself among those who used "underhanded ways" and in need of divine enlightenment (2 Cor 4:1-2, 4:6). It was Paul's accepting the crucified and risen Christ as God's Messiah, in all its "foolishness", that altered his view of reality. To him, "Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24).

CHAPTER 5

EXEGESIS OF 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-4:6

At the heart of this investigation into the glory of Christ and its perception lie the two verses 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6. There Paul describes the perception of the glory of God in Christ. The focus of our exegesis will be on these two verses in their immediate context of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. In order to not get lost in the questions of the individual verses leading up to and between 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6, in my exegesis I will analyse these verses first — together with the related verse 2 Corinthians 3:3. A comparison with the transformation described in 2 Corinthians 3:3 sheds further light on the two verses and their connection to the opening of the passage of 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6. After the exegesis of these individual verses I will analyse glory, Christ, and perception in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 in five subsections and summarise the results at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Introduction

Paul's Apologia is better understood if we see its connection to 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. These two narrative verses prepare much of what follows. Several key topics that are prominent in the Apologia are mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 already, namely, Paul's (indirect) rebuttal of accusations made against him, the nature and authority of his apostolic ministry, and his relationship to God and people, specifically to the Corinthians. Additionally, starting here provides the opportunity to tie the Apologia and specifically 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:16 to 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:11, the opening of the letter.

5.1.1 The transition from 2 Corinthians 2:12-13

First, I will address the transition between 2 Corinthians 2:13 and 2:14. This is not as hard a transition as has been thought. For some this break marks the start of not only an excursus before picking up the narrative in 2 Corinthians 7:5, but a

letter fragment with separate situational context. But for Heilig (2017:244) “it is very difficult to imagine a situation in which the thanksgiving, triumph metaphor, and figurative scent language would make more sense than in the context in which we currently find this passage”. The “connecting factor between 2:12-13 and 2:14b is specifically the aspect of the *movement* of Paul and his co-workers” (Heilig 2017:243).¹

The transition between 2 Corinthians 2:13 and 2:14 can also be explained when we consider *how* Paul theologises from experience. This is best explained in parallel with the narrative section of 1 Corinthians 1:8-11 as shown in the table below.

Table 5.1: A comparison between the narrative sections 2 Cor 1:8-11 and 2 Cor 2:12-3:3

Section	Asia (2 Cor 1:8-11)	Troas (2 Cor 2:12-3:3)
Introduction	^{8a} For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction which occurred in Asia,	¹² Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,
Testimony	^{8b} that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life. ^{9a} Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves	¹³ I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but saying goodbye to them, I went on to Macedonia.
Interpretation	^{9b} so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, ^{10a} who rescued us from so great a danger of death,	¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.
Generalisation	^{10b} and will rescue us, He, on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,	¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: ^{16a} to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.
Application	¹¹ if you also join in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons in our behalf for the favour granted to us through the prayers of many.	^{16b} And who is adequate for these things? ... ^{3:2} You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all people, ³ revealing yourselves, that you are a letter of Christ

¹Heilig (2017:152) even expresses hope that his work on 2 Cor 2:14 will “influence [scholars’] position regarding the literary integrity of Second Corinthians” in regard to a text-critical division at 2 Cor 2:14.

In both instances, Paul follows a recognisable pattern in theologising from his experience. After *introducing* the narrative, he gives a *testimony* of how the experience affected him — in both cases negatively. Paul's stated intent is to inform the Corinthians, making them aware of his toils for the gospel and on their behalf, but also to move them to compassion. It is their relationship to him, that he seeks to restore. The *interpretation* that follows, is striking for what it is not. In both cases, Paul interprets a negative reality into a positive theological truth. God is not the one who abandoned them in Asia or prevented Titus from coming to Troas. Rather, Paul sees God using both hardships for His divine purpose. God builds the apostles' trust in the affliction in Asia and reveals Himself to people in the relocation to and from Troas. What is more, Paul *generalises* his statements, once regarding the rescue by God and once regarding his fragrant revelatory nature. What follows, is an inclusion of the Corinthians in an *application*. These are different, but each appropriate to the context. In the first, Paul asks the Corinthians to partake in his ministry by prayer, assuring deliverance by God and favour in His sight. In the second, Paul includes the Corinthians as tokens of his sufficiency as God's apostle, who themselves contribute to God's self-revelation. In both applications, Paul maintains a minister-church distinction of roles and yet foregoes that distinction in describing all Christians working for God's greater purpose.

5.1.2 The connection to 2 Corinthians 1:1-2:11

Now I turn to the connection between 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 and the opening of 2 Corinthians. While it is impossible to reconstruct from Paul's letters *all* accusations made in the Corinthian congregation against him, from 2 Corinthians 1-2 we know for certain that *one* accusation was spurred by his change of travel plans.² Without getting into the details of what Paul's plans may have been and how he altered them, it is evident that he had communicated his coming to the Corinthians and subsequently altered his plans, delaying his visit (2 Cor 1:23; cf. 1 Cor 16:5-7). The accusation attached to Paul's delay was twofold. *First*, that he changed his decision as

²Cf. Heilig (2017:161) "What is in question is the integrity of Paul's ministry as a whole. His co-workers are not described as some disconnected addition to his own work but as an integral part of his mission in 2 Cor 1:19 and 2:13. Somehow, Paul has to affirm that the chaos that surrounds some of the recent missionary activities of him and his team are not an indication of human standards in a supposedly divine mission."

it suited him (not because he was hindered), going back on his word (2 Cor 1:17). *Second*, that he prioritised visiting other churches over the Corinthians, showing a (relative) lack of concern for the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:15-16; cf. 2 Cor 12:13).³ It appears, from Paul's rebuttal, that these situational grievances had taken on character-defaming proportions. He did not simply "change his mind" but was "vacillating" and making decision "by the flesh" (2 Cor 1:17). Similarly, Paul assures them that it was precisely *because he cared* that he did not "come again to Corinth" (2 Cor 2:1), suggesting there were Corinthians who doubted his love for him (cf. 2 Cor 7:2-3). One more aspect must be noted in Paul's response. In refuting his decision-making "according to the flesh" he insists that his actions and decisions mirror the character of God and actions of Christ (2 Cor 1:17-18). While the accusation against him likely did not go beyond him being "of the flesh", him being spiritual (i.e., of God and Christ) forms the basis of Paul's defence, as to be one precludes the other – how can he be of the flesh if he is of God? As "of the flesh" here is probably shorthand for acting in self-interest, Paul's being spiritual entails his acting in the interest of the Corinthians.

Within the narration of his movements in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul indirectly counters the named accusations against him. Writing in the first-person singular (unlike the preceding and following narrative sections, 1 Cor 1:8-10, 7:5-7), Paul emphasises his personal involvement in what are relocations under duress (leaving Asia because of affliction and Troas in a worried search for Titus). His agency in decision-making is exaggerated in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. *He* came to Troas, and *he* went to Macedonia. As will become evident in 2 Corinthians 2:14, it is God who steers Paul's movements, but here the emphasis is on Paul's agency. In his decision, he did *not* prioritise another church over the Corinthians. On the contrary, he left Troas, despite the door being opened for him, in order to seek Titus. He was anxious for news from *the Corinthians* (cf. 2 Cor 7:6-7). Despite the delayed visit, Paul is concerned for the Corinthians and makes his decisions with them in mind.⁴

³Cf. Belleville (1996:283): "The Corinthians have questioned Paul's sincerity because of a change in travel plans that gave the impression of fickleness"

⁴Baumert (2008:46) considers the insight into Paul's personality as an apostle from this decision: "Dies gibt Aufschluß über seine Persönlichkeit. Er war mit Leib und Seele Apostel, und der Gedanke, die Gemeinde könnte seine Sendung verkennen und damit für sich den Weg Christi verfehlen, war für ihn unerträglich, so daß er sobald als möglich wissen wollte, wie dieser Brief aufgenommen worden ist. Wenn er darum sogar eine andere Chance der Verkündigung aufgibt, liegt darin vielleicht die

The second key topic, Paul's apostolic ministry, is characterised in 2 Corinthians 2:12 as being in service of the Lord (who "opened the door") and constituting Paul's sharing of "the gospel of Christ". Paul's gospel message underlies the description of his ministry throughout 2 Corinthians 2:17-4:6, even though the word gospel is not explicitly mentioned again until 4:3. Paul's service under God — expressed in the acknowledgement that God opened a door for (i.e., enabled and blessed his ministry) in Troas — provides a characteristic qualification for Paul's ministry. His "success" in Troas is not to be taken for granted and is ultimately dependent on God's enabling.

Finally, Paul's relationship to God, the Corinthians, and the church at Troas are mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. Even under duress, Paul's concern in Troas is the gospel of Christ. He emphasises his relationship to the church in the positive reception he received and by mentioning bidding the brothers farewell. The "opening of a door signifies the availability or presence of distinctive opportunities [...]. Paul is probably referring to an actual, warm reception of his message, including provision of hospitality and general support, rather than simply to a promising prospect for evangelism" (Harris 2005:237). As mentioned, it is Paul's concern for the Corinthians that drew him away from Troas. Above all, Paul has a relationship of service to God (cf. 2 Cor 1:3-11; 2 Cor 2:14-17). His relationship with the churches is one of apostolic concern (cf. 2 Cor 11:28). He does not act in self-interest but in service of God.

5.2 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18 and 4:6

^{3:18} But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

^{4:6} For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.⁵

menschliche Ungeduld - aber das ist er eben, der Mensch Paulus!"

⁵2 Cor 3:18 and 4:6 contain minor variations in textual manuscripts. The most significant of these is the exclusion of πάντες ("all") at the beginning of 2 Cor 3:18 in Papyrus 46. Besides this, the

There are several similarities between the two verses. Both 1) employ the OT in their 2) use of visual metaphors⁶ to 3) describe an encounter with God 4) by a group of people and 5) a transformation of those people 6) caused by God. These similarities alone suggest that these verses be read together and for the interpretation of each in its context to indicate what Paul intends to communicate with the other (cf. Hays 1989:153; cf. Back 2002:142–144). Additionally, there are considerable parallels between these two verses and the earlier verse 2 Corinthians 3:3:

3:3 revealing yourselves, that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

All three verses concern the transformation of the believers in response to an encounter with God. In fact, though they are not stated in the same manner, all elements of comparison between the verses 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 can be found in 3:3 as well. The similarities between the verses are presented in the Table 5.2.

An analysis of 2 Corinthians 3:3 will serve to obtain a better grasp of Paul's concern regarding the transformation of the individual, which will shed light on how to understand both verses 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6. Connecting the latter to verses 2 Corinthians 3:3 also helps understand the passage as a whole, as it indicates how early the elements of encountering Christ are present in the argument of Paul. I will return to unifying elements of the verses after the exegesis of the individual verses.

5.2.1 The letter metaphor of 2 Corinthians 3:3

My concern in this study is the glory of Christ and its perception. While the glory of Christ is not mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3:3, the parallels between this verse and 2

Codex Vaticanus omits τῆς δόξης (“of the glory”) in 4:6 and *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* alters the “καρδιαὶς ἡμῶν” (“our hearts”) to “καρδιαὶς ὑμῶν” (“your hearts”) in the same verse. As has been stated in the introduction I use the Greek text according to the NA28 for my exegesis.

⁶Visual metaphors, in my usage, refers to metaphors that are not only visual in the sense that they use images to convey meaning, but that the image they establish itself relates to perception. Metaphors regarding sight, blindness, beauty, and ugliness fit this category. These metaphors are commonly used either epistemologically or aesthetically. An epistemological visual metaphor uses the concepts of perception and perceptibility to describe human understanding and comprehensibility. An aesthetic visual metaphor uses the concepts of beauty, ugliness, being drawn to and aversion to describe human values and judgement, especially in their subjective nature.

Table 5.2: A comparison of 2 Cor 3:3, 3:18, and 4:6

Similarity	2 Cor 3:3	2 Cor 3:18	2 Cor 4:6
Reference to the OT	Tablets of Moses (Ex 31:18), hearts of stone replaced with hearts of flesh (Ez 11:19, 36:26-27a), new covenant written on hearts (Jr 31:33)	Moses meeting God in the Tent of Meeting (Ex 33:7-9, 34:34-35)	God creating light in darkness at creation (Gn 1:3; Is 9:1)
Use of visual metaphors	Open letters of recommendation, heart replacement, writing on hearts	People perceiving/reflecting glory with unveiled face	Creation of light in human hearts
Encounter with God	Writing on the heart by the Spirit of God	Being transformed in the presence of God	Receiving light to see the glory of God in Christ
Group of people	Corinthians	Paul, co-workers, and Corinthians	Paul and co-workers
Transformation	1. heart softened, 2. Christ written on the heart	1. veil removed, 2. person transformed	1. light created in darkness, 2. perception of Christ
God as the cause	Spirit of God written as ink on the heart	The presence of God as the Spirit	The speech of God the Creator

Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 mean these verses must be considered to inform our exegesis of 3:18 and 4:6. Specifically, the identification of the Corinthians as a “letter of Christ” written by the “Spirit of God” and the public nature of this letter must be explained. Are the Corinthians a public display of (the glory of) Christ? As illustrated in the comparisons drawn between 2 Corinthians 3:3 and the other two transformation verses, this first verse places greater emphasis on the relationship between Paul, the Corinthians and other observers. An understanding of these relationships in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 will help understand the apostle-church relationship in Paul’s ministry and shed light on how to understand the verses that follow, especially regarding the inclusion of the Corinthians in the statements of Paul.

The text of 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts,⁷ known and read by all people, ³ revealing yourselves, that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

The two questions in v. 1 are to be answered in the negative. Paul introduces the letters of recommendation as a specification of the general question regarding recommendation. As the Corinthians (somehow) take the place of Paul’s letter of recommendation in v. 3 — thereby alleviating the need for one, — the answer to both opening questions must be negative.⁸ Paul’s familiarity with the Corinthians stands behind his claim to need no recommendation. Arzt-Grabner (2014:270) states: “insbesondere für die Gemeinde in Korinth, die ihn ja so gut kenne, wären Empfehlungsbriefe doch schlichtweg unnötig”. Paul’s not needing letters of recommendation is set in contrast to “some”, who do require these letters. As writing letters of recom-

⁷There is manuscripts evidence for the reading καρδίας ὑμῶν (“your hearts”). While a minority of scholars do consider this the original rendering (eg. Back 2002:131), I follow the NA28 and modern translations in favouring καρδίας ἡμῶν (“our hearts”). Harris (2005:257) writes, “this is an instance where, with internal evidence almost evenly balanced, the consideration of external evidence, which favors ἡμῶν, should be determinative, although it would appear also that ἡμῶν is the more difficult reading.”

⁸Kuschnerus (2002:151) writes, “[s]pätestens der offenkundig rhetorische Charakter dieser zweiten Frage und die polemische Erwähnung der Empfehlungsbriefe in ihr decken die Ironie der vorhergehenden auf” – with Harris (2005:258) and contra Guthrie (2015).

commendation was a common practice, there is no doubt that the Corinthian church had received people with such letters.⁹ To what extent Paul here specifically refers to other teachers who authorised themselves before the Corinthians with letters of recommendation, and to the Corinthians' over-valuing of such letters, is difficult to ascertain. The fact that Paul contrasts himself with the "some" in *necessity* and not *practice* does lend this background credibility. In any case, the profile of the "some" should not be drawn from the consideration of the historical context but from the metaphor itself. Paul could be creating a polemical caricature of his opponents against which to contrast himself, and his portrayal of these teachers could be exaggerated.¹⁰

Letters of recommendation

Central to the interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:1-3, is understanding Paul's metaphorical use of letters of recommendation. It is perhaps the most complex metaphor employed by Paul in our passage. In mentioning the Spirit and tablets of stone, Paul's figurative use of letters shifts in v. 3. The debate hinges on whether this shift is a continuation of the metaphor in 2 Corinthians 3:2 or if it constitutes a new heart-letter metaphor. Stated differently: is there *one* letter on *one* heart, or are there *two* letters on *two* hearts (or groups of hearts). I will argue for two distinct metaphors, one describing the letter written on Paul's heart and the other describing the letter written on the Corinthians' hearts. These two "heart-letters" form a part of Paul's overarching metaphor of *reciprocal* letters of recommendation, in which he changes the customs of letters of recommendation to make them a means of God's public self-revelation. In my interpretation I largely follow Kuschnerus (2002). I analyse the metaphor as blends of source and target domains (Parris 2013) as explained in the methodology chapter.

⁹According to Acts 18:27-28, Apollos came to the church in Corinth with letters recommending him. In Paul's own correspondence, 1 Cor 16:15-18 can be seen as a letter of recommendation for Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus and 2 Cor 8:22-24 as a recommendation of Titus. Regarding the Corinthian passages as letters of recommendation see Arzt-Grabner (2014:271, 2006).

¹⁰Stockhausen (1984:59) appears to miss this and considers Paul's rejection of letters of recommendation absolute, despite his practice of the same. She writes: "No previous argument explains Paul's abrupt rejection of such an ordinary means of social legitimation. And, finally, no information seems to be offered here about the differences between those who do use such letters and Paul, who does not, although an important distinction is surely implied in the first verse." Cf. Arzt-Grabner (2014:270): "In der zweiten Frage geht es nicht drum, ob Paulus Empfehlungsbriefe verwendet (χράομαι), sondern ob er sie benötigt, nötig hat (χρήχω)."

Historical background

Harris (2005:259–260) explains the practice of recommendation letters:

‘Letters of (re)commendation’ συστατικαὶ ἐπιστολαὶ (or συστατικαὶ γράμματα) were given to travellers or emissaries to introduce them to persons in another town or country who could provide them with hospitality and meet their particular needs. Since the person recommended was in good standing with the recommender and the recipient was a friend or patron of the recommender, the ‘letter of recommendation’ virtually committed the recipient to comply with the request expressed in the letter.

To understand Paul’s metaphorical use of letters of recommendation, the relationship between the parties is crucial. Letters of recommendation (L) were given by a patron or benefactor (A) to a travelling person or party (B) to recommend them to someone at their destination (C). Paul’s letter to Philemon is a good example of this: “Die Situation is eine [für Empfehlungsbriefe] typische: Paulus [A] sendet den Sklaven Onesimos [B] mit dem Brief [L] zu Philemon [C] und legt in diesem Brief [L] für Onesimos [B] Fürsprache ein” (Arzt-Grabner 2003:59, letter annotations added).¹¹ While the recommended party B and the benefactor A as well as the benefactor A and the recipient C are each acquainted with each other, the recommended party B and the party they are recommended to (C) are not acquainted or are not on such terms that B could recommend themselves to C.¹² The relationship of each party to the letter is as follows: A writes the letter, B carries the letter, and C receives the letter. One final note of importance: neither the letter nor any party are public *per se*. While the practice could be observed by others, it did not have a public function as did, for example, Hellenistic royal letters inscribed in stone in the city they were received in (cf. Scott 2022:55).

¹¹Paul was well-versed in the practice of letters of recommendation. Cf. Arzt-Grabner (2014:271): “Mit der Verwendung der exakten Terminologie zeigt er jedenfalls, dass er mit dem Typ des Empfehlungsbriefes gut vertraut war. Sowohl die Bezeichnung ἐπιστολή συστατική für diesen Briefftyp als auch die Verwendung des Verbs συνίστημι/συνιστάνω in geprägten Wendungen innerhalb derartiger Schreiben entsprechen genau den zeitgenössischen Gepflogenheiten.”

¹²This last case appears to be the case with Paul recommending Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus to the church they are from in 2 Cor 8:22-24.

Interpretation

These elements of the practice of recommendation letters now need to be mapped to those in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. In doing so, three aspects must be considered. *First*, we must distinguish between the letter on Paul's heart (v. 2) and the letter on the Corinthians' hearts (v. 3). *Second*, we must correctly attribute the content and authorship of the letters. *Third*, we must recognise that in Paul's alteration of letters of recommendation into means of public display he is expressly *not* recommending himself, but God.

First, I will consider the number of hearts and letters present. Three options are possible: there is only one letter written on Paul's and his co-workers' hearts, only one letter on the Corinthians' hearts, or two letters with one written on each of their hearts. According to the first option, "the Corinthians are a letter written by God's Spirit on the hearts of Paul and his co-workers so that everywhere they go in preaching the gospel, the impact of the Corinthian church on their lives is evident to all" (Belleville 1996:291). But how does the spiritual transformation of Paul's heart "show" that the Corinthians are a "letter of Christ"? Paul cannot be the carrier of a letter that recommends the Corinthians. And is the argument Paul makes not the other way around — that he influences the Corinthians' lives through his service of the new covenant of the Spirit?¹³ The second option is considered by those who take καρδίαὶς ὑμῶν as the primary reading in v. 2. This is also unlikely, as it requires Paul to be recommended by a letter written on the Corinthians' hearts and the carrier of a letter of recommendation is always the one recommended. The best explanation is that there are two letters present. The reciprocal phrase "to you or from you" at the end of v. 1 also suggests this (Hickling 1975:381–382).

Second, I address the content and authorship of the letters. By separating the letters, the letter written on Paul's heart becomes evident: it is *not* the new covenant written by the Spirit of God but Paul's care for the Corinthians. Harris (2005:262) writes:¹⁴

¹³Cf. Baird (1961:171), "This apparent reference to the new covenant has led most commentators to identify the 'hearts' of II Cor 3 3 as the hearts of the Corinthians."

¹⁴Cf. Arzt-Grabner (2014:277): "Was auch immer schriftlich verzeichnet wird, erlangt durch eben diesen Akt des Festschreibens eine Gültigkeit, die man nur auf ausdrücklichen Antrag [...] wieder aufheben kann. Wenn also Paulus schreibt, dass die Gemeindeglieder in seinem Herzen "fest-

The “heart” (καρδία) is the seat of emotions and affections, the center of person-ality. The Corinthians were not merely frequently in Paul’s thoughts or always in the back of his mind; they had been indelibly engraved (ἐγγεγραμμένη, perfect passive) on his heart, and so were in his heart (ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν ἐστε, 7:3).

As in many places throughout 2 Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 3:1-2 Paul expresses his deep concern for the Corinthians. He spends himself for them on behalf of his apostolic calling (cf. 2 Cor 4:9-16) and carries the “daily pressure” from his “concern for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). The first heart-metaphor is a blend of personal and formal relationship spaces into a public-personal relationship space.

Table 5.3: The blend of Paul’s “heart-letter” metaphor (2 Cor 3:2)

Generic Space	Source Space	Target Space	Blended Space
Nature of Relationship	Personal relationship	Formal relationship	Public-personal relationship
Relationship between	Paul and co-workers to Corinthians	Recommended others to Corinthians	Paul and co-workers to Corinthians (observed by “all people”)
Correspondence	Without letters of recommendation but with personal care	With letters of recommendation but without personal care	Personal care written on the heart as a public letter of recommendation
Purpose	Genuine concern	Self-serving	Public witness of commitment to another in Christ

Paul changes the private letter of recommendation into a means of public display. Public observers are added as a party in the public-personal relationship space though they are not present in either source or target space. Paul explains to the Corinthians what their relationship *should* be like: not self-serving but a public witness. The theme of public display follows from the image of the Roman triumphal procession and the scent imagery in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. Paul’s leaving Troas on account of his care for the Corinthians serves God’s purpose of self-revelation through his apostle. The inner concern written on Paul’s heart is outwardly visible in the action he takes.

geschrieben” oder “eingetragen” sind, so kommt dies einem dauerhaften Treueverhältnis gleich, das ähnlich schwer zu tilgen ist.”

The second heart-metaphor is a blend of two written-document-spaces. A covenant-space and a letter-space blend into a (new) covenant-letter space in which the Corinthians are a “letter of Christ”.¹⁵

Table 5.4: The blend of Paul’s “letter of Christ” metaphor (2 Cor 3:3)

Generic Space	Source Space	Target Space	Blended Space
Written Document	(Old) Covenant	Letter of recommendation	Corinthians as a “letter of Christ” (new covenant)
Author	God	Patron	God who recommends Corinthians to the world
Administrator	Moses	Amanuensis	Paul and co-workers as amanuenses
Writing	Written by the finger of God	Written with ink	Written with the Spirit of God
Medium	Tablets of stone	Papyrus	Fleshy hearts
Content	The law	Recommendation of carrier	Christ as the recommendation of the carrier
Relationship	Between God and his people	Between patron, recommended, and recipient	God recommending his people, the Corinthians, to the world

The relationship between Paul and the Corinthians is still in view, as he “administers” (διακονέω) the letter on their hearts. Again, the letter is public, as the Corinthians reveal (φανερώω) themselves as a “letter of Christ”. Many scholars consider ἐπιστολὴ χριστοῦ as a genitive of authorship. Harris (2005:263) argues that “Christ was the author of the letter, Paul simply the amanuensis” as the context “places no emphasis on the content of the letter”. On the contrary, that which is written by the Spirit of God on the hearts of the Corinthians describes the content. Kushnerus (2002:162–163) writes:

Eine andere, wahrscheinlichere Auffassung sieht in Christus den *Inhalt* des

¹⁵Paul’s use of Old Covenant in the source space of the metaphor prepares his later comparison between the covenants. The connection is deeper than what Baumert (2008:57) calls “Stichwortassoziation”: “Daß er [Paulus] den Mosedienst im Anschluß an ‘Empfehlungsbriefe’ nennt, ist eine reine Stichwortassoziation, die man der Spontanität des Paulus zugestehen muß.”

paulinischen Empfehlungsschreibens. Als Verfasser dieses Briefes wäre dann an Gott zu denken, der bereits in 2,14 als Subjekt eines Christus offenbarenden Geschehens genannt wird, an dem der Apostel beteiligt ist

I follow Kuschnerus, Tack (2015:96), and Witulski (2012:345) who all argue for Christ as the content of the letter. Without defining the content of the letter, a central part of Paul's metaphor is missing. Kuschnerus is right in naming God as the author and Harris in naming Paul the amanuensis.¹⁶ The allusion the law written on people's hearts does not preclude Christ being the content of the letter. The law as content of the written document in the source space does not have to transfer to the blended space.¹⁷ Paul's image in 2 Corinthians 3:3 is of his writing Christ into the hearts of the Corinthians by the Spirit and in service of God. The transformed Corinthians publicly recommend themselves in their Christ-likeness to the world.

Third, I consider the odd nature of public recommendation in Paul's metaphor. Decidedly, neither letter contains the self-recommendation to be expected of a letter of recommendation. Paul's heart contains the Corinthians and the Corinthians' hearts contain Christ. That which is read on their hearts is *not* themselves but someone else. Therein lies the paradox of self-recommendation in the new covenant—Paul and the Corinthians recommend themselves to others by means of selflessness. If we extend the heart-letter metaphor to those who do rely on letters of recommendation then their hearts contain themselves. In this polemical characterisation of his opponents Paul does legitimise and recommend himself by contrast. The recommendation in the letter metaphor, however, is not one of legitimising his apostleship to the Corinthians. As Witulski (2012:345) writes, “Die christliche Gemeinde in Korinth stellt insofern eine ἐπιστολή christlichen Inhalts dar, dass diese ἐπιστολή χριστοῦ in keinem Falle als Selbst-Empfehlung des Paulus missverstanden werden

¹⁶Some translations translate διακονέω in v. 3 as “delivered” (ESV, NASB), but the word is an unnatural choice if Paul was only the carrier of the letter. Additionally, Paul cannot be the carrier of a letter that is written on the Corinthian's hearts and recommends them. As Paul in v. 6 calls himself a διακόνου of the new covenant which brings the Spirit, it is fitting for his service to the Corinthian church to be the application of the Spirit to their hearts.

¹⁷Paul does something similar in Rm 10:6-8, where “Moses”, “word”, and “heart” all occur. He replaces “law” with “Christ” in his quotation from Dt 30:12, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will go up into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching.”

darf”.¹⁸ Paul and the Corinthians can forgo recommending themselves to each other on the basis of their familiar relationship. What is more, their relationship is a public witness to the unity and transformative power of the gospel. As Kuschnerus (2002:156) notes, “Die Steigerung der extravaganten Eigenart des paulinischen Empfehlungsschreibens drückt daher auch eine unüberbietbare Nähe des Apostel zur Gemeinde aus, die einem entgrenzten menschlichen Publikum gegenüber in Erscheinung tritt”.

Summary

Paul converts letters of recommendation into concerns written on the heart. It is not the letters themselves that are visible, but the effect they have on their carriers. Paul’s concern for the Corinthians is evident to all by his suffering and self-expenditure on their behalf. The Corinthians carry Christ in their hearts and show to the world that they belong to him. Paul and the Corinthians are a joint witness to the gospel. Consider 2 Corinthians 4:5, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants on account of Jesus”. This twofold gospel is expressed in Paul’s metaphor of letters of recommendation. Paul with the Corinthians written on his heart preaches himself as their bond-servant. The Corinthians with Christ written on their heart proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.¹⁹

Paul and the Corinthians are recommending themselves *not* to each other, but to the world as belonging to Christ. This manifests itself in their lives differently. Metaphorically, they each have a letter written on their heart. Striking is how in both cases the letter is not private — unlike real letters of recommendation. Paul is critical of needing letters of recommendation, so he twists the metaphor into something that is his concern. It is as if he is saying, “we don’t need to recommend ourselves to each other, we need to recommend ourselves as Christ to the world”.

The Corinthians are written on Paul’s heart, and Christ is written on the Corinthian’s

¹⁸Cf. Kuschnerus (2002:156–157), “Der Apostel legitimiert sich nicht durch den Verweis auf die Gemeinde als einer empirischen Gegebenheit. Wie 2Kor 3,3 und das Attribut (1Kor 9,1.2) zeigen, verweist der Apostel auf seine missionarische Tätigkeit und ihr Ergebnis unter Bezugnahme auf die Wirksamkeit des Evangeliums.”

¹⁹Regarding the actions of the Corinthians in obedience with the gospel have a proclaiming effect see also 1 Cor 11:26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you *proclaim* the Lord’s death until He comes” (emphasis added).

hearts. As Paul's endurance of hardships on behalf of the Corinthians reveals his care for them to everybody, so the letter on his heart is "known and read by all". Similarly, Christ, who has been written into the hearts of the Corinthians by the Spirit of God, is (or should be) observable. The metaphor expresses the reciprocal nature of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. He spends himself for them, and they are obedient to his gospel through their transformation by the spirit. Decidedly, Paul does not employ the metaphor of letters of recommendation to recommend himself but the gospel as evident in the Corinthian's lives.

Having explained the letter metaphor of 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, I now turn to the exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:18. Tack (2015:103) also interprets these verses in light of one other. She writes, "2 Cor 3,18 does not only elaborate the idea of the letter of recommendation that is so explicitly spelled out in 2 Cor 3,1-3, but also introduces the main topic of 2 Corinthians 4."

5.2.2 Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:18

The transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is a restatement of the application of the Spirit to hearts (2 Cor 3:3) in terms of the Exodus 34 narrative and Moses' encounter with God in the Tent of Meeting. Perception and perceptibility lie at the core of interpreting the verse as its meaning is "mainly determined by the translation of the participle κατοπτριζόμενοι" (Tack 2015:89). The glory of Christ is perceivable in Christians' transformation. Their Christ-likeness makes them witnesses to the gospel.

But we all

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες

The majority of scholars see the "all" as signifying an inclusion of the Corinthians in Paul's statement regarding transformation (Guthrie 2015:226; Schmeller 2010:224; Harris 2005:313; Back 2002:144; Garland 1999:198–199). A minority maintain that Paul refers only to himself and his co-workers (eg. Belleville 1996:302). In this second case, the "all" signifies an emphasis on the contrast of Paul's ministry over Moses' ministry. Unlike Moses, who alone was transformed in the presence of God, "we all" who serve as ministers of the new covenant are so transformed. An even

smaller minority of scholars take the ϣ^{46} textual variant, which omits the “all”, to be the original reading of the verse (Baumert 2008:71). In this case, it is also only Paul and his co-workers who are in view.

The case for exclusion of the Corinthians is made from the context, especially 4:1ff, clearly referring only to Paul and his co-workers.²⁰ The same can be said of 3:4-16, where Paul chiefly defends his ministry practice. Why would Paul make a statement that includes the Corinthians in the midst of an argument which relies on his *special* service for God, of which they are the benefactors and not participants? Their inclusion also weakens the comparison that Paul makes with Moses. If Paul is a mediator between God and the world as Moses is the mediator between God and the Sons of Israel, Paul’s inclusion of those he is mediating to at the climax of his contrast lessens its argumentative thrust.²¹ It is for these reasons that the ϣ^{46} reading is attractive. It maintains the focus on Paul and his co-workers from 3:4-4:6.

The case for the inclusion of the Corinthians is based primarily on it being considered the natural reading of “we all”. However, there are other reasons for it to be preferred. When limited to Paul and his co-workers, the content of v. 18 does not significantly further Paul’s apologetic argument in the immediate context. He has already established that he speaks truth boldly before God and does not need to extend the Exodus 34 story into the Tent of Meeting to establish his unveiled witness. If the statement of 2 Corinthians 3:18 was limited to the unveiled encounter with the presence of God, the application to *only* Paul and his co-workers seems more natural. However, the inclusion of the transformation of those in the presence of God raises the question as to why Paul would emphasise his transformation over and against the Corinthians. Would he not thereby implicitly call their transformation lesser or non-existent? The Corinthians do experience a transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:3, where the Spirit of God is written on their hearts. If that transformation is true of them, why not the one in 2 Corinthians 3:18? Schmeller (2010:225) draws the

²⁰Schmeller (2010:255) notes: “Wer die christlich-inklusive Deutung vertritt, muss erklären, warum Paulus ab 4,1 offenbar nur noch vom apostolischen Dienst spricht und die 1. person Plural dort nur noch auf sich selbst (evtl. die Apostel und Missionare) bezieht, ohne einen Wechsel der betroffenen Personen zu implizieren”

²¹Cf. Belleville (1996:302, footnote 77): “The consistency of Paul’s ‘we gospel ministers’ perspective in 2:14-7:2 suggests that ἡμεῖς is being used for purposes of emphasis rather than for broader inclusion. Indeed, to broaden the reference in v 18 so that it includes all believers is to lose the final and major point of ministerial contrast that Paul has been at pains to establish in these verses.”

same parallel, “V. 18 entspricht [...] 3,1-3, wo ebenfalls die Adressanten einbezogen werden”.

For these reasons, I prefer a reading that includes the Corinthians, but with some qualifications. I consider the thrust of Paul’s argument to focus on him and his ministry, as the scholars with a case for the exclusion of the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:18 point out. Therefore, I do not consider the inclusion to be a direct address or statement of fact, as with Paul’s statements regarding his itinerary or the Corinthian’s participation in the collection (2 Cor 2:1-3, 8:10-11). Rather, the statement is one of Paul’s generalising climaxes, in which he states a profound truth that *should* find application to those he is writing to by nature of them being Christians as he is (cf. 2 Cor 1:19-20, 5:17, 10:18). This move from the specific to the general enables Paul to maintain the focus on himself and his co-workers while at the same time teaching the Corinthians a spiritual truth that is principally true for them by nature of them having accepted ϣ^{46} is the correct textual variant, scholars must still ask if Paul, in his generalised statement regarding transformation, is not making a statement that is paradigmatic for all Christians and therefore applicable to the Corinthians as well.

with unveiled faces looking as in a mirror

ἀνακεκαλυμμένω προσώπῳ [...] κατοπτρίζομενοι

Scholarship is divided on the meaning of κατοπτρίζω in this context. The question is whether it means “to reflect”, “to look as in a mirror”, or simply “to look”. In the last case, it is surmised the reference to reflection or mirrors, though etymologically present, has been lost over time. A second question of interpretation in the above phrase is what the function of “unveiled faces” is. Does the unveiled face serve “open proclamation”, as in vv. 12-13, or “open (responsive) minds” in connection to vv. 14-15? The two questions are connected. Both regard people either *seeing* or *being seen* as a consequence of their faces being unveiled. Hence, the answer of one influences the other, and it is more likely for both to make the same statement regarding the direction of perception. The key difference in the visual metaphor in the two readings of κατοπτρίζω is that with “behold as in a mirror” the encounter

with the glory of the Lord is mediated rather than direct. This requires an interpretation of to what the mirror in the image refers.

In 2015, Laura Tack (2015) published *A Face Reflecting Glory: 2 Cor 3,18 in its Literary Context (2 Cor 3,1 – 4,15)*, a thorough analysis of κατοπτρίζω in 2 Corinthians 3:18. In it she presents traditional arguments for different interpretations of κατοπτρίζω and—presenting contextual arguments of her own—concludes that “to reflect” “contributes to a better understanding of 2 Cor 3,18 in the flow of thought of 2 Corinthians 3-4” (Tack 2015:95).

The lexical basis for the meaning of κατοπτρίζω as a present middle participle does not provide a definitive answer. The entry for κατοπτρίζω in the *Brill dictionary of Ancient Greek* lists the active, middle, and passive meaning. They each reference reflection and in reference to 2 Corinthians 3:18 it states the meaning of κατοπτρίζω as “to reflect”.²²

1. *act.* to show as in a mirror or by reflection
2. *mid.* to look in a mirror, be reflected in a mirror | to reflect NT 2Cor 3.18
3. *pass.* to be reflected in a mirror

The option “to look” (without reference to reflection) as a meaning for κατοπτρίζω is improbable. There is no lexical evidence for its usage and “[h]ad Paul meant simply ‘observe’, a verb such as θεωρέω or ἐμβλέω would have been a more obvious choice” (Garrett 2010:764). Reflection is (in some way) part of what Paul is trying to communicate in v.18, so “the real options are: ‘reflect like a mirror/as in a mirror’ or ‘behold/see as in a mirror’ ” (Harris 2005:314). While “the middle can describe using a mirror to look at oneself”, Garret (2010:762) notes, “Paul clearly does not mean that we look at ourselves in a mirror”. Harris (2005:314) opts for “behold/see” in a mirror, writing it “is to be preferred [...] the idea of reflection is rather contained by implication in the subsequent work εἰκῶν, which is a visible representation (or reflection) of some reality”. Garret (2010:763), argues for “reflect” from the context. He writes, “Indeed, having gone to great lengths to make the contrast between us who

²²The *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (Louw & Nida 1988:176) does not make a decision one way or the other regarding κατοπτρίζω in 2 Cor 3:18. It contains two entries for κατοπτρίζομαι (“see by reflection” and “reflect”) and at the end of each states: “For another interpretation of κατοπτρίζομαι in 2 Cor 3:18 see” with reference the other entry.

behold glory unveiled and those who see it obscured by a veil, why would Paul interject the metaphor of a mirror and indicate that we, too, have something between us and God's glory?". Both Harris and Garret appeal to the *context* to argue for a lexical meaning of κατοπτρίζω rather than the other way around. Until a more thorough lexical analysis of the middle form of κατοπτρίζω is done, the debate around its meaning will remain one of its immediate context.

Considering the influence of "unveiled face" on the meaning of κατοπτρίζω, if the veil prevents *being seen*, as in the Exodus 34 narrative and v. 12-13, κατοπτρίζω is more likely to mean "reflect". However, if it prevents *seeing*, as in Paul's application of the veil to the hearts of the Israelites in v. 14-15, κατοπτρίζω is more likely to mean "look (as in a mirror)". Harris (2005:313) chooses the latter, writing, "An unre-moved veil prevents recognition of the glory of the new covenant" and "the whole phrase ἀνακεκαλυμμένω προσώπῳ ('with unveiled faces') [...], refers to the unimpeded vision of Christians in contrast to the impeded vision of Jews (vv. 14-15)." Tack (2015:93) takes the opposite side, writing, "In this context therefore the unveiled face does not refer to the ability to see God's glory, but instead refers to the ability to make visible God's glory by means of the face." Her argument is based on Paul's consistent use of "veil" throughout 2 Corinthians 3. When in front of the face, the veil only ever denotes an obfuscation of the wearer's face. Only before the heart does it denote an inability to understand. The unveiled face in 2 Corinthians 3:18 should therefore be read as a face that is now visible. This speaks for translating κατοπτρίζω in 3:18 with "to reflect" and not "look as in a mirror". Additionally, Tack (2015:102) draws a parallel between the open letter of recommendation in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 and the open face of 2 Corinthians 3:18:

2 Cor 3,2b exemplifies the idea of openness by the letter of recommendation that is "to be known and read by all". In 2 Cor 3,18 this idea of free openness is described by the unveiled face. [... Christians] are, as it were, embodying an open letter of recommendation with their unveiled faces. Set within the broader literary context of 2 Cor 3,18, the participle [κατοπτριζόμενοι] explains the kind of transformation that is going on after this metamorphosis has been set in motion by the Spirit

The flow of Paul's argument in the larger context also speaks for translating κατοπτρίζω in 2 Corinthians 3:18 with "to reflect". As Tack points out, the parallel to the presentation of the Corinthians as an open letter speaks to the openness of believers in 3:18 also serving display. This also ties 3:18 better to the following verses, in which Paul writes of commending himself to other people. The manifestation of glory on believers ties together the larger context. Tack (2015:104) writes: "2 Cor 4,1-6 constitutes the bridge between 2 Cor 3,18, which mentions the facial manifestation of divine glory of all Christians, and 2 Cor 4,7-15, which deals with the bodily manifestation of Christ's resurrected life".

Finally, I consider the influence of the inclusion or exclusion of the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:18. At first glance "to look as in a mirror" is the more natural reading in the case of an *inclusion* of the Corinthians in 3:18. While all Christians see the glory of the Lord, it is only Paul and his co-workers who proclaim it openly. I suspect that this is the reason many scholars opt for this pairing of interpretations. There is an observable correlation in the majority of scholars including the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and the majority interpreting κατοπτρίζω as "to look as in a mirror".²³ Tack (2015:100), however, makes the case for "reflect" because of an inclusion on the basis of the parallels to 2 Corinthians 3:3. Moreover, "throughout the Pauline corpus there is always some kind of reciprocity involved or aimed at in the relationship between Christ, his envoy Paul, and the Christian community" (Tack 2015:103). The Corinthians are witnesses to the gospel in this reciprocal relationship (Tack 2015:100):

Paul seems to be particularly preoccupied with the way in which he proclaims his message, rather than with giving the Corinthians specific guidelines on the knowledge of God. It is because Paul authentically embodies Christ by reflecting His glory that the Corinthians also get a chance to become imitators of Christ while being transformed into glory, and thus are able to become one of the "Christ-centered communities".

In the context of the above quote, Tack quotes Long, who describes Paul's rhetoric

²³I have not seen this connection addressed in the discussion of 2 Corinthians 3:18. The correlation appears to exist in both directions. Belleville and Baumert are two scholars who exclude the Corinthians and interpret κατοπτρίζω as "to reflect" in 2 Cor 3:18.

as “incarnational”. Paul, while describing himself as “open” and “bold in speech” (2 Cor 3:12), uses what Long (2004:240) calls an “incarnational rhetoric” to describe the proclamation of his gospel:

Paul’s rhetoric fundamentally is incarnational rhetoric. [...] Paul’s is a suffering rhetoric, and at times a self-deprecating rhetoric, but always a rhetoric calling the audience to conformity to Christ and directing human persons to the purposes and glory of God in Christ. Paul is himself incarnated in and through his speech, even written speech (1 Cor. 5.1–5; cf. 2 Cor. 13.2). More importantly, Christ is incarnated through Paul in his speech (13.3; cf. 2.17; 12.19). Paul is the aroma of Christ (2.15). Paul embodies simultaneously the sufferings (1.5–6; 4.10) and life (4.10–11) of Christ. Paul reflects the new covenant glory (3.12–13) and reminds the Corinthians that all in Christ are being transformed into this glory more and more, whereby they reflect the very face of Christ (3.18). Indeed, the gospel message of Christ is incarnated in Paul’s ministry.

Paul’s proclamation of the gospel is a paradoxical self-recommendation. He preaches “not himself” but “himself as bondservant” (2 Cor 4:5). In the previous section I asked: Why would Paul make a statement that includes the Corinthians in the midst of an argument which relies on his *special* service for God, of which they are the benefactors and not participants? However, while Paul does distinguish between himself and the Corinthians, he does not do so in regards to living a transformed life as witness to the gospel. On the basis of the Corinthians being partakers in his ministry, it is worth reconsidering the apostle-church divide assumed in Paul’s argument. It seems that Paul is not arguing on the basis of *his* status as apostle towards the Corinthians but on the basis of *their* joint status as members of the new covenant towards the world.

at the glory of the Lord

τὴν δόξαν κυρίου [κατοπτριζόμενοι]

The phrase “the glory of the Lord” describes that which is either seen or reflected (depending on the meaning of κατοπτρίζω). The question here is to whom does κυρίως refer: God or Christ? The case for “God”, as in YHWH, rests on the allusions

to Moses meeting YHWH in the Tent of Meeting in 2 Corinthians 3:16 and 3:18. The case for Christ relies on the parallel to 2 Corinthians 4:6, where the glory of God is seen on the face of Christ.

Harris (2005:314–315) argues for Lord referring to YHWH in a connection to the preceding verses, “In LXX usage (ἡ) δόξα κυρίου frequently refers to the glory of Yahweh, including, significantly, passages that refer to Sinai (Exod 24:17) and the “tent of meeting” (Exod 40:34–35; Lev 9:5–6; Num 14:10; 16:19). He discounts the connection to 4:6, as “in 4:6 Paul refers to ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, a composite statement which shows how ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ is related to Christ as [ἡ] εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ (4:4). ‘The glory of the Lord’, is God’s glory as it is revealed in his image, Christ” [Harris (2005), 315]. In this final step, his argument hinges on his interpretation of κατοπτρίζω as “to look as in a mirror” and his identification of Christ as the mirror.

Newman’s (2020:123) argument for Christ as referent is based on how Paul usually uses δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ when ascribing glory to God. His argument is worth citing in full:

While the LXX overwhelmingly speaks of the ἡ δόξα τοῦ κυρίου, Paul expresses a curious reserve in his preference for ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ instead. There are two significant exceptions, both of which reveal Paul’s christological use of glory language. In defense of his apostolic conduct in 2 Corinthians 3–4 Paul does employ ἡ δόξα τοῦ κυρίου, and he does so in close proximity with ἡ δόξα τοῦ Χριστοῦ and ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ:

τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι (2 Cor 3:18)

εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 4:4)

γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 4:6).

Paul uses κύριος five other times in 2 Corinthians 3:4–4:16, and each time he does so with the risen Jesus as the referent. The epicenter of Paul’s preaching, announcing Jesus Christ as the Lord (κηρύσσομεν ἀλλ’ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον), makes clear that when someone turns to the Lord (ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον) they

are turning to the risen Jesus. Jesus, as the risen Lord, is Spirit (ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν), shares Spirit (καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος), and, through Spirit, creates eschatological liberty (οὐ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία). Thus, to behold the glory of the Lord (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι) is to behold God's presence in the risen Jesus.

Harris and Newman make good claims for their interpretations, but don't satisfy in their counterargument *against* κύριος (also) referencing Christ or YHWH. I see a deliberate ambiguity in Paul's choice of κύριος with a primacy of YHWH and allusion to Christ. What Garrett (2010:759) writes concerning κύριος in 2 Corinthians 3:16 applies also to 3:18:²⁴

Since Paul paraphrases a specific verse in Exodus, we must consider the meaning "YHWH" to be primary here. On the other hand, since he is universalizing the application of the text and setting it in a new covenant context, a reference to "Jesus" is also hinted at, though not yet developed. Paul is not unaware of but deliberately exploits the ambiguity of κύριος. He obviously knows that it is the standard translation for YHWH in the LXX but that it is also a standard title for Christ in the churches.

into the same image are being transformed from glory to glory,

τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν

A challenge in understanding the transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is that it is the only time Paul writes of a non-eschatological transformation into glory. Newman (2020:131) writes, "Paul expresses an eschatological reserve both [in Rom 8:17] and in Philippians [3:20-21]. He speaks of deferred δόξα—δόξα yet to be revealed, δόξα yet to be experienced. But Paul abandons any such reluctance in 2 Corinthians 3:18". The same reserve is true in Paul's mention of glorious bodies in 1 Corinthians 15. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, "Paul affirms that δόξatic-christosis has already commenced. Beholding the glory of Jesus (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι) triggers

²⁴Cf. Baumert (2008:71), who considers κύριος to have layered meanings of "God" and "Christ" in a shift from 2 Cor 3:16 to 3:18: " 'Herr' [hat] nun spätestens ab V 17b eine Sinnverschiebung erfahren. War es noch in V 16 der Gott des Mose, so gilt zwar 'wo der Geist des Herrn ist' auch für Mose (vgl. Num 11,25), aber es klingt nun deutlich die Geistsendung von Gott durch Christus *mit* an. Wie bei einem Film schiebt sich das eine Bild über das andere."

the process of transformation (μεταμορφούμεθα) into that very same image (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) of glory” (Newman 2020:132).

With Newman, many consider Paul to in v. 18 describe a transformation by vision. It is the perception of Jesus (or God) that “triggers” the transformation. Harris (2005:316) summarises, “it is by ‘seeing as in a mirror’ that ‘change’ is effected. For Christians, both now and in the hereafter, there is ‘transformation by vision.’” However, Back (2002:146) disagrees, “Ihre Verwandlung wird nicht durch die zuvor erwähnte Schau bewirkt, wie es in der Forschungsliteratur zu 2 Kor 3 meistens vorausgesetzt wird”. She argues (Back 2002:146, emphasis in original):

Die Verwandlung, die mit diesem visionären Offenbarungsempfang verbunden ist, vom *Geist* hervorgerufen. Das geht aus der Wendung καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος, mit welcher der Urheber der Verwandlung bezeichnet wird, klar hervor: Die Christen werden ‘wie vom Herrn, dem Geist, verwandelt’

I agree with Back in light of 2 Corinthians 3:3, where transformation is also brought about by the Spirit. However, one option should not preclude the other. In 3:18, the context in the Exodus 34 narrative is the presence of the Spirit of God in the Tent of Meeting. The “sight” of the glory of the Lord is not only visual, but one of proximate divine presence – not so different from the image of the Spirit written on the heart. It is the receipt and experience of the spirit *by one’s spiritual faculty of perception* that causes transformation.

The word μεταμορφώω occurs twice in the letters of Paul and μορφώω (“to form”) occurs once. Besides the occurrence in 2 Corinthians 3:18, μεταμορφώω describes the transformation by the renewal of the mind in Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed (μεταμορφοῦσθε) by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”. μορφώω, occurs in Galatians 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed (μορφωθῆ) in you”.²⁵ In all three

²⁵Lambrecht (2009:145–146) also connects the transformation in Gal 4:19 with that in 2 Cor 3:18: “Finally, although the term ‘glory’ is not present in Gal 4, 19, Paul’s strange imagery in this verse should be mentioned in this discussion. At the end of his plea in 4, 12–20 Paul addresses the believers in Galatia: ‘My children, for whom I am again in labor ‘until Christ be formed’ in you: μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῆ ἰησοῦς ἐν ὑμῖν’. It is, of course, the same glorious Christ as in 2 Cor 3, 18 who takes

cases (μετα)μορφόω regards a change that takes place in believers as a result of their acceptance of Christ. In all cases, it is passive. The transformation is not brought about by the believer, but it is done to them. However, in both Romans and Galatians Paul's concern is the lack of such transformation and — especially in Galatians — he writes of it in the context of admonition to be active in the pursuit of what can be called a “proper Christian life”. The transformation is therefore not entirely brought about without the encouragement or action of the believer. In Galatians, Paul uses the striking image of him being in the pains of childbirth for the spiritual formation of the Galatians. Paul, too, is involved in the transformation of the believers of his churches. While the transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:2 (without the use of the word μεταμορφόω) mirrors the active role Paul voices in Galatians, 2 Corinthians 3:18 does not. Contrary to Romans and Galatians, it includes Paul as one being transformed, though Paul's own transformation certainly stands behind his appeal to his churches.

To consider the question of the nature of the transformation described in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we can consider the interpretation of four scholars. Harris (2005:316), with reference to Romans 12, writes of an *inner* transformation:

Paul must be thinking principally of the transformation of ‘the inner person’ (4:16b) [...] When Jesus was transfigured, the change was outwardly visible (Matt 17:2), but when Christians are transformed, the change is essentially inward, the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2), and becomes visible only in their Christ-like behavior.

Newman (2020:130) describes a transformation into the likeness of Christ:

Christosis, the process of becoming like Christ through participation in Christ, already implicit in Paul's use of glory language to depict initial transfer, becomes explicit in Paul's use of glory language to depict the iterative biography of transformation.

Several pages later he elaborates (Newman 2020:138):

form in the believers. According to Paul the Galatians must be ‘transformed’ into Christ; we may add: ‘from glory to glory’. Paul refers here to his own ‘labor’ (οὐς πάλιν ὠδίνω, Gal 4,19) in this process.”

Second Corinthians 3:18 suggests that doxastic-christosis is the pattern for new life in the new community. Transformation into glory is transformation into the eschatological divine presence, i.e., the resurrected Jesus, and transformation into each other[...]. Unity within the community is achieved through this metamorphosis: everyone can and must be changed.

Petre (2018:198) connects the transformation into a “fuller glory” with sanctification:

Under the new covenant, the converted Christians have their understanding “unveiled” (περιαιρείται τὸ κάλυμμα, “the veil is taken away”, 2 Cor 3:16), and they reflect God’s glory. This glory is the initial, unveiled glory that shone on Moses’ face, representing God’s ideal plan. From this initial glory, the believers are transformed from into a fuller glory (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, “from glory to glory”, 2 Cor 3:18), which may well point to the process of sanctification.

Back (2002:155) eschews the interpretation of transformation as moral sanctification. She states, “mit dem paulinischen Verwandlungsgedanken, wie er in 2 Kor 3,18 vorliegt, [ist] nicht an eine individuelle Vervollkommnung gedacht.” Rather, the “Pointe des in 2 Kor 3,18 geschilderten Verwandlungsgeschehens liegt darin, daß an den Verwandelten der verherrlichte Christus *sichtbar* wird” (Back 2002:151). The Christlikeness of the believer is not glorious in an impressive sense (Back 2002:153):

Die Verwandlung in das ‘Christusbild’ [...] nicht zu einem beeindruckenden Äußeren der Christen führt. Wie aus 2 Kor 4,7ff. hervorgeht, wirkt sich die Gegenwart des lebendigen Christus am Apostel gerade nicht in einem kraftvollen Auftreten sondern in seiner Zerbrechlichkeit und Schwäche aus.

One common thread is identifiable: the transformation is a glorification of the believer that is not glorious in appearance. It is a paradoxical, unassuming glory. And yet the glory is not without effect, it is not invisible. I think Back is right in that the transformation is not primarily a moral transformation. Rather, it is the transformation into a new creation that Paul also describes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” The reference to God as creator in 2 Corinthians 4:6 also suggest this. The transformation of the person enables them to be a bearer

of divine glory (cf. “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” in 1 Corinthians 6:19). Garret (2010:767) writes, “The divine glory becomes resident within people, first in Moses’ glowing face under the old covenant and now in believers who reflect the likeness of God in their countenance under the new covenant”. And Newman (2020:129) explains how audacious ascribing God’s glory to humans is:

If Paul scandalously and brazenly transfers God’s glory to Jesus, then, having summoned an equal amount of apostolic audacity, he next transfers the glory of God, discovered in the resurrected Jesus, onto and into those who are named by the name of this risen Jesus. Paul democratizes divine glory upon all who give their allegiance to the one true god through Jesus.

But moral transformation is within the scope of what Paul is addressing. In 2 Corinthians 4:2 he writes “we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in trickery nor distorting the word of God, but by the open proclamation of the truth commending ourselves to every person’s conscience in the sight of God.” Moral transformation aids Paul’s ministry efforts. Rycke (2019:266) explains that moral and spiritual transformation are a result of Christians being a temple for the Holy Spirit:

Ähnliche theologische Vorstellungsbereiche der Wohnung der Herrlichkeit Gottes im Tempel und in der Schöpfung, verbunden mit einem moralischen Imperativ, begegnen wir auch bei Paulus, und zwar aus einer neuen Perspektive. Bei Paulus ist das Motiv der Umwandlung der Gläubigen in eine neue Schöpfung belegt. Durch die Schau der Herrlichkeit Gottes auf dem Antlitz Christi und durch die Wohnungnahme des Geistes sind die Christen zu einem lebendigen Tempel geworden.

Understanding the glory into which the believers are transformed as unassuming glory helps in solving the tension of present and eschatological transformation. The present glory is an internal hidden glory that will be revealed at the eschaton. This parallels the glory of Christ, that was revealed in his resurrection. Bryne (2018:29) writes concerning 2 Corinthians 4:17 with reference to 2 Corinthians 3:18:

“The glory in consideration here has a clear future reference (as in Rom 5:2 and

8:18). It is likely, however, that what is in view is the eschatological revelation of a present yet hidden glory in a transformation that, as described several sentences earlier (2 Cor 3:18), is already under way”.

In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul writes “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”. To those who “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7), the glory bestowed upon believers is not unassuming. It is an “eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:18). But the glory on the believer is one that not everyone appreciates. Paul and his co-workers are the “scent of Christ” and are met with mixed reception (2 Cor 2:14-16). Similarly, in their transformation into a new creation all believers are a witness to Christ and not everyone sees their glory.

Paul describes the transformation as “from glory to glory”. Garret (2010:767) explains that “ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is not a standard idiom; it is in fact as peculiar in Greek as ‘from glory into glory’ is peculiar in English.” I agree with Harris (2005:316) that “ἀπὸ δόξης and εἰς δόξαν should be considered together as expressing the nature or direction of the transformation: ‘with ever-increasing glory’ (NIV, REB), or ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (RSV, NRSV). In stark contrast with the radiance on Moses’ face that faded (3:7 13), the glory of the Lord that is reflected in believers lives gradually increases”.²⁶

just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος

In his recent analysis, Dan-Adrian Petre (2018:193) lists the translations that the syntax of this phrase permits: “(1) ‘from the Lord of the Spirit’, (2) ‘from the Spirit of the Lord,’ (3) ‘from the Lord, the Spirit’, (4) ‘from the Lord who is the Spirit’, (5) ‘from the Lord who is Spirit’, (6) ‘from the Spirit who is the Lord’, (7) ‘from the Spirit, who is Lord’, (8) ‘from the Spirit, who is from the Lord’ ”. He continues, “[F]acing this semantic plethora, it becomes obvious that the context needs to be taken into account in order to arrive at a satisfactory meaning” (Petre 2018:193–194). Petre

²⁶Cf. Lambrecht (2009:146): “In 3,18 Paul no longer has in mind the vanishing glory of the old covenant; he exclusively focuses upon the new glory of the believers. There can be little doubt that he also points to a continuing transformation, a constant increase: “from glory to glory”, i.e., from one degree of glory to a greater degree.” Contra Garrett (2010:768).

(2018) goes on to argue for the seventh option on the basis of an analysis of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 and His “ruling over” the transformation that occurs. He concludes (Petre 2018:198):

As in verse 17a, it seems that in v. 18 the Spirit is the source of the spiritual transformation. But what the verse 18 appears to emphasize is that this source of transformation is ruling over the entire process. Hence, the translation of ἀπό κυρίου πνεύματος could be “from the Spirit, who is the Lord [over the process of transformation as God was in the old covenant] [...] The meaning of ἀπό κυρίου πνεύματος is, in this case, “from the Spirit, who is the Lord”.

However, his observations that the Spirit governs the transformation process does not preclude translation (4) “from the Lord who is the Spirit”. Harris (2005:318) calls 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 “pneumatological in emphasis” and the Spirit “the hallmark of the new covenant” and translates the phrase “the LORD (= Yahweh), who is (now experienced as) the Spirit”. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3:3 also already draws a connection between the OT terminology of “the Spirit of God” and the Holy Spirit transforming the believer. Translation (4) better captures Paul’s allusion to the Lord as Spirit in the Tent of Meeting. Garret (2010:770) draws this parallel, “Paul is saying that we replicate Moses’ experience, receiving the glory of God and reflecting it back from ourselves, just as Moses reflected the glory from *YHWH the Spirit*” (emphasis added).

Summary

While the emphasis in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is on Paul and his co-workers, the encounter with God and transformation he describes is true of all believers. Through the Spirit, Christians are transformed in the presence of God and reflect the glory of the Lord. Unlike Moses, the glory does not fade but increases. However, the Christians’ Christ-likeness is a paradoxical unassuming glory. Like Christ, their gloriousness will be made evident at the resurrection. Until then, it is only appreciated by those who, like them, have seen the glory of Christ.

5.2.3 Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,”

ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει,

2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 only contains two direct citations of the OT and this phrase contains one of them (the other being in 2 Corinthians 3:16). While the words of the citation do not match any Septuagint text exactly, it is evident that Paul cites from the OT because he uses a quotation formula ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν (cf. Metzger 1951:300, cf. εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς in 2 Cor 6:16). Harris (2005:334) writes, “Paul seems to be alluding to Gen. 1:3-4 as modified by the expression φῶς λάμψει in Isa. 9:1.” He continues (Harris 2005:334, emphasis in original):

These two texts read as follows in the LXX (points of contact are italicised)

Gen. 1:3-4 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς . . . καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκότους

Isa. 9:1 ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει, ἴδετε φῶς μέγα· οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου, φῶς λάμψει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς.

In the chapter on methodology, I introduced Beale and Carson’s (eds. 2007, xxiv-xxv) six questions to guide the interpretation of the NT’s use of the OT. Considering these helps understand the meaning of the above phrase in 2 Corinthians 4:6.

1. The NT context is God’s self-revelation to and through Paul (*through Paul*, 2 Cor 4:4-5; *to Paul* 2 Cor 4:6ff). There is a contrast in divine agent between v. 6 and v. 4: “Whereas the ‘god of this age’ blinds the mind (v. 4), the God of the ages shines in the heart” (Harris 2005:335). The ability of God to create light is placed over and against the ability of the “god of this world” to create darkness. In v. 5, Paul and his co-workers “preach Christ Jesus as Lord”. V. 6 makes clear the apostles are recipients of the same gospel they preach and God must shine into their heart as He must into every unbelievers’ heart for them to believe.
2. The context of Genesis 1:3 is the first creation account. V. 2 reads, “and the earth was formless and desolate emptiness, and *darkness* was over the sur-

face of the deep, and the *Spirit of God* was hovering over the surface of the waters” (emphasis added). The “Spirit of God” acted in darkness. V. 4 mentions the separation of light from darkness, which could parallel the distinction between believers and unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 4:4. In Isaiah 9, “the lands of Zebulon and Naphtali are promised recovery and glory after initial defeat by the Assyrian occupants”, which is a prophecy that “became significant for the early Christians” because of the mention of Galilee (Balla 2007:763).

3. Balla (2007:763) notes “neither Gen. 1:3 or Isa. 9:2 is directly quoted in the Qumran literature”. However, the “antithesis of darkness and light is well attested” (Balla 2007:763). Regarding the broader papyrological evidence Arzt-Grabner (2014:299) writes, “Zumeist ist der Erwähnung eines ‘Lichtes’ aber in einen von Glaube und Magie geprägten Zusammenhang eingebettet”. While the OT is Paul’s source, he may have chosen the image of light because of its connotations as a “geheimnisvolle Kraft” to a Gentile audience (Arzt-Grabner 2014:300).
4. Of λάμπει in 2 Corinthians 4:6, Harris (2005:334) writes, “whichever way φῶς λάμπει is rendered, the future is punctiliar, with consequent linear action assumed: “Light shall blaze forth and thereafter continue to shine”. The same “Greek future-tense verb appears [in Isa 9:2]” (Balla 2007:763). Two differences between 1 Genesis 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 4:6 are noteworthy. Genesis reads “God said” where 2 Corinthians reads “God who said”. And the OT phrasing is “let there be light” while the NT quotation is “let light shine” (cf. Balla 2007:763).
5. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 Paul connects the God of creation to the God who acts in the believer today. “Paul’s thought moves from the physical creation (λάμπει) to the spiritual re-creation (ἐλάμψεν), from nature to grace. The God of redemption is none other than the God of creation” (Harris 2005:335). The light of creation becomes the light of revelation. Understanding the gospel requires spiritual perception and God, the maker of light, is the enabler of spiritual perception. Balla (2007:763) writes, “Just as God acted in creation, [...] so now God shines ‘the light of the gospel’ into the hearts of those who receive Jesus Christ as Saviour”. By combining Genesis 1:3 and Isaiah 9:2 Paul casts

the believer's transformation as a new creation and as the fulfilment of God's promised light shining on "people in darkness".

6. Paul uses Genesis 1:3 in 2 Corinthians 4:6 to "highlight the extraordinary character of people turning to Christ" (Balla 2007:764). The emphasis is on the "activity on God's side" — "God creates the Christian believer by showing a person God's glory on Christ's face" (Balla 2007:764). Additionally, "Paul's allusion to the creation of light serves his christological emphasis: true knowledge of God comes only through Jesus Christ, and God himself made it possible for human beings to know him in this way" (Balla 2007:764). The contrast with Satan in v. 4 sets the light-creating act of God in v. 6 in a divine epistemological tension in which God overcomes Satan in his act of new creation. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 prepares the shift from the recipients of Paul's message to Paul and his co-workers' endurance as ministers of God. By invoking the God of creation as the one who transformed them, Paul makes believable how he and his team can be sustained through the hardships they endure. Paul serves an omnipotent God.

is the One who has shone in our hearts

ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν

This phrase defines the location of the creation of light as the heart of a person. Baumert (2008:77) notes, "Ort diese Lichtes ist das 'Herz' des Paulus, der Sitz der Erkenntnis, das Innerste seiner Person". The God of creation made light shine in the hearts of Paul and his co-workers to enable spiritual perception. God's shining into people's hearts is a divine transformation of perception and akin to conversion. Harris (2005:335) writes, "Since ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν is parallel to the preceding ἐκ σκοτούς, Paul is not only depicting the heart as by nature dark through sin, but also implying that conversion is the replacement of that darkness by light, a theme frequently expressed in the NT."

to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] χριστοῦ.

This phrase contains several parallels to 2 Corinthians 4:4b:

they will not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ.

Paul connects the seeing of light with the reception of the gospel in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 when he explains that those to whom his gospel is veiled are unable to see the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”. Therefore, the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” in 2 Corinthians 4:6 and the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” in 4:4 both refer to the gospel. In 4:6 Paul describes his own acceptance of the gospel whereas in 4:4 he describes other peoples non-acceptance of the gospel he preached. In vv. 5-6 he summarises his message as “Christ Jesus as Lord” and explains how God’s light enabled him to believe this gospel. Why does Paul use these phrases to refer to the gospel? What does the phrasing of the gospel in terms of the light of the glory of Christ *add* to his argument? A comparison of the two phrases provides an answer.

The two alterations that are made in 2 Corinthians 4:6 by Paul can be explained by stylistic variance and the perspective he is writing from. The “light of the gospel” and the “light of the knowledge” are equivalent. The same is true of the expressions “the glory of God in the face of Christ” and “the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”. Stylistic variance can explain the change from εὐαγγελίου to γνώσεως. The same shift is observable from “εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ” in 2 Corinthians 2:12 to “τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ [χριστοῦ]” in 2 Corinthians 2:14.²⁷ Garret (2010:763) states, “τῆς γνώσεως, analogous to the Hebrew root נָטַי, refers to a direct, experiential knowledge”. Paul uses the ability and inability to perceive God as metaphors for the ability

²⁷If Paul does make a distinction between the two words, it is perhaps that γνώσεως is the neutral and εὐαγγελίου is the positive term. This matches his olfactory terminology in 2 Cor 2:14-15, ὀσμὴν (“smell”) being the neutral and εὐωδία (“fragrance”) being the positive term. In 2 Cor 2:14 he pairs the two neutral terms in the phrase “τὴν ὀσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ.”

and inability to believe the gospel. As the perception of God, the gospel is not only knowledge but a divinely mediated “experiential knowledge”.

Considering the second alteration made in 4:6, the “glory of Christ” in v. 4 corresponds to “the glory of God” in v. 6 and “the image of God” in v. 4 corresponds to “in the face of Christ” in v. 6. The first ascribes glory and the second sets God and Christ in relation to each other. In both assertions, Christ is an embodiment of God’s glory, once as “the image of God” and once with God’s glory on Christ’s shining face.²⁸ Paul ascribes the glory of God to Christ. Paul “characterizes the gospel he preaches as consisting in the glory of Christ (εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The gospel, the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, both is the glory of Christ and that which reveals the glory of Christ” (Newman 2020:124).

In phrasing the gospel in terms of the light of the glory of Christ, Paul unequivocally states that Jesus is κύριος (2 Cor 4:5). Defining Christ as the bearer of God’s glory ascribes to him a position above that of any human. Newman (2020:124) writes:

There can hardly be a clearer instance of Paul’s conviction that the risen Jesus shares God’s divine identity than this claim [that Jesus shares God’s glory], and Paul does so despite the unequivocal and repeated warnings of his scriptural tradition about making such a claim, along with Isaiah’s unambiguous declaration that glory belongs to God and God alone.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 carries a similar triumphalist tone to 1 Corinthians 2:8, where Paul writes of the wisdom “which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”. The light imagery used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 enables him to explain how the gospel of “Christ Jesus as Lord” is not perceived by all (cf. 1 Cor 2:2-16). Its perception can be thwarted by the “god of this world” and such perception must be enabled by God in an act of new creation in a person’s heart (cf. 2 Cor 2:14-16).

One question remains to be addressed: is it in the crucified or risen Christ that Paul and his co-workers perceive the glory of God? Newman (2020:124) makes a case

²⁸Cf. Harris (2005:336) “Seen as Paul’s final comment on the Exodus 34 narrative, which formed the backdrop to [2 Cor] 3:7-18, ἐν προσώπῳ χριστοῦ must be rendered ‘(shining) on the face of Christ’ (cf. 3:7), and not ‘(embodied) on the person of Christ’ (with πρόσωπον, ‘face’ standing for ‘person’ by synecdoche).”

for it being the risen Christ: “It is Paul’s interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus as a revelation of God’s glory that leads him to identify Jesus as the glory of God; and it is Paul’s interpretation of the resurrection as the glory of God in Jesus that leads him to identify his gospel, featuring the resurrection of Jesus, as the glory of Christ”. Newman (2020:133) goes further and links Christ’s glory exclusively to resurrection on the basis of Paul’s usage:

Paul never once predicates glory as a marker of, or for, the pre-existent Jesus. Neither does Paul ever link glory with Jesus’s incarnation. Nor does Paul use glory to describe any aspect of Jesus’s life (his baptism, his transfiguration, his crucifixion)—while the Fourth Gospel does all of this and more. For John, glory ties to Jesus’s pre-existence, incarnation, miracles, suffering, and resurrection, while for Paul it does not. For Paul, δόξα is quintessentially christological because it is quintessentially resurrection. For Paul, δόξα begins with resurrection and ends with [...] resurrection.

However, considering 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, it is clear that the death of Christ is also in view. The “treasure” that Paul and his co-workers have is the gospel of the *death and resurrection* of Jesus Christ. Both elements are brought together in 2 Corinthians 4:10, where Paul writes, “always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body”. Byrne (2018:28) writes:

While it is most natural to associate glory with the risen state of Christ, it is not unlikely that the face of the Crucified is also in view. Paul describes his own conversion as a “revelation” of God’s Son (Gal 1:16). He recalls his initial preaching to the Galatians as a public portrayal of him as crucified (Gal 3:1c). He has insisted earlier to the Corinthians that his preaching was of a crucified Christ (1 Cor 1:23) and that he “knew nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:2). Later he speaks of the “rulers of this world” having crucified, in their ignorance, “the Lord of glory” (2:8).

Both Newman and Byrne appeal to Paul’s gospel to make their case. As the phrasing of Paul’s gospel message in the immediate context – “Christ Jesus as Lord” (v. 5) – emphasises the risen Lord, the primary image is one of the risen Christ. However, it is difficult to imagine how to separate the resurrection from the preceding

crucifixion when considering Christ's glory. If glory is God's "mobile divine presence", was it only present after resurrection? Newman (2020:138) himself points out the audacity of ascribing glory to one "recently crucified":

Identifying Jesus as the glory of God either outright breached, or dangerously and recklessly flirted with breaching, what was permissible. It was one thing to report a heavenly journey in which a seer saw glory—be it God's, a throne's, or an angel's. It was altogether something new to say that a recently crucified Jewish prophet, who was also being hailed as both the Christ and the Lord, is the glory of God, God's divine presence.

Rather, it is likely Paul considers *both* the death and resurrection of Christ to be glorious. It is the resurrection that *visibly proved* Jesus was God's Messiah and revealed the glory he *had all along*. Byrne (2018:28) makes this point from the conversion of Paul:

Until his experience on the Damascus road, Paul had known Jesus of Nazareth only as a crucified messianic pretender, concerning whom blasphemous claims were being made. Is it not possible that the "light" that God the Creator "shone" at that moment in his heart was a light of divine radiance (glory) shone upon the Crucified, revealing him precisely as such to be image and Son of God? And is it not no less likely that the gospel proclaimed by Paul has at its centre a presentation of the same Crucified One, who believers, through the power of the Spirit, believers see, not as a failed messianic pretender, but as the glorious revelation of God (see Gal 3:1–5)?

Belief in Christ requires an acceptance of the paradoxical glory in crucifixion. God revealed himself through his suffering servant Jesus Christ. This connects to the theme of perception and perceptibility in Paul's argument. Those who reject the gospel, only see a crucified "messianic pretender" and not the "Lord of Glory". Those who accept the gospel receive light by God in their heart to believe the crucified and risen Jesus is Lord. Nicklas (2012:254–255) makes this connection:

Auch im Angesicht Christi — Gottes Ebenbild und gleichzeitig für Paulus immer des Gekreuzigten, der von Gott auferweckt wurde — ist für denjenigen, der auf

dem Weg ins Verderben ist (2Kor 4,3) kein “Glanz” zu erkennen. Wo Gott selbst, auf den alles Licht zurückgeht, jedoch im Herzen aufgestrahlt ist, hatte dies zur Folge, dass auch die (verborgene) Herrlichkeit Gottes im Antlitz Christi erkannt werden kann.

5.2.4 Comparison of 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18, and 4:6

After considering the three transformation verses of 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18, and 4:6 individually, I will now return to compare them across their six parallels. This will provide a better understanding of Paul’s emphasis in each and how glory, Christ and perception function in them.

Reference to the Old Testament

The visual metaphor in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is based on the Exodus 34 story of Moses entering the Tent of Meeting with his veil removed. In contrast to Exodus 34, the entire community of believers is in the Tent of Meeting and in the presence of God. The transformation of the believer is comparable to the transformation that Moses underwent while in the presence of the Lord. The visual metaphor in 2 Corinthians 4:6 is based on the creation of light in Genesis 1:3. Paul emphasises that the God who acts today is the same God who acted in creation. His word has the power to create the world out of nothing and to give sight to the blind. It is the word of God that created light in the darkness of the universe in the beginning, and it is the word of Christ that creates light in the darkness of human hearts today!

While the letters of recommendation are the primary metaphorical reference in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, Paul also alludes to the OT. Both 3:3 and 3:18 make an indirect reference to Moses’ encounter with God: 3:3 to his receiving the tablets of stone on Mount Sinai and 3:18 to his seeing God in the Tent of Meeting (though the former stands behind the reference in 3:3 and is not its “location” as in 3:18). The juxtaposition of stone and flesh in relation to hearts is a connection to the replacement of stone hearts with fleshly hearts in Ezekiel 11:19 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. Additionally, the promise of the law being written on hearts from Jeremiah 38:33 stands behind the image of the Spirit writing on the Corinthians’ hearts. In contrast to the allusions

in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6, these describe not the location or source of the encounter with God, but the transformation itself.

Use of visual metaphors

Both 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 are metaphorical descriptions of an encounter with God. The image created in 2 Corinthians 3:18, is one of people being transformed, with faces unveiled, in the presence of the Lord. Hays (1989:153) writes, “The imagery of 3:18 paints a picture of the community of faith being transformed as they contemplate a vision of glory”. This is true regardless of whether κατοπτρίζω is to be read as “behold as in a mirror” or as “reflect”. The transformation akin to Moses implies an observable change in those in the presence of God.

In 2 Corinthians 4:6 the visual image is one of the hearts of people being illuminated by rays of light from God. The source of the light rays could be considered to emanate from God and enter every believer’s heart, as if illuminating a room from the outside. However, in parallel to the creation story and as the quotation from Genesis 1:3 is altered to include “shine out of darkness”, it is more fitting to picture the light as being created in the darkness of each individual heart. The act of creation in the image is therefore the creation of light out of nothing in many hearts. This picture of the internal creation of light also suits the second half of the verse better, as well as the following verses (2 Cor 4:7-10). “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” and the light that God shone into hearts are one and the same light. Identifying Christ as the source of the light created by God in the individual places Christ inside the individual, seen by their heart, rather than outside and seen by their eyes. That which God gives in 2 Corinthians 4:6 is in 4:7 called a “treasure in earthen vessels” and can be identified with what Paul and his co-workers “[carry] about in the body” in v. 10, namely the “dying of Jesus”.

Letters of recommendation are not in themselves visual metaphors. However, in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, Paul employs them metaphorically as elements of God’s self-revelation. He makes them tools for proclamation rather than private communication. The letter on Paul’s heart is “being known and read by all” and the Corinthians “show” they are a letter of Christ. Out of the three transformation verses, 2 Corinthi-

ans 3:2-3 carries the strongest elements of public perception. 4:6 does not mention observers, and in 3:18 they are only implied by explicit mention of transformation and possibly the reflecting of the glory of God. While Christ and the Spirit are mentioned in 3:3, neither are the object of perception. What is perceived is Paul and the Corinthians with the letters on their hearts. What unites all verses, however, is that the perception in each relates to the self-revelation of God. God reveals himself in the Corinthians (as letter), in the Lord, and in the face of Christ.

Additionally, the image of a heart-transplant from Ezekiel may stand behind Paul's letter metaphor — hearts of stone being replaced by hearts of flesh. Their hearts as the writing medium of the letter of recommendation have been transformed in preparation. This image does not describe the perception of God, as the other two verses, but the transformation that occurs in the believer. If we permit a further reference to the writing of the law onto hearts from Jeremiah, the transformation of the believer becomes a complex image that weaves multiple OT promises together in a kind of visual mixed-citation. The Corinthians are people whose hearts have been made fleshy and soft (no longer stone) and upon them has been written the law of God by the Spirit of God as a sign of the new covenant. A parallel can be drawn between the receptiveness of fleshy hearts, the removal of the veil from hardened minds, and the giving of light into darkness. In each, God acts to grant perceptibility.

The encounter with God

The location of the encounter with God in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the Tent of Meeting. People enter the presence of God. In 4:6, it is God with his presence who enters the people. In 3:18, the “medium” of encounter is the Spirit of God. In 4:6, it is the light of God. A key contrast between the two verses is the relationship between the encounter and transformation. In 3:18 the encounter with God leads to a transformation and in 4:6 the transformation leads to an encounter. In the context of 4:6, and in contrast with 4:4, it is natural for Paul to describe the transformation as a prerequisite and not a consequence of the encounter with God. Similarly, in the context of 3:18 and in light of Exodus 34, it is natural for Paul to describe the transformation as a consequence and not a prerequisite of turning to the Lord.

In comparing the encounters with God, a key distinction of 2 Corinthians 3:3 is that it is a mediated encounter. Paul is crucially involved in the Corinthians' encounter with God. Similar to 4:6, the encounter in 3:3 lies in the past, whereas 3:18 describes the encounter as a present and ongoing occurrence. Also, "Paulus hat [...] in 2 Kor 3,18, anders als etwa in 2 Kor 3,2f., kein punktuelles, einmaliges Ereignis der Vergangenheit, sondern ein sich gegenwärtig vollziehendes, dauerhaftes Sehen im Auge" (Back 2002:144). In 3:3, the encounter with God is neither a prerequisite nor consequence of transformation. Rather, it is the receipt of Paul's message that stands as the implicit prerequisite to both. However, within the OT allusions, the replacement of the heart of stone with a heart of flesh is what enables a new relationship with God. There is also not the same distinction between encounter and transformation as there is in 3:18. The transformation of the believer *is* their encounter with God.

The group of people

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6, a second-person plural pronoun denotes those who are encountering God — Paul and his co-workers are certainly included. Of the three verses, 2 Corinthians 3:3 is the only encounter that does not include Paul and his co-workers in the group being transformed. It is the Corinthians who are transformed. However, their transformation does not occur in isolation. Rather, their encounter with God is mediated by Paul and his co-workers.

In all verses, the group of people is in contrast to another group of people. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, the group is compared to Moses, who is unveiled, and contrasted with the sons of Israel, past and present, whose hearts are veiled in Paul's theological appropriation of the Exodus 34 narrative. The veil over the Israelites hearts represents the hardening of minds (caused by God) that prohibits understanding the revelation of God. In 4:6, the group of people encountering God are contrasted with "those who are perishing" (4:3), whose minds have been blinded by "the god of this world" (4:4). The key differences in the two contrasts, are the agent of confusion and the message to which each is responding. In 3:14 the agent doing the hardening is God, in 4:4 it is Satan (cf. Harris 2005:328). In 3:14-16 it is the message of Moses that is not understood, in 4:3-4, it is the gospel of Christ proclaimed by Paul. In

3:3 Paul contrasts the transformed Corinthians with others who need letters of recommendation. The Corinthians do not need letters of recommendation because they *are* one. Implicitly, those who do need letters to recommend themselves are not transformed in the same manner. Paul contrasts the two group's practices, whereas in 3:18 and 4:6 the contrast lay in their perceptibility.

The transformation

As stated in comparing the encounter with God in the verses, the transformation appears to be a prerequisite in 4:6 and a consequence in 3:18. Another contrast between the two transformations is their localisation in the person. In 4:6 it is the heart that is transformed, and though 3:18 lacks a specific location, against the backdrop of Moses' shining face in Exodus 34 it can be assumed to be the face that is transformed. These observations are less absolute as one considers the context of each verse, however. Paul uses "mind" as the location of understanding in 4:4, which stands in direct parallel to 4:6. If v. 6 explains why, unlike the unbelievers of 4:4, Paul and his co-workers can see the light of the gospel of Christ, it is their faculty of understanding (once described by mind and once by heart) that is transformed.

In 2 Corinthians 4:6 God creates light in the believer out of nothing. This itself is not transformation, but an act of creation. Something entirely new is created and not something existing transformed. But the creation of the new inside the individual transforms the old. Despite the differences, both verses describe the transformation that occurs at what can be called a conversion. They describe the same moment from different perspectives. 3:18 describes the external perspective of the transformation that occurs, whereas 4:6 describes the internal perspective.²⁹ In contrast to 4:6, 3:18 suggests an ongoing transformation with the phrase "from glory to glory".

The twofold transformation that could be seen in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 is also evident in 3:3. The softening (or replacement) of stone hearts is the first transformation that enables the second – that of the Spirit of God writing on hearts. The local-

²⁹Cf. Harris' (2005:336) comparison between 2 Cor 4:6 and the Lukan accounts of Paul's conversion: "[w]hat makes an allusion to Paul's Damascus encounter with the risen Christ likely are the many similarities in thought and diction between 2 Cor. 4:6 and the three Lukan accounts of Paul's conversion, but *while Paul emphasizes here the inward, the Acts accounts stress the outward phenomena*" (emphasis added).

isation of the transformation is also the heart, or faculty of understanding. A transformation beyond the heart is also implied: in 3:18 the transformation akin to Moses' in the Tent of Meeting, and in 3:3 the Corinthians as a letter that is read by others. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, God the creator “exchanges” darkness in the believer by creating light. Similarly, in 3:3, God exchanges a heart of stone for a heart of flesh. In both cases, the revelation of God follows, once through the perception of the “glory of God on the face of Christ” and once by the writing on the heart by the Spirit of God. In each case, what the believer receives is not momentary, but maintained in their heart — once as a “treasure in jars of clay” (2 Cor 4:7) and once as the Spirit's writing on their heart.

Even more so than the transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6, the one in 3:3 resembles conversion (Back 2002:156):

Das Gestaltgewinnen Christi bei den Christen nach paulinischer Sicht [beginnt] mit ihrem Christwerden [...] . Wenn Paulus die Korinther hier als “Brief Christi” bezeichnet, der von allen Menschen erkannt und gelesen wird, geht er davon aus, daß Christus an den Korinthern öffentlich und vor aller Welt sichtbar ist, seitdem sie Christen sind.

Due to the “service” of Paul and his co-workers, the Corinthians received the Spirit in their hearts. While 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes an external and 4:6 an internal perspective of transformation, 2 Corinthians 3:3 describes the same transformation from the perspective of the minister who facilitated it. This is fitting in context, as 3:3 is the only verse that excludes Paul and his co-workers among those being transformed. In general, 2 Corinthians 3:3 emphasises the interpersonal aspect of the transformation, as in it the transformation of the individual is also witnessed by others.

The epistemological element of the transformation itself is not as prominent in 2 Corinthians 3:3, as only the background of the changed heart alluded to this. However, it is present in those who “read” the Corinthians as a letter. The emphasis in regard to perception in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 lies on the perceptibility of God's self-revelation *in* the Corinthians and Paul, rather than *to* the Corinthians and Paul. This

suits the contexts, as from the triumphal procession in 2 Corinthians 2:14 onwards, Paul has addressed the spread of the gospel.

God as the cause

Both 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6 are explicit about the transformation being brought about by God. The transformation in 3:18 is “from the Lord, the Spirit” and in 4:6 it is the God of creation who, by his light, transforms the individual. The emphasis in both is on the closeness of the God of the covenant to his people. The difference is that 2 Corinthians 3:18 alludes back to the Exodus 34 story and the Spirit of the Lord in the Tent of Meeting. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 the emphasis is on the creation power of God to reach even into the hearts of his creatures.

While 2 Corinthians 4:6 places special emphasis on the initiative and action of God in the transformation, 3:3 emphasises the role of the one sent — the apostle. However, even in 3:3 it is not Paul and his co-workers alone who transform the Corinthians. As with 3:18 it is the believer’s encounter to the Spirit that causes the transformation, here mediated by Paul. As Tack (2015:102) writes:

Spirit is prominently present in 2 Corinthians 3. The Spirit is not only the alternative ‘ink’ that is used to write the letter of recommendation (3,3); the Spirit is also the defining characteristic of the new covenant (3,6) and is above all the factor that brings about openness (3,17)

A similarity between 3:3 and 4:6 is that the proclamation of a message alters people. Where in 4:6 the creator-God speaks light into people’s hearts, the event behind Paul’s administering to the Corinthians the letter of Christ was his first visit in which, “the Son of God, Christ Jesus, [...] was preached among you by us — by me and Silvanus and Timothy” (2 Cor 1:19).

Summary

The three transformation texts of 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, 3:18, and 4:6 refer to the same transformation of an individual in their acceptance of Christ, but with a different focus. The main difference is the perspective from which the transformation in 2

Corinthians 3:3 is described. Paul and his co-workers are excluded in the transformation. Rather, Paul is the amanuensis who in the Spirit of God engraves Christ on their hearts. The Corinthians are transformed. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 the transformation is also caused by the Spirit, but in this case there is no mediator or “missionary” mentioned. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, the agency is God’s, and it is He who makes light shine into hearts. As with 3:18, the statement in 4:6 is set against the backdrop of people who do not believe because they are blinded by the “god of this world”. The action of God *for* the believer is contrasted with the action of Satan *against* the non-believer. In regard to perception, each transformation is connected to an act of God granting the believer perceptibility of God’s self-revelation.

5.2.5 Preliminary result

What function does the glory of Christ and its perception play in Paul’s argument? I can now give a preliminary result as regards the question of my study. Two threads are observable in Paul’s argument in the verses 2 Corinthians 3:3, 3:18, and 4:6. They answer probable accusations against him. *First*, if Paul is a servant of the God of Israel, why do his own people reject his message? Paul answers with the imperceptibility of the glory of Christ to those who reject him. The acceptance of his message hinges on the perception of Christ’s glory and this must be granted by God. *Second*, how can Paul as minister of God experience the afflictions he does? Why does Paul — to use Garland’s (2021:16) phrase — “cut a shabby figure”? Paul answers with the paradoxical nature of the glory of Christ into which he is transformed. God, through the Spirit, works in and through Paul to reflect his own glory even in Paul’s trials.

In summary, Paul’s argument has a twofold glory of Christ in view: the glory of the crucified Christ and the glory of the risen Christ. The glory that is bestowed upon members of the new covenant in their transformation is of the same twofold nature. Their life on earth is one marked by a paradoxically selfless self-commendation that acts as an open letter of recommendation to the world. Paul’s argument further has a twofold reception of God’s self-revelation in view. Paul uses perception metaphorically to distinguish between those who accept and those who reject God and his servants.

5.3 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 in subsections

In the previous section I identified the transformation of the believer as a unifying element in Paul's key verses regarding the perception of the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor 3:3, 3:18, 4:6). The God-enabled perception of the glory of Christ initiates a transformation in a person that displays the glory of Christ to other people. In this section I will analyse glory, Christ, and perception in Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 in five subsections. In particular I will tie the results of the detailed exegesis of the key verses to the entire passage.

5.3.1 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: ¹⁶to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 – Introduction

According to 2 Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul relayed his movements from Asia over Troas to Macedonia. He made two competing judgements regarding his time in Troas. Positively, God enabled his ministry (opened a door) and negatively, Titus is not there, which troubled Paul's spirit — presumably because he is anxious to hear a report from the Corinthian church (cf. ch 7:6-9). Paul leaves Troas, implicitly stating that he chose the Corinthian church over a fruitful mission opportunity in Troas.

Despite his second relocation under duress in a short time, in v. 14 Paul expresses thanks to God, the one who leads him as captive in his triumphal procession (θριαμβεύοντι). God is responsible for and makes use of Paul's movements as he is displayed in God's triumphal procession. It is not Paul's autonomy but God's leadership that enables Paul's ministry (cf. "opened a door" in v. 12).

In vv. 15-16a, Paul further expresses the spread of God's revelation in scent imagery. The aroma that Paul (somehow) is can (somehow) lead to life *or* death. The ability for the same aroma to have two results introduces the dimension of spiri-

tual perception and perceptibility. As Müller (2012:227) writes, “Dass ‘wir’ Christi Wohlgeruch sind, hat Auswirkungen auf zwei Gruppen von Menschen, die Gruppe der Geretteten und die der Verlorenen.” The success of Paul spreading the “knowledge of God” is dependent on its perceptibility by those receiving it.

In v. 16b, Paul responds to this perplexing truth regarding the nature of God’s self-revelation by asking, “who is adequate [to understand] these things?” This mirrors other expressions of insufficiency at understanding the dealings of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:11-12, Rom 11:34, Isa 40:13-14). The expected answer to the question is “no one.”³⁰ Paul does not claim to know the mind of God.

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 – Glory, Christ, and perception

Newman, in his analysis of δόξα in Paul, states that its meaning as “honour” and its meaning as “divine presence” belong to “two different semantic universes” (Newman 2020:106). Paul, in the metaphor of the Roman triumph brings these two semantic universes together. He does not use the word δόξα but invokes images of glory and honour that prepare his discussion of glory in ch. 3. In his image of the Roman triumphal procession, he replaces the victorious general with God. The honour and glorification attributed to the Roman emperor in his triumph is instead attributed to God.

The Roman triumphal procession was a victory procession in Rome by the Roman emperor. The greatness of the emperor would be on magnanimous display with the captives of his victory led before him. In his lexical analysis of the word θριαμβεύω, Heilig (2017:101) states the element of display is part of the lexical sense of the word. His definition for θριαμβεύω is “to cause [somebody or something] to move (before oneself) in a triumphal procession in order to display [somebody or something] to the watching crowd.” It is this element of display, with the purpose of the

³⁰What answer is to be expected is a matter of debate. I agree with Müller (2012:237): “Wer ist nun würdig und geeignet, Träger eines Wortes zu sein, durch das Entscheidungen von letzter Tragweite zustande kommen? Die Antwort liegt eigentlich auf der Hand: Kein Mensch ist hierfür geeignet (Joel 2,11; Röm 11,34). Aber weil es sich um Gottes Triumphzug handelt und weil Gott in Paulus und durch ihn wirkt, ist er von Gott zu diesem Tun befähigt. Die kritische Spitze gegenüber dem römischen Triumph besagt: Kein Heerführer und kein Kaiser ist dafür geeignet, schon gar nicht, wenn er sich selbst an die Stelle Gottes setzt. Der imperiale Machtanspruch ist Anmaßung göttlicher Würde. In Gottes Triumphzug aber wird die *ικανός* von Gott selbst verliehen.” For a counterargument see Harris (2005:253).

self-revelation of God, that links the images of triumph and scent: “Die *Erkenntnis Gottes* bildet also das unmittelbare Thema der metaphorischen Verbindung. Die Wortfügung impliziert, daß Erkenntnis ein Duft ist” (Kuschnerus 2002:113).

Both elements of the glory of Christ are present in the self-revelation of God through his apostle. Paul reveals God in shame and suffering and the self-revelation of God is met with mixed reaction.

First, I consider the odd picture of Paul as a prisoner of God’s triumphal procession. Kuschnerus (2002:136) describes the image as the “beschämende Zurschaustellung eines dem Tode ausgelieferten Gefangenen (Paulus), durch die der Triumphator (Gott) seinen Sieg bekanntmacht”. Harris (2005:247) addresses the paradoxical nature of the image when he writes, “Paul the passive captive is also the active evangelist. God’s agent is none other than his prisoner. [...] Such paradoxes have an irresistible appeal to Paul, and 2 Corinthians is replete with them”.

The aspect of shame in the metaphor is counterbalanced with the aspect of God being in control and Paul and his apostles being “in Christ”.³¹ There is a “double reality of, on the one hand, a shameful reality, and, on the other hand, the result of being nevertheless made ‘known’ in that process” (Heilig 2017:256). Heilig (2017:230) writes:

On the one hand, being led in the triumph is a negative thing. Something that is closely associated with shame (Marshall) and that implies that one is captive and not in authority over one’s own movements. That is what Paul’s movements might have looked like to the Corinthians. However, Paul wants to direct the eyes of the Corinthians to the fact that God is the one who is leading them.

Heilig (2017:248) captures the aim of what Paul is trying to achieve with the metaphor in stating, “Paul chose this metaphor in order to link the perception of captives in the procession with an evaluation of his ministry — more specifically the chaotic movements of his mission — that he might have feared to be prevalent in Corinth”. Several pages later, he states succinctly, “Paul wants to *transform* the

³¹Heilig (2017:230) considers the possibility of an inclusion of the Corinthians in the triumph: “Paul could have used the phrase [in Christ] not only to include all Christians, but also to emphasise that what is happening to his team is happening to them specifically *because* they are associated with Christ.”

perception of his readers and not simply to *reaffirm* it” (Heilig 2017:254). Kuschnerus (2002:112) states similarly, “Sie sollen erfassen, daß gerade die Zurschaustellung des leidenden Apostels die Funktion besitzt, die Erkenntnis des Triumphators zu vermitteln”. The Corinthians misunderstood the glory of the Christian experience (Heilig 2017:252):

While he wants to counter the Corinthians “triumphalism” in the first case [1 Cor 4:9] by pointing to the fundamental cruciform lowliness of Christian experience, in the second case [2 Cor 2:14c] he defends it with reference to what is glorious about it indeed but might be overlooked in the Corinthians focus on the outer appearance.

Both a “fundamental cruciform lowliness” and a hidden glory are markers of the Christian life of which the Corinthians needed to be reminded of. The hidden glory cannot be seen by those who focus on outer appearance. “Paul wanted to point out to the Corinthians that what they might have regarded as shameful actually brought *honour* to God” (Heilig 2017:256). The Corinthians’ misunderstanding of Christian glory—a possible influence by those who “focus on outer appearance”—affected their appreciation of Paul.

Second, there is a mixed reaction to God’s self-revelation as expressed by the effect of the scent imagery in 2:15-16. The scent imagery follows the display of the procession as the revelatory image that describes the self-revelation of God through Paul and his co-workers. The saved and the perishing perceive the same revelation as a different olfactory sensation.³² “To the latter group it is a deadly stench that leads to death, but to the former it is a vitalizing fragrance that leads to life” (Harris 2005:250).³³ Müller (2012:232–233) points out the pleasing and unpleasing smell associated with deities:

³²Harris (2005:249) makes an important point regarding the state of the saved and perishing being as much a present reality as a judgement of a future state: “Paul viewed ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία, σώζομαι) as lying in the present as well as in the past and future, so there can be no a priori objection to understanding οἱ σωζόμενοι as ‘those who are being saved,’ which in fact is the rendering of the majority of English translations. Since οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι is parallel, it may be rendered ‘those who are perishing,’ the implication being that ἀπώλεια, in the sense of being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) and under God’s wrath (Rom 1:8), is as much the present experience of οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι as σωτηρία, the enjoyment of God’s approval and redemptive blessings, is the ongoing privilege of οἱ σωζόμενοι.”

³³Cf. Kuschnerus (2002:128–129): “Was für Gott Christi *Wohlgeruch* ist, wird von den antonymen Gruppen gegensätzlich wahrgenommen und diese Perzeption und ihre Folge selbst bildet das unterscheidende Moment.”

Umgekehrt erkennt man menschenfeindliche göttliche Mächte an ihrem drohenden und giftigen Geruch (Eur. Hipp. 1473f; Aischyl. Eum. 53). Während die Götter duften, sind der Teufel und die Dämonen an ihrem Gestank erkennbar, der auf die Bedrohung hinweist, die mit ihnen verbunden ist. Es gibt demnach einen himmlischen, Leben spendenden Geruch und ebenso einen Geruch, der den Tod vor Augen stellt.

Paul suggests that there are multiple ways to perceive him and his message and implicitly critiques the Corinthians' possible view of him. He is not stating that they belong to those who are perishing. Rather, he critiques their spiritual immaturity. Because they belong to those who are saved, they should perceive the message of Paul as a "vitalising fragrance".

5.3.2 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6

^{2:17} For we are not like the many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. ^{3:1} Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all people, ³ revealing yourselves, that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴ Such is the confidence we have toward God through Christ. ⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves so as to consider anything as having come from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶ who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6 – Introduction

In v. 17, the insufficiency in knowing God becomes a laudable honesty that distinguishes Paul from those who "peddle" the word of God (i.e. the gospel). One who seeks to sell the gospel will pretend to have all the answers, eliminating the mysterious sovereignty of God and reducing the "good news" to merchandise sold for profit (cf. Kushnerus 2002:147). Paul speaks not only "as from God", but also "in

the sight of God”, expressing himself accountable to the one who can see the motives of the heart (cf. 1 Cor 4:5).

After addressing the relationship of his ministry to God in 2:14-17, Paul turns to his relationship with the Corinthians in 3:1-3. In 3:1, Paul denies he is trying to recommend himself to the Corinthians, as 2:17 could suggest. To Paul, their relationship is one of familiarity (hence in no need of letters of recommendation) and yet it is asymmetric and spiritual in nature, as the mention of Christ, the Spirit, and Paul’s involvement (“διακονηθεῖσα”) in the Corinthians as “letter of Christ” (ἐπιστολή χριστοῦ) make clear. The mention of the Spirit and the tablets of stone in v. 3, prepare the discussion of Moses and the old covenant to which Paul turns from v. 7.

Paul’s involvement in the spiritual formation of the Corinthians prompts him to express the source of the authority of his ministry in 3:4-6. He is bold (cf. 2 Cor 3:12, 4:1) in his horizontal relationships *because* of his vertical relationship toward God in Christ. God has both made him sufficient for this relationship and given him a task as a servant of the “new covenant”, which is of the Spirit and gives life.

2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6 – Glory, Christ, and perception

I have above addressed the metaphor of the peddlers in 2 Corinthians 2:16 and the letters of recommendation in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. In this section I will address these only briefly and consider the Christ-likeness of the sufficiency of Paul as apostle.

While there is no mention of glory in 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:6, some elements that underlie the concept of glory are present. The “Spirit of the Lord” is associated with glory throughout the Old Testament and in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. Paul and his co-workers being ministers of a new covenant of the spirit ties back to the Spirit of the Lord, who is written on the hearts of the Corinthians. As the new covenant is with glory, the Spirit on their hearts is with glory.

As in 2 Corinthians 2:15, Paul is trying to correct a false understanding in the Corinthians. They are *undervaluing* the Gospel. The “many, peddling the word of God”, dishonour the word by making it cheap. The contrast with Paul’s truth-telling implies that the cheap gospel is no longer the true gospel.

Baumert (2008:51) points out that while in 2 Corinthians 2:15 a contrast between different *recipients* of Paul's message is in view, in 2 Corinthians 2:17-3:1 a contrast between messengers of God are in view. Paul, in contrast to the other teachers, qualifies his own ministry as being "in Christ". Christ is not only the content of the gospel (cf. 2 Cor 2:12), but influences how Paul speaks. There are three other qualifying statements regarding Paul's speech in v. 17: he is sincere, speaks a message from God, and is aware of his standing before God. In his ministry, Paul is transparent and not self-serving.

Regarding the adequacy question of 2 Corinthians 2:16, Müller (2012:239) writes:

Die Frage καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός greift aber nicht nur auf 2,14-16b zurück, sondern wirkt auch auf 2,17 ein. Wer das Wort Gottes verkündigen will, muss dies nach V.17 'aus Gott', 'vor Gott' und 'in Christus' tun, d.h. in Auftrag und Vollmacht von Gott her, ihm gegenüber verantwortlich und 'im Kraftfeld Christi'. Das Wort Gottes zu verkündigen ist für Paulus nur in Verantwortung diesen Instanzen gegenüber möglich. Handel damit zu treiben, d.h. wie mit einer Ware damit umzugehen, über die man verfügen kann, wird der Verkündung weder von ihrem Auftrag noch von ihrem Inhalt her gerecht.

There is discrepancy in the two adequacy statements made by Paul (2 Cor 2:16; 2 Cor 3:4). The first refers to the adequacy to be a prisoner in God's triumphal procession (2 Cor 2:14-16) and thereby spread God's message as an "aroma of Christ". The second mention of adequacy refers to the adequacy to be a minister of the new covenant and thereby bring life and righteousness to people (2 Cor 3:4). Both aid God in his self-revelation. Yet, in contrast to the former, the latter could be understood as an appointment by God to a position of status (cf. Avemarie 2014:69). The tension between the two adequacies is best resolved by giving the role of minister of the new covenant a similarly subordinate status as that of a slave in the procession.³⁴ As Paul calls himself and his co-workers "your 'slaves' for Jesus sake" in 2

³⁴This is further supported by the use of διακονέω for the work of an apprentice in weaver contracts. Arzt-Grabner (2014:259) writes, "Was die Wortfamilie um διακονέω betrifft, ist insbesondere festzuhalten, dass das Verb im 1. Jh. n.Chr. ausschließlich in Weberlehrverträgen begegnet, so dass als Hintergrund für das paulinische Verständnis seines 'Dienstes' wohl sein eigener Handwerksbereich zu berücksichtigen ist. In derartigen Verträgen wird vereinbart, dass die oder der Auszubildende (ein Sohn, eine Sklavin oder ein Sklave) dem Webermeister in allen zu dienen

Corinthians 4:5 so he calls himself a “servant of the new covenant” in 3:6. It is important to remember that though a slave was not free, they could be educated and have roles of responsibility in a household. As Arzt-Grabner (2014:299) states:

Der Sklave ist zum einen in umfassender Weise von seinem Herrn abhängig und hat dessen Befehle auszuführen, zum andern konnte ein Sklave in eine gehobene Position gesetzt und mit verantwortungsvollen Aufgaben betraut werden. Dies ist bei Paulus, insbesondere aufgrund der konsequenten Begründung seiner Aufgaben und Funktionen durch den Herrn Jesus selbst, unbedingt mit zu bedenken.

Paul writing of “such confidence” in v. 4 does not have to imply a high status in the job that he performs. Rather, it implies the high status of the one *for* whom he performs the job. A person who performs lowly tasks for a king can only do so in confidence if they are assigned their task by the sovereign.

The letter-Spirit contrast in 3:5 is best understood as characterising a visible-invisible divide. This provides a better explanation than the inner-outer divide commonly attributed to the contrast. There is an extended correlation in 2 Corinthians 3 between the letter and perishing on the one hand and the Spirit and life on the other hand. This parallels the contrast 2 Corinthians 4:18, “the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” A further parallel can be drawn to 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, where “one who is Spiritual” is able to discern the “things of the Spirit of God”. In addition, in 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul writes “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” Though Paul has not yet mentioned δόξα, he has prepared the elements that will be associated with it in the coming verses.

5.3.3 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

⁷ But if the ministry of death, engraved in letters on stones, came with glory so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, ⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to

hat, was dieser im Zusammenhang mit dem Weberhandwerk an Aufträgen erteilt. Paulus sieht sich hier als Lehrling Gottes, dem er auch eine Eignung und Befähigung zu verdanken hat (beachte z.B. 3,5-6).”

be even more with glory? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness excel in glory. ¹⁰For indeed what had glory in this case has no glory, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 – Introduction

In vv. 7-11 Paul contrasts the glories of two ministries (not covenants!) in three “from lesser to greater” (qal wāḥômer) comparisons. With each comparison he argues that: If the “ministry of death” had glory, his “ministry of the spirit” more certainly has glory. He invokes the story of the Israelites being unable to look at the glory of God on Moses’ face to describe an aversive reaction to the glory of God in the “ministry of death” (cf. 3:7). As his ministry also has glory, it suggests an aversion to that glory would be similarly present.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 – Glory, Christ, and perception

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 are the verses with the highest density of the use of δόξα in the New Testament (ten times in five verses; eight times as a noun and twice as a verb). Paul has already demonstrated that his ministry in service of God is a revelation of God’s divine presence, His glory. In vv. 7-11 he makes this explicit and draws a comparison with the glory of the ministry of the old covenant.³⁵ In v. 7 Paul first connects the themes of glory and perception in describing the glory of Moses as so great that the Israelites could not bear it. Christ is not mentioned in these verses but is implicit in the new covenant as its inaugurator (cf. Baumert 2008:68, with reference to the Last Supper).

These verses serve two functions in the argument of Paul. First, Paul argues for the glory of his ministry by its favourable comparison to the ministry of the old covenant. He implicitly counters the impression (or accusation) that his ministry is not glorious. Second, Paul establishes that the glory of God can be met with a negative response. This continues the theme of the mixed reception of God’s self-revelation.

Vv. 8, 9, and 11 each contain one argument “from lesser to greater”. Harris

³⁵Though Paul does not use the term “old covenant” until v. 14, the contrast to “new covenant” of v. 6 makes it clear that the ministry he describes is that of the old covenant.

(2005:279) explains, “This literary technique (‘if X . . . , how much more Y’) was one of the rabbinical exegetical ‘rules’ (*qal wāḥômer*, ‘the light and the heavy’), a technique also known as *a minore (or minori) ad maius* ‘from lesser to greater.’ In such contrasts, the movement of thought is from ‘what is true’ to ‘what is even more certainly true’”. In other words, Paul’s threefold “from lesser to greater” argument serves primarily to establish the *certain existence* of the glory of his ministry and not its *greater magnitude*. According to Hafemann (2020:165) the “point of v.8 is not that the glory of Moses’s ministry is less than that of Paul’s qualitatively, but that the glory of Paul’s ministry must be equal to that of Moses’s revelationally. The comparison in vv.7-8 establishes the *certainty* of the glory attendant to Paul’s ministry, not its nature.”

Unlike Hafemann, Harris (2005:279) does not limit Paul’s comparison to the certainty of glory. He writes, in “vv. 7-11 Paul seems to be saying that if the Mosaic dispensation was glorious [...], the new dispensation is not only more certainly glorious (v. 8) but also incomparably more glorious (vv. 9, 11).” The juxtaposition of “has glory” and “excel in glory” in v. 9 does tip the balance in favour of Paul ascribing a greater glory to his ministry. The greater glory of the new ministry is appropriate considering its life giving and not death dealing quality. Garret (2010:751) states, “The forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of God, and the new heart make up the very definition and function of the new covenant (Isa 11:9; Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:26), just as death and condemnation make up the essence of the old.” Harris (2005:287–288) connects the positive features of the ministry of righteousness to the self-revelation of God in Christ:

Δικαιοσύνη here is a relational rather than an ethical term, denoting a right standing before God, given by God (as in Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3; Phil. 3:9), the status of being “in the right” before the court of heaven. God’s approval, not his condemnation, rests on those who are “in Christ”. This being so, the new covenant and its administration must even more certainly than was the case under the old covenant be characterised by divine splendor, and also must abound (περισσεύει) far more in that splendor (δόξη). What was a distinctive and positive feature of the old order must also characterize the new economy, but in greater measure. The new covenant has surpassing glory inasmuch as it

is a more adequate revelation of God's character.

While Paul has not yet in his argument arrived at the connection between Christ and glory, it is present in the greater qualities of the new covenant. As the paradoxical glory that marks both Christ and the new covenant ministry appear to be in question, Paul cannot argue from the glory of Christ to the glory of his covenant. Rather he argues from the old covenant, which came in glory, to establish that his ministry also is with glory. Over the following verses he increases allusions to and mentions of Christ and in 4:5-6 states Christ as the source of glory of the new covenant and its ministry.

The second function of these verses in Paul's argument concerns the Israelites' averse response to the glory on Moses face. Why does Paul, in the context of his apology in 2 Corinthians 3, introduce the story of Moses' shining face from Exodus 34? According to Avemarie (2014:68–69), "he adduces the example of Moses in order to demonstrate by comparison that his ministry is endowed with radiance. This comparison entails that he places himself on a par with Moses, or rather, more precisely, on an even higher rank than Moses".³⁶ However, in light of the lowly status that Paul ascribes himself as God's slave/bondservant (2 Cor 2:14, 3:6, 4:5), it is unlikely that his comparison serves the establishment of rank. In addition, v. 7 introduces the Exodus 34 narrative into his argument with a focus on the "Sons of Israel" and contains no comparison between him and Moses. A comparison to Moses does not come into view until v. 12-13. It is therefore more probable that Paul introduces the story because it exemplifies a negative reaction to the self-revelation of God that has been a theme from the Roman triumphal procession onwards. This also provides a better explanation why Paul chose *this* OT text over others. Garret writes (2010:755):

Paul seizes upon the fact that the Israelites were uncomfortable looking at the physical manifestation of the goodness of God (αἰσ; Exod 33:19), as this is the divine attribute that is at the center of the new covenant. Furthermore, this

³⁶The argument for the comparison to Moses on the basis of rank is often connected to the assumption that Paul's opponents appealed to Moses. Balla (2007:754) summarises, "It seems that he [Paul] was attacked by some people in Corinth who claimed that he was no true apostle. At the same time they perhaps referred to Moses as a great minister of God's will, and they emphasized the inferiority of Paul's ministry compared to that of Moses."

metaphor of grace and life as light is central to the NT's understanding of Jesus: "In him was life, and the life was the light of humanity" (John 1:4); and "[He] is the radiance of [God's] glory and the visible representation of his being" (Heb 1:3). Most importantly, Matt 17:2 describes Jesus' transfiguration with the words, ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ("his face shone like the sun"). These texts are indicative of the grace resident within Jesus, something analogous to but surpassing the glowing of Moses' face.

While Garret takes considerable liberty in how he connects the "NT's understanding of Jesus" to Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3, his suggestion that the glory of Christ informs Paul's comparison to Moses is worth noting. Christ is a more natural bearer of glory associated with the new covenant. The glory on Paul and his co-workers was not visible and hence called into question. Paul argues for the glory of his ministry *despite* appearances to the contrary. Bryne (2018:30) makes this connection:

Paul deployed the scriptural contrast with Moses in order to demonstrate—on the *a minore ad maius* logic—that his ministry was attended by an accrediting glory, albeit one that could not at present be seen. The fact that it was not able to be seen—that it was masked by the fragile and precarious bodily existence of the ministers (4:7–15)—was no derogation of its value but in fact an indication of both its reality and its superiority at the same time.

5.3.4 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

¹² Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, ¹³ and we are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not stare at the end of what was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. ¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts; ¹⁶ but whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 – Introduction

V. 12 is the hinge on which Paul’s discussion turns from his sufficiency as minister of the new covenant to its consequences for his ministry. The eternal nature of his ministry gives Paul a hope that results in him speaking boldly in the proclamation of that ministry.

In v. 13, Paul re-appropriates the story of Exodus 34:29-35, now focusing on Moses (rather than the Israelites). Moses’ action of covering his face becomes a foil for Paul’s ministry of “boldness”. When Moses encountered aversion to the glory of his ministry, that was manifested on his face, he hid his face with a veil. Paul does *not* act in this way. Rather, with an unveiled face he proclaims the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor 3:18), and negative reactions do not cause him to cover himself as Moses had done.

In vv. 14-16, Paul makes use of the Exodus story for the third time, this time using the veil as a metaphor for spiritual blindness. In this function, the veil is no longer an object that hinders revelation (as in, being seen by others), but one that hinders perception (a person’s own ability to see). The spiritual blindness that the Israelites have, and which is evident in the reading of the old covenant, can be removed “whenever someone turns to the Lord”.

In vv. 17-18 Paul expresses what occurs “when one turns to the Lord”. First, he generalises the location, expanding it from the Tent of Meeting (Ex 33:7-9; 34:34-35) to wherever the Spirit is present. Second, he describes the transformation — as with Moses — of the people who are unveiled in the presence of the Lord. Paul, his co-workers, and all Christians reflect the glory of the Lord as they are transformed into the image of Christ. In their visible Christ-likeness they — like open letters of recommendation — are witnesses to the gospel and to the power of the Spirit to transform lives.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 – Glory, Christ, and perception

After the ten occurrences of δόξα in vv. 7-11, there are no occurrences in vv. 12-17. However, the glory of the ministries and covenants from the previous discussion must inform the meaning of these verses. Additionally, many scholars under-

stand “that which is fading away” (v. 13) to refer to the glory on Moses’ face. Δόξα returns in v. 18 with three occurrences. Paul makes a number of statements regarding perception and perceptibility in vv. 12-18. Moses impedes perception by veiling his face while Paul and his co-workers invite perception by “being bold”. God affects a divine hardening of the Israelites’ faculties of spiritual perception. In every case, imperceptibility refers to the inability to understand the message of Moses: once Moses, the minister in Exodus 34, another time Moses referring to the Law, the scriptures that are read. The lifting of the veil in v. 16 is an enabling of perception. Christ occurs once in 3:12-18. In v. 14 Paul writes that something is removed “in Christ”. In modern translations the referent for “removed” (καταργέω) is the veil (the veil is removed *in Christ*). However, a number of scholars make the case that it refers rather to the old covenant (the old covenant is abolished *in Christ*). Paul’s use of κύριος in v. 16-18 is deliberately ambiguous and refers to both God and Christ (see section on Exegesis of 2 Cor 3:18).

The function of the veil is central to Paul’s argument in these verses and connects the elements of my inquiry. The veil hinders perception of Moses’ face and impedes the understanding of the Israelites. It hides the (end of the) glory on Moses face and is removed “in Christ” (v. 14) and/or in a turning to the κύριος (v. 16). I will address the veil over Moses’ face (1), the veil over the Israelites’ hearts (2), and the generalised veil of v. 16 in turn (3).

First, Paul writes of the veil over Moses’ face. After comparing the old and new covenant ministries in their glory Paul contrasts himself with Moses in his ministry practice. Paul and his co-workers use “great boldness in their speech” (παρρησία, v. 12) while Moses “put a veil over his face”. παρρησία carries connotations of openness and publicity, which is in line with how Paul has characterised his ministry from the metaphor of the Roman triumph in 2:14 onwards. The Corinthians, as a public letter of recommendation, (should) partake in this open public witness. Harris (2005:295) writes, “It was not only his speech but his whole way of life that was characterized by ‘forthright openness.’ He has nothing to conceal, but every reason for ‘fearless candor’ (cf. 4:2).” Hope is the reason for their frankness (Harris 2005:295):

If οὖν looks back to 3:7-11 in general, τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα alludes to 3:11 in particular. As participants in the ministry of the new covenant, Paul and his fellow apostles and all proclaimers of the gospel had a confident expectation (ἐλπίς) that this new covenant was permanent and irrevocable (τὸ μένον; 3:11b), never to be superseded or surpassed in splendor. Since they possessed (causal ἔχοντες) such hope, their conduct was marked by the utmost freedom and boldness.

Paul had an “open” face because of his hope. Why did Moses conceal his face? And what did he conceal? These questions are a matter of considerable debate, in part because the “Exodus narrative makes no mention of Moses’ purpose in veiling his face, the fading splendor of his face, or the inability of the Israelites to gaze at his face because of its brightness” (Harris 2005:277). According to v. 13 Moses veiled his face, “so that the sons of Israel would not stare at the end (τέλος) of what was fading away (καταργουμένου)”. I do not consider Paul to be attributing deceit to Moses as the comparison is “not straightforward honesty in contrast with devious deceit, but rather openness as opposed to concealment, with no necessary implication of duplicity in that concealment” (Harris 2005:296). Τέλος is best translated as “end” in this context.³⁷ Καταργουμένου refers both the fading of glory and the passing of the Mosaic dispensation.³⁸ It is best to understand the contrast between Paul and Moses as one of two dispensations (Byrne 2018:23):

Since Moses is playing a role here, albeit a negative one, in the divine scheme of salvation, and since the glory on his face is a divine glory, it is unlikely that Paul is attributing deception to Moses. For Paul it was the law-giver’s unhappy lot to promulgate a dispensation that, in view of Israel’s sin, was designed not to give life but in fact to make sin explicit and mark it out for condemnation (vv. 6–7; see Rom 4:15), and, beyond this, to conceal any hope of remedy (the τέλος [v. 13b]) but rather to bring about a state of hardening.

³⁷καταργέω implies “end” rather than “goal” as the meaning for τέλος, though the meanings of “end” and “goal” are not as far apart in τέλος as they are in English. Garret (2010:754) argues for both meanings.

³⁸While the fading of glory is not explicit in Exodus 34, “it is natural to deduce that each encounter with Yahweh brought about a ‘recharging’ with glory, which in turn implies a loss or fading of glory” (Harris 2005:285). Καταργέω, though an unnatural choice to describe “fading”, refers naturally to the end of the old covenant economy. Paul, through this semantically odd word choice, connects the fading of the glory on Moses’ face with the passing of Moses’ ministry.

Moses only hides his face *after* talking to the Israelites—“When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face” (Ex 34:33). What Moses hides must be more specific than only the glory on his face. He hides the fading of the glory and, by analogy, the limited nature of his dispensation. This ties in with the greater glory belonging to that which remains (v. 11).

Second, in vv. 14-15, Paul transfers the veil over Moses face to the hearts of the Israelites. The phrases “same veil” and “to this day” hint that the transfer is primarily temporal. Paul applies what was true in the time of Moses to his own time. Moses, though no longer alive, continues to speak in the Sabbath readings (“whenever Moses is read”). Any supposedly pejorative statement regarding Moses and the old covenant needs to be seen in light of this. Paul suggests the obsolescence of Moses’ service as little as he suggests the obsolescence of the Sabbath reading of the Torah. Bryne (2018:24) writes:

For Paul, then, the two covenants do not simply follow each other in a temporal sequence. They overlap in the sense that the “old” one (“old” in the sense of contrast with the new [3:6a; 1 Cor 11:25]) is still around as a dispensation of condemnation and death (3:6b–7a). For those, however, who through faith in the gospel, socially enacted in baptism, have entered “into Christ” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) the old dispensation has been rendered obsolete. In him they have entered into the new covenant foreseen by Jeremiah, acquiring the righteousness and promise of (eternal) life that pertains to the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). In this new covenant both they and those such as Paul and his co-workers who are its ministers (διάκονοι) are in a totally new situation, an “unveiled” situation as regards the divine glory.

The two covenants overlap and everyone needs the message of Moses as well as the message of Christ. Baumert (2008:68) writes:

Wer nun dabei stehen bleibt und nicht *hinzukommend* die Botschaft von der Rettung in Christus hört, der bleibt unter der Hülle. Paulus will also nicht etwa sagen, jene Bücher sein ‘veraltet’ und man brauche sie nicht mehr zu hören, sondern betont, man könne (und müsse) sie jetzt ‘ohne Hülle’ lesen und hören, d.h. der Wahrheit von der Sünde und deren Verurteilung ‘ins Gesicht schauen’.

Denn es geht immer um die Hülle *des Mose*. Also muß Mose auch von den Christusgläubigen gehört und angenommen werden!

The shift of the veil from the face of Moses to the hearts of the Israelites is necessitated by the shift from Moses the *man* to Moses the *book*. With this shift, Paul introduces the motif of divine hardening of perception. "The hardening should be understood quite literally in the sense of a fixed attitude or disposition that was unable to see or adapt to a new circumstance (the ministry of the gospel when it was promulgated)" (Byrne 2018:23). The Israelites "had become deadened in their powers of spiritual perception" (Harris 2005:301).³⁹

Paul's *third* use of the veil is the general formulation of 2 Corinthians 3:16, "but whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away". Paul adapts Exodus 34:34, "whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil." Fee (1995:310) summarises Paul's alterations.⁴⁰

Paul makes a few crucial changes to the text of the LXX that allow him to interpret it as he intends in vv. 17-18, by way of analogy. (1) [...] the subject "Moses" is deliberately omitted; (2) the verb εἰσεπορεύετο ("used to go into") is altered to ἐπιστρέψῃ ("turn to"), which in Pauline/Lukan circles had become a quasi-technical term for "conversion"; (3) having omitted "Moses," Paul also therefore omitted the purpose clause, "to talk to him [God]"; and (4) most significantly, in altering the word order of the final clause, Paul also changed the verb from an imperfect middle (" he [Moses] used to remove") to a present passive, so that, in line with v. 14c, Paul's version reads, "the veil is being removed" (by the work of Christ, being the obvious implication).

"Someone" is deliberate ambiguity referring to both Moses and anyone.⁴¹ By this

³⁹Baumert (2008:72–73) suggests Paul refers specifically to a blindness from religious pride. He writes, "durch das 'Nicht-Erkennen' seitens bestimmter Juden ist ein spezifisches Hindernis derer benannt, die Gottes Offenbarung 'schon kennen': Wenn Gott ihnen *neu* entgegenkommt, vielleicht noch menschlicher und noch demütiger, als sie es bisher gelernt oder kennengelernt haben, dann kann die 'theologische Vernunft' genauso auch christlichen 'Schriftgelerten' zum Hindernis werden, Gott tiefer zu begegnen (weil sie es ja schon 'wissen')."

⁴⁰Baumert (2008:69, emphasis in original) similarly sees the alteration to serve generalisation: "[Paulus] will eine Brücke schlagen; das Verhalten des Mose wird nicht historisch, sondern prinzipiell formuliert, und in dieser Form ist es dann auf andere Situationen übertragbar: [...] *Bis heute*, sooft er/man sich zum Herrn *wendet*, nimmt er/man die Hülle ab. Das ist ein geltender Grundsatz, damals und heute."

⁴¹Cf. Fee (1995:310): "The grammar demands that the unexpressed subject of the verb is 'he' (=

ambiguity Paul connects his two previous threads of the veil. The key is to understand Paul's equation of the veil over Moses' face with the veil over the Israelites' hearts. In Paul's allegorical interpretation of the Exodus 34 narrative, the veil over Moses' face *is* the hardening of the Israelites minds. It is "the same veil" over both Moses' face and the Israelites' hearts, and the actions of the one effect the other. Moses is the one who veils his face (and by conduit their heart) and Moses is the one who unveils his face (and by conduit their hearts). Byrne (2018:24) writes, "Turning' here has the Semitic overtones of conversion (cf. 1 Th 1:9). In turning back, unveiled, to the Lord, Moses at this point was 'modelling' conversion to faith in Christ". The conversion to Christ that Moses modelled, however, is only indirect. Foremost Moses models a return to God and spiritual receptiveness for God's self-revelation. Only in light of the new dispensation of God's self-revelation in Christ does a humble turning to God entail an acceptance of Christ. As discussed in the exegesis on 3:18, it is probable that Paul uses κύριος in vv. 16-18 as a deliberate ambiguity to refer to both God and Christ.

5.3.5 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

^{4:1} Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, ² but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in trickery nor distorting the word of God, but by the open proclamation of the truth commending ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they will not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants on account of Jesus. ⁶ For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Moses). But it is equally clear from the context that the subject has been intentionally unexpressed, because in the end it means 'he' (= 'anyone')."

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 – Introduction

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, Paul closes the argument that he started in 2:17. He restates his commitment to truthful, bold, and God-directed speech as a logical consequence of the nature of his ministry. Paul distancing himself from “trickery” and “distortion” in this conclusion, suggest a negative, even deceptive, intent in his use of “peddlers” in 2 Corinthians 2:17.

Since 2 Corinthians 2:17, he has argued that his sincere speaking — in contrast with those who peddle the word of God — stems from the (superior) nature of his divine ministry. The key distinction between the ministries of the covenants is the Spirit of God *in* Paul and those he ministers to (cf. 2 Cor 3:3). As it did Moses, the presence of the Spirit transforms Paul and makes the appearance of his ministry — like slaves in a triumphal procession — averse to (some) people. Both Paul and Moses are unveiled when they are in the presence of the Lord. However, unlike Moses, who had to return to the tent of meeting to meet God. The presence of God, in the Spirit, is permanently present with Paul. Hence, it is unthinkable for Paul to veil his face, i.e., his message.

Having closed his argument regarding the boldness of his speech, in 4:3-5, Paul addresses the natural question that arises: If his ministry is superior and spirit-filled, and he proclaims it so boldly that it is clearly visible for all to see, why do so many people not accept his message and believe in his god? In his answer, Paul acknowledges that his gospel *is* veiled, but only to the perishing. Their not believing is no fault of Paul’s message — which is here described as “the gospel of the glory of Christ” and “Christ Jesus as Lord” — but because the “god of this world” has blinded their minds.

In v. 6, Paul speaks to the spiritual reality of the revelation that he and his co-workers received in contrast to the blinding of “those who are perishing”. He echoes the creation narrative in describing what God has done in their hearts. In contrast to the blinding unbelievers experienced, this “new creation” enables him to see “knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”. Seeing Christ as the glory of God was preceded by a spiritual transformation and effects a spiritual transformation (2 Cor 3:18).

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 – Glory, Christ, and perception

2 Corinthians 4:3 & 4:4 contain the first mentions of εὐαγγέλιον since Paul's coming to Troas "for the gospel" in 2 Corinthians 2:12. Without explicit mention the gospel has been central to Paul's argument throughout the verses in between. Paul uses images to describe his ministry and its message: "fragrance of Christ" (2:15), "speak in Christ" (2:17), "letter of Christ" (3:3), "servants of a new covenant" (3:6), "such a hope" (3:12), "freedom" (3:17), "we received mercy" (4:1), and "word of God" (4:2). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 4:6, Paul introduces a new image to describe his gospel: the glory of Christ. In the context of other people's rejection of Paul's message (4:3-4) and Paul's own reception of Christ (4:6), the perception of the glory of Christ functions as the decisive factor in determining salvation. Those who do not perceive Christ's glory are the "perishing" (4:3) and "unbelieving" (4:4). The parallel to 2 Corinthians 2:15, where the same word (ἀπολλυμένοις) is used for "perishing", suggests Paul and all who accept his gospel are of the "saved" (σωζομένοις).

What determines the perception and perceptibility of the glory of Christ? Paul makes Satan ("god of this world") responsible for blinding unbelievers to Christ's glory and attributes his recognition of Christ's glory to God's creating light in his heart. Ultimately, both blinding and granting sight are under God's purview (Harris 2005:329):

Since Paul elsewhere speaks of God as blinding human eyes (Rom. 11:8, "God gave them . . . eyes that would not see"; cf. Rom 11:10), he must have understood this blinding of the understanding either as a divine judgement administered by Satan or, as seems preferable, as an accommodation within the divine will. Even Satan's acts lie with God's sovereign control.

Paul practices "open proclamation of the truth" (4:2). It is not the fault of his person or preaching that people do not believe. Paul "makes it clear that the reason for the 'veiledness' of the gospel in the case of those who are perishing (v. 3) is not the gospel itself (it brings enlightenment, v. 4b), nor himself as its agent, but the activity of Satan in blinding their minds to the truth of the gospel" (Harris 2005:327). But as the rejection of his message is not a mark of his failure, so the acceptance of his

message is not a mark of his success.⁴² God is the one who must shine into hearts.

In 2 Corinthians 3:13-16, the veil (and blindness) did not hide the glory of God on Moses' face but rather its fading. What exactly does the veil (and blindness) hide in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6? The veil cannot be hiding Christ completely as Paul openly (and intelligibly) proclaims Christ. Rather the veil hides the glory of Christ.⁴³ But how can people see someone who is glorious without seeing their glory? It is possible because the glory of Christ is of another nature, it is invisible to the natural person (cf. 1 Cor 2:14). This is what Paul describes as the blindness of the unbelieving. As Baumert (2008:75) writes, "Sie erkennen die 'Herrlichkeit Christi' in ihrer für die irdischen Augen unsichtbaren Geist-Gestalt nicht, obwohl er doch 'Bild Gottes' ist. Denn dazu braucht man den Geist, dem sie sich gerade verschließen". Paul, writing from the perspective of a sighted believer, perceives Christ as glorious and all who do not see the glory of Christ as blind. But the unbelievers do not know they are blind. From the perspective of the unbeliever Christ is not glorious and Paul is out of his mind (cf. 2 Cor 5:13). Harris (2005:328) writes:

In a metaphorical sense τυφλόω means "deprive of (spiritual) sight," "prevent from understanding." In conjunction with this metaphor of "blinding," νοήματα is more appropriately rendered by "minds" than by "thoughts," but either way it is the understanding of the truth and attractiveness of the gospel that are effectively blocked by the devil.

Harris gets at the centre of Paul's argument from perception in writing of an "attractiveness of the gospel". The believing and unbelieving both hear the gospel, but the unbelieving are not drawn to it. Drawing on the images from 2 Corinthians 2:14ff, the gospel can be perceived to embody shame (2:14), be a stench (2:15), be uncredentialed, and to prohibit self-promotion (3:1-3). But to those whom God grants spiritual sight, Christ is attractive. They perceive a beauty in Him that beckons them.

⁴²Cf. Arzt-Grabner (2014:280) regarding 2 Cor 3:6, "Paulus [betont hier], dass er *nicht* imstande ist, etwas "zu verrechnen" oder "in Rechnung zu stellen", als käme es von ihm selbst. Paulus überträgt hier die Sprache der Land- und Geldwirtschaft auf seine *διακονία* (beachte V. 6), betont aber dabei gerade den entscheidenden Unterschied: Was er anzubieten hat und ausübt, kommt nicht von ihm selbst und geschieht nicht aufgrund eigener Leistung; und deshalb kann er es auch nicht in Rechnung stellen, dann seine Eignung kommt direkt von Gott."

⁴³This makes it less probable that in ch. 3 the veil hides Christ in the OT.

The perception of the glory of Christ is the acceptance of “Christ Jesus as Lord” (v.5). The acceptance of Christ transforms the believers into a “new creation” that has an entirely changed view of reality. The paradoxical glory of Christ characterises the new covenant ministers who selflessly commend themselves while preaching not themselves. Accepting Christ leads to service (Harris 2005:332–333):

The parallelism between “Jesus Christ as Lord” and “ourselves as your slaves,” and the natural sequence of thought from lordship to slavery (κύριον . . . δούλους) suggests that acknowledgement of the lordship of Jesus leads naturally and inevitably to lowly service to one’s fellow believers. To confess that “Jesus is Lord” is to say to other Christians “I am your slave”; slavery to Christ is exhibited as slavery to Christians. [...] He [Paul] envisages his relationship to Christ and his relationship to fellow Christians as one of slavery, that is, unquestioning service for the benefit of the other, as the result of the unconditional but voluntary surrender of all personal rights. In this lowly service to others, Paul was following in the footsteps of his Lord, who himself had adopted the status and role of a δούλους (Phil. 2:7; cf. John 13:2-5). There was, however, one important difference between these two relationships: the Corinthians were not his κύριος any more than he was theirs (cf. 1:24). His service to them was διὰ Ἰησοῦν, “for Jesus sake” — only Jesus Christ was κύριος.

Baumert (2008:74) connects the “unseemliness” (“Unansehnlichkeit”) of Paul’s Christ-like service to the accusations against him:

Die unverhüllte, aber verborgene Geist-Herrlichkeit bestimmt nun grundsätzlich das Verhalten des Paulus, auch in der gegenwärtigen Situation, in der er wegen seiner Leidensgestalt und seiner “Unansehnlichkeit” als unecht verdächtig wird. Er weiß um seine Sendung, um die Qualität seiner “Diakonie”, seines Dienstes, weiß aber auch um die Schwierigkeiten anderer, dies zu erkennen und zu verstehen.

In establishing that his ministry models the mysterious lowly self-revelation of God in Christ, Paul explains that his unseemly appearance does not disqualify him as servant of God. On the contrary, ministers of the new covenant are appointed and

made sufficient by God and serve as slaves. By implication, those who rely on their own credentials and focus on appearance are not true ministers.

5.3.6 Summary

The glory of Christ and its perception is not only present in the two verses, 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6. Throughout 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, the glory of Christ and its perception recur in the themes of apostolic service and of mixed reception to revelation. Paul and his co-workers model Christ in their self-sacrificial service for the gospel and on behalf of the Corinthians, by contrast people reject the self-revelation of God because they cannot appreciate its glory.

5.4 Results

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, Paul repeats the same argument several times. He uses metaphors, his ministry practice, and a spiritual application of the OT to explain the paradoxical appearance of the gospel of Christ. Paul's advocating for his gospel is not unique to 2 Corinthians. As Lim (2017, xv) writes, "Paul's occasional letters written to various Christ-communities are primarily meant to persuade, correct, and shape the thinking and behavior of his audience so that they are rooted in his understanding of the gospel." However, in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul places a specific emphasis on having the right perception regarding the gospel. Paul answers the claim that his ministry is unseemly by explaining how his ministry *does* have glory, though its glory is of a different nature. As if taking the Corinthians to a class in spiritual aesthetics, he reveals the paradoxical beauty of the glory of Christ and its effect on the Christian life.

Barnett (1993:647), Garland (2021:16), Schnelle (2012:315), and Baumert (2008:59) all speak to the tension between Paul and his "opponents" in Corinth regarding appearances. The spiritual immaturity of the Corinthians has made them susceptible to outside influences, especially to individuals who appear to be more impressive than Paul. The statements in 2 Corinthians that Paul makes regarding people of negative spiritual influence all follow the same pattern: these people have an inappropriate focus on themselves in their ministry. They "peddle the word of God" (2:17), need

“letters of recommendation” (3:1), “take pride in appearance and not in the heart” (5:12), boast of qualifications and experiences, and allure the bride that is meant for someone else (11:2-4). They are inappropriately self-absorbed in the service of God as they feed themselves instead of those they are to be serving. In contrast, Paul’s affliction is for the Corinthians’ comfort (1:6) and his decisions are made with them in mind (1:23); he is their servant (4:5), and an earthen vessel – “that the surpassing greatness of the power will be from God and not from” himself (4:7).

Throughout the Corinthian correspondence Paul contrasts fleshly and spiritual perception and warns of judging by outward appearances. The Corinthians are spiritually immature and misguided in their judgement. They do not appreciate the cruciform beauty of Paul’s apostleship. Paul and his co-workers are presented as models of spiritual perception. The Corinthians’ lack of spiritual understanding likely leads Paul to use the number of metaphors he does. He translates spiritual realities into images and metaphors that correct a misunderstanding in the mind of the Corinthians. He desires to give them “an opportunity to be proud of [him], so that [they] will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart” (2 Cor 5:12). Paul emphasises the transformation of the believers in the presence of God because he finds it lacking in the Corinthians.

How specifically does the perception of the glory of Christ function in Paul’s argument? In the preliminary results I noted there are two threads to the argument of Paul: the twofold nature of the glory of Christ and the twofold reception of God’s self-revelation. The exegesis as a whole confirms this. While the glory of Christ does not explicitly enter Paul’s argument until 2 Corinthians 4:4, both Christ and perception are present throughout. From the display of the captives in the Roman triumphal procession *in Christ* in 2:14 to the sight of the glory of God in Christ’s face in 4:6 Paul addresses the perception of the gospel whose center is Christ. Paul divides people into two groups: the saved and the perishing (2 Cor 2:15-16, 4:3-4). The defining characteristic of the saved is their perception of God’s self-revelation in Christ. The glory of God in a crucified Messiah breaks the expected categories of divine revelation (Newman 2020:124):

Paul hints at how he came to this scandalous conclusion when he character-

izes the gospel he preaches as consisting in the glory of Christ (εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The gospel, the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, both is the glory of Christ and that which reveals the glory of Christ.

Paul's defence of his ministry is a defence of his gospel. His description of his gospel sometimes has a polemic edge. The fault of the peddlers (2 Cor 2:17) is that they cheapen the gospel by selling it. Paul, in contrast, speaks the truth in Christ. A similar apologetic purpose follows Paul's description of the gospel as the glory of Christ. Paul and his co-workers are examples of right perception. However, though Paul presents himself as a model, he does not claim to be sufficient in himself. His adequacy as minister of the new covenant is from God. In calling himself διάκονος in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul does not give himself a position of high status, but describes a servant. Here lies the paradox in Paul's argument. He is not making himself great, but small. In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul calls himself a slave for Christ's sake. As God revealed himself in Christ so God reveals himself in his ministers. Paul is not greater than Moses. He emphasises how being a minister of the new covenant is a role of service.

There is a bias to understanding Paul's ministry as preaching. This is reflected in the ESV translation of εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ in 2 Corinthians 2:12. It renders the purpose of Paul's visit to Troas as "to preach the gospel of Christ" rather than "in the gospel of Christ". Paul's ministry included more than preaching. He and his co-workers commend themselves to others by their conduct (2 Cor 4:1-2). Besides proclaiming Jesus as Lord, they proclaim themselves as the Corinthians' bondservants (2 Cor 4:5). As Baumert (2008:77) writes:

Auffallend ist, wie sehr Paulus in diesem Abschnitt seine eigene Person mit der Botschaft verknüpft. [...] Paulus bringt die Botschaft auf eine sehr persönliche Weise. Er ist nie unbeteiligt und spricht von dem, "was er gesehen und gehört hat" (Apg 22,15; 1 Kor 15,8-10; Gal 1,11.17 etc.), d.h. er ist *Zeuge*.

Paul goes one step further and generalises his encounter with God and transformation by the Spirit. In contrast with Moses, who alone entered the presence of the Lord, all believers encounter God and are (or should be) consequently transformed.

The perception of the glory of Christ stands as the cause and consequence of the believers' transformation. They see the glory of Christ, are transformed into his image, and reflect his glory for others so see. In a sense, Paul democratizes Christian witness. It is not only those with external recommendation who speak God's word, nor is it only Paul and his co-workers. Rather, he includes the Corinthians and all believers as joint witnesses to the gospel of Christ. Self-sacrificial love is the hallmark of individuals and communities transformed by the gospel of Christ. Christians forego status-seeking and are unified as sinners reconciled to God with an eternal hope of glory in Christ. The Christians' Christ-like spending of themselves for others is the uncomfortable glory that commends them and their gospel to the consciences of unbelievers. Their glory lies in their actions and not their words. It is the accompanying beauty that witnesses to the truth of the gospel they believe in. Paul recommends himself to "every man's conscience" (2 Cor 4:2) as an embodiment of the gospel (cf. "incarnational rhetoric" in Long 2004:240).

These results are further supported by the one later occurrence of the "glory of Christ" in 2 Corinthians. With reference to the ministry of the Spirit (2 Cor 3), James Harrison (2010:186) explains Paul's attribution of the glory of Christ to believers in 2 Corinthians 8:33 as a description of their "true identity" as Christ-like servants:

This ministry of glory had been inaugurated by God in the history of Israel (Rom 9:4: ἡ δόξα; 2 Cor 3:7: ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ; 3:11: διὰ δόξης) and had paradoxically found its full revelation in the shame of the cross (1 Cor 2:8: τὸν κύριον τοῦ τῆς δόξης). From this inauspicious and dishonourable beginning emanated the infinitely more glorious ministry of the Spirit and righteousness, with a view to the final transformation upon the believer's arrival in the glory to come. Consequently, in the present age, Paul locates the true identity of believers, as δόξα Χριστοῦ, in their Lord's example of selfless service of the weak and poor as opposed to the privileged patronal networks of the Roman ruler (1 Cor 8:11; cf. 9:22a; 2 Cor 8:9; cf. 11:29). Believers would glorify Christ in the ordinary tasks of ministry in the same way that the incarnate Christ had glorified his Father on earth as a lowly servant and continued to do so now in heaven as the divinely vindicated Lord of all (Phil 2:11b: εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In 2 Corinthians, Paul explains his apostolic ministry with the aim of transforming the Corinthians' perspective. His defence of his apostleship is a defence of his gospel. In his Apologia, the glory of Christ refers to Paul's gospel. The perception and imperception of the glory of Christ is the acceptance and rejection of the gospel by those who encounter it. Those who see and appreciate the glory of Christ are those who believe and accept the gospel of Christ.

Underlying Paul's use of the perception of Christ's glory lies the theology of the transformation by the indwelling Spirit. Paul's argument for his apostolic ministry is based on the positive transformation by the Spirit, the "hallmark of the new covenant" (Harris 2005:273). Paul includes the Corinthians not only in the benefits of the gospel but in his apostolic ministry to the world. Their transformation by the Spirit makes them an open letter of recommendation. The new covenant enables all members to enter the presence of God. The glory of God as God's "visible and mobile divine presence" is most fully expressed in the person of Christ, the image of God (Newman 2020:115).

In summary: the perception of the glory of Christ is the nucleus around which a believer's spiritual faculty of perception is formed. God's gracious action enables a person to see the glory of Christ and through the Spirit transforms them into a new creature who has a radically different perspective on reality. Those who see Christ's glory understand the mystery of God's self-revelation in the new covenant. They accept the paradoxical self-revelation of God in his suffering servant and Messiah Jesus Christ and believe the crucified and risen One to be the Lord of all the earth. They believe he will one day make everything new, reveal all immortal treasures in human earthly vessels, and glorify those who imitated him in their lives on earth. The counter-normative behaviour of those with a transformed perspective on reality imitates the self-sacrificial actions of Christ and draws unbelieving people to Christians

and the Lord they serve. However, some unbelievers are put off by the lowly state of both Christ and Christians. They are blinded to the perception of glory in weakness and perceive the aroma of Christ as a stench that leads to death (2 Cor 2:15). For the believer to see triumph in what is commonly seen as defeat requires them to see into a spiritual dimension of future glory that gives them a hope in this world — as the images of a hidden plant within a plain seed (cf. 1 Cor 15) or a glory in jars of clay (1 Cor 4:7) express. To those granted such sight, the glory of Christ is a beauty that beckons them. What is more, it is a beauty that transforms them.

I close with a quote from the Catholic theologian and philosopher Johannes Hartl, who in his recent book *Eden Culture* articulated the paradox of the glory of Christ as the source of hope for the world. Hartl (2021:253–254) writes:

Am deutlichsten wird dieses Paradox [des Schönen im Häßlichen] in der am häufigsten abgebildeten Szene der ganzen Kunstgeschichte: der Kreuzigung. Dass ein absolut guter Mensch eines entsetzlichen ungerechten Todes stirbt, ist alles andere als schön. Es ist sogar das Hässlichste, was man denken kann. Wenn aber selbst in diesem Drama etwas von der radikalen Liebe und Güte Gottes aufleuchten würde, wäre das ein Hoffnungsschimmer. Wenn sich diese Liebe jedoch sogar als siegreich über den Tod erweisen würde, wäre das ganze Leben radikal neu zu bewerten. Genau davon erzählt die christliche Botschaft von der Auferstehung: dass die Hässlichkeit eben nicht das letzte Wort hat. Die ganze Form der biblischen Heilsgeschichte strahlt eine rätselhafte, aber faszinierende Schönheit aus, die in der Person Jesus Christus ihre Mitte findet.

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