

**Paul and spiritual transformation:
Evaluating the contemporary Contemplative Tradition in light
of Paul's μορφή texts**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Transformation is an essential part of the daily life and ongoing concern of those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus Christ. At least two vital convictions support this affirmation. In the first place, the Scriptures are clear in their assessment that humankind, though formed in God's image, is now plagued with a spiritual 'deformity'. Sin's pervasive effects have so marred the image of God in humankind that the unfortunate result is a profound misshapeness. The very 'form' of this divine image has been so contorted that its 'shape' now more closely conforms to the distorted mold of this present age than to its original 'form', the image of God. This 'de-formity' is the sad reality of every human being. We simply do not appear to be what we were created to be. The second conviction upon which the importance of transformation rests is that it is the will of the same God who first formed humankind in his image to restore that image to its original 'shape'. This is graphically asserted by Paul in passages like Romans 8:29, 'For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son'. God, like an expert sculptor, is busily working to 're-form' the Christ-follower, molding and shaping her until one day she takes on the clear likeness of Jesus Christ. That is what transformation is. Transformation refers to this 're-shaping' by the divine hand so that the sin-marred disciple of Christ one day will be restored to the original 'form' for which she was created, the image of God in Christ. This study is about that kind of process of transformation.

And yet, the focus in this study is not so broad as to include every kind of transformation, rather its emphasis is a much narrower field of study, the transformation that occurs in the life of persons who have already experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and have come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. That is, the focus is on 'post-conversion' transformation in the life of those who identify themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ.

However, even this focus is far too extensive for a project like the present one since the concept of spiritual transformation is woven deeply into the narrative of the entirety of the New Testament story. Somehow the focus of this study must be narrowed even further. Hence, in order to make this vast subject more manageable this study will consider the concept of ‘spiritual transformation’ as it is developed in the letters of Paul of Tarsus. In particular it will analyze four key passages in Paul’s letters, Galatians 4:19, Philippians 3:10, Romans 12:2, and 2 Corinthians 3:18. But why these texts and not the host of other passages in the Pauline letters that address this often-mentioned topic of spiritual transformation? Three comments are necessary to answer this relevant question. First, these four passages overtly speak to the concept of spiritual transformation. Each of the passages selected use terminology (specifically the ‘μορφή’ root) which include within their range of meanings the idea of transformation. In fact, Louw and Nida (1988) in their groundbreaking lexicon offer a series of possible words whose semantic domain speaks to the idea of the nature or form of something (Louw and Nida 1988:586-587) and a change of state of something (Louw and Nida 1988:154-157). Within these semantic domains the words that most clearly speak to the concept of post-conversion spiritual transformation are the ones chosen for this study (μορφώ and συμμορφίζομαι appear under Louw and Nida’s category for the ‘nature or character of something’ domain, whereas μεταμορφόομαι is part of the ‘change of state’ domain)¹. Thus given the fact that a narrowing of the scope of the project was necessary, the texts that overtly referred to spiritual transformation took on a priority².

¹ The word γίνομαι can be used to refer to a change or transformation of something (i.e., Jesus becoming sin, 2 Cor 5:21, or someone’s circumcision becoming uncircumcision, Rm 2:25), or it is often used with mimesis language to refer to ‘becoming an imitator’ of someone (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Gl 4:12; Phlp 3:17; 1 Th 1:6) or an example to someone (1 Th 1:7), but generally is not used to refer to a Christ-follower’s post-conversion transformation (with the possible exception of Phlp 2:15 where Paul speaks of ‘becoming blameless’, referring to an internal quality that is expressed through actions and thus reflects the fruit of spiritual progress).

² The majority of words that Louw and Nida (1988) include in the above mentioned categories do not even appear in Paul’s universally accepted letters. It would seem from this that Paul’s teaching on transformation is not generally centered around a specific vocabulary, though the passages examined in the present project represent four cases where the concept of transformation is spoken about and expressed using a particular vocabulary, one that is rare both in the New Testament and in literature outside the Bible. This is not to say that the three Greek words chosen inherently ‘mean’ transformation. It is understood that words are linguistic symbols that represent a range of possible meanings depending on other factors (i.e., context, co-text, usage). It is to acknowledge, however, that in the particular contexts and co-texts where these three words appear Paul’s intention appears to be to speak about a particular ‘forming’ or ‘change of form’, and thus some kind of spiritual transformation. It seems legitimate

Second, the choice of these four passages does not imply that these are the only texts which speak about spiritual transformation, nor that the only way that a text can be understood to speak about spiritual transformation is if a particular word appears in the text. This is obviously not the case. As already mentioned, Paul's letters are rife with references and examples of the Christ-follower's transformation. As a result, this study includes in chapter 6 the study of three texts that speak to the subject of spiritual transformation without using either of the three Greek words mentioned above. In other words, the real issue is not does a particular word appear, but rather is the author's intention to address either explicitly or indirectly the subject of transformation.

Third, many other passages in Paul's letters could have been chosen for a basis of this study, but both limitations of space and time and the desire to do a more in-depth exegesis of a few key passages rather than a more general exegesis of a host of passages, led to the decisions which form this particular investigation of the motif of transformation. Or stated differently, this study is not a full-orbed Biblical Theology of Paul's view of spiritual transformation. That project will hopefully come in the future. Nor is it an exhaustive study of transformation in the Bible. The present study has a more modest goal, to analyze Paul's concept of spiritual transformation as expressed through several passages in his letters and thus provide a sound exegetical basis for a comparison with the view expressed by the Contemplative Tradition.

In terms of methodology, the present research, as already stated, is primarily an exegetical examination of the topic of spiritual transformation. This means that its central focus is on analyzing specific passages of Scripture within the accepted Pauline corpus employing a historical-literary-cultural-linguistic-grammatical approach. The study will not engage in an investigation of the psychological, sociological, or neurotheological perspectives on spiritual transformation, not because these areas of study have nothing to offer, but rather due to limitations of time, space, and also the specific goals and interests of the author. In addition to a largely exegetical approach,

therefore to include them in an analysis of the concept of spiritual transformation, even giving them priority as texts that directly address the concept of transformation.

this project includes one chapter of comparative theology whereby the exegetical conclusions arrived at will be compared to the practical theology of a popular movement within modern evangelicalism, a movement sometimes labeled the Contemplative Tradition. Finally, this study has a very ‘practical’ and ‘pastoral’ tenor to it, seeking to bring clarity to a vitally important topic that touches the everyday life of Christ-followers around the globe. Confusion regarding the means by which spiritual transformation can be experienced has plagued sincere followers of Jesus in many cultures and at many stages of history. What ultimately led the author to a consideration of this theme and the specific approach chosen to address the topic was the desire to bring some measure of clarity to the host of Christ-disciples who long to better understand how to make ongoing progress towards the goal of spiritual transformation and thus with Paul to ‘by any means possible ... attain the resurrection from the dead’ (Phlp 3:11).

The question regarding how persons can experience this kind of a transformation has received a variety of answers throughout history from a host of differing perspectives. One of these common perspectives is an ancient tradition which has experienced something of a revival in the later part of the twentieth century. This particular ‘tradition’ is known by a variety of different names – Christian Mysticism,³ Christian Spirituality, the Contemplative Tradition, or in more recent days, the Spiritual Formation movement.⁴

The Contemplative Tradition, birthed in the monastic movement of the fourth century, but experiencing a significant rebirth in the twentieth century, places a strong emphasis on the practice of the spiritual disciplines, especially prayer. In fact, one modern

³ McGinn (2006:xvii) comments, ‘One thing that stands out in the accounts of all the Christian mystics is that their encounter with God transforms their minds and their lives. God changes the mystics and invites, even compels, them to encourage others by their teaching to open themselves to a similar process of transformation. That is why the only test that Christianity has known for determining the authenticity of a mystic and her or his message has been that of personal transformation’.

⁴ The proper terminology is a complex matter since there are no universally accepted definitions for these different terms. Sometimes they are used interchangeably and sometimes they refer to different aspects. For example, McGinn (1985:xvi) comments about the different terms, ‘Spirituality ... is a broader and more inclusive term than either asceticism or mysticism’. Foster (1998) views the Contemplative Tradition as one of six major historical ‘streams’ and thus would most likely describe it as a more narrow title than Christian Spirituality, perhaps viewing it as a close parallel to Mysticism, though he does not seem to use the term mysticism frequently. The Spiritual Formation Movement is a title now commonly used, but would generally have a much narrower reference. We are using these titles interchangeably.

adherent of this tradition, Richard Foster refers to the contemplative tradition as ‘the prayer-filled life’ (Foster 1998:4). Foster asserts that the primary pathway to the goal of being conformed to Christ’s image is by imitating the life of Christ. This involves a devotion to the spiritual practices that Jesus regularly engaged in, what Foster calls ‘spiritual disciplines’. Dallas Willard concurs when he writes,

my central claim is that we can become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself ... We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.

(Willard 1988:ix)

The list of spiritual disciplines that represent valid spiritual practices which can lead one to conformity to Christ varies depending on the author. There is no official list which represents the entire contemplative tradition. However, though there is a variety of perspectives on exactly how many disciplines there are, there is little disagreement regarding the essential nature of these spiritual activities for growth in godliness. The Contemplative Tradition asserts that these disciplines put one in contact with the transforming grace of God and the God of grace Himself, and thus become essential means for personal spiritual transformation. The various branches of the Contemplative Tradition throughout church history, though manifesting different emphases, all come together below this one banner – the way to spiritual maturity is through the practice of the spiritual disciplines which are the primary means by which a believer can experience intimate communion with God.

How does this particular perspective on transformation square with Paul’s view? The purpose of this study is to answer that question, considering the issue of spiritual transformation from two different perspectives as stated above, an exegetical lens and a comparative lens. First, this study offers an analysis of key passages in the accepted letters of Paul with the desire to distill principles which indicate Paul’s view of spiritual transformation. Second, this study considers the issue of transformation as developed by adherents of the contemporary Contemplative Tradition, especially from the writings of two of its most influential proponents, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard.

Much attention has been given since the twentieth century to the subject of Christian spirituality. A plethora of books surveying the landscape of 'modern' Christian spirituality from a variety of different theological and cultural perspectives has been published. For example, one can readily find articles and books about feminist spirituality, African spirituality, Asian spirituality, spirituality among children, queer spirituality, and a seemingly unlimited number of options from a host of different cultural, academic and theological angles. And all make the claim to be 'Christian' spiritualities.

Even among a more mainstream Christianity one finds a host of different options from a variety of perspectives. For example, Bradley Holt (2005), a North American Lutheran, in his *Thirsty for God*, gives us 'an accessible sampling of the spirituality of over 100 individuals and spiritual movements' from the perspective of various denominations through a range of historical epochs. Phillip Sheldrake, a British Catholic, has written many books on Christian spirituality, including his *A Brief History of Spirituality*, which focuses on four paradigms found in Western Christianity, the monastic, the mystical, the active, and the prophetic-critical (Sheldrake 2007). Sheldrake also headlines the Spring 2011 issue of *Spiritus*, a journal of Christian spirituality, which was completely dedicated to the matter of European spirituality, with an article entitled, 'Spirituality in a European Context'. Alister McGrath, an Irish Anglican, wrote a brief treatment of Reformation spirituality and in his fine book, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (McGrath 1999), goes beyond a mere survey of the main personalities in the history of Christian spirituality to discuss important theological foundations and practices of the different traditions. And Robert Wuthnow (1998), a North American sociologist, wrote *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950's* which, as the title suggests, describes the phenomenon of spirituality in North America since 1950. This is just a small sampling of the multitude of diverse treatments of Christian spirituality that have been published, representing the multiplicity of lenses through which this subject has been analyzed in the last few decades.

And yet, as one peruses the dizzying number of tomes dedicated to the subject of Christian spirituality, there is an obvious hole that appears. While there are multitudes of

books dealing with the key historical figures that represent the different spiritual traditions⁵, and many books which give a historical survey of the various traditions⁶, and a great variety of books which teach concrete practices of Christian spirituality⁷, and even a few books which treat the theological foundations for Christian spirituality⁸, there has been far less interest in an exegetical analysis of New Testament teaching on 'spirituality'. Thus a recent comment on the web page of the Evangelical Theological Society states, 'We are aware that sometimes the spiritual formation movement has lacked in theological grounding and understanding'.⁹ Robert Rakestraw (1997:257) adds that there is a 'crying need for a robust, Biblical theology of the Christian life that will refute and replace the plethora of false spiritualities plaguing Church and society. Historical surveys and biographical sketches are important, but a clear exegetical study of New Testament spirituality is essential if the Church is to view this broad subject in a thoroughly Christian way. Then with this exegetical foundation built, one can more clearly evaluate the spectrum of modern day spiritualities that are evident in the church of our generation. This study proposes to fill a small part of this gap, focusing specifically on the letters of Paul of Tarsus and specifically his view of spiritual transformation as evidenced in select passages.

⁵ To name just a few examples: de Reuver, A., 2007, *Sweet Communion: Trajectories of Spirituality from the Middle Ages through the Further Reformation*, Baker, Grand Rapids; Hanson, B. C. (ed.), 1990, *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays*, Scholars Press, Atlanta; Elder, E. R. (ed.), 1976, *The Spirituality of Western Christendom* Cistercian Publications, Inc., Kalamazoo; Schmidt, R. H., 2008, *God Seekers*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids.

⁶ A few examples include: Mursell, G. (ed.), 2001, *The Story of Christian Spirituality*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis; Dupre, L. and Saliers, D. E. (eds.), 1989, *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York; Maas, R. and O'Donnell, G. (eds.), 1990, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, Abingdon Press, Nashville; Woods, R., 1989, *Christian Spirituality*, Thomas More Publishing, Allen.

⁷ For example, Calhoun, A. A., 2005, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove; and Foster, R., 1978, *Celebration of Discipline*, HarperCollins, San Francisco. See also the many books on specific spiritual disciplines.

⁸ Several of mention are: Chapters 3-4 of McGrath, A., 1999, *Christian Spirituality*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden; Chapters 10-16 of Holder, A. (ed.), 2005, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden; Alexander, D. L. (ed.), 1988, *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove; Senn, F. C. (ed.), 1986, *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, Paulist Press, New York; Chapters 1-3 of Greenman, J. P. and Kalantzis, G. (eds.), 2010, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove; Dieter M. E. et al., 1987, *Five Views on Sanctification*, Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids.

⁹ Viewed 5 January 2014 at <http://www.etsjets.org>.

Several scholars in the last few decades have attempted to fill at least a portion of this gap providing an exegetical study of certain aspects of the vital topic of spiritual transformation. There have been several important books on the matter of Pauline anthropology.¹⁰ For example, Bultmann, in his *New Testament Theology* (2007), divides his extensive section on the theology of Paul into two major parts: Man prior to the revelation of faith, and man under faith. The reason for making man central to his exposition of Paul is that for Bultmann, 'Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology ... Paul's theology can best be treated as his doctrine of man' (Bultmann 2007:191). But how is it that Bultmann understands Paul's perspective on the situation of humankind? Through the lens of the different 'formal structures' of humankind's existence, what are often termed 'anthropological concepts', such as soma, psyche, mind, heart, flesh, etc. Robert Jewett (1971a) follows a similar path explaining the meaning and usage from Paul's letters of key anthropological terms like σάρξ, πνεῦμα, σωμα, καρδιά, etc. Geurt Hendrik van Kooten (2008) takes a slightly different approach. He traces Pauline anthropology against the background of ancient Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophy focusing primarily on the idea of the image of God, and more specifically, Paul's emphasis on mankind being conformed to God's image. Though these works add important elements to the discussion of spiritual transformation, this is not their primary focus.

Also, some authors have analyzed the idea of Pauline ethics.¹¹ T.J. Deidun (1981) has written about Pauline morality under the new covenant, focusing especially on the imperative of Christian love. James Thompson (2011), in his book *Moral Formation according to Paul*, also addresses Pauline ethics. In his introduction, Thompson affirms the centrality of the concept of spiritual transformation for the Pauline letters. However,

¹⁰ See for example: Barrett, C.K., 1962, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York; Stacey, D., 1956, *The Pauline View of Man in Relation to its Judaic and Hellenistic Backgrounds*, St. Martin's Press, New York; Scroggs, R., 1966, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis; Gundry, R., 1976, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge.

¹¹ Examples include Rosner, B. S. (ed.), 1995, *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches*, Eerdmans Publishers, Grand Rapids; Harrington, S. J. J. and Keenan, J. F., 2010, *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham; Hooker, M., 1985, 'Interchange in Christ and Ethics', *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 25, 3-17.

his main concern is the context of Paul's ethics and its coherence. However, Thompson had already addressed the subject of transformation in his earlier *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul* (2006) where he asserted,

Paul assumes in his letters that, as a result of his original evangelistic mission, the converts experienced a radical change through the power of God. This change was only the beginning of the story ... Paul's pastoral care consists of his own participation in the work that God is doing in the transformation of his converts. Thus the letters speak not only of the new existence already attained but of the transformation that is occurring. The language of formation (*morph-*) ... indicates the central role of this concept in Pauline theology.
(Thompson 2006:23 emphasis in the original).

Thus, Thompson does speak of the centrality of transformation for Paul, yet Paul's concept of transformation is not the central focus of the book and therefore is not treated in depth. Hence, though the themes of Pauline ethics and anthropology and other related topics are important ones to analyze, and though they do move us along in our desire to understand the subject of 'spirituality' as it is addressed in Paul's writings, yet they do not bring us closer to an in depth knowledge of Paul's concept of transformation which is the goal of this study.

Nonetheless, there have been some treatments of the subject of transformation in Paul. In 1970 John Koenig published his doctoral dissertation entitled, *The Motif of Transformation in the Pauline Epistles: A History of Religions/Exegetical Study*. Koenig speaks of two different kinds of 'transformation'. First, there is 'a transformation of believers when Christ returns from heaven on the last day' (Koenig 1970:1). This transformation will be instantaneous and will bring about a radical change in believers so that they will bear the image of Christ. Second, Koenig writes about 'a transformation being experienced by believers already in their pre-parousia existence' (Koenig 1970:2). It is this second kind of transformation that occupies the majority of Koenig's thesis. To explain this second form of transformation, Koenig analyses the only Pauline passages where the verbal form of $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta$ (transformation) occurs: Galatians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:2, and Philippians 3:10. Interestingly, in his investigation of these passages Koenig concludes that there is a vital difference between Galatians 4:19 and the other three passages. Thus he states,

here it is necessary to distinguish Gal. 4:19 from 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; and Phil. 3:10. In the Galatians passage Paul speaks of a re-initiation into maturity, not of the ongoing

metamorphosis which begins to operate once believers have become mature. Therefore, it is probably best to refrain from calling the μορφωθῆ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν a transformation'.
(Koenig 1970:200-201)

And, when Koenig moves to define the nature of transformation he concludes that transformation does not refer to a gradual process by which a person becomes more and more mature, or by which a believer is slowly shaped into Christ's image. Being shaped 'into' the image of Christ happens at the parousia, not before. The pre-parousia transformation can be 'according to' or 'in line with' this image, but cannot attain a conformity to the image (Koenig 1970:238). Even more concretely Koenig declares, 'transformation per se is not to be thought of as moral or spiritual progress in the sense of an ascending movement toward perfection. Rather, 'as in 2 Cor. 4:16, it should be seen as a daily renewal which must occur again and again simply to keep Christ "formed" in believers during the course of their earthly walk' (Koenig 1970:174). In addition, Koenig would not associate transformation with sanctification; the two processes are quite different. He alleges regarding transformation,

Paul holds that in the present age it is a process which never ceases until death or the parousia and that instead of bringing about a qualitatively different level of existence in the person who undergoes it, it keeps him walking the way of a maturity already granted and corrects him when he strays from this. The apostle is unconcerned about whether he is more transformed, or less transformed than he was on the previous day. According to his view, one's perseverance in maturity is the real issue at hand. Thus, metamorphosis is no steady accumulation of divine power in one's body (as Philo and the missionary preachers in Corinth supposed). On the contrary, it is a dialectical process in which 'our outer nature is wasting away, (but) our inner nature is being renewed every day' (2 Cor. 4:16). For the apostle, incessant revitalization in the midst of suffering, not progress, is the most important product of transformation."

(Koenig 1970:228-229)

It appears that for Koenig transformation is a corrective process achieved largely through suffering rather than a gradual growth and change towards conformity to the image of Christ. Our study of Paul's concept of transformation though it includes the very same passages that Koenig treated, will come to quite different conclusions.

Kyle Wells (2010) deals with the theme of transformation in his doctoral thesis, *Grace, Obedience, and the Hermeneutics of Agency: Paul and his Jewish contemporaries on the Transformation of the Heart*. Wells' direction in the study is clearly stated, 'this

project, then, focuses on the interpretative traditions surrounding Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36–37 with an eye to unlocking Second Temple views about grace and agency, transformation and obedience’ (Wells 2010:9). Though Wells’ focus is primarily on the question of who brings about the transformation in Christians, he also touches on the matter of the change wrought in Christians. Wells emphasizes the initial act of God in the transformation of believing sinners and the believer’s union with Christ in the totality of his saving work. He also works out the practical implications of this union with Christ in a life of obedience.

Bradley Matthews (2009) in his doctoral thesis *Mature in Christ: The Contribution of Ephesians and Colossians to Constructing Christian Maturity in Modernity* also sees union with Christ as the key to a Christ-follower attaining the goal of the Christian life. Matthews’ primary concern is with the fact that ‘modern’ Christians have distorted ideas of what maturity really is and how it is ultimately attained. The modern concept is of something individual that can be easily ‘packaged’ and monitored step by step. The biblical model, however, is an eschatological and corporate concept that rests squarely on a believer’s union with Christ. Matthews uses key passages in Ephesians and Colossians to illustrate a Christian paradigm of maturity.

Another useful study is by James Samra (2006), *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles*. Samra’s focus, like that of Matthews, is the concept of Christian maturity. Samra concludes that true Christian maturity centers on the idea of being conformed to the image of Christ in our attitudes and our actions. But in chapter five of his dissertation Samra also develops ‘five components of the process of maturation (or five means the Spirit uses to bring about conformity to Christ)’ (Samra 2006:168). That is, these five means speak to the idea of how people are spiritually transformed. The five that Samra mentions are: identifying with Christ, enduring suffering, experiencing the presence of God, receiving and living out wisdom from God, and imitating a godly example. This is helpful treatment of the means of transformation, though it is quite brief.

A recent contribution to the topic of transformation is the work by deSilva (2014). He expresses his dissatisfaction with the way Paul's gospel is often understood, specifically the way the gospel message is truncated to include only the salvation of the 'soul' without considering the bigger picture of the God-produced transformation that brings about change in sinners and ultimate rescue from the full range of sin's consequences. He writes, 'As I have come to understand Paul's message, it is all about *change*. The good news is nothing less than that God has set in motion the forces and factors that can transform all of creation and make it new, good, and right once again—including *us*' (deSilva 2014:2 emphasis in the original). Hence de Silva wants to restore Paul's 'full gospel' so that it includes 'the transformation of the individual, the community of faith, and the cosmos itself as God's goal for God's saving action, indeed, as "salvation" itself' (deSilva 2014:5). Thus deSilva addresses each of these broadening spheres of transformation. The more global perspective on transformation is both helpful and important, however, the study does not include an in-depth exegesis of specific Pauline texts, something that this present study seeks to attempt.

It is evident then that much has been written on the topic of a Pauline theology of 'spirituality' though much less has been written specifically about the motif of transformation, and still less has been directly dedicated to the more narrow focus of the means prescribed to bring about transformation. That is the unique focus of this particular work, through an exegesis of key Pauline texts to distill principles related to the subject of post-conversion transformation in the life of Christ-followers, and especially the means used to bring about such a transformation. At the same time, this study is unique in that not only does it seek to demonstrate Paul's concept of transformation through a detailed study of several Pauline texts, it will then compare and contrast Paul's perspective with that of the Contemplative Tradition, which though it has ancient roots, has experienced a significant revival in the contemporary evangelical church. This is an area of research that is lacking and thus the present work hopes to make some kind of contribution to this needed area of study.

Chapters 2 through 5 will provide in-depth exegesis of the key Pauline passages that use words (the *morph-* root) that speak directly to the concept of transformation. Chapter 2 offers an examination of Galatians 4:19, looking first at the larger context for this text and then analyzing the immediate context (Galatians 4:12-20). The chapter ends with a summary of what this particular text contributes to the discussion of the motif of transformation. Chapter 3 follows the same basic outline as it investigates Philippians 3:10 and the surrounding context. Chapter 4 addresses the next Pauline passage, Romans 12:2. Chapter 5 follows the same steps in its study of 2 Corinthians 3:18. Chapter 6 offers a more general treatment of several texts that touch on the concept of transformation, though perhaps in a more indirect way.

Having thereby developed an exegetical foundation for understanding Paul's concept of transformation, Chapter 7 applies the fruit of this study to a comparison between Paul's view of transformation and that of the contemporary Contemplative Tradition. This particular aspect of the study begins by showing several lines of agreement between Paul and the Contemplative Tradition. The bulk of the chapter, however, is an examination of the lines of disagreement between Paul's view of transformation and that of the Contemplative Tradition, especially the writings of two of its most prolific adherents, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. The final chapter is then a summary of the findings of this paper. The goal of this research is not only to help clarify Paul's view of transformation, but also to instruct and motivate those longing to see ongoing transformation in their own lives and thus, by God's grace, to offer some help in the pursuit of being conformed to the image of Christ, the goal of all spiritual transformation.

Chapter 2

Transformation in Galatians 4:19

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first passage in Paul's letters that must be examined regarding this topic of spiritual transformation is Galatians 4:19. Of course it will be necessary to consider the context of this passage, both its immediate context, Galatians 4:12-20, and the broader context of the entire letter to the Galatians. Following an exegetical study of this important text it will be necessary to distill several concrete applications which directly relate to the subject of transformation. The text states,

¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

ESV.

2.2 CONTEXT

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a stern letter in which Paul addresses the churches in the Galatian region regarding the impact of certain 'teachers' who had recently made a very significant impact among the believers. It appears that these 'agitators', as Paul refers to them (Gal 1:7), were seeking to convince the Galatians of the importance of circumcision in order to be justified. Their efforts appear to have experienced some measure of success. Paul writes to challenge the Galatians regarding their present spiritual path, to confirm the nature and centrality of the gospel Paul preached and to show the error of the dangerous teaching being propagated by the agitators.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is unique among his letters, especially in terms of its structure. After giving the traditional blessing (Gal 1:3), Paul breaks from the normal model of letter openings and rather than offering a prayer of thanksgiving, elaborates on the nature of Jesus Christ. This is the only Pauline letter where he expands the greeting by speaking of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.¹² This is clearly purposeful as Paul wanted to make it very clear that Christ's self-sacrifice rescued sinners from 'the present evil age'. This means, in the context of the letter, that the Galatians have already been freed from bondage to the forces and ways of this world (Gal 6:14) and have now become citizens of the new age (Gal 6:15). They therefore do not need to live in bondage as they formerly did, to the τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. This even includes freedom from the law (Gal 5:1-2). Circumcision is not required! It is part of the old age from which they have been rescued. So then, if Christ has indeed given himself for their sins, then they have truly been liberated from the law as a governess over their lives. The message of the Judaizers has been upended by the self-sacrifice of Christ!

Having given a brief foreshadowing of this wonderful truth in his opening, Paul quickly changes tone and reproves the Galatians because they have deserted God so that they could follow the 'pseudo-gospel' of the agitators. Paul informs them sternly that to follow any other gospel other than the one they 'received' from him is to deserve God's judgment (Gal 1:9). Only the 'received' gospel which Paul handed over to them is of divine origin, since Paul himself received it through a revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11-12). Paul then goes into an extended explanation of his personal journey of faith. He was a stellar Jew, growing in knowledge and prominence, that is until God revealed Christ to him and called him to preach the gospel to the gentiles (Gal 1:13-16). But after this conversion experience, Paul did not seek out the 'pillar apostles' of the church in order for them to teach him the gospel message or to confirm his calling. Paul received his gospel and his calling from God and both his gospel and his calling were later confirmed by the leaders of the Jerusalem church. And interestingly enough, circumcision was never insisted upon by the apostles, not even for Titus who was an

¹² Though Romans also has a significant addition to the greeting, the focus is not on the redemptive work of Christ but rather on his person and his 'origin'.

uncircumcised Greek who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Gl 2:3). Even when some Judaizers attempted to enslave Paul and his missionary friends with their emphasis upon circumcision, Paul refused to yield because he wanted to preserve the true gospel (Gl 2:5). The pillars of the church recognized that Paul's gospel was valid and that God had entrusted him with ministry to the gentiles and so they publicly acknowledged their partnership in the gospel with Paul and Barnabas (Gl 1:9). And yet, on one occasion Paul even had to correct Peter who compromised the true gospel by expecting the gentiles to live by the Mosaic law, and this hypocrisy even influenced Barnabas to follow his wrong example (Gl 2:11-14)¹³.

The essence of the true gospel is that a person is justified by faith, not law-works. Paul himself notes that he died to the Mosaic law so that he could live for God. He was crucified together with Christ and now all of life is to be lived out by faith in Christ, lest Christ's sacrificial death be rendered purposeless (Gl 2:15-21).

¹³ Because the present work is focused on the letters of the Pauline corpus it is necessary to at least comment on the so-called, New Perspective on Paul, though an analysis of the New Perspective is beyond the purview of the present study's purposes. It will be noticed throughout the discussion, especially in the chapters dealing with Galatians, Romans, and Philippians, that this paper is more sympathetic to the traditional position. Because the scope of this study is less focused on the specific issues generally addressed in the debate between the two 'perspectives' on Paul and because generally speaking these matters arise in this paper in the sections dealing with the context supporting the main passages exegeted and not the primary passages themselves, this paper will not give detailed explanations of these matters. However, it is appropriate to make several comments. First, it must be recognized that the New Perspective on Paul is not a monolithic unified systematic perspective. In other words, one cannot really speak of 'The' New Perspective on Paul as though there were one coherent system accepted by all so-called New Perspective adherents. This is clearly affirmed by N.T. Wright (2003:5) when he writes, 'I say all this to make it clear that there are probably almost as many 'New Perspective' positions as there are writers espousing it – and that I disagree with most of them'. Thus, to simply state that one is opposed to or in support of the New Perspective on Paul is clearly an inadequate statement that needs further explanation. Of course, the same can be said for the 'old' or 'traditional' perspective on Paul; there is no one system that defines all those who would espouse its claims. Second, the New Perspective has helped clarify the nature of the conflicts Paul sustained with some of his opponents. Though this author still believes that Paul was at times addressing the issue of Jewish legalism, it is clear that this is not always the case. In fact, sometimes the cry of legalism has been exaggerated and the case of Jewish nationalistic pride has been neglected. In other words, it is probably more likely that both issues were a problem. Finally, though adherents of the New Perspective are right to affirm the need to view justification from a more corporate lens – the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's covenant people - nonetheless, this should not negate the fact that Paul also has in view God's making right the tragic situation of humankind's sin and 'un-right-ness' of all people outside of Christ. There is a focus in Paul's view of justification on the individual becoming acceptable with God through God's dealing with sin. This emphasis is sometimes lost in some New Perspective writings.

Paul intensifies his tone again in Galatians 3:1 and criticizes the Galatians for being foolish and 'bewitched'. They seem to have forgotten that they began their relationship with Jesus Christ by faith, not by works, and therefore that they can only continue this journey in the same way, by faith and not by performing law-works. Even God's miraculous deeds in their midst have been done by faith and not by law-works. This is consistent with what Abraham experienced; it was his faith in God that was 'credited' for righteousness (Gal 3:6). Thus it is clear that those who believe in Christ are Abraham's sons and since the scriptures declared long ago that God would justify the gentiles by faith, so now those who believe in Christ are included in this blessing and are blessed along with Abraham. On the other hand, those who try to be justified by the law are under condemnation just as the scriptures declared. But Christ brought freedom from this condemnation by suffering condemnation through his crucifixion. The result of this curse-bearing death was that in union with Christ Jesus God's blessing to Abraham came to the gentiles so that now those who believe receive the promised Holy Spirit by faith (Gal 3:14).

Paul explains the difference between covenant obligations and blessings received by a promise. The law covenant made long ago does not negate the promise made to Abraham. The inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, not because of a law, and therefore the promise is still valid. The law had a temporary purpose, to deal with transgressions, but when Christ came the law was no longer necessary. Besides, law cannot give life nor can it justify, it merely served to guide sinners until the time when Christ came and brought the fulfillment of the promise. So then the time of faith has arrived and thus there is no longer a need for the law; people are justified before God by faith and receive God's promise through this faith. Now everyone who believes in Christ Jesus is a son of God; there is no longer any distinction or favoritism. All who believe belong to Christ and are heirs of the promise made to Abraham (Gal 3:29).

Paul's primary concern during the first three chapters is to show that the Galatians' slide away from the Pauline gospel towards the works of the law proposed by the Judaizers is not only a dangerous slide, but will result in them being shut out from the promise that God made to Abraham and to the justification that comes by faith. They should not be

deceived in this way. Now in Galatians 4:1-11 Paul will show that the epoch-changing appearance of Christ has transformed their status so that they are freed from the law and should not put themselves under its bondage again. Then in Galatians 4:12-20 Paul gets very personal with the Galatians regarding their relationship both with him and with the false teachers. The Galatians should imitate Paul with regard to his view of the law and they should understand the manipulative motives of the agitators. As Paul thinks about how their view of him has deteriorated and how they have given in to the false teachers and their damaging message he expresses his deep concern for their spiritual condition (Gal 4:19). It is with this text that we must now grapple.

2.3 EXPOSITION

Galatians 4:19 is a very complex passage that will need to be unraveled. In order to rightly understand Paul's metaphor in this verse, we must follow his flow of thought in the entire paragraph. Paul is frustrated with the Galatians because they have abandoned the gospel which they received from him and have turned 'back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more' (Gal 4:9). It is evident from Paul's words that he considers not only idolatry (Gal 4:8) and the observance of special days (Gal 4:10) as examples of those 'elementary principles of the world' (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου), but also observance of the law (Gal 4:1-5). So then, according to Paul, the fact that the Galatians are dallying with the law as a governing pattern for life is clear evidence that they desire to return to the very slavery they lived under prior to knowing Christ. Such a dramatic regression causes Paul to fear that they might be lost for good. What is needed? The Galatians need a new example to follow. Thus in Galatians 4:12 Paul exhorts them to follow his example, 'become as I, because I also as you' (Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι καὶ γὼ ὡς ὑμεῖς). Paul's cryptic language in this verse is difficult to decipher and has resulted in a variety of interpretations.¹⁴

¹⁴ The main lines of interpretation are:

- a. Paul is requesting that the Galatians live free from the law just as he has (Betz 1979:222-223). Scriptural proof of Paul's 'becoming like them' is generally found in 1 Cor. 9:21. (See also, Witherington (1998:304); Schreiner (2010:285); Moo (2013:281); Martyn (1997:420); Longenecker (1990:189); Hays (2000:293); Fung (1988:195); Dunn (1993:232); De Boer (2011:278); and Burton (1921:236)).
- b. Paul wants the Galatians to become 'loyal to the truth of the gospel' because Paul became free from a zealous attempt to keep the Jewish traditions (Hansen 1989:46-47). This position

In order to untangle this somewhat ambiguous appeal by Paul, ‘become as I, because I also as you’, we must examine more closely the immediate context. As we move backwards to Galatians 4:1-7 we note that Paul is continuing the theme of sonship, a theme he addresses in Galatians 3:24-29. He begins Galatians 4:1-2 with a general observation relating to family inheritance, an observation surely known and understood by all of his readers, ‘As long as the heir is a child, he is no better than a slave even though he is master of the whole household.’ This statement represents the common practice of the day. Paul’s point is not to fully explain Roman inheritance law but to illustrate a practice that was common and therefore known by the readers. In terms of the everyday practical realities of life, heirs do not really enjoy the freedoms and privileges of heirs while they are still considered to be in a state of immaturity. This change of status must wait until the time which has been pre-determined by the heir’s father (ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός¹⁵). And so in a sense, the heir, while he is still

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- accepts position a. as an example of remaining loyal to the gospel, but sees the appeal as broader than this.
- c. Paul is saying, ‘In Christ I became as you are; become as I am in Christ’ (Eastman 2007:49). In other words, the new ‘apocalyptic’ situation inaugurated by Christ defines a broad spectrum of ways that Paul has become as the Galatians and thus the varied ways that they should become like him. Eastman asserts, ‘As in the explicit imitation texts, so also in Galatians Paul’s exemplary self-presentation includes the motifs of suffering for the sake of the gospel, concern for the maturity and unity of his congregations, friendship, and familial language (both maternal and paternal) ... At the same time, 4:12 describes a “shared existence” in which the nature of the imitative relationship is transformed by the new apocalyptic situation which Paul outlines throughout the letter’ (Eastman 2007:29). Eastman later comments, ‘This dynamic new situation transforms the imitation language ... such that it becomes an appeal for participation in a relationship with both personal and cosmic dimensions, in which there is a pattern of correspondence between Christ, Paul, and the Galatians’ (Eastman 2007:57). One important aspect of this ‘imitation’ is, according to Eastman, ‘For the Galatians to become like Paul, they must join him in suffering for the proclamation of the circumcision-free gospel’ (Eastman 2007:109). At the same time it is important to note that Eastman does see the issue of the law as included in what it means to become like Paul. She states, ‘in a qualified sense Paul became “like” the Galatians by becoming, like a “Gentile sinner,” outside the law’ (Eastman 2007:39).
 - d. Just as Paul has been faithful in the face of persecution and suffering so too must the Galatians return to a life of faithfulness in the face of the threats and influences of the agitators (Goddard and Cummins 1993:99).
 - e. Paul says, ‘I am your father and you are my children.’ Paul is anxious that the Galatians “should enjoy the same open feelings of friendship and confidence towards him as he cherishes for them” (Bruce, 1982:208).

¹⁵ There has been much discussion over Paul’s use of τῆς προθεσμίας here. Many scholars mention that there appears to be no parallel in Roman law to a father setting the time of the inheritance; this was something pre-determined by the state. And yet Belleville (1986:62) and Bruce (1982:192) give some

underage, is very much like a slave. He must live in submission to others who guide and govern his affairs.

With this general principle clearly laid out, Paul, in Galatians 4:3-7, applies this universal truth to 'us' (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς). But to whom exactly does the 'we' refer?¹⁶ The reader would expect the first person plural pronouns in verse 3 to refer to the Jews especially because the purpose clause in Galatians 4:5 asserts that redemption came for 'those under the law' (ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ). 'Those under the law' would typically be a reference to the Jews and would not include the Gentiles.¹⁷ And yet, it seems that the lines of distinction between Jew and Gentile are blurred in Galatians 4:1-11, perhaps as a consequence of Paul's words in Galatians 3:28-29.¹⁸ So now, the text affirms that both Jews and Gentiles are 'those under the law' and both can be considered to have lived enslaved under the στοιχεῖα (Gal 4:3, 9). Both were redeemed by Christ in the 'fullness of time,' both have received 'adoption', and both have the Spirit. Now each one (notice the singular εἷ in Gal 4:7) who has been redeemed, be he/she Jew or Gentile, is a son and thus an heir. Thus the 'we' of Galatians 4:3 is a reference to Christ-followers, both Jewish and Gentile.

evidence to support the father's freedom to make this decision. Also, James Walters (2003:62-63) states, 'the idea that a father's will could set the temporal limit of the guardianship ... is unknown in Roman legal sources and rare in Greek sources. Although the phrase does not correspond to Roman laws of guardianship, it does reflect a common Roman practice. Roman fathers increasingly made use of the fideicommissum (a kind of trust) to gain more flexibility in controlling their estates after death.' Thus Paul is not directly appealing to Roman law, but rather to the common practices of the time. J. Scott (1992:121-186) has a novel interpretation. He recognizes that the concept of τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός has no parallel in Roman or Greek law and thus finds a solution in the Old Testament exodus event. Paul is using typology to link Galatians 4 to the deliverance from Egyptian taskmasters. Moo (2013) is correct, however, that the connections between Galatians 4 and the exodus event are not clear enough to warrant Scott's conclusions.

¹⁶ The personal pronouns are notoriously complex in Paul. The 'we' of verse 3 refers either to Jews (See for example, Bruce (1982:193); Hansen (1994:114); Longenecker (1990:164); Matera (1992:155); and Witherington (1998:284)) or to both Jews and Gentiles (See for example, Betz (1979:204); Burton (1921:216); De Boer (2011:251); Dunn (1993:212); Fung (1988:181); Hays (2000:282); Martyn (1997:334-336); Moo (2013:260); and Schreiner (2010:267)).

¹⁷ Notice Paul's reference to the Gentiles in Romans 2:14 as τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα.

¹⁸ This blurring becomes evident as Paul shifts between first and second person even shifting between singular and plural. Paul uses first person plural three times in Galatians 4:3 and once each in Galatians 4:5 and 4:6. He uses the second person plural in Galatians 4:6 and the second person singular in Galatians 4:7.

Returning to Paul's argument, after Paul gives an illustration from everyday life he moves on in Galatians 4:3-7 to apply this commonly understood practice to all Christ-followers. He says, 'we' are in the same situation. Formerly we were 'infants' and in this stage of immaturity we were enslaved under the authority of the 'στοιχεῖα' of this world. We therefore did not govern our own affairs, but were forced to live in submission to the will of another. However, our status changed when the pre-determined time came. When the pre-determined 'age' was fulfilled, when it reached its fullness (τὸ πλήρωμα), the Father himself did all that was necessary so that our status could be 'legally' changed from slaves to sons, from infants to heirs. This radical change of status was brought about through God's sending of His son. The son bought our freedom from slavery (ἐξαγοράση) and thus we have the legal papers proving our sonship (τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν). Now because we are sons, we are truly heirs. This means we enjoy all the rights and freedoms of heirs; we are no longer slaves and thus no longer live under the authority and will of our former guardians and stewards. We no longer live as slaves to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. And in the context, this means that we no longer live 'under the law' (Gal 4:5 ἵνα ἐξαγοράση τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον).¹⁹ In fact, to live under the law would be to deny the radical change of status that has occurred in our lives. We have a brand new identity. We have passed from the stage of immaturity (the time of being νήπιοι) to the stage of full rights as sons (υἱοί). Slavery to the 'στοιχεῖα' of this world is no longer our reality. We are sons, no longer waiting under guardians and stewards; we are 'legal' heirs. With this new status come all the benefits of sonship, including the Spirit who mediates a relationship of intimacy with the Father.

Finally, in Galatians 4:8-11 Paul's argument turns to exhortation. Whereas in Galatians 4:3-5 Paul used the first person plural and in Galatians 4:6-7 he used a mixture of first and second person, he now uses the second person plural exclusively in order to drive

¹⁹ It is possible that the phrase τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον could merely be an identification of those who were redeemed, the ones who lived under the law. However, it seems more likely that Paul's point is that Christ redeemed those under the law from this servitude 'under' the law. That is, that the emphasis is freedom from a life lived under the law and not just an identification distinguishing who was redeemed. This fits more smoothly with the flow of Paul's argument where he speaks of being ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα and ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους. The clear implication then is that being 'ὑπὸ νόμον' is part of what it meant to live ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα.

his point home to the Galatians. This paragraph represents a very relevant and pointed implication of Paul's argument. He contrasts their former life (τότε), a life of ignorance regarding God and of enslavement to idols, with their present situation (νῦν) where they enjoy a very personal relationship with God where there is a mutual 'knowing', they know God and even more significantly, they are known by God. Given this marvelous new reality whereby they are cherished sons (those known by God and therefore by implication those who enjoy all of the benefits mentioned above – freedom from slavery, sonship, and being heirs) how can they return again to a life of enslavement under the control of the weak and powerless στοιχεῖα²⁰ (Gl 4:9)? How can life under the στοιχεῖα compare with a 'knowing' relationship with the God who really is by nature God? It obviously cannot compare and thus Paul's stern incredulous tone. He simply cannot grasp why the Galatians would be so foolish as to return to their former state when they have since been powerfully delivered from their former slavery and made sons and heirs. And yet this is exactly what the Galatians were doing. The evidence of their desire to regress is found in the Galatian's adherence to laws regarding the observance of 'days and months and seasons and years' (Gl 4:10). Nevertheless behind this concrete example is the more disconcerting fact that many of the Galatians represented those 'who desire to be under the law' (Gl 4:21). Their willing submission to the agitators' insistence on circumcision as a requisite to justification was clear proof of this fact. These kinds of practices were part of the στοιχεῖα from which they have already been delivered and yet by returning to such practices they show their longing to be enslaved once more, and even worse, such backsliding represented the very same idolatry that

²⁰ The meaning of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου is debated by scholars and a final decision on Paul's intended meaning can be tentative at best. There are four main interpretations:

- a) The elemental substances which make up the universe: earth, air, fire, and water.
- b) Heavenly bodies.
- c) The elements of religious knowledge, possessed by men.
- d) Spirits

Some scholars have combined views. One interesting view is that of De Boer who states that στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου 'is being used by Paul as a summary designation for a complex of Galatian religious beliefs and practices at the center of which were the four elements of the physical cosmos...the phrase is an instance of metonymy...for the religion of the Galatians prior to them becoming believers in Christ...The gods the Galatians worshiped were closely linked to the four στοιχεῖα so that worship of these gods could be regarded as tantamount to the worship of the στοιχεῖα themselves' (De Boer 2007: 220-221). Another view is that of Esser who writes, 'Thus "the elements of the world" cover all the things in which man places his trust apart from the living God revealed in Christ; they become his gods, and he becomes their slave' (Esser, *NIDNTT* II, 1967:453).

they engaged in before they came to know God. Who would ever think of wanting to return to the former status of being too young (immature, enslaved) to be treated as an heir and thus being forced to live all over again under the guardianship of another without experiencing the practical rights and freedoms of sons? Who would ever think of forfeiting a mutual 'knowing' with the God who is really God in exchange for a relationship with those who by nature are not gods at all? These are absurdities that Paul cannot understand. So deep is his concern for them that he even fears the worst, namely that they will be lost for good and all his labor on their behalf will have been in vain. In light of this deep concern for the spiritual well-being of the Galatian Christ-followers Paul's solution is to urgently appeal to them, 'Become as I, because I also as you, brethren, I urge you'.

We are now ready to explain Paul's impassioned appeal in Galatians 4:12. It is evident that Paul calls the Galatians to become like he is; but in what sense? How broad is this imitation? As the immediate context (Gal 4:1-11) shows, Paul is calling the Galatians to become like he presently was in terms of his standing with regards to the Law. The basis (ὅτι) of this imperative is a change that has occurred in Paul. That is, it is precisely 'because' Paul has 'moved' towards the Galatians in some way that they are to follow suit and 'move' towards him. As we examine chapter 4 it becomes apparent that Paul is identifying with a very significant change that has occurred in his 'standing' and he is calling the Galatians to fully identify with this same change. Paul once was νήπιός (Gal 4:3). In this period of infancy (and thus immaturity) Paul was both ὑπὸ νόμον (Gal 4:5) and ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (Gal 4:3). The sad result of this state of affairs was slavery. But Paul has 'moved'. He has been liberated (Gal 4:5, ἐξαγοράση) from this situation. Now Paul is a son and an heir, free from both the law's dominion and the controlling influence and ineptitude of the στοιχεῖα. He is 'free' from this slavery! It is from this vantage point that Paul urgently calls the Galatians to become just as he is – free! And the ground for this urgent appeal to imitate him comes from the fact that Paul himself has become like they are.²¹ Here we find little help in the immediate context, thus we need to look beyond this section to find how Paul has become like the

²¹ Here we are forced to insert the verb ἐγενόμην to complete Paul's thought.

Galatians. Paul most likely has in mind the fact that he has so completely identified himself with the Gentiles that he has become like one of them, one without the law. After all, God had called him to ‘preach the gospel among the gentiles’ (Gl 1:16; 2:2) and had entrusted him with ‘the gospel of uncircumcision’ (Gl 2:7). So close was this identification with the gospel and the Gentiles that it had even put Paul into conflict with Peter (Gl 2:11-14) and had caused him much conflict with the Judaizers and all those who were zealous for the law. What is more, Paul no longer is one who is zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gl 1:14). He is zealous for the gospel of grace rather than for the law. It was definitely true of Paul that he ‘lived like a gentile even though he was a Jew, and did not live “jewishly”’ (Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, Gl 2:14). Because of this dramatic change in his life he now calls the Galatians to make the same move. They are to live in the same ‘freedom from the law’ that Paul enjoys. They are certainly *not* to submit themselves to the deceitful influence of the Judaizers who want them to practice circumcision and thus live under the law, a move that would signal a definite retreat to a life of slavery under the στοιχεῖα and a return to ‘immaturity’ (νήπιός). And so, this is a clear call for the Galatians to forsake their desire to be under the law as their governing authority and to remain in the freedom of Christ, which is freedom from the law’s dominion.

Having exhorted the Galatians in this way, Paul goes on to recall the reception they gave him when he first (τὸ πρότερον) preached the gospel to them (Gl 4:12c-15) compared to the cool reception they are now showing him. They know that he preached the gospel in the region of Galatia as a result of some type of physical problem which he was enduring, a problem which evidently was so serious that it could have been an offense to the Galatians.²² But in spite of this serious situation the Galatians did not despise nor shun Paul (Gl 4:14), nor did they injure him in any way (Gl 4:12c). Quite the contrary, they received him with honor, as though he were a messenger of God or even Jesus Christ himself. In fact, it appeared that at that time they would have gone to any

²² The exact nature of this ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς is difficult to discern. Scholars have offered a host of possibilities: physical ailment, satanic oppression (‘thorn in the flesh’), persecution, temptation, or a combination of each of these. It is difficult to pinpoint one specific idea.

extreme to express their deep concern for him (Gl 4:15). But now the situation seems to have changed. Paul wonders where their ‘blessing’ is (ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν;).²³ In other words, formerly they pronounced a blessing on Paul for his life and ministry among them, but this attitude has changed and now they are critical of him. The Galatians have actually begun to view Paul as an enemy, all because in his proclamation of the gospel he has questioned their desire to turn to the law for justification (Gl 4:16).

With this, Paul directly confronts those who are responsible for this change of heart that the Galatians have expressed, namely the false teachers. In Galatians 4:17 Paul addresses the motives of these agitators, motives before which the Galatians are seemingly blind. The Judaizers give the impression that they are seeking the well-being of the Galatians as they court their favor, but the truth is they are really trying to ‘shut you out’ (ἐκκλεῖσαι Gl 4:17). Paul is not explicit in terms of the object of this exclusion. It could refer to the Judaizer’s desire to exclude the Galatian believers from the covenant community. And yet this doesn’t fit with what follows. Paul gives the purpose for ‘shutting you out’, namely ‘so that you will be zealous for them’. It isn’t clear why the Galatians would be zealous for the Judaizers by being threatened with exclusion from participation in the covenant community. Perhaps their threat indicated that they alone were guardians of the door to the covenant community and if the Galatians didn’t fulfill the expected rites, like circumcision, they would be excluded. The Galatians would thus become zealous for the Judaizers because they served as the guardians through whom the Galatians must enter or remain in the community. However, a better interpretation is to understand ἐκκλεῖσαι as referring to being excluded from the circle of Paul’s disciples. The Judaizer’s zeal for the Galatians centered on their insistence that Paul’s gospel was

²³ The precise meaning of ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν; has been debated by commentators. Bruce (1982:210) thinks Paul has in mind self-congratulation. Dunn (1993:235) believes it refers to ‘the typical euphoria which converts often feel.’ Hays (2000:294) believes that ‘Paul is not asking the Galatians what happened to the feeling of blessedness they used to have; rather, he is asking what happened to the word of blessing they once pronounced on him’. B. Longenecker (1999:97), on the other hand, believes that it refers to ‘the blessing of the Spirit of God among them.’ Paul’s language is cryptic, but the γὰρ that follows points in the direction of the Galatians’ and their relationship with Paul. Hays is thus probably right that Paul is referring to the way that Galatians once spoke of him and to him. Once they blessed him, but now they are full of criticism.

inadequate. Therefore, the Judaizers sought to exclude them from Paul's community in order that the Galatians would give their full allegiance to the Judaizers and their way. Whatever the exact nuance of ἐκκληῖσαι, Longenecker (1999:104-105) correctly captures the essence of their motives, 'Paul is suggesting that the agitators' motive is to woo the Galatians in order to gain their compliance and to bolster the agitators' own reputation by enlisting the Galatians in a relationship of dependent allegiance.'

After exposing the manipulative motives of the Judaizers, Paul goes on in Galatians 4:18 to bring a very relevant application to the present situation of the Galatians. Paul states, 'being deeply devoted to something that is truly good is a good thing, but it should be a constant devotion and not one that holds sway only at times'. Or more pointedly, Paul chides the Galatians because they once were 'zealous' for Paul, but it appears now that this 'zeal' has proven to be fickle. It was only evident when he was present with them. However, now that he is far away, and now that the Judaizers have captured the Galatians' 'zeal' they are no longer 'zealous' for Paul. The object of their 'zeal' has been redirected. This, says Paul, is not good.

The recognition of the Galatians' change of heart towards Paul and his gospel and the weightiness of fearing that his labor may have been in vain move Paul to groan longingly in Galatians 4:19, 'my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you'! What can this strange expression by Paul mean? There are at least four main interpretations:

The whole section (Galatians 4:12-20) is dealing with the theme of friendship.

This first interpretation was proposed by H.D. Betz in his commentary on Galatians.²⁴ Betz (1979:221) states, 'What Paul offers in the section is a string of topoi belonging to the theme of 'friendship'. Betz responds to the typical 'psychological interpretation' of Galatians 4:12-20 that understands the passage as an emotional outburst somewhat

²⁴ See also Marshall (1987) who focuses mainly on the situation in Corinth, but does mention Galatians 4:12-20 as also dealing with the theme of friendship and enmity (see also White 2003).

detached from Paul's main argument by appealing to the rhetorical character of the passage. He states,

This means that the section in Galatians is neither inconsistent nor lacking argumentative force. It is, to be sure, a lighter section compared with the heavy arguments in the preceding section. A personal appeal to friendship is entirely in conformity with Hellenistic style, which calls for change between heavy and light sections and which would require an emotional and personal approach to offset the impression of mere abstractions. The argumentative force lies in the topic itself, the marks of 'true' and 'false' friendship.

(Betz 1979: 221)

As Betz carefully examines the whole section of Galatians 4:12-20, he finds a host of references to this friendship topos, references that have clear parallels in the rhetorical speeches of Paul's day. L. Michael White (2003) gives a helpful summary of the elements from the friendship theme that Betz discovers in Galatians 4:12-20:

- (1) the appeal for reciprocity (Gal 4:12)²⁵;
- (2) the 'epistolary cliché' that friends do not wrong one another (Gal 4:12)²⁶;
- (3) how they responded to his illness (Gal 4:13-14)²⁷;
- (4) their former praise of him and willingness to sacrifice for him (Gal 4:15)²⁸;
- (5) the theme of enmity (Gal 4:16)²⁹;

²⁵ When Paul states in Galatians 4:12 *Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι κἀγὼ ὡς ὑμεῖς*, according to Betz, "the underlying idea is the topos from popular philosophy that 'true friendship' is possible only among equals" (Betz 1979:222).

²⁶ Betz states, 'Asyndetic is also the following statement: *οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε* The remark, certainly puzzling, is unique to Galatians, but it can be understood as an epistolary cliché belonging to the friendship topos. Among "true friends" there is confidence that they do not do each other wrong' (Betz 1979:223).

²⁷ Regarding Galatians 4:13-14 Betz writes, 'Although the language is Paul's, the statement as a whole expresses the theme of friendship. It is the sign of real friendship to provide unlimited help at the moment of great need, in particular in illness; true friendship may begin with an experience of pain and trouble; true friends may remind each other of the 'bushel of salt' they have eaten together' (Betz 1979:224).

²⁸ Regarding Paul's assertion *εἰ δυνατόν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύξαντες ἐδώκατέ μοι* Betz comments, "Usually commentators correctly point to the ancient belief that the eyes are man's most delicate and costly organ. Paul then is taken to say: 'they would have given him what was most valuable to them, and therefore would have done everything for him.' In addition, however, Paul refers to a literary topos. True friendship, teaches the friendship doctrine, requires the readiness of the highest sacrifice" (Betz 1979: 227).

²⁹ Betz introduces his analysis of verse 16 stating "This verse introduces a question which also belongs to the friendship theme: *ὥστε ἐχθρὸς ὑμῶν γέγονα ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν*; ('is the result of it all that I have become your enemy by telling you the truth?') ..." (Betz 1979:228).

- (6) the theme of frank criticism in ‘telling the truth’ (GI 4:16)³⁰;
- (7) portrayal of his opponents as flatterers (GI 4:17)³¹;
- (8) the constancy and loyalty of true friends, even when apart (GI 4:18)³²;
- (9) the metaphor of the loving mother (GI 4:19)³³

White then adds a tenth element, not identified by Betz:

- (10) Paul’s tone of perplexity as a sign of endangered friendship (GI 4:20; White 2003:323).

Both Betz and White, then, find Paul’s central focus in the subject of friendship.

However, rather curiously, when Betz arrives at the metaphor in Galatians 4:19 he fails to see a close link with what comes before. He writes, ‘Seemingly abruptly, Paul turns to another theme...’ (Betz 1979:233). He does affirm rather weakly, ‘the comparison with the loving mother was part of the friendship theme’ (Betz 1979:233), but believes that the ‘mother metaphor’ of Galatians 4:19 is saying much more. The theme of friendship fades to the background and that of rebirth arises. He speculates, ‘Thus, it remains but a possibility that the concept of “spiritual motherhood” belonged to the complex of “rebirth” (Betz 1979:234). Finally, Betz concludes,

Gal 4:19 should be dealt with as a conglomerate of concepts all belonging to the complex of ‘rebirth ... In this conglomerate of ideas the Apostle plays the decisive role of the founder ‘giving birth’ to a Christian community. The one ‘born’ is Christ, and his ‘birth’ is his epiphany; his ‘birth’ coincides with the ‘rebirth’ of the Christians as the ‘children’ of Paul as well as the ‘sons of God.’

(Betz1979: 235)

³⁰ Concerning Galatians 4:16 Betz continues, ‘It is an allusion to the friendship topos of “frankness of speech”. Among true friends it is possible to speak the truth with frankness without becoming enemies; telling the truth in this way distinguishes the “true friend” from the “flatterer”, while turning against those who speak the truth is the way of the uncivilized masses’ (Betz 1979:228-229).

³¹ Betz asserts, ‘When Paul employs this kind of language, he does so for the purpose of discrediting his opponents in the eyes of the Galatians. He portrays them as nothing but shallow, hollow, and grabby “flatterers” (Betz 1979:230).

³² ‘Verse 18b states the opposite of what v 18a has defined Rather than openly accusing the Galatians of becoming disloyal to him, Paul suggests that they might be that type of person whose style of life follows the rule “out of sight, out of mind.” It is interesting that Paul’s statement is again a topos in connection both with the friendship theme and with epistolography. According to the friendship theme, temporal separation is one of the severe tests of friendship To be sure, true friendship does not change even when the friends are separated’ (Betz 1979:232).

³³ ‘The comparison with the loving mother was part of the friendship theme’ (Betz 1979:233).

White sees the inconsistency of Betz' sudden change of subject and thus states,

Betz is indeed correct in identifying the passage as coming from the friendship topos, but has missed the way that it fits into the overall rhetorical strategy of the letter. Rather than being an aside, an emotional outburst, or a rhetorical artifice, this passage constitutes one of the principal charges that Paul brings against the Galatian converts for failing to live up to the social demands of friendship and patronage.

(White 2003:311)

And so, according to White, Galatians 4:11-20 is 'a rebuke couched in terms of friendship' (White 2003:323). He sees the section forming an *inclusio* whereby 'with the frankness of a friend Paul charges the Galatians with enmity on account of their hypocrisy, false friendship, and failure to show due honor to him as their spiritual benefactor' (White 2003:336). The metaphor in Galatians 4:19 simply resumes

the theme of his 'labors' on behalf of the Galatians from 4:11. The new travail is their desertion from his gospel, which he takes to be an abandonment of Christ himself. In other words, he is having to repeat the actions that brought Christ's death to reality 'before their eyes; in the first place ... His perplexity (4:20) ... is a sign that the friendship has been broken by their failure to show him due loyalty and honor for his spiritual benefaction toward them.

(White 2003:342)

To summarize this first interpretation, Paul's point in Galatians 4:12-20, including the metaphor of Paul as a mother in labor, treats the idea of friendship, its true marks and how it was endangered in the case of Paul and the Galatians.

Galatians 4:19 refers to Paul's apostolic ministry and its relationship to the restoration of the whole created order.

This second interpretation has been developed by Beverly Gaventa (2007). Her thesis can be summarized this way:

Gal 4:19 is not merely an emotional outburst or a typical rhetorical device. Galatians 4:19 associates Paul's apostolic vocation with the anguish anticipated in an apocalyptic era and recalls to the Galatians their own crucifixion with Christ. As such, Gal 4:19 employs a conventional metaphor, that of the anguish of a woman in labor, to identify Paul's apostolic work with the apocalyptic expectation of the whole created order. The goal of Paul's

anguish, in this instance, is that Christ be formed within the communities of believers in Galatia.

(Gaventa 2007: 31)

In order to understand Gaventa's position better, we need to examine its various parts. First, what does Gaventa see as the function of Galatians 4:19 within its larger context? She comments that Galatians 4:19 'is not an emotional outburst but an important theological link between this section of personal appeal and the remainder of the letter' (Gaventa 2007:31). What is this 'theological link'? It is the painful, longing expectation of an apocalyptic redemption. As Gaventa writes,

It is, instead, a theological claim that Paul's work as an apostle occurs within an apocalyptic framework that is created by God's revelation of Jesus Christ and that looks forward to the full incorporation of all believers – indeed, of the cosmos itself – into Christ.

(Gaventa 2007:37)

That is, Paul's expression of 'pain' is an indication of his sense that what was happening in the Galatian churches and what he himself was living out through his apostolic ministry were both part of something much bigger than themselves. It was part of a cosmic struggle. Paul was not the only one suffering birth pangs. The whole creation, including all of nature and all of humanity are also in the throes of this anguish (Gaventa 2007:54). And this distress is 'apocalyptic' because it will continue throughout the present age; throughout the history that Paul and all of mankind must live out, reaching its ultimate end only in the future when God acts to culminate history. Thus Galatians 4:19 is an essential piece of Paul's overall theological concern in the letter which Gaventa describes as

The gospel proclaims Jesus Christ crucified to be the inauguration of a new creation. This new creation allows for no supplementation or augmentation by the law or any other power or loyalty. What the Galatians seek in the law is a certainty that they have a firm place in the church of God and that they know what God requires of them. It is precisely this certainty, and every other form of certainty that Paul rejects with his claim about the exclusivity and singularity of Jesus Christ.

(Gaventa 2007:110-111)

Second, what does Gaventa understand when Paul writes that he is ‘in the anguish of childbirth?’ She begins by making an important distinction between the Pauline metaphors for fatherhood and those for motherhood. She comments, ‘To beget a child is not the same thing as to give it birth and we should not hastily equate the two’ (Gaventa 2007:32). Most commentators have missed this distinction and thus have misunderstood Paul’s point here. With this important clarification made, Gaventa goes on to examine more closely the meaning and use of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ (‘birth pangs’) after which she concludes, ‘... we find an established association between apocalyptic expectation and the anguish of childbirth’ (Gaventa 2007:33). This leads her to write,

From this variety of evidence we may conclude that, by the first century, it was customary to speak of a coming cataclysm, however interpreted, as being accompanied by anguish like that of a woman giving birth...In my judgment, the best explanation of Gal 4:19 is that the same association is at work here as well. Paul’s anguish, his travail, is not simply a personal matter or a literary convention ... but reflects the anguish of the whole created order as it awaits the fulfillment of God’s action in Jesus Christ.

(Gaventa 2007:34)

Thus when Paul states that he is suffering birth pangs he is linking his apostolic ministry with the distress of the whole created order as it waits for God’s gracious intervention to redeem the creation.

Third, what does it mean ‘until Christ is formed in you’? Gaventa claims that as we examine $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ and related verbs we find that ‘each reflects the conviction that the Christ event issues in a profound shaping and reshaping of human perceptions’ (Gaventa 2007:35). Then as we consider other key passages in Galatians like 2:19-20, 3:27-28, and 6:15 it becomes clear that,

For Christ to be formed in the Galatians is not simply for them to develop spiritually or morally or christologically. The formation of Christ among the Galatians is simultaneously their crucifixion with Christ. It means that the eclipse of the old occurs among them. The letter reflects Paul’s conviction that the Galatians were called, that they had heard the gospel, and that they responded in faith. But he also believes that they are in danger of turning again, converting back to their earlier views. For that reason he speaks of his own labor with them and the need for Christ to be formed.

(Gaventa 2007:36)

In other words, Paul, like the Galatians, and in fact, all of creation, must wait in this time of apocalyptic distress until 'Christ is formed in' them. And this forming of Christ in them is really their crucifixion with him. But it is precisely here that Paul confronts a difficult tension. Whereas this crucifixion with Christ has already occurred, yet the formation of Christ must continue 'until the fulfillment of the Christ event in God's final triumph (Gaventa 2007:36). And this fulfillment can also be described as 'the revealing of the sons of God' (Rm. 8:19), 'the redemption of our bodies' (Rm. 8:23), or as 'Christ being formed in us' (Gl 4:19).

Finally, Gaventa emphasizes that this work of 'Christ being formed in us' 'occurs as a gift, not as an achievement' (Gaventa 2007:37). That is, although what awaits the church and all of creation is an indescribable glory, nonetheless 'there is nothing creation or humanity can do to bring it to completion' (Gaventa 2007:59). We can only wait and persevere the pains of labor until God acts. And God's action is to form Christ in us.

Garlington helpfully summarizes this position stating,

In sum, Christ as the bringer of the new creation is being formed "within" the Galatian communities (not "in" them as a fetus in their "womb," as though they could give birth to Christ). It is Paul's person and preaching, not that of his detractors, which is bringing this about. Therefore, he is willing to suffer no less than the agony of childbirth until Christ is finally fully formed in their midst.

(Garlington nd.:128)

Galatians 4:19 refers to Paul's suffering for the gospel and the need for the Galatians to do the same.

In her book *Recovering Paul's mother tongue* Susan Eastman (2007) has done a thorough study of Galatians 4:12-20 which represents a third possible interpretation of Galatians 4:19. She begins by explaining Paul's imperative in Galatians 4:12, 'become as I am, for I also have become as you are' since this command really controls the meaning of the whole section. This appeal is better understood to be saying 'that they have already "become like" each other, in and only in Christ' (Eastman 2007:43). That is, 'the definitive aspect of that relationship is that it exists in, and only in, the new

situation inaugurated by the advent of Christ. “In Christ,” Paul and his converts participate in a new relational matrix that reconstitutes existing categories of human interaction’ (Eastman 2007:45-46). The heart of this relationship is Paul’s embodiment of ‘Christ’s interchange with humanity’. Just as Christ moved downward into the sphere of sinful humanity where he suffered and died for sinners, thus Paul has moved into the sphere of the Galatian gentiles ‘both by suffering persecution and thereby “bodily” proclaiming the crucified Christ, and by breaking down the barriers between ‘Jew and Gentile’ (Eastman 2007:47).³⁴ It is this movement into the Galatians’ sphere through his suffering and preaching of the gospel – his ‘becoming like you’ – that the Galatians must emulate. In other words, the focus of this ‘mimetic relationship’ is not primarily their relationship to the law as is commonly thought, but rather their identity in Christ and ‘the stunning apocalyptic reversal’ that should motivate the Galatians to become like Paul in his willingness to suffer for the gospel, and like Christ in his willing humiliation for needy humanity. The Galatians already share this common identity ‘in Christ’. Now they must imitate the same example of downward movement just as Paul has done for them. With this framework set in place, Eastman moves on to expound Paul’s curious metaphor in Galatians 4:19 which serves as the climax to the appeal to ‘become as I am, for I also have become as you are’. She must first unveil the meaning of Paul’s ‘labor pains’. To do this Eastman turns to the statement of Paul’s ‘weakness’ mentioned in Galatians 4:13 (δι’ ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός). She concludes that Paul’s ‘weakness’ which was the cause of his first preaching the gospel to the Galatians is not a reference to an illness that Paul contracted, but rather ‘refers to the physical effects of persecution, the scars of which made Paul’s body a “placard” of the crucified Christ’ (Eastman 2007:97).³⁵ If when he first preached the gospel to them he did so ‘because’ of his experience of persecution and physical suffering, it must follow then that the ‘return’ of his labor pains is nothing less than the same suffering. So then when Paul

³⁴ Eastman writes that 4:12 shows the same ‘exchange’ made by Christ with humanity. She states, ‘Christ became as we are, that we – in Christ – might become as he is. Now Paul says to the Galatians, ‘[In Christ] I became as you are; become as I am [in Christ]’ (Eastman 2007:49).

³⁵ In this conclusion Eastman is largely following the research of Goddard and Cummins who conclude, ‘It is prima facie possible that in his use of the phrase δι’ ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός at Gal. 4:13 Paul is reminding the Galatians that it was on account of bodily weakness due to some form of persecution that he first preached the gospel to them’ (Goddard and Cummins 1993:103).

speaks of experiencing ‘labor pains’ (ὠδίνω) in Galatians 4:19 he is referring to the full-range of suffering that he experienced as a result of his passionate commitment to preach the gospel. And yet this ‘metaphor’, given the apocalyptic context in which it is generally found, surely has another referent. Eastman comments,

Paul’s maternal metaphor has two poles – a “near” point and a “far-off” point. The near point is Paul’s physical suffering for the sake of the gospel, through which he displays Christ crucified. In light of the echoes of Jeremiah’s and Isaiah’s maternal imagery for God, I suggest that the far-off point is God’s apocalyptic labor in which the apostle shares, just as Jeremiah enacts God’s anguish at the destruction of Jerusalem ... Yet although the echoes of Jeremiah and Isaiah amplify Paul’s metaphor, they do not tell the whole story. Paul interprets his scars as the branding marks of Jesus. From this perspective, his suffering is precisely a christophany ... Therefore the “far-off” and the “invisible” referent of ὠδίνω as divine suffering has come near and become visible in the concrete, historical crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

(Eastman 2007:124)

And so, the labor pains that Paul experiences as he preaches the gospel are the same labor pains that Christ experienced in his self-sacrificing death and these afflictions portray ‘to the Galatians the depth of God’s compassion and therefore the certainty of God’s faithfulness’ (Eastman 2007:121).

But what is the significance of the second half of Paul’s metaphor in Galatians 4:19? It is closely aligned with the first part. The Galatians who have heard Paul’s cruciform message and seen his ‘scars’ and his labor pains now must imitate Paul. These labor pains will continue, after all, until ‘Christ is formed in them’. And as Eastman announces, ‘Christ will be formed in the Galatians when they “become like” Paul by exchanging the marker of circumcision for the brand marks of Jesus – that is, when they join the apostle in suffering for the sake of the gospel’ (Eastman 2007:97). She states again, ‘For the Galatians to become like Paul, they must join him in suffering for the proclamation of the circumcision-free gospel’ (Eastman 2007:109). Once again she asserts, ‘As “Christ is formed in” them, the Galatians too will display over time the unique crucifixion of God’s Son through their own interaction and suffering for the sake of the gospel’ (Eastman 2007:125).

But this call to imitate Paul and to have Christ formed in their midst is not just a call to suffer, rather it is much more, a call to persevere. Eastman concludes,

As the climax of his appeal to “become like me,” it tells them that, just as his participation in Christ involves suffering for the sake of the gospel, so the formation of Christ in them will take a cruciform shape. Just as the transforming and sustaining power of God is paradoxically displayed through Paul’s “weakness,” so it will be with the Galatian congregations.

(Eastman 2007:126)

Galatians 4:19 refers to Paul’s apostolic ministry among the Galatians and the depth of love and concern he has for them and the need for the Galatians to have their character conformed to the image of Christ.

This fourth common interpretation of Galatians 4:19 puts the stress, not on the identification of the ‘birth pains’ but rather on the goal at hand, that Christ would be formed in the Galatians. Generally speaking this interpretation sees ‘Christ formed in you’ and ‘you conformed to the image of Christ’ as stating the same reality. Thus Bruce writes, “Christ lives in me” (2:20) was true not only of Paul but (potentially at least) of all believers. Paul longs to see Christ visibly living in the Galatians – to see the likeness of Christ manifested in their lives’ (Bruce 1982:212). And Burton states,

The reactionary step which the Galatians are in danger of taking, forces upon the apostle the painful repetition of that process by which he first brought them into the world of faith in Christ, and his pain, he declares, must continue till they have really entered into vital fellowship with Christ.

(Burton 1921:249)

Bruce comments again,

Paul’s thought here is not essentially different from this language about the daily renewal of the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16), about the putting on of the new man, who “is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator”...But the thought is more vividly expressed here, and certainly the metaphor of birth is more effective than the catechetical formula “putting on.”

(Bruce 1982:212-213)

And so, according to the fourth view, this passage stresses Paul's pastoral concern for the condition of the Galatians' spiritual life. They are in danger of taking a detour from the gospel way and this danger brings Paul to a place of having to 'bear them all over again.' He is once again experiencing the same 'labor pains' as he did when he first evangelized them. But now he knows that these pains will continue until they themselves pass through the process of giving birth to Christ. That is, until Christ is formed within them.

Which of these four interpretations most clearly expresses Paul's intention in Galatians 4:19? Before we seek to answer this important question, there are two observations that must be made. First, we must respond to Betz's position that Galatians 4:12-20 is 'a string of topoi belonging to the theme of friendship.' While it is evident that the topic of Paul's relationship with the Galatian churches is central to this section of the letter, it is less clear that Paul was purposely imitating a universally accepted rhetorical tradition on friendship³⁶. The truth is, Betz's application of elements of the 'friendship topos' seem forced at times.³⁷ What is more, as many scholars have pointed out, there are problems with the whole methodology of interpreting Paul's letter as though it were a conscious example of Greco-Roman rhetoric in practice.³⁸ And so, though it is possible that

³⁶ See the concerns expressed by Porter (1993:115-116), 'That there were universal rhetorical practices at play in everyday use of language can be granted, since every culture has its rhetorical practices in this sense. It is possible – though difficult to defend – that some rhetorical practices of the orators may have influenced ancient letter writers. That formal rhetorical categories were systematically applied to analysis of epistles, and that there was precedent for this in the literary analysis of the ancient world, are open to serious question. One can be certain from the evidence of the ancient rhetorical handbooks themselves of only one thing: with regard to epistles only matters of style were discussed in any significant way, virtually always with epistles mentioned in contrast to oratory. There is, therefore, little if any theoretical justification in the ancient handbooks for application of the formal categories of the species and organization of rhetoric to analysis of the Pauline epistles.'

³⁷ This can be illustrated by Betz's forced interpretation of Galatians 4:12. Although Betz correctly understands Paul's appeal to imitate him as a call to 'remain free from the Law!' (Betz 1979:222), he forces this appeal into the friendship topos stating, 'It is presupposed, but not expressly stated, that "true friendship" must be based upon reciprocity' (Betz 1979:222). One wonders if this 'purpose' for his appeal would have been a surprise to Paul!

³⁸ Among Kern's many criticisms of this methodology he writes, for example, 'Rhetorical analyses of Galatians are necessarily selective regarding both the data they adapt from the classical world and the methodological avenues they pursue' (Kern 1998:39). Later Kern states, 'Describing the structure of Galatians as "rhetorical" again appears suspect. Not only does rhetorical analysis fail to produce agreement concerning the outline, but even more, the epistle does not conform to the descriptions culled from the handbooks' (Kern 1998:118). Hays also has definite concerns. He writes, 'It appears that Betz has pushed his formal analysis beyond the evidence' (Hays 1985:97). Finally, Porter concludes, 'In fact,

elements of the ‘friendship topos’ are sprinkled throughout this section, this particular interpretation does not adequately explain Paul’s purpose in Galatians 4:12-20.

Second, we must ask if Gaventa is correct that Paul uses a ‘conventional metaphor, that of the anguish of a woman in labor, to identify Paul’s apostolic work with the apocalyptic expectation of the whole created order.’ That is, does Paul’s use of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ (‘birth pangs’) necessitate an ‘apocalyptic’ perspective? While it is clear that the second half of the metaphor, ‘until Christ is formed in you’ has an eschatological focus – the process of formation will continue on into the future until Christ is fully formed – it is not so clear that Paul’s experiencing of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ represents ‘the apocalyptic expectation of the whole created order’.³⁹ In fact, though the metaphor of ‘birth pains’ is often used in eschatological settings, it is not always used thus.⁴⁰ What is more, as Gempf has shown, the controlling idea of the metaphor is most often the pain of childbirth and not the anticipation of something in the future (Gempf 1994:119-135). In addition, it is important to distinguish between the meaning of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ and the application of its metaphorical use in a concrete context. That is, is it the metaphorical use of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ itself (‘birth pains’) that gives it an apocalyptic flavor or does an eschatological meaning depend upon clear clues from the surrounding context? In other words, is a future focus inherent in the idea of $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ or is this ‘eschatological’ sense added because of the context? Does the image of ‘birth pains’ connote apocalyptic judgment or does it connote intense or even unexpected pain and thus fits as a graphic description of what it will be like in the end? If it is the latter, then the controlling idea is of the pain associated with the event being described in the particular context. When applied to Galatians 4:19 ‘to experience birth pains’ does not necessitate an eschatological understanding. In fact, it would appear that Gaventa has imported this idea (as it applies

the literature he (Betz) cites is hardly germane, as many have pointed out. Secondly, his organizational analysis especially with regard to chs. 5 and 6, in which he must invent a category not found in any of the classical rhetorical handbooks (exhortatio), as well as his inadequate treatment of chs. 3 and 4, shows that it is tenuous to rely upon his analysis of the book of Galatians as the basis for subsequent analysis of any epistle in its entirety’ (Porter 1993:104).

³⁹ Eastman rejects Gaventa’s conclusion when she comments, ‘Therefore, it seems that Paul’s “labor” does not represent solidarity with either the anguish of unredeemed creation in general or the people of God in particular’ (Eastman 2007:120).

⁴⁰ See for example Acts 2:24. In the Septuagint see also Exodus 15:14, Deuteronomy 2:25, 2 Samuel 22:6, Psalm 18:5-6, Psalm 48:7 and Psalm 116:3.

to Gl 4:19) from Romans 8:22 and other passages where the context clearly points to a future focus. In Galatians 4:19 what we see is not a focus on the whole created order and it's groaning for redemption, but rather a distressed apostle who has invested his very life in the birth and growth of a church that is now in danger of sliding into apostasy.

What then does Paul's $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ mean? His use is clearly metaphorical since Paul could not truly experience the pains of childbirth! What kind of pain then did Paul have in mind? Eastman is convinced that Paul's second round of labor pains refer to his physical suffering which resulted from his preaching of the 'circumcision free gospel'. Paul had been soundly persecuted when he first preached the gospel to the Galatians and bore the physical wounds to prove it. Now he is facing another round of persecution because he has had to 're-preach' the 'circumcision-free' gospel all over again to the unfaithful Galatians. While this reconstruction is possible, it is not the best solution.

More likely, the labor that Paul is going through is an emotional anguish and is related to the present situation at hand, the crisis of the Galatians' potential desertion of the true gospel for a 'gospel' that is not good news at all. Support for this interpretation comes from three sources. First, we find that $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ often refers to an experience of emotional 'anguish'. While it is clear that both the biblical and non-biblical evidence demonstrate that $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ often refers to intense physical pain,⁴¹ it is also common to see $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ used to describe emotional distress, fear, and anxiety. For example, Exodus 15:14 in the Septuagint states, 'The nations heard and are angry; birth pangs ($\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\varsigma$) have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.' This is the song which Moses intoned after God miraculously saved Israel from Pharaoh's army. The surrounding nations upon hearing of God's redemption of Israel were seized with birth pains. The LXX uses $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\varsigma$ to translate קִיֵּל , which has the idea of writhing in pain. It is quite clear that the 'pain' that the people are 'writhing in' as a result of the alarming news of God's miraculous defeat of mighty Egypt refers primarily to an emotional anguish. They have been overtaken by

⁴¹ See Isaiah 26:17; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9-10; 4 Maccabees 15:7; 4 Maccabees 15:16 (see also Gempf 1994:119-135; Eastman 2007:89-126).

fear and thus are overwhelmed with the distress of knowing that this powerful God is able to defeat all his enemies. And so ὠδίνεξ here speaks of an emotional pain.

Consider also Deuteronomy 2:25, 'On this day begin to give your trembling and your fear upon the face of all the nations under heaven, who upon hearing your name will become troubled and have labor pain (ὠδίνεξ) at the sight of you.' Moses and the Israelites are in Moab and God calls them to pass through the land of Sihon King of Heshbon. God informs Moses that he will cause the people of the surrounding regions to fear and to 'writhe in anguish' before the name of the Lord and before his people. Once again, the Hebrew word is לַיָּהּ which translates ὠδίνεξ in the LXX. What is the nature of the 'birth pains' that the nations will experience? They will be 'troubled' (ταραχθήσονται) and they will begin to fear and tremble before the Israelite people. Their 'pain' is an emotional anguish.

The same focus can be seen in Isaiah 13:8, 'The elders will be troubled, and pangs will take hold of them like those of a woman giving birth (ὠδίνεξ), and they will wail one to another; and they will be amazed, and like a flame they will change their face.' The text describes the terror that will accompany the Day of the Lord. The people will be struck with fear and they will be writhing in anguish (יִלְכָּדוּ) as a woman who is giving birth. There is no doubt that when the destruction comes there will be unimaginable physical pain on those who oppose God, and yet this passage also pictures the fearful anticipation of that day which creates untold emotional anguish and shame. Once more we see that ὠδίνεξ points beyond physical suffering to mental distress.⁴²

Further evidence that the concept of 'birth pains' served as a well-known metaphor for emotional anguish in the ancient world and thus is a fitting translation for Paul's use in Galatians 4:19 can be found in an interesting passage from Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*. The relevant text states, 'By Pelops, I entreat you spare me, by your father Atreus and my mother here, who suffers now a second time the pangs (ὠδίνεξ) she felt before when bearing me (ὠδίνουξ)!'

⁴² Notice the same focus in 2 Samuel 22:6; Psalm 18:5-6, Psalm 48:7, and Psalm 116:3.

Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, is to be offered in sacrifice to the gods by her father. When she discovers this plan she pleads with her father to spare her life. In her highly emotional appeal to her father she mentions that her mother is ‘suffering now a second time the birth pangs she felt before giving birth to me’ (ἦ πρὶν ὠδίνουσ’ ἐμὲ νῦν δευτέραν ὠδῖνα τήνδε λαμβάνει). This passage is a remarkably close parallel to Galatians 4:19. The use of νῦν δευτέραν ὠδῖνα here parallels the use of πάλιν ὠδίνω of Galatians 4:19. In this tragedy, Euripides uses both the verb ὠδίνω and the noun ὠδίν. While the verb simply refers to the process of giving birth, the noun is used to describe the extreme mental pain that Clytaemnestra, Iphigenia’s mother, is feeling knowing that she will lose her daughter. Her mental anguish is described as a second experience of ‘birth pangs’ just as is Paul’s deep emotional pain at the spiritual desertion of the Galatians!

Finally, seeing ὠδίνω as primarily referring to emotional distress makes good sense from the context of Galatians 4:19. For example, in Galatians 4:9 Paul responds to the Galatians’ detour from the apostolic gospel with a very direct and biting question, ‘how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?’ Paul is absolutely incredulous. One can ‘feel’ Paul’s emotion as he reveals the profound foolishness of the Galatians for retreating to their former slavery. The ultimate end of his concern is revealed in Galatians 4:11, ‘I am afraid (φοβοῦμαι) I may have labored over you in vain’. That is, Paul fears that they may have completely abandoned the truth. His response is a highly emotional one.

The intense nature of Paul’s response to the Galatians is evident by the graphic and hyperbolic language he uses in Galatians 4:12-20. For example, notice the contrast between how they did not treat Paul (οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπτύσατε – both very strong emotionally packed terms) in spite of some glaring physical defect (be it a sickness, an injury, or any other problem⁴³) and how they did treat him (ὡς ἄγγελον

⁴³ Less convincing is the idea that Paul was ‘abhorrent’ to them because of the persecution he suffered unless that persecution resulted in Paul being ‘visibly disfigured’ as Eastman (2007:104) proposes.

θεοῦ ἐδέξασθέ με, ὡς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν). They could have ‘despised’ him but instead they ‘honored’ him as though he were an angelic being or even Christ himself!

Another example of hyperbolic language is the stark image Paul uses in Galatians 4:15, ‘For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.’ Once again Paul’s response to the Galatians’ reversal in how they treated him is intense. At one time they would have given him their very eyes, but now he is their enemy! The whole matter is charged with emotion.

Paul’s emotional appeal reaches its climax in Galatians 4:19. In Galatians 4:12 Paul had addressed the Galatians as ‘brothers’ (ἀδελφοί), but now Paul appeals to them as his children (τέκνα μου).⁴⁴ This intimate address communicates the affection and depth of relationship that Paul shared with the Galatians. They are not merely converts; they are his spiritual children and as such, are very dear to him. As Paul would later write to the Corinthians, ‘I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel’ (1 Cor 4:14-15). In the same way, Paul is the spiritual father (and mother!) of the Galatians. So deep is his love for them that he even feels the freedom to rebuke them, believing that his affection is well known to them. This closeness stands in stark contrast to the Judaizers who cannot claim this same spiritual parenthood and thus cannot possibly have the same depth of love. And it is this bond that Paul enjoys with the Galatians that moves him to express the deep anguish he feels (ὠδίνω) as a result of their abandonment of the true gospel.

Why then did Paul choose the image of a mother in labor to describe his response to the Galatians? The answer lies in the specific situation Paul was addressing. Paul is profoundly concerned with the Galatians’ present theological detour. They are returning to that which formerly enslaved them (πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ

⁴⁴ There is a textual problem in Galatians 4:19. Some manuscripts read τέκνα whereas others read τεκνία. Τεκνία is the more difficult reading, but the manuscript evidence is split and there are scholars on both sides of the argument. The sense is not affected very much either way.

στοιχεῖα, οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε). The manipulative influence of the Judaizers has won them over in Paul's absence and now they are blindly surrendering themselves to the 'elements of this world' all over again. Paul was deeply affected by this betrayal and he expresses his intense frustration and indeed, pain, through the graphic image of a mother suffering with labor pains. The image is metaphorical; his suffering is real!

This is not the first time that Paul has gone through this same painful 'pregnancy' on behalf of the Galatians. Paul states that he is suffering labor pains *again* (πάλιν ὠδίνω).⁴⁵ The first time Paul found himself in the throes of such anguish was when he first proclaimed the gospel to them and they were converted. Now, years later, he finds himself re-living the same pain as the Galatians appear to have been born 'prematurely' and need to be 'born all over again'. Here the metaphor suffers from the physical impossibility of what Paul calls the metaphor to communicate. He implies that those who are the cause of his present labor pains (i.e., the child being formed in the womb) have in fact already been born once before (Martyn 1997: 426)! But Paul is less concerned with the consistency of the metaphor and more interested in the vivid image that it

⁴⁵ Koenig (1970:114, n. 6), states, 'It is true that, strictly speaking, πάλιν modifies ὠδίνω rather than μορφωθῆ. But this by no means excludes the possibility that the formation of Christ referred to also happened previously...Indeed, it is hard to imagine that Paul is here recalling anything other than his first efforts to win the Galatians for Christ (4:13)'. However, Paul's point is definitely *not* that Christ was already formed in them and now it has to happen all over again. This error affects all that Koenig writes about this 'formation.' He erroneously concludes 'The metaphor employed in 4:19 suggests that the higher level of Christian existence resulting from formation should be understood as a pregnancy coming to fruition. It is clear, however, that Paul's emphasis here lies not on pre-natal development in the womb but on the new life which comes into existence at birth itself. As shown above, this is none other than the crucified Lord, who by coming to life in the believer subjects him also to crucifixion. Formation or crucifixion therefore refers to a boundary event which distinguishes between two possible stages in the believer's existence. Thus, when Paul mentions his own crucifixion with Christ (Gal. 2:20; 6:14), he does so in the perfect tense, indicating that he thinks of it as something which has been completed in the past. He is on one side of this event, his Galatian readers on the other. Previously, they too were crucified with Christ in baptism, but now, because they have slipped back to the lower level, they must undergo an extra-baptismal formation of Christ within them' (Koenig 1970:118-119). Koenig equates Christ being formed in them with a 'new' salvation experience whereby they are again crucified with Christ. He has missed the point because he incorrectly associates πάλιν with μορφωθῆ rather than with ὠδίνω. What has been repeated is Paul's pain in the process of giving them 'birth' not Christ's 'shaping' them. It could be that Paul's point is that his pain now is even a 'longer' pain than his previous pain. That is, initially he was in pain until they were spiritually born. Now, however, because of their straying off course to another gospel, he is experiencing the same pain, but that this pain will continue until Christ's shape defines their shape. That is, until Christ is formed in them.

communicates – he is deeply disappointed and thus experiencing mental anguish all over again on their behalf because of their infidelity to the Gospel message they received from him.

Fortunately this painful process of labor pains is temporary. Paul states that he will continue experiencing these birth pains until (μέχρις) Christ is formed in them. The pains have already begun and are intense, but they will cease one day. Now it isn't clear whether Paul's point in stressing the temporal nature of these labor pains is the hope that this might bring (i.e., there is a goal in mind, the end is near) or to highlight the present futility (i.e., the process is long and must be endured). Whatever the case, it is evident that the pains will end one day, though for the present Paul must continue to suffer.

It is important to notice the strange shift in the subject of the metaphor. The metaphor is clearly mixed. Paul begins as the parent informing his child that he is once again in the throes of labor for them. That is, he is giving birth again to the same children that he has already delivered! But then the metaphor takes a dramatic change of direction. Suddenly Paul, 'the mother', is a waiting observer as Christ is the embryo being formed within the Galatians. The original fetus who causes the labor pains in her mother has now become the 'pregnant' woman even though her mother continues to experience labor pains!

There have been many different explanations for why Paul used such a convoluted metaphor. However, we agree with Gaventa that Paul used a mixed metaphor not out of ignorance, lack of emotional control, or carelessness, but because it suited his purpose. She comments, 'The flaw that appears in the second part of Paul's analogy occurs, not because his imagination is defective, but because he does not wish to carry the analogy through to its logical conclusion' (Gaventa 2007:37). Paul in fact was purposely trying to communicate two different truths in each part of the verse. He is not really concerned about whether the metaphor is mixed. In the first part it is his deep concern and pain on their behalf that stands in the forefront. This was most graphically communicated

through the image of a pregnant woman in the midst of labor. In the second half it is God's work of forming Christ in them that Paul wanted to highlight. And so, in part one Paul wants the Galatians to know how deep is his sacrifice on their behalf, how committed and concerned he is with their faithfulness and perseverance in the truth. So much so that he actually feels anguish for them. Just as he was willing to go through 'labor' in the initial birthing process, so now he once again agonizes over them. Yet there is a greater goal in mind. Paul longs for them to have Christ formed in them completely. When this finally occurs, his suffering for them will end.

What does it mean for Christ to be formed ($\mu\omicron\pi\omicron\varphi\omega\theta\eta\tilde{\iota}$) in them? Generally the New Testament speaks about the believer being conformed to the image of Christ (Rm 8:29). Yet here Paul reverses the metaphor and speaks of Christ being formed in the Galatians. It is not readily apparent why Paul decided to 'mix' the metaphor rather than simply continuing with the idea he started in Galatians 4:19a, that he is experiencing labor pains until the Galatians are fully formed. That would have communicated the idea that they are still 'unformed' or better, immature, lacking in the necessary spiritual formation and Paul's pain would continue until they reached the goal of maturity. However, Paul chose to invert the image and speak not of their formation, but instead of 'Christ being formed in them.' Perhaps Paul chose such a sharp change in the metaphor and the graphic image of Christ as an embryo being formed in the Galatians in order 'to shake the Galatians out of their spiritual lethargy' (Schreiner 2010:289). Or even more probable, Paul could have chosen to portray Christ as the unformed embryo needing to reach full-form in the Galatians because he wanted to emphasize the Godward side of this work rather than the needed effort of the Galatians. In other words, Paul focuses on what Christ must do in them rather than what they must do for Christ. Christ must become 'full' in them; he must be 'formed' into his mature image.

Whatever the intent of this change of metaphor, we must dig deeper to understand the second half of Paul's metaphor. The verb $\mu\omicron\pi\omicron\varphi\omega$ is a New Testament *hapax* and does not appear at all in the Septuagint. It was, however, used in antiquity where its basic sense was to take something and to mold it, to give it shape. For example, according to

Plutarch God gave shape to matter through the agency of the soul (αίδιον δὲ τὴν ὕλην καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς μορφωθῆναι; Plutarch, *Compendium libri de animae procreatione in Timaeo*, Section 2). In another place Plutarch states, 'God did not make the body, but matter being provided, he formed and fitted it' (τὸ μὲν οὐκ ἐγέννησε θεὸς ἀλλά, τῆς ὕλης παρασχομένης, ἐμόρφωσε καὶ συνήρμοσε; Plutarch, *Platonicae quaestiones*, Chapter 2). Clement of Alexandria writes, 'A statue is an inanimate object which has been formed by a craftsman's hand' (ἔστιν γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ἄγαλμα ὕλη νεκρὰ τεχνίτου χειρὶ μεμορφωμένη; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, Chapter 4). Josephus is in agreement with Clement when he refers to a statue as τύπους μεμορφωμένους, a formed or sculptured image (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.329). And Diodorus Siculus speaks about air forming itself into a variety of shapes (πολλαχῶς μορφουμένου τοῦ συμπίπτοντος ἀέρος; Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, Book 3 Section 51). So then, it becomes clear that the general sense of μορφώω is to take something and give it a form, to mold or shape it. Quite often this shaping involves taking something that is yet 'unformed' and molding it into something complete.

Thus when Paul speaks of 'Christ formed in you' he has the idea of a work of God (it is a divine passive) in the life of the Galatians. God is at work forming, shaping the Christ who lives in them. God is molding Christ into his fullest form. That is, Christ is like the embryo that is 'unformed' within the pregnant woman (the Galatians). This embryo must be shaped by the divine hand, bringing it to its final form, making it ready to be delivered. Unfortunately recent events in the lives of the Galatian believers have made it clear to Paul that the Christ who lives in them is still 'unformed'. He has not been brought to fullness, to his fullest expression in their lives. Their 'turning from the one who called them to another gospel' (Gl 1:6), their 'foolishness' (Gl 3:1), their being 'bewitched' (Gl 3:1), their 'desire to return again to the weak and impotent στοιχεῖα' (Gl 4:9), their treating Paul like an enemy (Gl 4:16), their desire to be under the law (Gl 4:21), their being tripped up so that they don't obey the truth (Gl 5:7), and the relational problems in the churches (Gl 5:15, 26) all contributed to a 'stunted' growth of Christ in them. Their lives have demonstrated that Christ has not been fully shaped in them. This is not to say that somehow Christ is defective or unfinished. We must remember that

Paul is using a metaphor, and a rather convoluted one at that. His point is to show that the defect resides in the Galatians, not Christ. Christ has not been able to come to full expression in them. As a consequence, Paul is experiencing great anxiety and this emotional anguish will continue in him until God's work of forming Christ in the Galatians reaches its completion.

Why does Paul reverse the metaphor in the second part? By reversing the second half of the metaphor and removing Paul from the shaping process it becomes evident that it is God who is at work, not Paul. Paul's role is now simply that of a passionately interested 'relative' who though suffering the pain of watching and waiting for the end of this difficult process, is not giving birth at all. His pain is real, but the birth pangs now appear more like 'sympathy pains' as he anxiously watches as the Galatians go through labor. It is the Galatians who must 'deliver', though the forming is God's work. And rather than the Galatians themselves being formed or 'transformed' (as in the first part of the metaphor), it is now Christ himself who must be 'shaped' within them (ἐν ὑμῖν)⁴⁶ into the child who is ready to be delivered.

Now one might ask if there is a difference between the Galatians being conformed to the image of Christ and Christ being formed in them? Koenig answers in the affirmative. He comments,

Here it is necessary to distinguish Gal. 4:19 from 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; and Phil. 3:10. In the Galatians passage Paul speaks of a re-initiation into maturity, not of the ongoing metamorphosis which begins to operate once believers have become mature. Therefore, it is probably best to refrain from calling the μορφωθῆ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν a transformation.

(Koenig 1970:200-201)

For Koenig and Gaventa when Paul speaks of 'Christ being formed in you' he is really speaking of the believer's crucifixion with Christ. Thus Gaventa comments, 'For Christ to

⁴⁶ ἐν ὑμῖν can have the idea of 'in you' or 'among you.' As Bruce (1982:212) quotes, 'the community is born through the growth of Christ in individuals.' In other words, Paul probably was not distinguishing between the individual and the corporate as he saw both as completely interrelated.

be formed in the Galatians is not simply for them to develop spiritually or morally or christologically. The formation of Christ among the Galatians is simultaneously their crucifixion with Christ' (Gaventa 2007:36). But these authors narrow the reach of Paul's metaphor too much. While it is certain that a part of what it means for Christ to take full shape in the believer is for the believer to be crucified with him, it is not the whole of this image. Paul purposely chose an image which emphasizes the production of life, not death. He wanted to emphasize Christ flourishing in the believer. Christ is the embryo that grows and is being formed into his proper shape. He is being prepared for delivery and thus must be 'mature'. And so, Christ being formed in the Galatians means much more than their death with Christ. It also means Christ growing to fullness and maturity in them. Christ will be fully formed in them when His life, His character, His teachings, and His death become the shape of their lives, when their lives are both cruciform, but also 'Christoform'. Thus to have Christ formed in them is to adopt His lens for interpreting life (Gal 2:19-20) and relationships (Gal 3:28) and everything else. In this way, to have Christ formed in them is the same as their being conformed to His image. This image is captured by the writer of Ephesians 4:13 who states that the growth process continues "until we all attain ... to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες ... εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).⁴⁷

What are some concrete expressions of a fully-formed Christ in the lives of believers? Paul alludes to several important ones. For example, when a life is Christoform there will be the ability to discern between the divinely inspired gospel and the false gospel of the agitators. The Galatians were far too easily and far too quickly duped by the 'zeal' of the false teachers, a clear sign of immaturity. They did not even recognize that the gospel preached by the Judaizers was no gospel at all. Second, a mature Christ-life will demonstrate stability and perseverance to walk consistently in the truth and freedom of the circumcision-free gospel. There will be no wavering and no desire to return to the

⁴⁷ Though this study recognizes that the image in Ephesians 4:13 speaks of the believer's being shaped to be like Christ rather than Christ being formed in the believer, nonetheless the passage seems to capture the basic idea of 'the maturity of Christ' as does Galatians 4:19.

former life of slavery. There will be no confusion about the fact that one is justified by faith and not by works of the law. Third, a fully-formed Christ in a believer will result in a life style that embodies the gospel. There will be healthy relationships on all levels (Gl 5:13-15, 26), and clear ongoing manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit (Gl 5:22-23). The person will live consistent with the realm of the Spirit and will serve others through the agency of love. All of these are practical ways of evidencing a fully-formed Christ in the life of a Christ-follower.

To summarize, Galatians 4:19 speaks of Paul's deep anguish over the present spiritual misstep of the Galatians who have been so influenced by the agitators that they have retreated to their former bondage which characterized their lives prior to their conversion. They are being duped into seeking acceptance and trying to advance in their faith through legalistic principles like guarding feast days and circumcision. This foolish infidelity causes Paul to suffer deep anguish again just as he did when he first preached to the Galatians. His pain is very intense precisely because even though he has invested so much in them, they appear to have retreated to the same bondage and the same idolatry as when he first met them. This was deeply troubling to Paul, and caused a pain so sharp that it was like a woman in labor. And this pain which he is now experiencing will continue until God's ongoing work of bringing His Son to full expression in them is complete.

2.4 APPLICATION: TRANSFORMATION IN GALATIANS 4:19

What does Galatians 4:19 teach us about the 'spiritual transformation' of believers? In the first place it shows clearly that this is a divine work. This is evident from the use of the passive tense of μορφόω. This is most likely the so called 'divine passive' which points to God as the agent of the 'forming' work. It is the divine hand which forms Christ within the believer. The divine agency in this 'forming' work is also evidenced in Galatians 3:2-3 where Paul first asks the rhetorical question, 'Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith'? Paul then follows up this question with another rhetorical question, 'Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by

the flesh?’ Paul’s point is that just as the reception of the Spirit at conversion⁴⁸ was a work of God that you simply received by faith, so too is continuation in the life of faith a work of the Spirit of God. In other words, transformation begins as a work of God evidenced by the reception of the Spirit and ultimately reaches its goal by a work of the same Spirit of God. It is a divine work from beginning to end.

Second, this work of transformation described in Galatians 4:19 is a process that has its ebbs and flows. Paul describes himself as suffering the pains of childbirth ‘until’ Christ is formed in them. He must endure this process, waiting until it is finally completed, but as he waits there is much anguish to be tolerated. It is here that we notice how Paul uses the image of childbirth not only to describe his intense anguish (the first half of the metaphor in Gl 4:19) but also to describe the waiting that he must endure ‘until Christ is formed’ in the Galatians. In other words, Paul’s ὠδίνω is the link which holds together both ‘turns’ of this mixed metaphor. It describes his own pain at the ill-formed and still unformed state of the Galatian’s relationship with Christ, and it carries over to reveal that the Galatians have a birth process going on in them. It is Christ himself who is being formed in their lives. As Paul has already witnessed, having known them from the beginning of their walk of faith, this formation process has not always gone so smoothly. There have been some times of progress (Gl 5:7, ‘you were running well’), but also times like the present, when they seem to have regressed. Paul fears that there could be a miscarriage! The process of ‘formation’ is a long arduous, often painful process that has its ups and downs.

Third, the goal of this process of formation is that Christ be brought to full maturity in the person’s life. This seems like an odd way of describing the goal towards which the Galatians’ faith is headed (generally we think of the person being brought to full maturity in Christ), but it is perfectly consistent with the birth metaphor that Paul chose. Like a

⁴⁸ Dunn is correct when he states regarding the Galatians’ experience of ‘receiving the Spirit’ that “This formulation was already more or less a technical term to speak of conversion and the beginning of Christian discipleship...It focuses the fact that for Paul and the first Christians this was the decisive and determinative element in the event or process of conversion and initiation; hence the nearest thing to a definition of ‘Christian’ in the NT.” (Dunn 1993:153).

fetus living in the womb of a mother will come forth when it is fully formed, so too Christ must first develop in the Galatians before they are ready to 'give birth to him'. This of course implies the ongoing presence of Christ in the Christ-follower, something that is quite obviously implied by the birth metaphor; Christ is within the Galatians and is slowly being formed. But this same idea is also explicitly stated in Galatians 2:20 where Paul gives testimony to the fact that 'Christ lives in me', a claim that other scriptures apply to all believers (i.e., Col 1:27). The point is that everyone who has been 'baptized into Christ' has Christ living in them by his Spirit (Gl 4:6).

But beyond the presence of Christ in the disciple of Christ, what does it mean in concrete terms to have Christ formed in you? It means to have Christ's 'form' determine our 'form'. That is, Christ's character and teachings, his priorities and his saving works should shape and determine our steps and thoughts, our identity and our choices. It means to have a life that is cruciform, or even more, that is 'Christoform'. For example, to have Christ fully formed in the Galatians means for them to be fully established in the gospel handed down to them. Right now they are demonstrating their immaturity, the fact that they are not ready to give birth to a fully mature Christ, because they are wavering at the most foundational level, perseverance in the true gospel. In fact, Paul laments the fact that they have so rapidly 'turned away from' God and turned instead towards a strange so-called gospel (Gl 1:6). This desertion proves they are not yet ready to 'give birth to a mature Christ'. This lack of maturity is further evidenced by Paul's rebukes of the Galatians. He says they are foolish (Gl 3:13), have been bewitched (Gl 3:1), and then chides them for willingly turning back to their former bondage (Gl 4:9). Paul's birth pains will definitely continue while their commitment to his gospel remains in such an uncertain, 'ill-formed' state. This illustrates one of the foundational ways that a person can have Christ being formed in them, by persevering in the gospel of Christ.

But this 'Christoform' life also implies living consistent with the new status that comes to one who is 'in Christ'. How could the Galatians live under the law when they are now sons and heirs? Their status has dramatically changed from slaves who lived under the

power of the στοιχεῖα to sons who are legally qualified to receive their inheritance. Now they must live in the freedom that Christ won for them, which means not trusting in the law for righteousness (GI 5:1-5). They are to live consistently with their new status – they are sons and heirs - not their old status as enslaved under the authority of guardians and stewards.

To live consistently with their new status also means to understand and live mindful of the new social matrix that exists 'in Christ'. This means that former distinctions have been voided. There is no longer a wedge between Jew and Greek, or slave and free, or man and woman. These and other status-trumping distinctions have been leveled. Now all who belong to Christ are one; all are equally Abraham's seed and thus heirs of God's promise. Therefore, the covenant community must be characterized by a faith that is exercised through love (GI 5:6), loving service to all members (GI 5:13), the fruit of the Spirit (GI 5:22-23), mutual burden bearing (GI 6:2) and good works done to all (GI 6:10). When these kinds of social interactions are accepted and lived out it is evidence of Christ being formed in the person.

Living consistently with this new status also has ethical and spiritual implications. Chief among them is a new life lived in light of the new creation that God is bringing about (GI 6:15). Thus the one in whom Christ is being formed will give evidence of having been 'rescued from the present evil age' (GI 1:4). The patterns and priorities that govern their worldview will not be those of the 'elements of this world', and the spiritual forces that govern this present age, but rather those of the new creation, where the Spirit of God rules. They will live as ones who have been crucified with Christ (GI 2:19-20), whereby the rebellious world system in the midst of which they carry on their earthly lives will no longer be the defining factor (GI 6:14). Though there will still be a struggle with sin, since they are part of God's new creation they will recognize that they have crucified the flesh and its controlling passions and that their life is to be aligned consistently and continually with the Spirit of God and no longer with their former allegiance to all that characterizes the present evil age.

Thus, to have Christ formed ‘in you’ means that Christ determines the shape of the person’s relationships, ideas, and conduct. It means to persevere in his gospel. It means to reflect a Christiform life in every respect.

Finally, does Paul give any indication of the means by which this process of transformation comes about? Before looking for an answer, it is important to remember Paul’s purpose in Galatians 4:19. Clearly Paul was not trying to give the Galatians a full-orbed description or prescription regarding spiritual transformation. Rather his primary purpose was to express his deep concern for their flagging faith and the serious threat they faced of rejecting the very gospel they had formerly received. He is in anguish for them and he expects this anguish to continue until they have safely reached the goal. This is what Paul is primarily expressing in this passage. And yet, as one examines his broader discussion of the Galatians’ progress in faith several hints emerge regarding one of the primary means of ongoing transformation towards the goal of a full-formed Christ in them. Paul demonstrates that transformation takes place by faith and not by performing the works of the law. This theme has been repeated throughout this letter. Paul himself affirmed that ‘the life I now live in the flesh (i.e., this earthly life) I live by faith in the Son of God’. In other words, the life of a Christ-follower is a faith-life. It is a life that began by faith, not by works of the law as Paul makes abundantly clear in Galatians 3:3 when he asserts, ‘Having begun by the Spirit ...’ But the life of a Christ-follower also advances by faith and not by works as Paul implies by his biting rhetorical question ‘are you now being perfected by the flesh?’ That is, ‘do you really think that you can reach the goal through circumcision and feast days and other such works of the law? Well you cannot!’ Paul’s point is that the agency that enables one to reach the goal of full maturity is the same Spirit that you received by faith when you were converted. It is not by means of the works of the law! Spiritual transformation is an ongoing work of the Spirit of God that is experienced by continual persevering faith in Christ.

Chapter 3

Transformation in Philippians 3:10

3.1 Introduction

The second Pauline passage that speaks directly to the concept of transformation is Philippians 3:2-14, specifically verse 10. In this section Paul warns the Philippian believers about a damaging Judaizing teaching that perverts the gospel and thus hinders transformation. Paul gives a personal testimony of his own transformation and in this way motivates the Philippians to pursue the same kind of transformation in their lives. This chapter will consider first the context of this key passage and then will offer an exposition of the text, ending with some specific conclusions, especially as the passage relates to the theme of transformation. The passage states,

²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

3.2 CONTEXT

Before examining Philippians 3:10 it is important to consider the wider context. Philippians 3:2 seems to make a rather abrupt transition from the flow of thought initiated in Philippians 3:1 where Paul appears to be bringing the letter to a close. This sudden change of direction has led many scholars to posit that this chapter is a

fragment of a separate letter.⁴⁹ The arguments supporting a compilation of two or more fragments, however, are conjectural and the external textual evidence to support this view is not strong (Silva 2005: 12) other than an often misunderstood comment in Polycarp. Garland's (1985:141-173) careful study gives ample support for the reasonableness of a unified letter and we will assume this unity here.

Paul writes this warm letter to the Philippians after receiving their generous offering for his needs (Phlp 4:18) and hearing the report from Epaphroditus about how the church was doing (i.e., Phlp 4:2) in the face of some potentially threatening circumstances (Phlp 1:29-30; 3:2). He writes to thank them for their generous and ongoing participation in the gospel ministry (Phlp 1:5; 4:10-20), but also to reassure them that he is remaining firm in the Lord in spite of the trying circumstances he was facing (Phlp 1:12-26) and to urge them to do the same (Phlp 1:27-4:9).

Paul's letter is addressed to the Philippian Christian community, both its general membership (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις) and the leadership (σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους). As was his custom, he opens with a prayer of thanksgiving motivated by the many remembrances he had of the Philippian believers as a result of their ongoing teamwork in the gospel ministry, including, but not limited to, their financial gifts. Even beyond this joyful gratitude that Paul feels for their partnership with him in the gospel, Paul possesses a deep confidence in God's ongoing and comprehensive work in their lives (Phlp 1:6).⁵⁰ Paul also intercedes on the church's behalf (Phlp 1:9-11), praying that God might cause the Philippians' love to abound in the

⁴⁹ Joseph Fitzmyer holds that Philippians is a conflation of three letters of Paul. The 'abrupt' break at Philippians 3:2 is one of the main reasons. This 'break' after a farewell (Phlp 3:1), plus the 'tone' of Philippians 3:2-4:3 which for Fitzmyer is 'so different from the rest of Phil.' points to a separate letter whose purpose was 'to warn the Philippians about the Judaizers' (Fitzmyer 1968:248). There are a host of scholars who follow this same view. Others hold that the letter is a conflation of two letters. For an excellent study of the issues see Garland (1985:141-173) who supports the view of the integrity of the letter.

⁵⁰ Just as their partnership in the gospel was more wide ranging than simply financial assistance, so too was the good work that God had done in them. It was a work so all-encompassing that it turned these people into generous givers (Phlp 4:10-20), persevering soldiers (Phlp 1:27-30), prayerful associates (Phlp 1:19), obedient servants (Phlp 2:12), and living witnesses (Phlp 2:15). These results demonstrate that God had done a profound, life-transforming work in them, a work that ushered forth with wide ranging fruit.

mature understanding and practical discernment that is necessary to be able to evaluate the competing choices that confront them in life and therefore to know what is the best path to take. This God-inspired discernment should lead them to lives that are pure and stable, fully ready for the day when Christ returns.

Paul begins the body of his letter with a missionary report (Phlp 1:12-26), informing the Philippians that his imprisonment and all the afflictions he has endured have, far from hindering the advance of the gospel, resulted in it spreading more and more (Phlp 1:12), though some have engaged in missionary activity with self-serving motives (Phlp 1:15, 17). Nonetheless, Paul is joyful in knowing that the name of Christ is going forth. Paul also rejoices because of his firm confidence that God will vindicate him in the end through the prayers of the Christian community and the Holy Spirit's help (Phlp 1:19). Paul's unwavering expectation is that Christ will ultimately be glorified through Paul's life, whether Paul lives or dies, since Christ is the very passion and focus of his life. Yet though Paul would prefer to die so that he could be with Christ, he recognizes that there is much fruitful ministry to be done and thus he fully expects to remain alive to help the Philippians continue to progress in the faith (Phlp 1:25-26).

In Philippians 1:27 Paul begins the main exhortation section of the letter. Paul urges the Philippians to conduct their lives in a gospel-worthy manner whether he can in fact return to help them or not. This gospel-worthy life means, above all, promoting unity in the church and remaining firm in the faith in spite of trials (Phlp 1:28-30). This unity will be preserved as they share in the multifaceted benefits that are theirs in Christ (Phlp 2:1), as they display true self-less humility (Phlp 2:2-4), and above all as they imitate the same sacrificial attitude that Christ himself exemplified (Phlp 2:5-11). Not only does this gospel-worthy life require that they live in unity, but it also means living in obedience. They are to continually make their salvation visible in all of life, something that is possible because God himself is at work in their lives (Phlp 2:12-13). Finally, Paul exhorts the believers to have an attitude appropriate for children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ), an attitude that is devoid of all complaining and arguing (Phlp 2:14-15). When the church displays this kind of an attitude they reflect a blamelessness and purity which sets them

apart from others and makes them shine in the midst of this perverted world. If the Philippians can live this kind of a testimony all the way until Christ comes (εἰς ἡμέραν Χριστοῦ) it will prove the fruitfulness and value of Paul's ministry (Phlp 2:16). He has willingly sacrificed himself for their progress in faith, yet he rejoices and urges them to rejoice in the same way (Phlp 2:17-18).

Paul follows these exhortations with two living examples of men who have lived gospel-worthy lives in their service for the gospel (Phlp 2:19-30). Timothy is a selfless minister of the gospel who is genuinely interested in what is going on with the Philippian believers. Paul hopes to send this valuable servant to Philippi soon. In the meantime, Paul sent back Epaphroditus to his home church. He nearly died in his service for Christ and thus will be a cause of joy to the Philippians, just as he has been a source of blessing to Paul.

Finally, in Philippians 3:1 Paul uses a 'bridge statement' which both brings to a conclusion the previous section and points to the beginning of a new section. Though many scholars believe that Paul was planning on bringing the letter to a close but then remembered that he had more to say, it is more likely that τὸ λοιπὸν signals a transition rather than a final conclusion.⁵¹ In the letter Paul has already encouraged the Philippians to see that joy is the appropriate response to hardship.⁵² Now he will introduce another very difficult matter, the damaging teachings of his opponents, and so he introduces this warning section with another call to rejoice, this time linking it with ἐν κυρίῳ. Their joy is to be found in their union with Christ, not in pleasant circumstances. Paul follows up this renewed call to rejoice with a reminder that all that he is writing, and especially what he is about to write, though not new, is of benefit to them because it serves as a safeguard (ἀσφαλές). This reminder that repetition serves as a helpful form of protection makes for a smooth transition into the warning section. Paul has already

⁵¹ See the discussion in *Greek Particles in the New Testament* by Thrall (1962:25-30).

⁵² See for example, Philippians 1:18 – Paul rejoices even though many false missionaries seek to add affliction to his imprisonment by preaching with selfish motives; Philippians 2:17-18 – Paul rejoices even though his life is being sacrificed for benefit of the Philippians' faith; Philippians 2:29-30 – The Philippians are to receive Epaphroditus with joy because of his sacrificial service for the Lord.

spoken to them about their opponents on another occasion and now he returns to this subject in the section that serves as our primary text.

3.3 EXPOSITION

The passage begins with a warning in Philippians 3:2,⁵³ ‘Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision’ (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν). Paul’s invective here is very direct and stinging. His caution to the Philippians is directed against one group of people that Paul describes with three disparaging and graphic terms. The exact identity of these opponents has been a cause of great discussion among scholars, but before we can identify them, it is important to examine how Paul describes them.⁵⁴ First they are ‘dogs’. Of course dogs in the ancient world were generally not the cuddly house pets that they are today. Though some dogs were watchdogs and thus useful (Job 30:10; Is 56:10), the majority of references to dogs are negative. In fact, the appellation ‘dog’ was a common insult used in ancient Israel for a variety of situations. For example, those who lived sinful lives were often called ‘dogs’ (Rv 22:15; Dt 23:18), as were wicked enemies (Ps 22:16, 20), or those who were despised or viewed as worthless (1 Sm 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sm 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; 2 Ki 8:13). In fact, generally speaking, dogs were wild scavengers roaming in packs and eating garbage and even human corpses (1 Ki 14:11; 16:4; 21:19, 23, 24; 22:38; 2 Ki 9:10, 36; Jr 15:3) and thus came to represent uncleanness.⁵⁵

With such a variety of possible emphasis, what did Paul mean when he called his opponents ‘dogs’? Did he have in mind ‘guard dogs, in this case “dogs” who see themselves as guardians of Jewish orthopraxy’ (Witherington 2011:189)? Or was Paul

⁵³ Contra Garland (1985:166) who states, ‘the Philippians are to learn their lesson from the Jews, not beware of them.’ However, the intensity of the language used and the repetition of the imperative point to this as a warning. See also Fee (1995:293; O’Brien (1991:354); and Silva (2005:153).

⁵⁴ The identity of Paul’s opponents in Philippians 3 has received a dizzying array of answers, everything from Gnostic libertines to divine men, from Jews to Gentiles, from zealots to pagans. Some even state that there were no opponents at all. For a summary of options see Sumney (2005:7-58).

⁵⁵ Garland (1985:167, n. 92) comments, ‘In the Mishnah ‘dogs’ are mentioned almost entirely with reference to matters concerning unclean food, the flesh of a corpse, or their tendency to scavenge (*m. Shab.* 24:4; *Pesah* 2:3; *Ned.* 4:3; *Hul.* 4:2, 7; *Bek.* 4:4, 5:6; *Tern.* 6:5; *Ohol.* 11:7; *Tohar.* 4:3, 8:6; *Zabim* 2:3; See also, *b.B.Qam.* 92b; *Gen. Rab.* 81:3)’.

pointing to 'the dog's association with impurity' (Garland 1985:167, n. 92; O'Brien 1991:355; Hawthorne 1991:125; Hansen 2009:219) or their nature as wild scavenger dogs who attacked passersby (Martin 1980:125)? Paul does not specify the exact focus of this metaphor. What is clear is that Paul uses this label in a derogatory fashion to expose the wicked practices of his opponents and will specify what these actions are later in the passage.⁵⁶ Thus Koester (1962) is correct when he writes,

The insulting address "dogs" should not be used as an indication of the identity of the opponents. However, it must be kept in mind that this word was one of the strongest invective terms possible. This means that the deliberate aim of the polemic here is not to describe the opponents, but to insult them.

(Koester 1962:319-320)⁵⁷

The second pejorative term Paul uses is *κακοὺς ἐργάτας*. This has been taken in several ways as well. Some see Paul as referring to the Jewish or Judaizing missionary movement (i.e., O'Brien 1991: 355-356). Judaizers were actively seeking to convince Gentile Christ-followers to submit to circumcision as a way to gain a righteous standing and thus be fully accepted in the community of saints. This was 'evil' because it fostered self-righteousness rather than dependence upon Christ, a law-based devotion rather than one that was faith-based. Others believe Paul has in mind those who 'work' for righteousness through obedience to the law (Garland 1985:169). That is, it refers to Jewish pride in their adherence to the law as a means of becoming righteous. What makes this kind of work 'κακοὺς' is that it demonstrates reliance upon law-works for acceptance before God, something that is not only impossible, but also harmful both to self and to others (Garland 1985:169). Still others see 'evil workers' as a reference to 'those whose actions are the antithesis of that which should characterize the Christ community' (Zoccali 2011:21, n. 16).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Though most scholars allege that the Jews had a custom of referring to the Gentiles as dogs, the evidence for such a dogmatic conclusion is not as obvious as many assume (see Nanos 2009:448-482).

⁵⁷ See also Nanos (2009:460), 'In a very real sense, calling someone or group a dog or dogs or referring to dog-like behavior is simply name-calling. It does not make clear precisely who is in view in other definable terms, but functions as a word of reproach, commonly understood without being spelled out'.

⁵⁸ Zoccali (2011:20-21) is correct when he writes, 'It should initially be observed that a precise referent(s) to the first two epithets, 'dogs' and 'evil workers,' is unwarranted'. But he goes too far when he adds, 'The language could apply to any individuals or groups outside of the Philippian community who have not

It is Paul's third term, 'the mutilation' (τὴν κατατομήν) which is the key to understanding the first two, 'dogs' and 'evil workers'. This third 'insult' is the clearest and the most brutal and it serves to define the other two. 'Mutilation' is a clear play on words with 'circumcision' (περιτομή) in Philippians 3:3. Whereas circumcision was intended to be a holy rite which gave a visible demonstration of one's allegiance to God's covenant, mutilation was nothing but savage brutality intended to harm a person. Paul claims that these individuals, in the name of circumcision are actually mutilating others. That is, their cutting of the foreskin is really not circumcision at all, but abuse, a harmful act that 'deforms' them spiritually, not because it was 'performed' incorrectly, but because it was not based upon faith and therefore had no value before God. It is for this reason that they are 'evil workers' and 'dogs' because all their labor tends toward a harmful end.

In Philippians 3:3 Paul goes on to give an explanation (γάρ) for his warning in Philippians 3:2, 'for we are the circumcision'. Paul's explanation can be bluntly stated, 'though they try to convince you that *they* are the circumcision, the people of God, the truth is *we* are, not them!' With these words Paul reveals two vital details that clarify the identity of his opponents. First, this explanation pinpoints the essence of his conflict with his opponents – it had to do with circumcision (ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή). This would seem to negate the suggestion by Nanos (2009:448-482) and others who hold that Paul's opponents were gentile pagans.⁵⁹ It is evident from Paul's warning and the explanation that follows the warning that his opponents had some relationship with Judaism. Second, Paul sets up a clear contrast between *them* (his opponents) and *us* (Paul, the Philippians, and by implication, all other followers of Christ who do not belong to this group of opponents). The teaching (and practices) of 'their group' is opposed to 'our' teaching (and practices). One of us is right, the other is wrong. You must be on

given allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord, do not conform to the praxis of the Christ movement (cf. esp. Rv 22.15), and may in Paul's view pose some element of danger for the church' (Zoccali 2011:20-21). The context clearly narrows the focus of these two terms. Both the addition of the explicatory insult 'the mutilation' and its opposite 'the circumcision' point to a Jewish or Judaizing opponent. In *this* particular context, therefore, the first two derogatory terms could not refer to 'any individuals or groups outside of the Philippian community'. This definition is too broad.

⁵⁹ Although note the position of Bateman (1998:39-61) who believes the opponents could be Gentile Judaizers.

your guard against them because ‘we’ are the circumcision which implies that they are not! Therefore, their circumcising work is nothing more than mutilation.

It should be noted that Paul’s invective and explanation are not necessarily intending to say that these opponents definitely stand outside of God’s covenant community, but rather to affirm that, in spite of the criticisms by these opponents, ‘we’ definitely *are* part of this community. It is interesting that Paul refers to himself, the Philippians, and other Christ-followers as ‘the circumcision’ when he stated so dogmatically that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mean anything (Gl 5:6; 6:15) and that he no longer ‘preached circumcision’ (Gl 5:11). Thus it is quite evident that Paul’s intention in using ἡ περιτομή as a self-description is not to say that he practices circumcision as a means of gaining a righteous standing before God, but rather, by using the very same ‘boundary marker’ that his opponents proudly used, Paul sets Christ-followers apart as God’s true covenant people.⁶⁰

But how can ἡ περιτομή be distinguished from the τὴν κατατομήν? Just as Paul used three metaphors to identify his opponents, he now uses three participial phrases to identify ‘the circumcision’. In the first place Paul affirms that ‘we’ are those who ‘serve by the Spirit of God’ (οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες). The verb λατρεύω means to offer religious service to God. Those who are truly the circumcision offer their acts of devotion to God by means of His Spirit, whereas the ‘mutilation’ practices their religion by another spirit (or by the flesh as opposed to the Spirit). By implication only the service rendered through God’s Spirit is acceptable to God; the opponents therefore are busily engaged in a fruitless task.

Second, Paul alleges that the circumcision ‘boasts in Christ Jesus’ (καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). To boast in this way is to glory in someone or something or to praise them. It carries the idea of to place trust in someone. What characterizes the covenant

⁶⁰ Witherington (2011:195) is correct when he comments, ‘Paul does not transvalue such language for mere shock value. He actually believes a change has happened, christologically redefining the nature and locus of God’s people. It is now Jew and Gentile united in Christ, whether circumcised and Mosaic covenant-keeping or not’.

people of God in the 'New Age' is that their confidence is placed solely in Jesus Christ. He is the object of their life's trust and the content of their heart's boast. They do not rely on their own righteousness or in any self-efforts. Christ Jesus is their only praise.⁶¹

Third, the circumcision 'does not trust in the flesh' (οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεπιοιθότες). This last phrase stands in direct contrast to the previous one and though πεπιοιθότες and καυχώμενοι are not 'precisely synonymous, they may nevertheless be said to occupy the same semantic field when Paul uses them to point out the object of faith' (Silva 2005:149). Thus the object of confidence or boasting is being contrasted. Whereas the opponents rely on 'the flesh', 'we' rely on Jesus Christ. These two 'boasts' are mutually exclusive; a person can rely on one or the other, but never both. The opponents are trusting in the flesh through their insistence that circumcision defines the covenant people, whereas the genuine circumcision (the new covenant people of God) places no confidence in circumcision, nor in any personal achievements or self-righteousness, their reliance is directed towards Christ Jesus and his saving work on their behalf.

Flesh (σάρξ) has a broad range of meanings in Scripture⁶²; however, the present context narrows these possibilities and gives it a particular focus. ἐν σαρκί is used three times in Philippians 3:3-4, each time with a form of πείθω (twice with the verb, once with the noun πεπιοιθίσις). In verse 3 it stands in contrast to both Christ Jesus and to the Holy Spirit as something that defines the opponents and not 'the circumcision'. Whereas Paul states that he places no confidence ἐν σαρκί (Phlp 3:3), he also states that he has every reason to put confidence in the flesh, and in fact did at one time (Phlp 3:4), though he has since renounced that confidence for the sake of Christ (Phlp 3:7-8). The clear implication is that any kind of trust in σάρξ stands opposed to 'gaining' Christ and to the knowledge of Christ the Lord. In fact, confidence ἐν σαρκί is associated with 'my own righteousness', a righteousness which comes from the law (ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν

⁶¹ 'Christians are the circumcision precisely because they take no pride in what they might do by themselves to earn God's favor, but only in what God in his favor has already done for them in Christ Jesus' (Hawthorne 1991:127).

⁶² In the indices of Louw and Nida (1988:220) the authors list eight different senses for σάρξ: a) flesh; b) body; c) people; d) human; e) nation; f) human nature; g) physical nature; h) life. One could add another category to specifically refer to humankind living according to the 'old age' (see for example, Rm 7:5; 8:4-9, 12-13).

ἐκ νόμου) and which is contrasted with the righteousness of God (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) which comes through faith (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει). Though this kind of confidence in the flesh once offered some type of ‘gain’ it is no longer appropriate – it belongs to the things ‘behind’ (ὀπίσω) that must be forgotten (Phlp 3:13) - and certainly cannot be compared with knowing Christ. And so the ‘true circumcision’ does not put its confidence in the flesh, even if at one time such confidence brought certain advantages.

With these contextual markers around σάρξ, what exactly does it refer to in this context? In the first place, it refers to actual circumcision, the ‘cutting away of the flesh of the foreskin.’ The opponents were trusting in circumcision and this misplaced trust exposed them as ‘mutilators’ since circumcision was an example of ‘righteousness which comes from the law’ and not the righteousness of God which is through faith in Christ.⁶³ And yet the meaning of σάρξ in this context goes beyond circumcision to something broader. It also speaks of a person’s position in society, their religious heritage, or their spiritual achievements as Paul so graphically illustrates in Philippians 3:5-6. Thus to put confidence in one’s ‘Jewishness’ or one’s acts as a demonstration of devotion to a particular religious status are incapable of producing the ‘righteousness of God’ and thus contradict the genuine signs of the true circumcision – spiritual service by the Spirit of God and confidence in Christ Jesus rather than one’s self.

In Philippians 3:4-11 Paul illustrates through his own personal experience that confidence in the flesh is an empty pursuit. He begins by affirming that if any Jew could possibly claim to have a basis for confidence in the flesh, he would be that person (Εἷ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεπειθῆναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον). He had a spotless religious pedigree and the corresponding deeds to prove a high level of devotion and success in his pursuit of God. It all began with circumcision, something that he obediently experienced just as God had commanded (περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος). This should certainly impress the Judaizers! What is more, Paul was born a Jew (ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ); he was not a proselyte, he was born with Jewish blood in his veins and his family belonged to a

⁶³ It is evident that the problem was not with the act of circumcision itself, but rather with circumcision as a ‘boast’ for one’s righteousness.

prominent tribe within Israel (φυλῆς Βενιαμίν). He was a Hebrew through and through (Ἐβραῖος ἐξ Ἐβραίων), not a ‘compromised Jew’ contaminated by the dispersion. When it came to God’s law, Paul was one who strictly adhered to the Mosaic injunctions. His zeal for Judaism was evidenced by his efforts to stamp out Christianity, what the Jews considered a damaging and damning sect. And in terms of a life of obedience to what the law requires, Paul was exemplary. In every way Paul was an exceptional Jew, one worthy of emulation.⁶⁴

And yet, in spite of all of these solid reasons for trusting in the flesh, Paul consciously chose not to continue to do so (Phlp 3:7-11). In fact, Paul emphatically states, ‘but whatever things were gain to me (Ἀλλὰ ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη), these very same things I considered loss’ (ταῦτα ἤγημαι...ζημίαν). The ‘whatever things’ of Philippians 3:7 is a very general ‘catch all category’. That is, Paul is saying that anything whatsoever that was a ‘gain’ to him in terms of a cause for boasting in the flesh, anything that accrued to his religious advantage⁶⁵ – including especially the blessings and privileges he mentioned in verses 5-6 - all of these very same things (ταῦτα) he made a conscious settled decision (ἤγημαι) to discount from the ‘gains’ column of his ‘righteousness’ account⁶⁶. Instead of being gains that increased his confidence in the flesh he now recognized them as losses, as that which proved to be truly disadvantageous in terms of true righteousness.

⁶⁴ ‘Paul defines confidence in the flesh in terms of his pure Jewish pedigree, his upper-class social status, his blameless moral life as a Pharisee, and his personal piety based on the law. By presenting this self-portrait, Paul demonstrates that he meets every qualification for greatness and excellence in Jewish society’ (Hansen 2009:222).

⁶⁵ It is not at all obvious from this general comment by Paul whether we can distinguish (as modern arguments attempt to do) between an evident emphasis on self-efforts to do righteousness (legalism) or an inappropriate view of the law and its place among God’s people (nationalism). Paul’s point is that anything and everything that could be cause of boasting in the flesh, be that a misplaced confidence in my own ability to obey the law or be that a reliance on religious heritage or adherence to certain ‘boundary markers’. In his defense in Philippians 3:5-6 Paul includes both privileges that were not earned and actions that characterized his religious life. So it may be most accurate to say that both self-righteousness and ‘ethnic’ righteousness, and anything else that may have been his former basis for confidence, have now been totally rejected as the ‘kind’ of righteousness which have value.

⁶⁶ The comment by Fee (1995:316) seems apropos, ‘What is being renounced in particular, as v. 9 makes clear, is his “blamelessness as to the righteousness in the law.”’

But how could something seemingly so ‘advantageous’ suddenly become ‘disadvantageous’ in terms of the confidence he placed in the flesh? Stated another way, why did Paul make such a radical break from his former system of calculating spiritual valuation? Why was there an inversion of values so that gain became loss and loss gain? Paul states that this radical change came about ‘because of Christ’ (διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν).⁶⁷ Such a transformation was a consequence of Christ’s work in Paul, probably a reference to his salvation experience on the Damascus Road and the continuing work of God afterward.⁶⁸ Christ had completely transformed Paul’s way of viewing life and the value that he gave to his former privileges and accomplishments. So profound was this impact that Paul now considers ‘everything to be loss’ (ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι). This change from ἅτινα ... ταῦτα in Philippians 3:7 to πάντα in 3:8 simply makes explicit what Paul was saying all along – all his confidence in the flesh, all his blamelessness in terms of righteousness by the law, all of it without exception, is no longer viewed as a motive for boasting, but has become valueless in his pursuit of pleasing God. Why? Because (διὰ with the accusative) he recognized that there was something that had infinitely greater value than all of these former ‘gains’, namely, the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus (τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). In fact, the extreme worth of this very personal relationship with Christ moved Paul to devalue his former ‘gains’ to such a degree that these things now appear as nothing more than excrement (σκύβαλα) in comparison.⁶⁹ Because of his new found devotion to Christ (δι’ ὄν) Paul

⁶⁷ The preposition διὰ with the accusative in this context either has a causal emphasis and thus should be translated ‘because of Christ’ pointing backwards to the reason why Paul now sees what was gain as loss (so called retrospective use of the preposition), or it points forward to Paul’s goal and thus should be translated ‘for the sake of Christ’ meaning that Paul’s change came about so that he might gain Christ (so called prospective use of the preposition). Both options are plausible and fit the context. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have assurance of which Paul intended (if in fact, such a fine distinction was consciously known to the ancients rather than merely being a modern distinction). Perhaps the idea in Paul’s mind was more comprehensive, including both ideas.

⁶⁸ The significance of διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν in this context is determined by the three-fold use of διὰ plus the accusative. The first and last objects of this preposition (Phlp 3:7 - τὸν Χριστὸν; Phlp 3:8 - ὄν, referring to Christ) are expanded upon and explained by the second object (Phlp 3:8 - τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου). In other words, when Paul says that it was because of Christ that he recalculated the value of all that was once valuable in his life, he does not primarily mean the cross work of Jesus (though this surely is never far from view), but rather he means to say that it was in exchange for the deep personal knowledge of Christ. It wasn’t for a theological principal, but rather for a relational reality, that Paul’s perspective so radically changed.

⁶⁹ Σκύβαλα can refer to ‘filth’ or ‘excrement’. Whatever Paul’s exact intention here, the force of such a lowly vulgar term would have been jolting for the readers. What formerly was of such high religious value is now a rotten mess, totally valueless.

has lost everything that once was a source of confidence in terms of his standing before God and his identity as one of God's people. Looking back on this incredible 'loss' Paul now recognizes that all of those former 'sources of confidence' are absolutely worthless, in fact, are about as valuable as a pile of filthy manure. Paul has exchanged reliance on them for the much more valuable knowledge of Christ the Lord.

Paul's purpose in recalculating the value of everything that once had value for him is in order to win Christ (ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω).⁷⁰ This implies that in some sense, the former 'confidences' were an obstacle to 'gaining Christ'. These things had to be given up and exchanged for the knowledge of Christ.⁷¹ This he did because of Christ (δι' ὧν). That is, because of the saving work of Christ and especially because of the incalculable value of knowing him as Lord, all of the supposedly valuable privileges and accomplishments that Paul once enjoyed and trusted in lost their value. Now Paul's desire is to 'be found in him' (εὕρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ) with the right 'kind' of righteousness.⁷² Thus Paul goes on in Philippians 3:9 to contrast two kinds of righteousness.⁷³ The first kind of righteousness is the one that Paul does not wish to be found having. It is described as 'my' righteousness. The 'my' is a possessive adjective referring not to the origin, but to the 'owner' of this righteousness, the agent who has acquired this kind of righteousness (O'Brien 1991:394). This righteousness that Paul has and which he describes as mine is also 'ἐκ νόμου'. This refers to its origin. It is a right standing with God that originates from the law. That is, from adhering to the law's requirements. This same idea is found

⁷⁰ Paul speaks of 'gaining' Christ not in the sense of being able to 'possess' him, but rather because it fits with the 'gain-loss' metaphor that he has been using to describe the radical change in his viewpoint. To 'gain' Christ means to enter into relationship with him, to have him as the defining person in one's life.

⁷¹ Paul's use of ἡγέομαι 'to consider' points to the idea that the things Paul was now considering 'loss' were not 'bad' in and of themselves. It was rather that these 'gains' were not capable of attaining the righteousness that God required. So Paul was making a conscious choice to renounce these things in exchange for something better, Christ Jesus.

⁷² Paul's point here is not simply a desire for 'union with Christ' as though there is a 'stop' after 'be found in him.' Rather Paul's goal is to be found in Christ with the right kind of righteousness. In other words, Paul's purpose is not simply to be in Christ, but to be in Christ with the righteousness that comes from God as opposed to his own ('my') righteousness. We agree with O'Brien (1991:393) that the participial phrase μὴ ἔχων ... ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει is modal.

⁷³ Though some scholars (i.e., O'Brien (1991:394); Silva (2005:160)) see a chiasm here, it is not likely. While there is a clear contrast between τὴν ἐκ νόμου and τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην the phrase ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει is not as clearly linked with ἐμὴν. This association seems forced and breaks down the chiasm. It could be that a more accurate contrast is between 'my righteousness' and τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ.

in Romans 10:5, 'For Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου), that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.' In this text also Paul contrasts two kinds of righteousness, one that originates from the law and one that is from faith (ἐκ πίστεως). One requires doing the commandments while the other requires a confession of faith (Rm 10:9-10). A similar idea is evident in Galatians 3:21, 'Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law (ἐκ νόμου)'. There is no such law which, by obeying its demands, will produce righteousness in the obedient person. This, says Paul, proves that righteousness does not originate in obedience to the law. Therefore Paul does not want to 'be found' with his own righteousness (Rm 10:3) which originates in the law because this kind of righteousness is no righteousness at all, has no power to produce life (Gl 3:21) and does not come from God.⁷⁴

The second kind of righteousness, the kind that Paul desires to be found having, has a completely different origin. It comes from God (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην), not from the law. This implies that it is a gift, not something that is achieved through obedience to commandments. In addition, this 'from-God righteousness' is διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ. This refers not to its origin, but to the agency by which it is received, namely faith in Christ⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ 'In this argument Paul has theologically transmuted circumcision from an ethnic-religious identity symbol, whereby in obedience to Torah Gentiles become full members of the covenantal people of God, into a means to and an expression of "righteousness." However, it is a thoroughly useless expression of righteousness – indeed, "foul-smelling street garbage" – and therefore no means to righteousness at all, because it not only makes an end run around Christ Jesus but puts confidence in the symbol, mere flesh, rather than in the reality. Circumcision – and all other forms of Torah observance – means to "boast" in human achievement; and its "blamelessness" is expressed in ways that count for nothing at all. One is thus neither righteous in the sense of being rightly related to God nor righteous in the sense of living rightly as an expression of that relationship' (Fee 1995:323).

⁷⁵ The translation of the phrase πίστεως Χριστοῦ here and its variations in Rm 3:22, 26; Gl 2:16, 20, 22, is debated by scholars. The three main positions are: 1) A subjective genitive, rendering the phrase 'the faithfulness of Christ'; 2) An objective genitive, rendering the phrase 'faith in Christ'; 3) An adjectival genitive, rendering the phrase something like 'a Christ-faith' variously understood as the origin of faith (Christ), the character of faith (like that of Christ), or something similar. All three options are both exegetically and theologically possible. A definite decision is difficult. The present study has opted for the objective genitive thus translating 'faith in Christ' rather than the 'faithfulness of Christ.' Support for this view comes for example from 'Πίστις with a Preposition and Genitive Modifier' by Porter and Pitts (Bird 2009:33-53). See also the convincing arguments of Silva (Carson et al. 2004:227-234). However, even if the phrase were to signify 'the faithfulness of Christ' it would not change the fact that in the context Paul is demonstrating the necessary response of faith in Christ for justification (see for example, Gl 2:16c καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν).

That is, righteousness originates in God, but comes to a person through Christ as this person trusts in him. Finally, this righteousness is ‘based upon faith’ (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει).⁷⁶ This final phrase emphasizes the human response of trust, whereas the former phrase διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ indicates the object of the faith through which this righteousness comes.

There is one more detail that must be considered in Philippians 3:9, namely the timing of when Paul wants to be ‘found in him’ with a righteousness from God. Is this a present goal or a future one, or could it be an example of ‘both/and’? Considering the overall context, it is clear that Paul has been talking about real life decisions that have already taken place in his life. He enjoyed certain privileges and accomplished significant things in his pursuit of God (Phlp 3:5-6). And yet he has already determined to consider these former advantages as disadvantages so that he might gain Christ (Phlp 3:7-8). Though this decision could reflect an ongoing process, the emphasis seems to be that Paul has already accomplished this. The transformation of his system of values is a present reality; it is something that he already lives out. Paul already weighed the options and now has determined, because of Christ and his surpassing excellence, to consider his former religious pursuits and blessings as nothing but trash. He determined that knowing Christ was of supreme value and therefore this knowledge has taken center stage in Paul’s life. Paul’s purpose, however, was not only to know Christ, but also to please him in everything. This means having the right kind of ‘status’, one that will be forever acceptable to Christ. Therefore, Paul no longer wants to be defined by his own righteousness which came from his zealous obedience to the law and the privileges that came with being a Jew of Jews. He wants a new righteousness, one that comes as a gift from God through Christ and is based on faith in him. This desire reflects a present

⁷⁶ Though some see this second mention of faith as needless redundancy and therefore as proof that the prepositional phrase διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ is a subjective genitive, it is more likely that it emphasizes the basis of the righteousness. It is based upon faith, stressing again the idea of gift and contrasting the ‘selfness’ of ‘my’ righteousness and a righteousness that comes from adherence to the law. At the same time, it should be noted that the second phrase, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει functions to clarify and elaborate the first phrase, τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ. In other words, Paul after stating that the ‘proper’ righteousness was τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ makes it clear that this is a not a righteousness ἐκ Χριστοῦ, but one that comes from God (ἐκ θεοῦ) and is based upon faith, a faith that has Christ as its object (διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ).

situation. Paul chose to devalue all that was formerly valuable to him so that he might live in Christ as one who is righteous, not by his own means, but rather as a gift from the author of righteousness, God himself. Paul sees himself as identified in the here and now with this ‘righteousness from God’.

And yet it appears that Paul’s desire for this righteousness is more than a mere present goal, it is also a future goal. That is, as Paul thinks about and anticipates the future, especially the day of Christ (cf. Phlp 1:6, 10; 2:16), he longs for the ‘righteousness from God’ to continue to be that which identifies him. Paul wants to be found on that day with the right kind of righteousness, that which comes from God. Paul hopes that on the day of judgment when he is examined by the Lord the righteous Judge, it will be revealed that he stands there not based upon his own achievements with respect to obedience to God’s law (ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην) for this is the same false confidence that he has already rejected as worthless. Rather Paul wants to be found to have the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ. It is this righteousness that has supreme value. And so, Philippians 3:9 reflects a ‘both/and’ approach. It expresses Paul’s desire to have a righteousness from God both now and for the future.

This leads us to the key passage regarding the theme of transformation, Philippians 3:10. We are immediately confronted with a difficult grammatical issue, how does the articular infinitival clause (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν⁷⁷) relate to what comes before? There are at least four major options: First, it can be linked to ‘faith’ in verse 9, setting forth either the goal of the righteousness that is by faith (Hendriksen 1962:167, n. 146), or defining its content (Martin, 1976:133). This is doubtful, especially if the participial phrase μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην ... ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει is modal as argued above. If it is modal it serves to describe the manner of ‘being found in him’ and therefore is almost parenthetical.⁷⁸ Second, the infinitive can be linked to ‘I consider everything rubbish so that’ and define

⁷⁷ The Infinitive with the article τοῦ can express purpose (Votaw 1896:21; Burton 1900:157), result (Votaw 1896:25), it can be expegetical (Votaw 1896:26), or it can have a wide range of other possibilities (Robertson 1914:591). Most grammarians hold that it indicates purpose in Philippians 3:10.

⁷⁸ That is not to say that it is unimportant, but rather to acknowledge that in Paul’s argument it is intimately linked to how Paul wants to be “found in him” and is not an independent idea. In other words, it is part of the second element in the purpose clause and does not stand alone.

further what it means to gain Christ and be found in him' (Byrnes 2003:212).⁷⁹ That is, it is an exegetical use of the infinitive whereby to 'know Christ' is simply the fleshing out of what it means to gain Christ and be found in him.

Third, the infinitive can be linked to 'I consider everything rubbish so that' and express a third purpose for such a decision (O'Brien 1991:400-401). That is, 'the final infinitive construction in vv. 10-11 is best regarded as being in a relation of coordination with the ἵνα purpose clause in vv. 8e-9a' (Koperski 1996:177). If this is Paul's idea then there are three parallel purposes for which Paul has given up everything and considered them rubbish. Each of these three purposes carries the same weight: to gain Christ, to be found in him, and to know him. Though this is possible, two factors argue against this option. First, the change from the conjunction ἵνα to the articular infinitive of purpose seems to point to more than a stylistic change. Paul often expresses parallel purposes by using ἵνα ... ἵνα. Here, however, he introduces the first two elements with ἵνα and then after a long participial phrase adds 'τοῦ γνῶναι'. Paul does something similar in Romans 6:6 where the initial purpose clause (ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) serves as the basis for the second one (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ). The same kind of construction is found in Colossians 1:9-10 where once again the first purpose clause (ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ) is the basis of the second (περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου).⁸⁰ Finally, the infinitive can be linked to 'I consider everything rubbish so that' and express Paul's ultimate purpose (Fee 1995: 327). In other words, Paul expresses his penultimate purpose, namely to gain Christ and be found in him, but even this purpose has a greater goal, to know Christ.

⁷⁹ 'Therefore, given the rarity of this construction in the Pauline corpus and in light of a clearly documented alternative to express purpose, it seems better to understand the clause introduced by τοῦ with the infinitive as having been added to the ἵνα clause in order to convey a consecutive or exegetical meaning. In the case of Phil 3:10, then, the infinitive clause does not describe a further purpose of counting all things as loss, but rather it further defines what it means to gain Christ and be found in him' (Byrnes 2003:212).

⁸⁰ It is recognized that there are differences in these passages as well. For example, in Colossians 1 the infinitive which begins verse 10 is not articular whereas in Philippians 3:10 it is. Also, it is evident that the sample size of constructions with ἵνα ... τοῦ + infinitive is too small to come to any definitive conclusions. All that can be acknowledged is that the two examples that we do have (Phlp 3:10 and Rm 6:6) seem to support the idea of one purpose serving as the basis for a more ultimate purpose.

A definitive answer is difficult because ‘Paul employs a great deal of variety in combining ἵνα purpose constructions with other types of final constructions, and there seems to be no “rule” as to whether such a combination indicates parallelism or subordination’ (Koperski 1996:173). Nonetheless, the scanty evidence that we do have points more favorably in the direction of the fourth option. Paul uses the articular infinitive in Philippians 3:10 to indicate that his ultimate purpose for devaluing all that was formerly valuable to him was in order to know Christ. And as stated earlier, this knowledge was not some impersonal merely propositional knowledge, but rather refers to the most intimate of personal associations with Christ, as Paul elaborates in what follows.

Having stated his ultimate purpose, ‘to know Christ’, Paul goes on to express exactly what is entailed in this knowledge. He uses three objects, each in the accusative case, to describe that which he wants to know, αὐτὸν, τὴν δύναμιν, and κοινωσίαν. With each object there is an emphatic personal pronoun, clearly pointing to Christ as the truly central object of his knowing (‘him’, ‘his resurrection’, and ‘his sufferings’. Later he also adds ‘his death’). Paul links the final two objects together very closely by joining them under one article, and links them both to the first object (‘to know him’) by the conjunction καὶ. As most commentators recognize, this καὶ functions epexegetically offering an explanation of what it means to ‘know him’, namely to know the power of his resurrection and to know the participation in his sufferings. Together these two ‘objects’ of knowledge are what it means to know Christ.

To what does ‘the power of his resurrection’ refer? At least five interpretations have been offered. First, it may refer to the power of Christ. As one author writes, ‘The Son, now established in power, is able to exercise continually on our behalf the power which he always had, but which in his earthly existence was only manifested occasionally’ (Koperski 1996:239). So this power does not refer to the historical event of Christ’s resurrection, but rather to the power that Christ exercises today. Second, it may refer to the power of God. This interpretation has been most forcefully argued by Joseph Fitzmyer (1981:202-217). He begins by stating, ‘the resurrection for Paul meant the

endowment of Jesus by the Father with the “power” of a new life’ (Fitzmyer 1981:206).
He then goes on to explain,

This “power” is not limited to the influence of the risen Jesus on the Christian, but includes a reference to the origin of that influence in the Father himself. The knowledge, then, that Paul seeks to attain, the knowledge that he regards as transforming the life of a Christian and his/her sufferings, must be understood as encompassing the full ambit of that power. It emanates from the Father, raises Jesus from the dead at his resurrection, endows him with a new vitality, and finally proceeds from him as the life-giving, vitalizing force of the “new creation” and of the new life that Christians in union with Christ experience and live. It is not something simply equated with the “physical” act of raising Jesus from the dead, or with the miraculous character of that event, or with the state of the risen Jesus. It is rather the full, comprehensive power in its various phases; and the knowledge of it, emanating from Christian faith, is the transforming force that vitalizes Christian life and molds the suffering of the Christian to the pattern which is Christ. This is the basis of Paul’s hope and his boast. (Fitzmyer 1981:208-209)

Thus, though it is clear that ‘the power of his resurrection’ implies that Jesus wields power and even that this power impacts believers, yet Paul’s primary focus is on the origin of that power in the Father who in turn works it out through Christ and eventually into the lives of Christ-followers.

A third interpretation claims that this power refers to the power of the Spirit. Thus one scholar comments,

Paul is saying that while he has already undergone a transformation that is cognitive and complete – one of being struck by the “overwhelming impact of the knowledge (γνώσις) of Christ Jesus, my Lord” (3:8) – he is also at present undergoing a physical change in the form of a process that consists in gradually being taken over more and more by the material pneuma in order that he may eventually and finally come to be found in Christ. (Engberg-Pedersen 2009:134)

Fourth, Paul may have in mind the power of inner transformation. For example, ‘When Paul in Philippians speaks about experiencing the power of Christ’s resurrection, he has in mind our spiritual transformation into the image of Christ – a transformation that takes place as we behold his glory (2 Cor. 3:18)’ (Silva 2005:164). A fifth interpretation states that the power of his resurrection refers to the power that believers wield. Thus Fee writes that this power is ‘the power that comes to believers on the basis of Christ’s resurrection’ (Fee 1995:329).

What shall we conclude? The power of his resurrection at very least refers to the active expression of God's majesty that brought about the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This was a concrete act that demonstrated the divine power at work. It becomes the quintessential expression of power in the Scriptures. But this same power was not exhausted there, nor is it limited to that expression. This same power is evident in Christ post-resurrection. His new life, the glory that he possessed, and his new exalted position all reflect this same resurrection power. And of course, in Philippians 3:21 we read that it is the power of the exalted Christ himself who will transform our earthly bodies to be like his glorious one. So the very same power of God displayed in the resurrection is also available and active in Christ. This too is 'the power of his resurrection'.⁸¹ But Paul's point goes beyond even this expression of power which originates in the Father and is expressed in and through the Son. Paul himself wants to know this power which implies that it is a power that those who belong to Jesus can also experience. Thus the power of his resurrection, the very same power that remains active today in the exalted Christ and will be displayed through him in the future when he transforms the body of lowly sinners to be like his glorious body, is the same power at work in and through his people by the Holy Spirit. It is a power that those who are 'in Christ' and belong to the new age have access to, a power to face suffering, to overcome sin, and ultimately to become a transformed person who reflects the image of Christ. As Fitzmyer (1981:209) stated, it is a 'comprehensive power'. It was this power, originating in the Father, displayed in and through the Son, and now at work by his Spirit in and through his disciples that Paul wanted to experience so that he could more intimately know Christ.

This knowledge of Christ that Paul longed for is also described as 'κοινωνία παθημάτων αὐτοῦ'. Most scholars agree that παθημάτων is an objective genitive and

⁸¹ Jesus obviously had incredible power prior to his resurrection, a power that enabled him to heal the sick, cast out demons, forgive sins, and calm the seas. Yet though this pre-resurrection power may have been of the same capacity and intensity, it cannot rightly be called 'the power of his resurrection'. Paul chooses this phrase to describe the power that he wants to know so that he can fully know Christ because it conjures up a graphic picture of the maximum expression of power, one that brought about the most amazing event in history, the resurrection of the Son of God. It also brings to mind the heavenly glory that the resurrected and exalted Christ displayed.

that κοινωνία is best translated here with an active sense, ‘participation’, thus giving a rendering, ‘a participation in the sufferings of Christ’. But at least two key questions must be answered at this point. First, what did Paul mean by ‘his sufferings’ (παθημάτων αὐτοῦ)? The pronoun ‘his’ most obviously points to Christ, thus the phrase ‘his sufferings’ refers to the sufferings of Christ. But what did Paul have in mind by ‘Christ’s sufferings’? A similar phrase appears in the following texts:

- 2 Corinthians 1:5: ὅτι καθὼς περισσεύει τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς
- Colossians 1:24: ἀναναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία
- 1 Peter 4:13: ἀλλὰ καθὼς κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν
- 1 Peter 5:1: μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων

In each of these passages the plural noun which is translated ‘sufferings’ (πάθημα or θλίψις) is linked to a genitive noun (in all the above examples it is Χριστοῦ with the article, except Phlp 3:10 which has the pronoun αὐτοῦ). The genitive Χριστοῦ has been understood in a variety of ways in the above constructions.⁸² However, in Philippians 3:10, the pronoun αὐτοῦ is most likely possessive giving a rendering of ‘the sufferings personally experienced by Christ’ (Contra Harris 2005:146). However, even if the possessive genitive is accepted there are at least four main interpretations of the exact nuance of this connotation of the phrase. In the first place, some scholars believe that Paul has in mind the ‘the sufferings that Christ endured’, referring primarily to his death and resurrection. A second interpretation agrees that the phrase refers to ‘the sufferings that Christ endured’ but would expand these sufferings to include ‘the whole drama of the incarnation, life, death and resurrection, rather than any specific event in Jesus’ life’ (Lim 2009:52). A third interpretation states that the phrase ‘Christ’s sufferings’ has in mind not so much the historical suffering that Jesus experienced, but rather the sufferings associated with his role as messiah. That is,

These παθήματα do not refer to Christ’s redemptive death on the cross. That once-for-all act is described by the apostle under the terms “blood”, “cross”, and “death”. Rather,

⁸² Thrall (1994:107) referring to 2 Corinthians 1:5 mentions for example, ‘a genitive *auctoris*: suffering ... due to the activity of Christ’. Garland (1999:66) mentions a genitive of source, ‘sufferings ordained by Christ for believers’ (see Harris 2005:146 who calls this same genitive construction a subjective genitive). Harris (2005:146) mentions a relational genitive, ‘the sufferings associated with Christ’. The list goes on!

“Christ’s sufferings” is another way of speaking of the messianic woes of Jewish apocalyptic thought, the birth pangs of the Messiah, which fall upon God’s people. All Christians participate in these sufferings; through them they enter the kingdom of God.

(O’Brien 1991: 405-406)

Fourth, there are some who see the ‘sufferings of Christ’ as referring to the sufferings that Christ inaugurated and which he continues to experience through his church as a result of their baptismal union with him (Ahern 1960:1-32; cf. Thrall 1994:108-110; Proudfoot 1963:147). This is often termed the ‘mystical’ view.

Before resolving this question, there is another related question that must be considered, namely what did it mean in concrete terms for Paul to *participate* in Christ’s sufferings? How does this ‘participation’ take place? There have been many different opinions, three of which stand out. In the first place, Paul wants to know Christ by sharing in his physical suffering, specifically experienced through his apostolic ministry. Thus one author comments, ‘When Paul speaks personally about participating in ... the sufferings of Christ, there is at the root of his thinking a commitment to suffer on behalf of the church to the extent that Christ suffered (without, of course, any idea of atoning value)’ (Perriman 1991:77). Though some see this as a desire for martyrdom, most view it as Paul wanting to identify fully with Christ which necessarily includes experiencing the physical suffering that comes with following him and sharing his gospel. This is no masochism, but rather a recognition that,

the way forward lies with the “road less traveled,” through the present with its suffering for the sake of Christ, not through the past with its safe, religious conformity...From his perspective any genuine knowing of Christ means participation in his sufferings, since only in such sufferings does one truly know Christ...He frequently refers to suffering on behalf of Christ as the ordinary lot of believers ... The language “participation in his sufferings” gives the theological clue to everything. While believers’ sufferings do not have the expiatory significance of Christ’s, they are nonetheless seen as intimately related to his. Through our suffering the significance of Christ’s suffering is manifested to the world, which is why in 1:29-30 Paul describes such suffering as “on behalf of Christ ... It is difficult to imagine that Paul is not here reflecting the teaching of his Lord, that those who follow Christ will likewise have to “bear the cross” on behalf of others.

(Fee 1995:332-333)

Campbell (1932:371) is in agreement and in fact is so confident of this interpretation that he boldly says that Philippians 3:10, 'presents no difficulty; the meaning is simply, "(the) sharing of his sufferings," a real participation in the sufferings of Christ, not merely sympathy with him in his sufferings, still less appropriation of the benefits won through these'. And O'Brien (1991:406) is even more concrete, 'such afflictions may include physical sufferings such as imprisonment, floggings, beatings, hardships, and privations of different kinds...as well as mental anguish'. So then this first interpretation holds that participation in 'his sufferings' refers to Paul's real life physical sufferings that he experienced through the realization of his apostolic mission. This suffering was truly a participation in Christ's suffering.

A second line of interpretation sees participation in these sufferings as referring to inner transformation or what some have termed 'spiritual suffering'. Thus, Christ-followers do not have to actually endure physical suffering in order to 'participate' in Christ's sufferings. Rather as Hawthorne claims,

Just as knowing Christ in the power of his resurrection is an inward experience that can be expressed in terms of being resurrected with Christ (cf. Rom 6:4), so knowing Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings is equally an inward experience that can be described in terms of having died with Christ.

(Hawthorne 1991:144)

Loh and Nida (1977:105) are of the same opinion, 'To share in his sufferings refers most probably to an inward experience, not to outward hardships and persecutions, just as the experience of the power of the risen Christ is an inward experience'. Adherents of this position generally appeal to Romans 6:4-11 as a parallel situation. So then, Paul participated in Christ's sufferings not through his apostolic ministry and the sufferings that resulted, but rather through his union with Christ, the death he died through his baptism into Christ (Rm 6:3-4), and his continual battle against sin.⁸³

⁸³ From a similar perspective, 'The sufferings of Christ are the Christian's sharing in the historical sufferings (or death) of Jesus, as these are mediated to them through their spiritual connection with the risen Christ—just as "comfort" is their sharing in the resurrection of Christ through the somatic union with him. The death and resurrection of Christ are twin experiences of the believer as the result of his union with the Lord' (Proudfoot 1963:147).

A third and mediating approach claims that ‘sharing in his suffering’ refers to both outward physical suffering and inward struggles against sin. Muller writes,

This does not mean sharing the atoning and redemptive suffering of Christ on the cross, but it means a personal dying to sin (mortificatio), the crucifying of the flesh, and suffering for the sake of Christ and His cause ... Sharing the suffering of Christ is, therefore, more than just suffering for the sake of Christ (in Tribulation and persecution), or imitation of Christ. It means all suffering bodily or spiritual, which overtakes the believer by virtue of his new manner of life, his “Christ life” in a world unbelieving and hostile to Christ.

(Muller 1955:116-117)

This same inclusive interpretation (Koperski 1996:258) can be seen in other authors.

For example,

Such suffering is a privilege ... It implies beatings, stonings, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, etc., endured in the work or being *a witness for Christ to all men* ... It includes also the experience of the hatefulness and hurt of one’s own sins, the sins that caused the Savior to suffer such indescribable agonies ... Hence, the desire to participate in the sufferings of Christ is part of the intense longing and striving for complete holiness.

(Hendriksen 1962:168)

Thus, this inclusive approach sees a both/and meaning in the idea of ‘sharing’ the sufferings of Christ. It includes both the external physical suffering that accompanies a life of discipleship and the internal spiritual realities of death to sin through union with Christ. All suffering related to our relationship with Christ and service in his name can be termed ‘a participation in his sufferings’.

What conclusions can be drawn? What is the significance of ‘κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ’? The noun πάθημα occurs sixteen times in the New Testament, seven of which are in the universally accepted letters of Paul (Rm 7:5; 8:18; 2 Cor 1:5, 6, 7; Gl 5:24; Phlp 3:10), two occurrences in the debated epistles (Col 1:24; 2 Tm 3:11), three in Hebrews (Heb 2:9, 10; 10:32) and four in 1 Peter (1 Pt 1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 9). While πάθημα can mean ‘passion’ or ‘strong desire’ (Rom 7:5; Gl 5:24), it generally means hardship or

suffering, especially physical suffering, though its meaning can be broader.⁸⁴ It can also be a synonym of θλίψις (2 Cor 1:3-7; Col 1:24), and thus there is no real difference between τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 1:5) and τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Col 1:24). Both refer to hardship or suffering.

What of the function of the genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ? The structure of Philippians 3:10 is illuminating:

καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ
καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ,
συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ

The three-fold repetition of the genitive αὐτοῦ serves to emphasize Christ and his work. Paul speaks of ‘his resurrection’, ‘his sufferings’ and ‘his death’. Each of these genitives functions in the same way, to specify whose work it was that Paul wants to know, namely Christ’s. Each use of αὐτοῦ is clearly parallel and functions as a possessive pronoun. So the sufferings referred to are the ones that Christ himself experienced, just as the resurrection and the death were the ones that he experienced. Therefore, ‘his sufferings’ is a reference to the earthly sufferings of Christ, culminating in his death. Due to the various references in this passage to the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:6-11, it is most likely that ‘Christ’s sufferings’ though centering on the death of Christ, include the totality of his humiliation, from his incarnation to his death. It includes his ‘emptying of self’ and his ‘humbling of self’ as well as his sacrificial death. The whole process from incarnation to crucifixion is included in ‘his sufferings’.

How does Paul ‘participate’ in the sufferings that Christ experienced? If the sufferings of Christ refer to historical sufferings that Christ endured, both in his crucifixion and

⁸⁴ It is not always clear if πάθημα has only physical suffering in mind or if the suffering referred to can also include other kinds of suffering. For example, in Romans 8:18 Paul writes, ‘For I consider that the sufferings (παθήματα) of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.’ The suffering described here is not clearly defined as physical or otherwise. However, in the context what is clear is that the focus is on the full effects of the fall. The whole creation was subjected to futility and presently groans and suffers pain until the time of its redemption. This futility and painful groaning appear to be the result, not only of the physical suffering that must be experienced, but of all suffering, all kinds of hardship that result from life in a fallen world. In Hebrews 10:32 it is clear that παθημάτων can go beyond physical suffering to include loss of possessions, reproaches and other kinds of suffering that are directly related to persecution, but are not all physical in nature.

throughout the accomplishment of his mission on earth, then Paul must in some sense ‘share’ in these real life sufferings. Paul does this through the persecution and hardships that he experiences while living out his God-ordained mission. The adversities that Paul endured for the sake of the gospel, prophesied by Christ himself (Ac 9:15-16), are his participation in Christ’s sufferings. This participation in Christ’s suffering does not refer to every kind of suffering that Paul endured;⁸⁵ rather it refers to what he endured for the sake of his calling. His imprisonment (Phlp 1:12-13) and the personal and financial hardship that resulted (Phlp 4:14), the reproach of others (Phlp 1:17), injustice, persecution (Phlp 1:30), potential death for the gospel, and the sacrifices made in the service of others (Phlp 2:17)⁸⁶ all were examples of Paul’s participation in ‘the sufferings of Christ’. None of these hardships were expiatory, but they were nonetheless a genuine sharing in the hardships of Christ. As Paul engaged in his mission he not only represented Christ, he also participated in his sufferings.

Nonetheless, the full implications of this participation in Christ’s sufferings are still unclear. Therefore Paul elaborates further on what it means to participate in Christ’s sufferings (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ) through the participial phrase that follows. The difficulty is in knowing how this participle phrase relates to what comes before. Several options have been suggested:

First, some see it as an exegetical participle whereby Paul is explaining what he means by ‘participate in his sufferings’ (Tannehill 1967:120). The structure would thus be:

καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ *is the same as* συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ

Thus to participate in ‘his’ sufferings is the same thing as ‘being made conformable to his death’.

⁸⁵ That is, it doesn’t refer to any kind of hardship or suffering which is a consequence of living in a fallen world.

⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that according to Philippians 2:30 Epaphroditus suffered a physical sickness that almost killed him and Paul refers to it as ‘risking his life for the work of Christ.’ This too is a participation in the sufferings of Christ.

Second, and closely related, is to see the participial phrase as modal and thereby expressing the means by which a person participates in Christ's sufferings (Fee 1995:333, n. 65). This participation takes place as a person is conformed to Christ's death. The structure is very similar to the epexegetical participial:

καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ *by means of* συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ

A third option is to see the participle as expressing result (Hansen 2009:246; Koperski 1996:270; Byrnes 2003:228). A participation in Christ's sufferings will produce the effect of conformation to Christ's death. The structure would thus be:

καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ *with the result that* συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ

A fourth possibility is that instead of relating primarily to the phrase 'participation in his sufferings' the participle qualifies the whole of Philippians 3:10 (O'Brien 1991:407). Thus, Paul is conformed to Christ's death by both participating in Christ's sufferings and being strengthened for this very purpose through the power of his resurrection. The structure thus would be:

τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ *by means of* συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ⁸⁷

Though each of these options is possible grammatically, which one fits best with Paul's argument? For all intents and purposes the modal and the epexegetical positions communicate much the same thing. Both basically define Christ's sufferings as the process of being conformed to Christ's death. But this does not appear to be Paul's point. It has already been established that the first καί in Philippians 3:10 is epexegetical. In other words, the two phrases that follow καί (τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ and κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ) serve to explain more concretely what Paul meant when he said that he wanted to 'know him'. This knowledge would come by an experience of the power of Christ's resurrection and by a participation in Christ's sufferings. And these

⁸⁷ The relationship of the participle to the rest could be result, means, or epexegetical. The point of this particular position is that the phrase relates to all of verse 10 and not just the last phrase. O'Brien (1991:407) believes that the relationship is one of means.

two ways that Paul wanted to intimately know Christ are closely related, both being indispensable for the kind of knowledge of Christ that Paul longed for.⁸⁸ But what impact will this kind of knowledge of Christ have, and especially such a participation in his sufferings? Paul adds the participial phrase ‘being conformed to his death’ as the answer. The process of transformation into a cruciform person is the effect of participating in Christ’s sufferings.

Paul uses the present passive participle συμμορφιζόμενος, a word that appears nowhere else in the New Testament nor in the Septuagint, nor does it appear in any literature before Paul’s time. The related adjective σύμμορφος shows up only in Philippians 3:21 and Romans 8:29 as well as in Nicander’s poem *Theriaca*⁸⁹ prior to the New Testament age and then again in Pseudo-Lucian’s *Amores*⁹⁰ which is second century or later. O’Brien suggests that Paul coined the word (O’Brien 1991:408). The word has the idea of ‘shaping something into the same form’ as something else. In Philippians 3:10 it is Paul’s life that is shaped into the same form as Christ had at his death. Paul sees this work of ‘formation’ as still in progress.

The nature of this process of being shaped into a cruciform life is best understood by examining the ‘transformation’ of Christ expressed so eloquently in the Christ hymn in Philippians 2:6-11. At least two factors commend this passage as an interpretive parallel for Philippians 3:10. First is the similar structure of humiliation and exaltation.

Philippians 2:6-8 relates Christ’s humiliation, while Philippians 2:9-11 expresses his exaltation. The order is not so neat in Philippians 3:10, nonetheless both themes are clearly present through the mention of Christ’s resurrection and his death. Second, is

⁸⁸ Both phrases are governed by one article thus showing that they are closely linked. Exactly how they are related Paul does not specify. Most likely Paul’s point is that they are related in that both are essential ingredients of a true knowledge of Christ. Contra O’Brien (1991:406) who defines very specifically what Paul leaves ambiguous. O’Brien states, ‘As Paul participates in Christ’s sufferings, strengthened to do so through the power of his resurrection’. Though this is possible it appears to limit ‘power of his resurrection’ to only strength for suffering, whereas Paul probably had something broader in mind, his power as our enablement for all that is required in knowing him.

⁸⁹ The poem states in lines 320-321, Εὖ δ’ ἂν σηπεδόνοσ γνοίησ δέμασ, ἄλλο μὲν εἶδει αἰμορόω σύμμορφον.

⁹⁰ The text states, γράεσ δὲ καὶ θεραπαινίδων ὁ σύμμορφοσ ὄχλοσ ἐν κύκλω περιεστάσσι ποικίλοισ φαρμάκοισ καταφαρμακεύουσαι τὰ δυστυχή πρόσωπα.

the use of the μορφή root and the repetition of the idea of ‘transformation’. In the Christ hymn Paul uses the noun μορφή twice to describe Christ (Phlp 2:6, 7). And this description is found in the context of a great ‘transformation’ in Christ as he went from being μορφή θεοῦ to μορφήν δούλου.⁹¹ His ‘essence’ did not change, but his identity and sphere of action did. He had a new visible condition, a new ‘status’. He was now ‘empty’ because he was fully identified with weak, sinful humanity. This same idea of taking on a different ‘form’ is repeated in Philippians 3:10 through the use of the rare συμμορφίζω and Paul being transformed into the form of Christ’s death.

What did it mean for Paul to be transformed into the form of Christ’s death? Once again, we need to consider this same ‘process of transformation’ in Christ. Christ was ‘ἐν μορφή θεοῦ’ (Phlp 2:6) and yet he took on the μορφή of a servant (Phlp 2:7). This is a definite ‘change’ in ‘form’. But how did this transformation take place? Christ made a decision (ἠγήσατο, ‘he considered’) not to take advantage of his original position. In turn, he emptied himself by taking on the more lowly form of a servant. Yet this transformation did not end there, though Paul uses other terminology, the idea of transformation continues. Jesus ‘being found in human form’ (σχήματι Phlp 2:7) became (γενόμενος) obedient to the point of death (Phlp 2:8). This reflects another step further down from his exalted ‘form’ of equality with God. Now not only has he taken on humanness, but he has taken on the lowly position of a fully obedient servant whose commitment to obey takes him to the lowest possible place, crucifixion. This crucifixion was not a result of judgment, but rather was a willful act of obedience. How did Jesus experience this final ‘change’? Paul says that he ‘humbled himself’. And so, how was it that Jesus was ‘changed’ so that he became conformed to death? He emptied himself and he humbled himself.

⁹¹ By referring to Christ’s incarnation as a ‘transformation’ we are not saying that he ceased to be God. Our point is to stress that a change of ‘station’ took place. Jesus’s self-emptying came about ‘by’ taking on the μορφή of a servant. He did not cease to be the μορφή θεοῦ. Paul’s point here is to show in graphic terms that even though Christ was equal with God, having the very μορφή θεοῦ, he made a definite decision to empty himself. This supreme act of humiliation consisted in taking on what he formally did not possess, the μορφήν δούλου. Christ’s identity had changed. He was now μορφήν δούλου, and was recognized as such.

This is the same process that Paul is to go through. It is an ongoing process that is characterized by a 'change of form' (συμμορφίζω). Paul was a stellar Jew with countless privileges, blessings, and religious accomplishments. And yet he considered (ἥγημαι) and he goes on considering (ἠγοῦμαι) these things, and in fact all things, to be of no value, like filthy trash. He has been emptying himself of former 'gains', losing all that once defined him religiously. This includes even the very righteousness that he once pursued. His desire is to be found united to Christ with only the free gift of righteousness that God offers, without any of the 'law-righteousness' that once defined him. Paul's ultimate goal is to know Christ in all his vastness, from his exaltation to his humiliation. This means experiencing the power of Christ's resurrection, but also experiencing the reality of his sufferings. It is through this participation in the sufferings of Christ, through a selfless and wholehearted engagement in the mission of Christ which inevitably leads to hardship for the name of Christ, that this transforming work of God takes place in his life whereby Paul will be ultimately conformed to Christ in his death. He will be empty of all 'my righteousness' and all the 'garbage' in which he once boasted. He will be sufficiently humbled so that what is important is no longer his reputation, but that Christ is proclaimed (Phlp 1:18). He will be sufficiently molded to be like the crucified one so that he will be content whether he is full or hungry, whether rich or in need (Phlp 4:11-13), whether he faces life or death (Phlp 1:20). This is what it means for Paul to be continually 'shaped into the image of Christ's death'. It is to have his life transformed so that it resembles the life of Christ at his crucifixion, resembling the same priorities and attitudes, and obedience, the same emptying of self and the same humility. And this conforming work requires that Paul experience the sufferings of Christ.

In Philippians 3:11 Paul states his ultimate goal in this whole process of having his life become truly cruciform, 'that somehow, I might attain to the resurrection from the dead' (εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν). And yet this goal lies in the future; it is a still unattained prize. Paul expresses his hope to reach the goal, but is he mired in doubt as the expression εἴ πως might indicate? There are four main positions regarding why Paul used such a seemingly tentative construction:

First, Paul wanted to express humility. It wasn't that Paul seriously doubted whether he would actually attain the prize, but rather, as one scholar comments, 'Paul uses such an unexpected hypothetical construction simply because of humility on his part, a humility that recognizes that salvation is the gift of God from start to finish and that as a consequence he dare not presume on this divine mercy' (Hawthorne 1983:146). A second option believes that Paul's motive was self-distrust. Paul recognized that there was still a long road to travel and that he could not be overconfident about the final destination. He must run and run well, all the way to the end for only by remaining faithful till the end would one win the prize. Thus,

It is always important, in this connection, to distinguish between the firm, unmovable *object* of our hope and our *subjective* apprehension of it. The apostle Paul, in spite of his maturity, and though writing under inspiration, was neither omniscient nor sinless. This passage is not the only place where he expresses a note of self-distrust (cf. esp. 1 Cor 9:27); moreover, his concern to strengthen Christian assurance is always balanced by a desire to prevent presumptuousness (1 Cor 10:12; Gl 4:19-20).

(Silva 2005:166)

A third position states that Paul's 'doubt' was not pertaining to whether or not he would attain the resurrection, but rather to 'how' it would be attained. Would Paul have to pass through death to be raised, or would he be snatched away while still alive? O'Brien comments,

'While the goal of the resurrection is certain, the way or route by which the apostle will reach it is unclear ... he might reach the resurrection through martyrdom (or some other kind of death), or he might be alive at the coming of Christ'.

(O'Brien 1991:413)

Finally, a fourth viewpoint states that the real issue was not doubt, but dependence. 'By introducing his hope to "attain to the resurrection from the dead" with εἴ πως, Paul removes the realization of this hope from the realm of human possibility and confesses it to be only a "divine possibility" (Gundry Volf 1990:258). In other words,

Here Paul intentionally contrasts his attitude toward his final destiny with that of his perfectionist opponents ... After such a confession of utter dependence on God for salvation, Paul's hope of resurrection can hardly rest on his own doing, not even on a

possible martyr's death. Rather, Paul looks to God, who alone can raise the dead, for the fulfillment of his expectation that he will attain to the resurrection.

(Volf 1990:258)

It would seem that these options are not mutually exclusive. Each one expresses a fundamental conviction that Paul was not mired in doubt; he confidently believed and expected to one day 'attain to the resurrection from the dead'. In other words, Paul does not doubt the reality of reaching the goal. In fact, the grammatical construction εἴ πως does not necessarily imply doubt in the sense that Paul feared that he wouldn't reach the goal.⁹² Rather the expression reveals the natural tension that existed in Paul's mind. On the one hand, Paul had a deep desire, a longing for the goal, and a firm confidence in God's gracious work which would assure that Paul makes it to the end. This confidence is clearly stated in many passages in Paul's letters (i.e., 1 Th 5:23-24; 1 Cor 1:8-9; Phlp 1:6; 3:20-21). Thus, there was no worrisome fear or tentativeness in Paul's words. His confidence for his final salvation and his hope for the future rested on God's faithfulness and God's clear promises. And yet, Paul recognizes that many have started the race only to give up before reaching the goal. What is needed is what Colossians states so clearly: Christ reconciled you 'in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard' (Col 1:21-23; emphasis added). Only those who persevere until the end will reach the goal. This is the tension that exists in Paul's mind as he writes this letter. He knows God is faithful, but he also knows

⁹² Compare the comment by Gundry Volf, εἴ πως does 'not suggest that an element of doubt is inherent to the construction. Rather, it simply communicates hope or expectancy' (Gundry Volf 1990:257). And yet Silva rebuts, 'The specific combination *ei/ean pōs* commonly designates uncertainty (cf. *LSJ* 1562, meaning I), and this is surely the case in the NT'. He cites Acts 27:12 as evidence (Silva 2005:166). Bockmuehl agrees with Silva, 'there is a degree of contingency often underrated by commentators: Paul's own resurrection is his earnest desire, rather than a *fait accompli*' (Bockmuehl 1998:217). Perhaps the answer lies in what one means by 'doubt'. Paul's 'doubt' is not to be associated with a fear that he will miss the resurrection. He clearly places his confidence for this work in God's faithfulness and the reality of God's gracious call in his life, a call that God himself initiated and will bring to fruition. And yet, Paul recognizes that perseverance was necessary. He had not yet attained to the resurrection. It was a goal off in the future. He must remain faithful and persevere to the end as 1 Corinthians 9:27 makes clear, 'But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified' (ἀδόκιμος). There is thus a tension here between absolute confidence in God's promise and His faithfulness to do what he promised (1 Th 5:23-24; 1 Cor 1:8-9) and Paul's recognition that he must 'work out his salvation with fear and trembling' (Phlp 2:12-13). It is with this sense of 'doubt' in mind that Paul uses εἴ πως.

that the road to the goal is long and hard and that many have turned aside before reaching the end. Paul should not presume anything; rather he must diligently run the race all the way till the finish line. As one writer put it,

We may fairly say that it does not imply the uncertainty of the final glory of the true saint. It is language which views vividly, in isolation, one aspect of the “Pilgrim’s Progress” towards heaven; the aspect of our need of continual watching, self-surrender, and prayer; in order to the development of that likeness without which heaven would not be heaven. The other side of the matter is the efficacy and perseverance of the grace which comes out in our watching; without which we should not watch; which “predestinates” us “to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rm 8.29). The mystery lies, as it were, between two apparently parallel lines; the reality of an omnipotent grace, and the reality of the believer’s duty. As this line or that is regarded, in its entire reality, the language of assurance or of contingency is appropriate. But the parallel lines, as they seem now, prove at last to converge in glory.
(Moule 1977: 96)⁹³

What Paul so earnestly longs for and expects, but for which he knows he must persevere is called the ‘resurrection from the dead’. This refers to the future day when at Christ’s return, all believers will be raised to new life (Rm 8:23; 1 Cor 15:22-23, 35-49; 2 Cor 5:4-5; Php 3:21). This was the goal of Paul’s pursuit of knowing Christ, to be resurrected on the day when Christ returns.

Having expressed his deep longing and the goal towards which his life is directed, Paul goes on in Philippians 3:12-14 to describe the progress he has made regarding this goal. He acknowledges that he has not yet reached the goal (Οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον), nor has he been ‘perfected’ (ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι).⁹⁴ Scholars have long debated the exact focus of this ‘goal’. Paul has just stated that he longs to attain to the resurrection of the dead. But this goal is merely a representation of the overall goal stated throughout Philippians 3:7-11, namely ‘to gain Christ and be found in him’ with the righteousness

⁹³ ‘Resurrection, then, is for believers no doubtful and uncertain desire but the sure hope for what God in Christ has promised. Yet the only road to it is the race-track of the expectant, Christ-orientated “mind” that Paul himself exemplifies: forgetting the pride in his own status and achievements and reaching forward to the heavenly prize of fellowship with Christ (vv. 13f.). There lies the contingency’ (Bockmuehl 1998:218).

⁹⁴ Though many scholars have attempted to explain why Paul gives this disclaimer, they are merely speculating because the text gives no clear idea of the why. Paul’s point is simply to acknowledge that he has not yet arrived at the goal of the Christian life. He has not yet achieved the purpose that he has so passionately been driving at. And yet, he is neither stagnant nor indifferent. He is still actively pursuing the goal.

that comes from God, so that ultimately he might know Christ in his immense fullness, from his exaltation to his humiliation and thus to attain to the resurrection from the dead. That is, so that he too, after passing through the same humiliation, might be exalted. Yet Paul is keenly aware that he has not reached this point. The goal is still off in the distance. His life has not been fully conformed to that of Christ and therefore he cannot say that he is 'fully mature'.

Although Paul recognizes that he is still far short of the goal, he is not passive or inactive. Paul is continually pursuing (διώκω) to be able to finally take hold of (καταλάβω) the very thing for which Christ first took hold of him (κατελήμφθην). Christ was the initiator of this whole process. He reached into Paul's life and took hold of him (Ac 9:15-16) with a clear purpose in mind; now Paul seeks to pursue this purpose. He again states that he recognizes that he has not yet arrived at the goal (Phlp 3:13a), yet he has a very singular focus (ἐν δέ), he is leaving behind all that represented his former life (see for example Phlp 3:4-8) and he, like a track runner stretching for the victory line, pushes himself forward towards the prize that Christ has set before him (Phlp 3:13). This prize is described as τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. It refers once again to what Paul has already stated as the pursuit of his life, the resurrection of the dead as a representation of the fully 'achieved' knowledge of Christ and all that entails. Paul stretches himself forward continually and passionately towards the heavenly invitation of eternal life, a resurrected life, a fully comprehensive knowledge of Christ. Paul speaks of this eschatological goal again in Philippians 3:20-21, 'But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform (μετασχηματίσει) our lowly body to be like (σύμμορφον) his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.' This eschatological work of Christ involves a transformation of our physical body so that it will be conformed to Christ's glorious body.

To summarize the text, Paul warns the Philippians of those who espouse a righteousness which comes through circumcision or other 'works of the flesh'. Though such people claim to be in the right, Paul is quick to insist that the real people of God

are those, like Paul, who make no boast in their religious heritage or in their religious acts or traditions. Paul once had this same faulty confidence, but has since given it up and now finds his only boast in Christ and considers all former confidences, all former objects of boasting to be utterly useless, without any value whatsoever. In fact, he had to give this former boasting up so that he could exchange it for something of far greater value, the knowledge of Christ. Paul has sacrificed everything in exchange for Christ and now instead of pursuing a man-initiated righteousness he lives for one all-consuming passion, to know Christ deeply and personally. This means to experience both the all-encompassing power of his glorious resurrection and to participate in his sufferings. It is as Paul participates in Christ's suffering and humiliation that he is progressively conformed to Christ's death, living out the same attitudes, holding the same values, and surrendering to the same humiliation. Paul's goal in this passionate pursuit of Christ is to persevere until the end and thus reach the goal of his faith, to be raised together with Christ. He has not yet reached this goal, but he continues striving to know Christ and to be shaped by him through his power and his sufferings so that on that final day he will attain the prize of eternal communion with Christ.

3.4 APPLICATION: TRANSFORMATION IN PHILIPPIANS 3:10

What does Philippians 3:10 have to say about the concept of transformation? The first task is to understand what transformation is? Paul speaks here of transformation as *συμμορφίζω*, being 'shaped' into the same 'form' as Christ. And yet, Paul rather surprisingly declares that the transformation that he seeks is not a conformation to the image of Christ (*τῆς εἰκόνοσ ἀυτοῦ*) as he often states but rather to his death (*τῷ θανάτῳ ἀυτοῦ*). What could Paul have in mind? It is not that Paul longed for death, (i.e., to be like Christ in that he died), but rather Paul longed to be conformed to what Christ was in his death. The 'form' to which he longed to see his life molded was a cruciform one. He wanted to be completely shaped by the very 'mindset' that Jesus Christ possessed in his sacrificial death (Phlp 2:5). This mindset is exemplified in the Christ-hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 and can be summed up by four key phrases from the hymn.

First, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ. That is, Christ ‘did not regard being equal with God as something to take advantage of, or, more idiomatically, as something to use for his own advantage’ (Hoover 1971:118). Christ did not use or abuse his privileged status for his own gain; he surrendered his rights and chose instead obedience even at great cost to himself. He took the hard road, the road of submission to the Father’s will that ultimately led to extreme humiliation and suffering on the one hand, but to fulfillment of his mission on the other hand.⁹⁵ It was this ‘consideration’ to not take advantage of his unique position that exemplifies the sacrificial, self-less mindset of Christ, the very cruciform attitude into which Paul wants to be ‘formed’. So then, if Paul is to be conformed to this Christ-mindset neither can he let his former status, privileges, accomplishments, and rights be determinant for his new life and serve as his present and future ground for boasting. He cannot use for his own advantage what was formerly ‘gain’ to him.

The second key phrase is linked to the first and serves as the ‘active’ expression of it, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφῇ⁹⁶ δούλου λαβῶν ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος. In direct contrast to taking advantage of his former position, Christ surrendered this place of honor. He ‘made himself of no reputation.’ That is, he ‘emptied himself’, not in the

⁹⁵ One thinks of Jesus in the wilderness as he faced the satanic temptation (Mt 4:1-11). The Evil One’s first tactic was to convince Jesus to bypass the Father’s appointed path for his earthly mission, a path that involved extreme self-sacrifice, suffering, humiliation, and ultimately death. The devil wanted Jesus to take matters into his own hands in order to meet His own needs and thereby short-circuit God’s pre-determined plan. He wanted the Son to make full use of the power and privileges of His Sonship in order to avoid the pain and suffering of his lowly condition as a servant. But Jesus refused, choosing instead the path of complete obedience, self-sacrifice, and even death. This is the same mindset that Paul speaks about in Philippians 2:5-8 and 3:10-11.

⁹⁶ The precise sense of μορφῇ is a hotly debated issue. Jowers (2006:739-766) mentions five different interpretations of μορφῇ. We cannot address this complex question here. Two comments will have to suffice. First, it is clear from the context of Philippians 2 that Paul’s primary purpose in using the Christ-hymn here was ethical rather than Christological. That is, Paul wants to establish the important ethical truth that humility and self-sacrifice are necessary if there is to be a profound and visible unity in the church. These characteristics were most profoundly modeled by Jesus Christ through his voluntary self-humiliation. Thus the passage is Christological in that Christ is the supreme example of this self-sacrificing humility, yet Paul’s primary purpose was to call the church to unity. Second, a precise understanding of Paul’s view of μορφῇ is not essential to capturing the point of his argument in Philippians 3. Paul applies the broad framework of the argument of Philippians 2 to himself in Philippians 3, without requiring that every detail be applied and understood. His point is that just as Christ humbled himself in the most complete and radical sense (death on the cross) in obedience to the Father’s will and then was exalted, so too Paul recognizes that he must be emptied of his own righteousness and be conformed to Christ’s death if he is to ‘attain to the resurrection of the dead’.

sense that he ceased to be 'equal with God' or that he temporarily gave up his divine attributes or other such things.⁹⁷ Rather his emptying of self was a result of what he took on to himself, namely 'the form of a servant' or 'being born in the likeness of men'. His 'station' in life was dramatically changed by his own decision. For the sake of the divine mission he willingly and consciously assumed a lower place, a place that meant service to sinful humanity and finally the ultimate service, the sacrifice of his life for others. In the same way, if Paul is to reflect this same 'self-emptying' attitude he must renounce his former conviction ('If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more') and make himself of no reputation. He must not seek to use his former religious status as an excuse to avoid the suffering involved in the gospel mission. He must truly take on the form of a servant and empty himself of his former confidences (his circumcision as a basis of righteousness, his bloodline as a sign of privilege, his boasting in his sacrificial devotion to former religious causes, and the success he experienced in his religious efforts). He must empty himself of all that was formerly valuable to him and exchange them for Christ. This loss of former 'glory', as modeled by Christ, is another example of being conformed to Christ's death.

The third key phrase is ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου. This statement provides the most direct parallel with Paul's expression to 'be conformed to his death'. The hymn reveals the humiliation of Christ which took him from the glories of equality with God downward to humble servant hood and then even further to the unquestioning self-abnegation and radical obedience of crucifixion. Here Christ himself took on a cruciform shape. This profound act of humility whereby he who was 'equal with God' died in public shame as an act of obedience and as a fulfillment of his mission points to the very heart of 'being conformed to his death'. It was this willingness to consider all gain as loss, to completely empty self of all other confidences, and to stand in absolute weakness totally dependent upon the one who sent him, totally given over to the divine purpose and the divine calling, that Paul longed to experience. No longer

⁹⁷ See the persuasive arguments of Jowers (2006:750-752) who comments, for example, 'every other instance in which Paul employs the verb κενούω (Rm 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:15; 2 Cor 9:3), he employs it in a metaphorical sense that does not imply that the verb's subject is emptied of any specific element' (Jowers 2006:750).

could he boast in 'my righteousness' or 'my Jewishness' or 'my religious prowess' or even my progress 'in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers' (Gl. 1:14). All this former 'gain' had to be sacrificed, emptied out, so that Paul could be 'found in him not having my own righteousness which is by Torah observance, but the righteousness of God which comes by faith in Christ'. This is what it meant to 'be conformed to Christ's death', to become a lowly servant of the gospel who lives in total dependence upon Christ and his righteousness. And it is this cruciform shape that is the prerequisite to gaining the knowledge of Christ that Paul passionately longed to attain.

The fourth phrase is *διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν*. The way to exaltation came not through self-aggrandizement, but through self-sacrifice. The way to reach glory was through humiliation and suffering. And it was God who exalted Christ. There is no room for self-exaltation or dependence upon self-achievement. Paul understood this too. Thus in his deep desire to know Christ he recognized that his life had to take a cruciform shape before he could 'attain to the resurrection from the dead'. The pathway to glory must pass through suffering; exaltation is always preceded by sacrificial obedience and humility. In order to attain to the resurrection from the dead, Paul had to die first, not necessarily in a physical sense, but he absolutely had to be conformed to the image of the crucified One, stripped of his misplaced confidence in his own righteousness and his privileged status. It was only when he was conformed to the death of Christ that he could be exalted by God and therefore 'attain to the resurrection from the dead'.

These four key phrases from the Christ-hymn sum up what Paul understood as essential aspects of 'being conformed to his death'. To be conformed in this way means to adopt the same perspective as Christ had that ultimately led him to Calvary. It means to have a self-sacrificing, self-denying commitment to do God's will even at great cost to self. One who is conformed to Christ's death does not use his/her status or privileges or accomplishments for personal advantage, but willingly surrenders all claims in order to serve others. This self-emptying attitude also reflects itself in a life of humble obedience

to God and of dependence upon him for all things. In order for Paul to know Christ deeply and to ultimately reach the goal of the resurrection, he recognized that he must take on this same cruciform shape in his life.

But how does it happen that one is ‘conformed to his death’? If the exegesis above is correct then this transformation is the result of ‘participating in his sufferings’. In other words, the shaping of the person so that they take on cruciformity occurs through the refining process of participating in Christ’s afflictions. This means that through a full-engagement in the gospel mission which inevitably exposes one to suffering, God is at work molding the Christ-follower to the image of the crucified One. It should be noted that ‘full-engagement in the gospel mission’ does not necessarily mean that one is a missionary or a vocational Christian worker. Rather the idea is more in line with what Paul stated in Philippians 1:27-30,

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

ESV.

Paul directs his comments to the Christian community in Philippi at large. All Christ-followers must live a life worthy of the gospel and must strive for the faith of the gospel. This kind of fidelity will often lead to ‘suffering for his sake’ especially when the church courageously remains faithful in ‘holding fast to the word of life’ (Phlp 2:1:16) ‘in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation’ (Phlp 2:15). Thus, it is through the church’s ‘partnership in the gospel’ (Phlp 1:6) that it participates in the privations and afflictions, the persecution and sacrifices that are associated with Christ’s sufferings. And it is through this active participation in these sufferings that the Divine Potter shapes and re-shapes the life of the Christ-follower little by little conforming it to the very death of Christ. Witherington (2011) captures a part of this idea,

This is in part what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ, being conformed to his death. Here is where we note that the “imitation of Christ” is not just something the believer does through his or her own choices and actions. It is also about what happens to the believer, unavoidably, when God uses certain experiences to conform the person to the image of Christ.

(Witherington 2011: 205)

If then the holy Refiner uses our participation in Christ’s sufferings to mold us into a cross-shaped life, the very ‘form’ which is necessary to truly ‘know Christ’, then it is utter foolishness to follow the ‘Judaizers’ or other such opponents of the gospel. To put our confidence in a particular religious rite or to run for refuge behind honored religious bloodlines or to invoke an exemption from affliction due to past acts of devotion or to claim special privilege due to adherence to a particular expression of the faith so that we can find acceptance before others and thereby avoid the suffering that a faithful gospel-devoted life often brings is to hinder any real transformation in our lives. It is not that we run to suffering, but rather that we fully engage ourselves in living a gospel-worthy life which will surely lead in some way to a participation in the afflictions of Christ. This is one of God’s ways to bring about transformation in us. We are molded into the image of Christ at his death through our participation in Christ’s sufferings.

There are a few other important aspects of the concept of transformation that Paul brings to light in Philippians 3. For example, Paul makes it quite clear that a transformation of this nature is a process. Though this kind of transformation has a definite beginning point and is moving towards a clear goal, it is most notably a process that continues through all of life. This is made quite evident in Philippians 3:12-14,

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

ESV.

Paul finds himself in the middle of a race. He has not yet reached the goal, so he strives (διώκω) to advance. He is straining (ἐπεκτεινόμενος) like the speedster lunging towards the victory tape. He continually pursues (διώκω) the prize. All of these images point to a

strenuous process that is ongoing. Paul is in the midst of a grueling contest and he continues to run until he reaches the finish line, something that is still off into the distance. This idea of process is confirmed by Philippians 1:6, 'he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.' Here Paul affirms that the work⁹⁸ has begun, but has not yet been completed. It is an ongoing work, a process.

And yet Paul's transformation began at a moment in his past. This Paul makes clear in Philippians 3:12, 'I press on so that I may lay hold (καταλάβω) of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus' (ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ). Christ was the initiator. He is the one who 'laid hold' of Paul and now as a response, Paul passionately seeks to lay hold of Christ and the goal of the mission. When Paul refers to Christ having laid hold of him first, he probably is referring to the day when Christ met him on the Damascus Road. It was through this encounter that Paul began to recognize that Christ was more valuable than his former confidences. The fact of this initial transformation could be what Paul has in mind when he states that 'whatever gain I had, I counted (ἥγημαι) as loss because of Christ' (Phlp 3:7). That is, it was a result of his encounter with Christ that everything changed. This is most likely the explanation for Paul's use of the perfect tense (ἥγημαι – Phlp 3:7) and then the change to the present tense (ἥγοῦμαι – Phlp 3:8). Paul was 'grasped' by Jesus and this produced a powerful transformation in him so that he now had a whole new value system. Yet this initial act of transformation set off an ongoing process of transformation that would continue until 'the day of Christ'.

This process of transformation, though initiated by God (Phlp 1:6: 'he who began'), involves the active participation of Paul. That is, there is mutuality in the process. It is God who conforms Paul to Christ's death. This is a clear emphasis in Paul; God is the

⁹⁸ There is much discussion among commentators about the exact focus of 'good work' in Philippians 1:6. It is our conviction that just as their partnership in the gospel was more wide ranging than simply financial assistance, so too was the good work that God was doing in them broader than just God's help so that they could give generously to the gospel mission (Contra Hawthorne 1983:21). It was a work so all-encompassing that it turned these people into generous givers (Phlp 4:10-20), persevering soldiers (Phlp 1:27-30), prayerful associates (Phlp 1:19), obedient servants (Phlp 2:12), and living witnesses (2:15). These results demonstrate that God had done a profound, life-transforming work in them, a work that ushered forth with wide ranging fruit.

primary agent of transformation. However, Paul must make concrete decisions to 'count all things loss. It is Paul who must 'work out his salvation', and yet he can do so precisely 'because God is the one working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phlp 2:12-13). God is the chief agent in this transforming process ('*he who began the good work in you will carry it to completion*' Phlp 1:6; emphasis added), but he accomplishes this change through the active participation of his people (Phlp 3:13). The Christ-follower is not passive in the process; he is a co-participant.

The goal of this process of transformation is stated in various ways. For example, Paul speaks of his desire to 'gain Christ' (Phlp 3:8). Paul has been using the language of commerce to describe his 'gains' and 'losses'. He has willingly lost everything that was formerly of great significance to him because of the far superior value of the knowledge of Christ. These two 'treasures' were in competition. He could have one or the other, either the knowledge of Christ or his former causes of boasting (his privileged status as a pure-blood Jew, the faithful law-performing heritage in which he grew up, his deep commitment to Torah obedience, and his incredible religious attainments). Paul's desire was to gain Christ and thus he lost everything else.

But Paul also states the goal is to be 'found in him' with the righteousness of God (Phlp 3:9). This refers to his desire to be united to Christ, but not through his own righteousness since this would be a futile goal, but rather he longs to be united to Christ having freely received through faith the righteousness that originates in God (Phlp 3:9). This is both a present and a future desire. That is, Paul wants his present relationship with Christ to be defined *not* by his former boasting, but rather by the gift of God's righteousness. But he also wants to stand before Christ on the final day and have the righteousness of God in his spiritual account. This explains why Paul not only made a conscious decision to count all things loss, but why he still considers all things as rubbish in comparison with the far superior knowledge of Christ.

Even beyond this, Paul's central desire was to 'know Christ' (Phlp 3:10). This knowledge of Christ is not mere propositional knowledge, but is a living experience of Christ. It is deeply personal. But this intimate knowledge of the person of Christ is

experienced in surprising ways. Paul says that he is known through two opposite poles: the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings. The idea is that in order for Christ to be truly known, he must be known both in his humiliation and in his exaltation. But even this does not refer to a mere intellectual awareness of these two 'states'. Rather the knowledge of Christ that Paul sought was a deep penetrating knowledge that encompassed the total range of his person and his work. Paul wanted an experiential knowledge that included 'power' and 'participation'. But even beyond an experiential knowledge, Paul wanted a transformative knowledge, one that would so deeply impact his life that he would be changed (συμμορφιζόμενος). Yet it is precisely at this point of change that Paul presents another surprise - the transformation that Paul sought was τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ not to his exaltation. That is, Paul aspired to be like Christ was in his death, totally emptied of self and given over completely to the will of God. This immensely transformative knowledge of Christ was Paul's chief pursuit in life.

However, just as Paul sought the same image of the crucified-Christ so too was his ultimate goal the very image of Christ resurrected from the dead (τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν Phlp 3:11). Paul's hope was to know Christ in such a way as to ultimately experience the exaltation that the crucified Christ experienced, a promise that Paul confidently awaits according to Philippians 3:20-21. It will be in this crowning moment, the 'day of Christ' (Phlp 1:6; 2:16), that Christ himself will 'transform our humble bodies into the form of his glorious body'. Thus Paul longs to be conformed to the image of Christ's death (Phlp 3:10), knowing that when God completes this work in him then Paul will also 'attain to the resurrection from the dead' and thus will 'be conformed to the image of his glorious body'. This is Paul's ultimate hope.

Finally, this powerful transformation in Paul's life that began at his conversion and continues throughout his life and will be consummated at the coming of Christ, has produced certain results in his everyday life. These results can be summed by saying that Paul had a whole new orientation to his life. For example, Paul experienced a complete reformulation of his system of what was valuable to him. Paul says that so radical was this change in him that began at conversion, but which continues to control

him throughout life,⁹⁹ that everything that was once considered profitable has now been 'revalued' and is totally useless to him. Anything whatsoever that was a 'gain' to him in terms of a cause for boasting in the flesh, anything that accrued to his religious advantage including especially the blessings and privileges he mentioned in Philippians 3:5-6 - all of these very same things (ταῦτα) he made a conscious settled decision (ἤγημαι) to discount from the 'gains' column of his 'righteousness' account. Instead of being gains that increased his confidence in the flesh he now recognized them as losses, as that which proved to be truly disadvantageous in terms of true righteousness. They are mere rubbish to him now. And what is it that has supreme value? It is the very Christ whom he once tried to stamp out. Knowing Christ, experiencing his resurrection power and participating in his sufferings, is what drives Paul's life now. For Paul 'to live is Christ and death is gain' (Phlp 1:21). His most eager hope and confidence is Christ being magnified in him whether through life or death (Phlp 1:20). The main goal of his life was knowing Christ. This is what has an incalculable value to him now. Paul has experienced a complete reversal of his values.

As a part of this total reorientation of life, Paul also has experienced a change of 'boast'. Paul has come to realize that putting confidence in one's 'Jewishness' or one's religious acts as he once did is evidence of a fruitless and misplaced boast that does not produce the 'righteousness of God' but instead produces 'my own righteousness', a righteousness 'from the law' which does not lead to gaining Christ or knowing him. In fact, it is an obstacle to knowing Christ and it contradicts the genuine signs of the true circumcision (spiritual service by the Spirit of God and confidence in Christ Jesus rather than one's self) and thus gives no evidence of a true God-wrought transformation. Thus Paul no longer 'puts confidence' in what once moved him to 'glory' in the flesh. He has a

⁹⁹ This could be the reason for Paul's change of tenses in Philippians 3:8. First Paul says 'whatever was gain to me, these very same things I considered (ἤγημαι: perfect tense) loss (possibly referring to his conversion)'. Then Paul adds 'indeed I also (now) consider (ἤγοῦμαι: present tense) everything to be loss (referring to his present evaluation). Again Paul states 'on account of Christ I have lost (ἐξημιώθην: aorist tense) everything, and I (now) consider (ἤγοῦμαι: present tense) them pure garbage' (referring to his present perspective).

whole new boast, the cross of Christ (Gal 6:14) and the righteousness that comes as a gift through faith (Phlp 3:9).

In Philippians 3:10 Paul describes something of the transformation that was taking place in his life. What he experienced has much to say about the process of transformation that all Christ-followers must go through. In order to truly know Christ it is necessary to be 'conformed to his death'. This ongoing transformation into the likeness of his death takes place as we participate in his sufferings.

Chapter 4

Transformation in Romans 12:1-2

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Our study of the concept of transformation in Paul's letters now brings us to Paul's majestic letter to the Romans and specifically to Romans 12:1-2. Here we find the first Pauline passage which explicitly states the means by which transformation takes place, namely, 'by the renewing of the mind'. Though Paul does not elaborate on the concrete ingredients of the process of 'mind renewal' our study will seek to clarify how a new 'mind' can bring about significant life change. We will begin by examining the context for our text followed by a detailed exegesis and then will end with specific conclusions related to the theme of transformation.

4.2 CONTEXT

Romans 12 marks a transition in Paul's argument. The first eleven chapters of Romans are a profound exposition of God's mercy displayed through his saving work in history. But prior to an elucidation of this mercy, Paul demonstrates the universal sinfulness of humanity and the intense wrath of God that is revealed against this rebellion. Mankind's idolatry and ingratitude resulted in God's extreme disfavor whereby he 'gave them up' to the free exercise of their sinful desires, thoughts, and practices. This rebellion and the resulting divine sentence of judgment extended beyond the idolatrous Gentiles to encompass even the beloved Jews. Though the Jews claimed to be privileged because of their relationship with God's holy law, their disobedience to this law revealed that they too stood precariously under God's wrath. All creatures are accountable to God and stand as guilty before him.

And yet, in spite of this disobedience to God's law, God did the unimaginable, he revealed his gracious decision to forgive guilty sinners, offering in their place his perfectly righteous Son as a sacrifice which assuaged his wrath. This undeserved gift proved that God is both an always just judge (he did punish sin) and that he is the one

who justifies sinners who put their faith in his Son and his saving sacrificial death. This indescribable gift did not come through personal adherence to the commands of the law, but was a gift of God's grace received through faith in his Son's redeeming sacrifice. This justification that is received through faith was God's mode of justifying even Abraham and David and is the promise that he continues to offer to all who believe in Jesus. Guilty sinners who have received justification through this saving faith enjoy concrete benefits, the apex of which is God's gracious salvation. These unworthy recipients of God's saving grace must not take his grace for granted by continuing to live sinful lives. They have participated with Christ in his saving works (his death, burial, and resurrection) and thus sin's reign over them has been broken. Therefore they must live consistent with this new reality; lives of willing obedience to God. They are not to try and win God's favor through the law since they have died to the law's jurisdiction over them and now, because they are united with Christ, they live in the realm of the Spirit. Life in the Spirit is a life of obedience in the here and now, but also a life of hope in the future when they, along with the whole creation, will experience the fullness of their redemption. The Spirit's presence in them and his work among them is the basis of their confident assurance for the future and their ongoing progress in faith in the present.

But has this gracious plan of God failed since the Jews have not believed, even though they were recipients of untold blessings from God? No, it shows rather God's purpose in election. He chose whom he desired, both from among the Jews and among the Gentiles. Now the righteousness that comes by faith has been extended to the Gentiles, whereas many of the Jews missed out because they tried to attain it through obedience to the law and thus rejected Christ. Yet God's merciful salvation can only be received through faith. This is why so many in Israel have been excluded; they heard the gospel, but refused to believe. Their unbelief has resulted in blessing for the Gentiles as the gospel was extended to them and many have believed and thus been saved. Paul's fervent hope is that the Jews, though they appear to be excluded because of their unbelief, will turn in faith to Christ and thus be included once more. All people, those presently in and those presently out, should be humbled then by God's kindness and be

fearful of God's wrath. All should turn in faith to Christ and should recognize his abundant mercy that makes salvation possible for all.

It is with this resounding note of God's mercy ringing in the ears of both Jews and Gentiles that Paul begins to share some of the practical implications of this mercy for the daily life of the Church. And this note of mercy leads us to a more careful exposition of Romans 12:1-2.

4.3 EXPOSITION

As we consider this important passage in Paul's letter to the Romans there are two structural matters that we must examine before delving into the specific verses themselves. The first has to do with the relationship of Romans 12-15:13 with Romans 1-11. It must be strongly affirmed that there exists an unbreakable relationship between these two sections. And yet this relationship is not one of theology versus practice as though the two were somehow opposed to each other or as though the first part of Romans was pure dogma without practice and the second part pure practice without theology. Such a dichotomy is 'unPauline' and does not fit with the actual evidence found in Romans. Barth is adamant about this,

We are not now starting a new book or even a new chapter of the same book. Paul is not here turning his attention to practical religion, as though it were a second thing side by side with the theory of religion. On the contrary, the theory, with which we have hitherto been concerned, is theory of the practice of religion.¹⁰⁰

(Barth 1933:426-427)

One need only consider the profoundly practical teaching in Romans 6-8 to debunk any idea that Paul finally turns from theology to 'practical Christian living' in Romans 12. And yet, there is no question that the οὐν in Romans 12:1 marks a transition, but what is the nature of this transition? Perhaps we could describe Romans 1-11 as an exposition of

¹⁰⁰ Many scholars are in agreement. For example, Byrne (1996:361) states, 'it is not appropriate to make a rigid distinction between exposition (kerygma) and exhortation (parenesis). However, from now on, in a more sustained way, Paul summons his implied audience – Gentile believers in Rome – to live out as a community the consequences of the 'inclusive' gospel by which they have been grasped.' Consider also the words of Wright (2002:700), who comments about the separation of ethics from theology, 'for Paul they are inextricably interwoven. They are the breath and blood of Christian living, the twin signs of life.'

the many sided ‘mercies of God’ and Romans 12-15:13 as the appropriate response to the display of these mercies. And yet even this division does not capture the whole story. It would seem that Moo (1996:745) is closest to the point when he writes, ‘The transition from Rom 11 to Rom 12 ... is not, therefore, a transition from “theology” to “practice,” but from a focus more on the “indicative” side of the gospel to a focus more on the “imperative” side of the gospel’.¹⁰¹

The second structural matter is the relationship between the two exhortations that Paul gives in Romans 12:1-2. Or stated differently, what kind of a conjunction is the *kai* that connects Romans 12:1 with 12:2? There are two main possibilities. In the first place, the two exhortations could be coordinate and thus represent two commands of equal weight: ‘present your bodies as a sacrifice AND don’t be conformed but be transformed’ (See, for example, Jewett 2007:725; Betz 1989:61; Wright 2002:705). One problem with seeing a coordinate relationship is that there is a lack of parallelism between the two phrases being linked. The first phrase uses the traditional ‘appeal’ verb (*παρακαλῶ*) with the expected infinitive (*παρασῆσαι*), while the second phrase uses an imperative (*συσχηματίζεσθε*) rather than a second infinitive which would have preserved the parallelism. Yet, because similar grammatical constructions (verb of appeal with two different objects expressed in verbal form and connected by *καί*) are so rare, no clear pattern emerges.¹⁰² One cannot therefore rule out the coordinate use of the conjunction. On the other hand, the second exhortation could be dependent upon the first. This

¹⁰¹ A superficial observation of the number of commands in the letter gives some credence to Moo’s point. There are five imperatives in Romans 6:11-13, 19 and three in Romans 11:18, 20, 22 (not considering quotes of the Old Testament), but no other imperatives in the first part of the letter (except Rm 3:4 which doesn’t really function like a command). There are, however, thirty-two commands in Romans 12-15:13.

¹⁰² Note, for example, the parallelism in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς, ¹³καὶ ἠγεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ διὰ τὸ ἔργον αὐτῶν. The *καί* connecting verses 12 and 13 links the two infinitives that serve as the object of the ‘appeal’ verb Ἐρωτῶμεν. Compare also 1 Corinthians 1:10, Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες, καὶ μὴ ἦ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα, ἥτε δὲ κατηγορησμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοί καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ. Here the *καί* connects two phrases that fill out the content of Paul’s appeal (Παρακαλῶ). First, ‘that you all might say the same things’ where Paul uses a present tense subjunctive verb (λέγητε). He then links this to the second phrase, ‘and (that) there might not be any divisions among you’ where Paul uses another present tense subjunctive verb (ἦ). While there is parallelism between the two verbs, there is a question as to the use of the *καί*. Fee (1987:53) views it as explicative and thus translates it ‘that is’. This may be correct. There do not appear to be any other passages in Paul where he connects two objects of an appeal verb with the conjunction *καί*. No clear pattern can be determined, therefore.

would give a rendering, ‘present your bodies as a sacrifice BY not being conformed, but transformed (Moo 1996:754-755; Evans 1979:25).¹⁰³ This second view, however, seems to unnecessarily limit the sacrifice of our bodies to nonconformity to the world and mind renewal. It seems best, therefore, to view the two exhortations as coordinate. Paul is exhorting the Roman believers to two ongoing actions – a sacrifice of their bodies and an inner transformation and nonconformity to this world.

The first matter to be considered in the exegesis of Romans 12:1-2 is the significance of the conjunction οὐν in this context. Is οὐν merely transitional (Käsemann (1980:326); Evans 1979:12) or does it have a stronger force in this passage, linking what Paul is going to say with what he has previously written? If the force is stronger, how far back does it point? Does it point back to Romans 11:33-36 or does it go further, being a response to Romans 9-11, or even further to Romans 5-11 or still further to the whole of the epistle?¹⁰⁴ The answer to these questions is closely linked to the next important exegetical issue in Romans 12:1, namely what is the role of the prepositional phrase διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ? Once this matter is decided the question of the function of οὐν can also be clarified.

There are two primary options for the significance of the prepositional phrase διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. The διὰ could be instrumental (so Byrne 1996:365, Corriveau 1970:165, Dunn 1988:709, Furnish 1968:102, Jewett 2007:727, and Käsemann 1980:326) thus giving the sense that ‘Paul stands before the Romans not on his individual strength but on the strength of God. Paul who is a “servant” and “apostle” of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1) is so not for any merit of his own, but by the mercies of God. These mercies of God authorize him to exhort the Christians’ (Viagulamuthu 2002:88).

¹⁰³ Moo (1996:754) comments, ‘But v. 2 is probably subordinate to v. 1, giving the means by which we can carry out the sweeping exhortation of v. 1’. Yet he gives no supporting evidence for this decision. Evans (1979:25) agrees adding, ‘This is the most likely sequence of thought, especially if the concentration of this transformation in the sphere of the mind, with the consequent implied capacity to discern the will of God, continues the thought of the rationality of worship’.

¹⁰⁴ ‘We take it, therefore, that the reference of οὐν is to the whole course of the epistle’s argument up to this point’ (Cranfield 1979:596; cf. also Morris (1987:432); Moo (1996:748); and Schreiner (1998:639)). Betz (1989:62) sees the mention of God’s mercy as relating to Romans 4-11. Dunn (1988:708) believes that it includes Romans 5-11.

On the other hand, διὰ could be causal (Barth 1968:426-429, Cranfield 1979:596, Moo 1996:749, Morris 1988:433, Parsons 1988:114, Schreiner 1998:643 and Wright 2002:703) and would give the sense, ‘because of God’s many merciful acts in history’. Both options are grammatically possible. Though a causal relationship generally requires the accusative case, there are some examples of διὰ + genitive that have a causal sense (i.e., it is quite probable that Romans 12:3 has a causal sense, ‘for I say because of the grace given to me’ (διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι).¹⁰⁵ A definite decision is very difficult and the three other passages in Paul’s letters where Paul uses the preposition διὰ in the same basic construction are rather ambiguous as well.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, the causal sense of the prepositional phrase fits the context very well and is to be preferred. Paul is therefore basing the exhortation to present their bodies as a sacrifice on the multitudinous displays of God’s mercy, a mercy that he has already mentioned earlier in the letter.

But what exactly is this ‘mercy’ that serves as the ground of Paul’s exhortation? The word Paul uses in Romans 12:1 οἰκτιρμός occurs five times in the New Testament (2

¹⁰⁵ See BDAG (2000:225). BDAG mentions Romans 8:3 and 2 Corinthians 9:13 as examples.

¹⁰⁶ In Romans 15:30 Paul writes, ‘I appeal to you, brothers (παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί) by (διὰ) our Lord Jesus Christ (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and by (διὰ) the love of the Spirit (τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ πνεύματος), to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf’. Just as we find in Romans 12:1, so here, the preposition could be either instrumental or causal. Moo (1996:909) sees the first διὰ as indicating ‘the authority by which Paul makes his request’ and the second διὰ as identifying the ‘ground of the request’. Cranfield (1979:776) is in agreement. It is not clear, however, why they give a different ‘value’ to διὰ in the parallel phrases. More likely is the suggestion of Schreiner (1998:781) who sees both as referring to the ‘ground’ of Paul’s appeal. Fee (1994:632-633) is in agreement stating that ‘Paul’s appeal has a twofold basis’. On the other hand, Käsemann (1980:407) translates διὰ ‘in the power of’ or ‘in the name of’ while Byrne (1996:442) translates it ‘in virtue of’. Two comments are necessary. First, if the two prepositional phrases in Romans 15:30 are parallel then the use is most likely causal. The reason for this conclusion rests largely on the second phrase ‘by the love of the Spirit’. It is quite unnatural to speak of love as the instrument or agency of Paul’s appeal. It is more natural that the love which the Spirit produces was one ground along with the Lord Jesus Christ (probably referring to his saving work or his authority or perhaps even his call upon Paul’s life) as the second ground for this appeal. The second passage is 1 Corinthians 1:10, ‘I appeal to you, brothers, (παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί) by (διὰ) the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Once again there is much ambiguity in Paul’s use of διὰ + the genitive. Thiselton (2000:113-115) sees it as the means of Paul’s request, but Fee (1987:53) views it as the basis of the appeal. Both are possible and fit the context. The third passage is 2 Corinthians 10:1, ‘I, Paul, myself entreat you (Αὐτὸς δὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς), by (διὰ) the meekness and gentleness of Christ (τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Once again there is some ambiguity, though the idea here does not seem to be that Christ’s meekness was the ‘cause’ of Paul’s appeal, but rather that his appeal is made in the same posture or attitude as Christ demonstrated in his meekness. What these examples show is the flexibility of Paul’s use of this particular construction.

Cor 1:3; Phlp 2:1; Col 3:12; Heb 10:28) while the verbal form οἰκτίρω appears only in Romans 9:15, a citation of Exodus 33:19 (translates םח). However, there seems to be no substantial difference between this word and Paul's use of ἔλεος in Romans 9:23; 11:31; 15:9 and the verbal form ἐλέω in Romans 9:15, 16, 18; 11:30, 31, 32; 12:8. Therefore, it is evident that Paul has directly referenced God's incredible mercy various times, especially in his discussion of the Jew-Gentile issue in Romans 9-11. In addition, if we move beyond a mere counting of references of a particular lexeme and take into consideration Paul's broader discussion of God's kindness, patience, and grace, themes closely related to his mercy, we find that this theme has been a significant part of Paul's ongoing argument throughout the epistle.¹⁰⁷ Of course the apex of God's active demonstration of mercy is found in the giving of his Son for sinners. We conclude then that the οὖν in Romans 12:1 is not simply transitional, but rather draws the reader back to prior references to God's mercy in chapters 9-11 and even further back to the overall argument of Romans 1-11. The abundant and multifaceted display of God's mercy culminating in the ultragenerous gift of the messiah should be a motivating force to move the Christ-followers to respond to God in a particular way. Or as Cranfield so aptly comments,

The implication of this "therefore" is that Christian ethics are theologically motivated or – to put it in a different way – that the Christian's obedience is his response to what God has done for him in Christ, the expression of his gratitude. Given its full force, the οὖν makes clear right from the start the theocentric nature of all truly Christian moral effort; for it indicates that the source from which such effort springs is neither a humanistic desire for the enhancement of the self by the attainment of moral superiority, nor the legalist's illusory hope of putting God under an obligation, but the saving deed of God itself.

(Cranfield 1979:595)

There has been much debate regarding the precise nuance of Paul's use of παρακαλέω in Romans 12:1. Is Paul commanding the Romans from his apostolic authority¹⁰⁸ or is

¹⁰⁷ Notice for example, Paul's reference to: God's kindness in Rm 2:4; 11:22; to God's patience in Rm 2:4; 3:26; to God's grace in Rm 3:24; 5:17; 6:23 and to God's love in Rm 5:5. See also Gupta's (2012:81-96) discussion of the three particular emphases of οἰκτιρμός /οικτίρω in the LXX and Paul's use of them in Romans. Gupta refers to God's mercy of divine self-revelation, God's mercy of forgiveness, and God's mercy of deliverance from captors and calamity (2012:83). He finds all three of these uses in Romans, seeing the culmination of God's mercy as demonstrated through the Christ-event.

¹⁰⁸ Cranfield (1979:597) writes 'When used in this sense it has all the urgency and earnestness that it has when it is used in the sense beseech, but also something more – the note of authority. It denotes the authoritative summons to obedience issued in the name of the gospel ... The apostle is not by any means pleading for a favor, he is claiming in Christ's name an obedience which his readers are under obligation

this a more gentle appeal?¹⁰⁹ The matter is a complex one. The exact grammatical construction of the ‘appeal’ clause in Romans 12:1 fits the research on παρακαλῶ done by Bjerkelund (1967) who found a common ‘formula’ when παρακαλῶ is used in friendship requests. ‘Essentially the formula consists of 1) the use of the verb of petition in the first person (parakalô); 2) a mention of the recipients; 3) (sometimes) a prepositional phrase; and 4) a request usually expressed in a hina clause or an infinitive clause’ (Collins 1983:30). This same construction can be found also in Romans 15:30 and 16:17 (though without the prepositional phrase).¹¹⁰ Overall it seems best to agree with Bjerkelund and see Paul as making an appeal, rather than a demand. And yet, this appeal comes with all of the urgency of an apostle concerned to move the church towards ‘the obedience of faith’.

Finally we come to the very heart of Romans 12:1, what is the content of Paul’s urgent appeal to the church at Rome? Paul writes, ‘I appeal to you to present your bodies as a sacrifice (παραστήσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν). The language Paul uses is clearly cultic (Peterson 1993:278).¹¹¹ He has used παράστημα (παριστάνω) already five times in Romans 6:13-19, though with a slightly different nuance.¹¹² In Romans 6 the idea of παράστημα is of giving something over to someone for a specific purpose. So for example Romans 6:13 warns not to ‘give your members over (μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν) as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but to give them over to God’

to render’. Schreiner (1998:642) agrees, ‘The Pauline exhortations do not merely contain good advice or his preferences. They represent the authoritative will of God and are enjoined upon churches in a solemn manner.’

¹⁰⁹ Dunn (1988:708) warns, ‘The fact that Paul regards “exhortation” as a ministry which was more widespread within the Christian congregations ... should warn us against seeing the language here as a subtle means of exercising extra leverage; the imperative follows from the logic of the gospel (οὖν) rather than from Paul’s apostolic commission as such.’ Others are more direct: ‘Our analysis has shown that in using παρακαλέω, Paul was not exercising his boldness and authority but gentleness and exhortation’ (Viagulamuthu 2002:84). Smiga (1991:267) concurs, ‘Romans 12:1-2 is not paraenesis but a request’. Finally, Jewett (2007:726) states, ‘In the effort to gain the cooperation of the Roman house churches for Paul’s missionary project, the language of command is avoided.’

¹¹⁰ Notice also 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 16:15-16 (without the prepositional phrase); 2 Corinthians 10:1 (without the content of the request); 1 Thessalonians 4:10 and 5:14 (without the prepositional phrase). Compare also Philemon 9-10 and Philippians 4:2.

¹¹¹ The statement by Ferguson (1980:1165) is a bit of an exaggeration, ‘This verse is the high point of the sacrificial language of the New Testament and of all literature’.

¹¹² Thus Peterson (1993:278) comments, ‘The verb is the same but the imagery is that of ownership and servitude in chapter 6, rather than sacrificial offering’.

(παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ). The Christ-followers are to commit their lives (your members) to do righteousness and not to sin. The verb does not have the sense of laying the “body” on the altar of sacrifice, but rather committing oneself to another as their servant. This kind of offering is an active ongoing giving over of oneself to another. Thus it is a matter of allegiance, of a willful surrender to obey the other. One who makes this kind of offering is choosing to enlist himself in the service of someone or something else to do their bidding. This is why Paul speaks of the believer’s handing himself over as an ‘instrument’ or ‘slave’. They are to become a functional agent for another’s use.

Not so in Romans 12. Here the idea is cultic and points graphically to the sacrifices of the Old Testament.¹¹³ In these kinds of offerings the person made a definite gift. There was no sense that the offering was given to serve as a functional agent for another purpose. The offering was a gift which was completely given over, and once given it was irretrievable. And yet, though the individual sacrifices were offered to God one time (they were put to death and thus could not be ‘continually offered’) the same types of sacrifices were given over and over again. This is Paul’s idea in Romans 12:1. He is calling upon the Christ-followers to give their bodies to God as a sacrifice, as something completely surrendered to him, as an irretrievable gift which once placed on the altar could no longer be reclaimed for another purpose. And yet this sacrifice would be given over and over again. Thus, Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12:1 is not simply a call to obedience, *per se*, but is much broader; it is a call to λατρεία, to worship. In fact, Paul states that this very sacrifice as continually offered to God as an irretrievable gift, is the disciple’s λογικὴν λατρείαν.

¹¹³ Only in Romans 12:1 does παράστημι (παριστάνω) explicitly refer to the offering as ‘sacrificial’. Though this particular nuance is completely missing from the LXX, it is found in extra-biblical Greek. For example, Josephus (Antiquities 4.113) writes that God commanded the king to construct five altars (βωμοῦ) and to offer (παραστήσαι) bulls and rams. A similar idea is present in Polybius (Histories 16:25, 7) where he writes of King Attalus’ visit to Athens. Throngs of people met him as he entered the city including a host of priests and priestesses. The temple doors were opened and the victims (θύματα) to be sacrificed were placed (παραστήσαντες) on all the altars (τοῖς βωμοῖς) and the king made sacrifices (θύσαι). It could be that παριστάνω simply means ‘to place on’ the altar here and that the emphasis on ‘sacrifice’ comes more from the context. In Diodorus Siculus (The Library of History 3:72, 1) it is quite clear that παράστημι has a sacrificial tone. He writes, ‘Now when Dionysus was on the point of setting out against Cronus and his force was already passing out of Nysa, his guardian Aristaeus, the myth relates, offered a sacrifice (θυσίαν τε παραστήσαι) and so was the first man to sacrifice to him as to a god’.

Of course, if we are to understand Paul's exhortation as a call to worship, we must investigate what Paul means here by λογικὴν λατρείαν. In terms of λατρείαν, the word generally refers to the old covenant cultus.¹¹⁴ Paul uses this same cultic imagery here, but in a metaphorical way. The disciple is to offer his body (σῶμα) as an act of worship to God just as the people did under the temple cultus when an animal was placed on the altar and was offered as a sacrifice to God. When the Christ follower offered his body as this kind of sacrifice to God it was an expression of worship (λατρείαν), specifically a λογικὴν type of worship.

Much ink has been spilled over the precise nuance of 'λογικός' and a firm decision on its proper sense in Romans 12:1 is probably not possible. The only other New Testament occurrence of 'λογικός' is in 1 Peter 2:2 which is equally ambiguous. The word is completely absent from the Septuagint, but is frequent outside of the Bible. Moo mentions four possibilities for Romans 12:1:

(1) "spiritual," in the sense of "inner": a worship that involves the mind and the heart as opposed to a worship that simply "goes through the motions"; (2) "spiritual" or "rational," in the sense of "appropriate for human beings as rational and spiritual creatures of God": a worship that honors God by giving him what he truly wants as opposed to the depraved worship offered by human beings under the power of sin (see Rom. 1:23-25); (3) "rational," in the sense of "acceptable to human reason": a worship that "makes sense," as opposed to the "irrational" worship of god through the offering of animals; (4) "reasonable," or "logical," in the sense of "fitting the circumstances" : a worship that is appropriate to those who have truly understood the truth revealed in Christ.

(Moo 1996:752-753)

Moo's first option – 'spiritual worship' - is doubtful. Even though Paul clearly understood true worship to be a matter of the heart, and in fact, of the total person, this is probably not his focus here. As one scholar opines,

¹¹⁴ Paul uses the noun λατρεία only one other time, in Romans 9:4 where he refers to the benefits that the Jews enjoyed as God's special people. One such benefit was the 'system of worship', a reference to the whole cultus under the old covenant. In each of its five occurrences in the New Testament and in seven of its eight appearances in the Septuagint the word has a cultic sense, referring to the ritual sacrifices and expressions of worship under the old covenant. Paul also uses the verb λατρεύω in Romans 1:9, 25; and Philippians 3:3 (cf. also 2 Tm 1:3) where it has the idea of an active expression of worship or devotion expressed to God. If the cultic sense is in view it is purely metaphorical. That is, Paul is not referring to the system of sacrifices, but rather a new way of worship, a devotion of self in service to Christ. In fact, in Philippians 3:3 Paul is implicitly contrasting the old way of the cultus with the new way of the Spirit, his λατρεύω is the true worship that the new circumcision offers to God.

To transfer Paul's language to the immaterial realm ('spiritual sacrifices') is, according to the shape of his argument, the exact opposite of what he intends! As Dillon observes, 'So far from a "spiritualizing," this proves to be a "corporealizing" of the philosophers' "rational worship" for the purposes of Paul's moral exhortation, in which believers are urged to live up totally, bodily, to the consequences of their transformed existence'.

(Gupta 2009:121)

Thus what remains is to understand λογικὴν as 'rational'. Yet what is the precise nuance of 'rational worship'? It must be remembered that Paul speaks of the worship as 'rational', not the worshipper. That is, his emphasis seems to be on what the worshipper does rather than the nature of the one worshipping. Hence interpretations such as 'the worship you owe as rational beings' miss the mark (Byrne 1996:365; Fitzmyer 1993:640).¹¹⁵ Paul's focus seems to be a kind of worship that is 'rational'. And yet to say that Paul's focus is on worship that 'enlists our mind, our reason, our intellect' (Murray 1959:112) though it fits well with Romans 12:2 is doubtful because it makes little sense of the syntactical function of the phrase as epexegetical (giving an explanation of what it means to present the body as a sacrifice). Tentatively, the best option may be to understand λογικός as 'logical', a worship that is fitting for those who have received such abundant displays of mercy.¹¹⁶ A sacrifice of the body is thus the appropriate, logical expression of worship for those blessed by God's incredible mercy.

¹¹⁵ Though λογικός can carry the nuance of 'endowed with reason' this does not seem to be Paul's emphasis in Romans 12:1. Though see especially Dio Chrysostom, *Orations*. For example in 12.27 - ἐν παντί τῷ λογικῷ γιγνομένη. In every creature endowed with reason; 12.39 - τοῦ λογικοῦ γένους. Of rational beings; 36.19 - ὅτι ζῶν λογικὸν θνητόν A mortal animal endowed with reason; 36.20 - ὡςπερ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ᾧ μὴ πρόσσεσι τὸ λογικόν, οὕτως οὐδὲ πόλις, ἧ μὴ συμβέβηκε νομίμῳ εἶναι. νόμιμος δὲ οὐκ. For just as that person is not even a man who does not also possess 'rationality' (attribute of reason), so that community is not even a city which lacks obedience to law; 36.23 - μίαν γὰρ δὴ ταύτην καθαρῶς εὐδαίμονα πολιτείαν εἶτε καὶ πόλιν χρὴ καλεῖν, τὴν θεῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνίαν, ἐάν τε καὶ ξύμπαν τὸ λογικὸν περιλάβῃ τις, For that, indeed, is the only constitution or city that may be called genuinely happy – the partnership of god with god; even if you include with the gods also everything that has the faculty of reason (or rationality); 36.31 - ὁ δὲ λόγος οὗτος ἔμβραχου ἐσπούδακε ξυναρμόσαι τῷ θεῷ τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ περιλαβεῖν πᾶν τὸ λογικόν. This doctrine, in brief, aims to harmonize the human race with the divine, and to embrace in a single term everything endowed with reason (rationality); 36.35 - ἅπαντος τοῦ λογικοῦ γένους The whole rational family; 64.17-18 – Σωκράτης γοῦν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς αὐτὸν ἐμακάριζε, καὶ ὅτι ζῶν λογικὸν καὶ ὅτι Ἀθηναῖος Socrates, at any rate, counted himself fortunate for many reasons – not only because he was a rational being, but also because he was an Athenian.

¹¹⁶ 'All that needs to be said is that Paul used the term with the meaning "rational" or "reasonable," as was common in the Greek language. His purpose in doing so was to emphasize that yielding one's whole self to God is eminently reasonable. Since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one's life to him is the height of folly and irrationality' (Schreiner 1998:645).

What did Paul mean by an offering of the 'body' as a sacrifice? There are two major interpretations. The first interpretation holds that when Paul referred to a sacrifice of the 'body' he was speaking of a giving over of the whole person (Bultmann 2007:192; Corriveau 1970:169; Cranfield 1979:598-599; Dunn 1988b:709; Moo 1996:751; Schreiner 1998:644; Wright 2002:704). A second interpretation holds that the sacrifice of the 'body' is to be seen in a more limited sense to refer to a person's physical body (Deidun 1981:98; Gundry 1976:35; Viagulamuthu 2002:178). It is evident that Paul uses $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ precisely because it so graphically fits the cultic image that his exhortation expresses. Yet he also wants to emphasize the corporal aspect of the sacrifice Christ-followers are to give. As the body is often the active agent which carries out sin's promptings, so it must be placed on the sacrificial altar and completely given over to God. And yet, surely Paul was asking for a complete renunciation of the whole person. A true handing over of the body as a sacrifice requires a giving of more than the physical nature; the whole person must be offered as well. Thus Dunn seems to most clearly capture Paul's intent:

The point to be emphasized, however, is that $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ denotes not just the person, but the person in his corporeality, in his concrete relationships within this world; it is because he is body that man can experience the world and relate to others...It is not to be thought of in contrast to an "inner consecration"... but as the physical embodiment of the individual's consecration in the concrete realities of daily life ..., a "somatizing" rather than a spiritualizing...It is as part of the world and within the world that Christian worship is to be offered by the Christian.

(Dunn 1988:709)

The sacrifice that constitutes a truly 'logical worship' is a giving over to God of the body, the person's earthy, this-worldly daily existence and all of its motions. And yet, such a somatic sacrifice implies also a giving over of the total person, as Gundry comments, 'of course, the offering to God of the physical vehicle of life in the world implies also an inner consecration to God' (Gundry 1976:35).

Paul goes on to describe the nature of this bodily sacrifice with three adjectives. First, the sacrifice is 'living' ($\zeta\omega\sigma\alpha\nu$). Scholars have understood this characteristic in various ways. Some view a 'living sacrifice' as 'in contrast to the animal and inanimate produce offered in sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple' (Byrne 1996:363). Others understand

'living' in a "deep theological sense" – living in that "newness of life" (Cranfield 1979:600), 'living, as vivified by the life of the risen Christ, as manifesting that life and as leading to life' (Corriveau 1970:170; cf. also Schreiner 1998:644). But this position would make more sense if Paul's emphasis were on the nature of the worshipper rather than the nature of the sacrifice offered. Another creative view is put forth by Kiuchi (2006) who writes that 'Paul was encouraging believers to live like an Azazel-goat, suffering for others by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Kiuchi 2006:251). In other words, Kiuchi sees the 'living sacrifice' as representative of the Old Testament ritual described in Leviticus 16. He comments, 'The Azazel-goat is a sacrifice (Lev. 16:5) - a sin offering - but unlike all other sacrifices it is not killed' (Kiuchi 2006:258), and in this sense it becomes a sort of 'living sacrifice'. However, it is difficult to know if Paul had such an idea in his mind. The interpretation that best fits the context is that of Moo (1996:751), 'it is more likely to refer to the nature of the sacrifice itself: one that does not die as it is offered but goes on living and therefore continues in its efficacy until the person who is offered dies'. Paul exhorts the church to offer their bodies as a sacrifice, an offering that lives and is to go on living, but is to live differently now, to live as a sacrifice to God, as a life fully and irretrievably given over to Him.

The sacrifice is also to be a holy one (ἁγίαν). This was a common designation for sacrifices and other cultic activities, utensils, etc. all of which were intended to be uniquely set apart to God, devoted to him for his purposes. Thus the body is to be offered to God as something reserved for his use and will. Finally, the sacrifice is to be 'acceptable (εὐάρεστον) to God. Once again this has clear cultic connotations. The offering given to God was to be pleasing to him and to be offered according to the criteria he set down. And so, Paul's exhortation is that the Romans give over their bodies, in fact their entire existence, as a sacrifice to God. This sacrifice is to be continually offered, is to be truly set apart for God's special use, and is thus to be offered in such a way that it pleases God and is accepted by him. This act of worship is the logical response of a person who has received countless evidences of God's rich and multifaceted mercy.

Paul's exhortation has a second element to it. Romans 12:2 states that not only are Christ-followers to offer their bodies as a sacrifice to God, but they are also to avoid all conformity to this age and instead are to experience ongoing transformation for it is only through this complete change that will they be able to truly 'approve' God's will.

The apostle's charge in Romans 12:2 begins with a strict prohibition. They are not to be conformed to 'this age' (μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ). The imperative is either middle or passive, though Moo (1996:755) could be right that 'whether middle or passive in form, it has a simple ("intransitive") active significance – 'do not conform'. The verb συσχηματίζω¹¹⁷ occurs only here and in 1 Peter 1:14 in the New Testament where it is another prohibition, 'as obedient children, do not be conformed (μὴ συσχηματιζόμενοι) to the passions of your former ignorance'. Peter's warning is that the recipients of his letter have escaped the controlling grip of the sinful desires that formerly ruled them so that now their true identity is as 'obedient children'. Therefore, they cannot allow themselves to be 'shaped' once again by these former passions. Instead they are to become (γενήθητε) like the God who called them to salvation. He is holy, so too must they be in all their way of life. Thus the word συσχηματίζω here means to 'have your life shaped' by something or to let your life be molded, formed by something, in this case by the holy character of God and not by sinful desires. In other

¹¹⁷ Although this word is not found in the Septuagint, it is found in several ancient authors. Most relevant for purposes of this study is its use in Aristotle and Plutarch. For example, Aristotle (*Topica* 151b.8) states, 'When definitions are obscure, you should correct and reshape (συσχηματίζαντα) them so as to make some part clear and have something to attack, and then make your examination.' The idea is that the present statement of the definition is not adequate and must be altered, changed, re-formed. Plutarch (*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*, chapter 1) describes the flatterer as variable, 'like water that is poured into one receptacle after another, he is constantly on the move from place to place, and changes his shape (συσχηματιζόμενος) to fit his receiver.' As water conforms itself to the shape of the receptacle into which it is poured, so too the flatterer is changeable and conforms his ways to suit his changing audience. Also, in chapter 1 of Plutarch's, *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*, he comments, 'It is much more probable that the faculties of the senses may be so brought in subjection by undergoing such exercise as we speak of, that all its imaginations and motions may be smoothed and conformed (συσχηματίζειν) to right reason.' The idea is that the soul's capacity for feeling can be trained so that its shadowy dreams can be molded to fit what is reasonable. In another volume Plutarch (*De fortuna Romanorum*, section 9) tells the myth of a certain tree-nymph who was instrumental in helping to institute and to shape (συσχηματίζειν) the government of her state. Finally, Plutarch (*De virtute et vitio*, chapter 1), in a dialogue where he personifies vice, states that at night while one is dreaming vice is most harmful, but during the day vice is 'controlled' and even 'conforms' (συσχηματιζομένη) its attitudes to others.

words, the believers are not to allow their lives to be governed by the cravings that formerly ruled them; instead they must be conformed to the image of the holy God.

Peter's prohibition is closely aligned with Paul's in Romans 12:2. In both there is a force to which they are not to be conformed. Whereas Peter speaks of the former desires that ruled them while they were still 'in their ignorance', Paul warns the Roman Christians not to be conformed to 'this age' (τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ).¹¹⁸ αἰών has various nuances in the Scriptures.¹¹⁹ In Paul's writings αἰών ('this age') is primarily temporal in focus. It can signify an unlimited duration of time (eternity), as in the doxological expression εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας (forever). It can also refer to the ancient past, the future, or as is the case in Romans 12:2, the present 'age'. The time described in the phrase 'this age' is operative now, in this present stage of history (i.e., τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος, Gl 1:4). Thus it is "this age" or 'the now age' (ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:10; Tt 2:12) as opposed to "the coming age" (Eph 1:21). However, one should not suppose that 'this age' represents only the present historical moment as though it were a problem of the twenty-first century alone. Rather 'this age' transcends modern history to refer to the present stage in redemptive history, the full extension of time from the fall of mankind up until the inauguration of the kingdom of God. In fact, though 'this age' is still fully operative in the present time and thus even Christ-followers must live within its

¹¹⁸ The phrase 'this age' (τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ or ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ) occurs seven times in Paul's universally accepted letters.

¹¹⁹ The range of meanings for αἰών in the New Testament can be summarized:

a) Forever, an unlimited duration of time – Mt 21:19; Mk 3:29; 11:14; Lk 1:33, 55; Jn 4:14; John 6:51, 58; 8:35, 51, 52; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; Rm 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; 1 Cor 8:13; 2 Cor 9:9; 11:31; Gl 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phlp 4:20; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 1:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 13:8, 21; 1 Pt 1:25; 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pt 3:18; 1 Jn 2:17; 2 Jn 2; Jude 13, 25; Rv 1:6, 18; 4:9, 10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5.

b) Ancient time, from the past, from days of old – Lk 1:70; Jn 9:32; Ac 3:21; 15:18.

c) Time before Creation – 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:9, 11; Col 1:26.

d) Eternal, a characteristic of God – 1 Tim 1:17; Rv 15:3.

e) Creation, all of history – Heb 1:2; 11:3.

f) The consummation of the age, the end of history. (Generally refers to the time when God's angels will separate the evil from the righteous and God will bring judgment, except in Matthew 28:20 and Hebrews 9:26) - Mt 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Heb 9:26.

g) This age, the present stage in history which is characterized by 'worries' and is evil, and which is contrasted with the 'coming age' - Mt 12:32; 13:22; Mk 4:19; Lk 16:8; 20:34; Rm 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Gl 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17; 4:10; Tt 2:12.

h) Future time, the coming age as contrasted with 'this age' - Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30; 20:35; 1 Cor 10:11; Eph 1:21; 2:7; Heb 6:5.

'borders', yet Christ has already rescued sinners from it (Gl 1:4) and in fact, Christ-followers are those 'on whom the end of the ages has come' (τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντηκεν, 1 Cor 10:11). Those who have experienced the renewing work of Christ have already 'tasted the powers of the age to come (μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, Hb 6:5) even as they wait for its full consummation in the future. They are, therefore, present in 'this evil age' but not to be ruled by it for they are citizens of the 'age to come'.

It is clear, then, that "this age" is much more than the present stage in history; it is also closely related to κόσμος ('this world'), a term which often refers to opposition to God.¹²⁰ Hence 'this age' refers to a sphere of life that embodies the present moment in redemptive history, but which is temporary (1 Cor 7:31) and will one day be replaced by the "age to come" (Eph 1:21). This present age is evil (Gl 1:4) and is governed by a malevolent force that blinds people's eyes so that they cannot grasp the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:4), nor the wisdom of God in the gospel (1 Cor 2:6-16). In fact, this present 'age' itself is personified as an enslaving force or an oppressive sphere of evil where sinners are kept in bondage (Gl 1:4)¹²¹ and live their lives according to the warped standards that this world espouses during its present span of existence (κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, Eph 2:2). The tyrannical ruler of this age and its minions are actively engaged in promoting further rebellion in the lives of the 'sons of disobedience' (Eph 2:2). But this 'present evil age' not only has its own 'god' (2 Cor 4:4), it also espouses its own 'wisdom' (1 Cor 2:6), a wisdom which is nothing like the wisdom that comes from God. In fact so alien is God's wisdom to the 'rulers' of 'this age'¹²² (1 Cor 2:8) that if they would have understood it they never would have crucified Christ, since he perfectly embodies God's wisdom (1 Cor 1:30).

¹²⁰ The meaning of αἰών often overlaps with that of κόσμος in Paul. For example, 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 27-28; 2:12; 3:19; 5:10; 11:32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Galatians 4:3. Notice the interesting inclusio in Galatians where Paul states in Gl 1:4 that Christ rescued us from the present 'evil αἰῶνος. Then in Gl 6:14 Paul concludes that the κόσμος was crucified to him and he to the κόσμος. Compare also Eph 2:2.

¹²¹ Notice how in Galatians 1:4 sinners are rescued 'from the present evil age' (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ), implying a sphere where evil reigns or at least a stage of history in which evil is the controlling factor.

¹²² Whether or not these 'rulers' are human beings, angelic beings, or a composite is difficult to determine. It is most likely that in 1 Corinthians Paul has in mind human beings. It is quite possible that in Ephesians the author has in mind spiritual beings.

This age has significant influence over unbelievers (τῶν ἀπίστων, 2 Cor 4:4). They are blinded by its 'sovereign' (2 Cor 4:4), enslaved under its tyrannical rule (Gl 1:4), and guided by its standards (Eph 2:2). The evil system that characterizes 'this age' is nothing less than a God-opposing, Satan-inspired, sin-saturated age that is presently operative subjugating people without Christ and dictating the very direction of their lives. But this present age also seeks to perversely influence Christ-followers. Though Jesus Christ died for their sins in order to rescue them from this present evil age (Gl 1:4), though they have been crucified to its authority over them (Gl 6:14 – where 'world' is equivalent to 'this present evil age'), yet they are in constant danger of being 'conformed' to its deformed ways. This is Paul's deep concern in Romans 12, just as it was Peter's in 1 Peter 1:14-16. Because those who are 'in Christ' are no longer slaves to the patterns, rulers, desires, and powers of 'this age', having been rescued by Christ's death, therefore, they must not allow the influences of this age to sculpt them into its image.

What then must they do? Paul's prohibition in Romans 12:2 is followed by a positive command, 'but be transformed (μεταμορφοῦσθε) by the renewal of your mind'. There is much discussion about the relationship between συσχηματίζω and μεταμορφώω. It was thought by some that συσχηματίζω referred to an external, superficial change whereas μεταμορφώω spoke of a more significant, internal change. This has been demonstrated to be a false dichotomy (Cranfield 1979:605-607). It is evident by the usage of both verbs that there is significant overlap in meaning. If there is any difference between these two words, it has nothing to do with inner versus outer or profound versus superficial. Both words can represent a profound internal work of change. For example, when both Peter and Paul use συσχηματίζω to describe conforming to 'this age' or to the sinful passions that once controlled us, it is evident that they are speaking of a deep internal shaping that affects all of life. This same profound internal change can be witnessed in Paul's use of μεταμορφώω in 2 Corinthians 3:18.¹²³ On the other hand,

¹²³ Compare also its appearance in secular Greek literature. For example, Demetrius of Phaleron (*Libro de Elocutione*, Book 3 Chapter 189) writes about a line of poetry being 'transformed' (μεταμεμορφωμένω) and compares this change with the myths that tell of men being changed (μεταβάλλειν) into women. In two different chapters of Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica*, Books I-V: 1, 24, 8; 4, 81, 5) he writes of

μεταμορφώω can be used to refer to Jesus' transfiguration (μετεμορφώθη – Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2), which represents a change in appearance, in 'form', not a deep internal change in Jesus' person.¹²⁴ We can conclude, therefore, that συσχηματίζω and μεταμορφώω function here as close parallels, if not synonyms. Συσχηματίζω emphasizes the active 'shaping' of the person into the image of 'this age' whereas μεταμορφώω points to the ongoing 'change' that must take place so that there is no longer this inappropriate 'conformity'.

Paul's positive exhortation is that rather than conformity to 'this age' the Roman Christ-followers should be 'transformed', and yet Paul does not specify here a concrete 'direction' for their new 'conformity'. What is to replace 'this age' as the model to which their lives should be shaped? We can find help from other Pauline texts. As we will see in the next chapter, 2 Corinthians 3:18 defines the goal of this change (μεταμορφούμεθα) as 'the same image' (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα, i.e., the image of Christ). Romans 8:29 concurs stating that those 'whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed (συμμόρφους) to the image of his Son'. As we saw in the last chapter, Paul in Philippians describes the goal of our transformation as our being conformed to Christ's death (τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ). And yet as our exegesis showed, this conformity to Christ's death is, in the end, very much akin to being conformed to the image of Christ, albeit in this case the image of what Christ was when he died. The author of Ephesians has a similar goal in mind stating that the church is being built up towards the goal of the full stature of Christ (εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

And yet, it could be that Paul does not specify the exact 'direction' of this new change precisely because his emphasis in Romans 12:2 is on the means by which this

people being changed (μεταμορφωθεῖς) into an animal. Also Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*, Section 31) comments about the Egyptians who sacrifice the animals that have within them the souls of unrighteous people who have been transformed into 'other bodies' (εἰς ἕτερα μεταμορφουμένων σώματα). Again Plutarch (*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*, Chapter 1) tells of the radical change (μεταμορφωθέντας) that came over the people who went from love of philosophy to a party spirit. Finally, Plutarch (*Parallela minora*, Section 22) mentions that Smyrna, the daughter of Cinyras, is changed into a tree (δένδρον μετεμορφώθη).

¹²⁴ It is evident in secular literature too that μεταμορφώω can at times refer to a superficial external change as in Appian's *The Civil Wars* (Book 4 chapter 6) where he writes of an old man who changed his appearance (μεταμορφῶν) by putting a bandage over one of his eyes.

transformation takes place rather than the goal of the transformation. Change, Paul asserts, comes by the ‘renewing of your mind’ (νοῦς). Noῦς has various senses in the New Testament.¹²⁵ Here in Romans 12:2 it means ‘mindset’ or ‘way of thinking’. It refers to the patterns of thinking that characterize a person and which serve as a controlling influence over their actions. It is the prevailing attitude of a person. Paul insinuates that the mindset of the Roman Christ-believers must be continually renewed (ἀνακαίνωσις appears only here and in Titus 3:5¹²⁶). Their whole structure of thought must be ‘reformatted’. The threat of conforming to the mindset fostered by ‘this age’ is a constant one and certainly has, to some degree, colored their daily patterns of thought and thus their conduct. In order for real change to take place in their lives they need a new attitude, new ways of thinking. This does not refer to some superficial change of opinion, but to a whole new grid. Just as they are part of a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), so too must their thought patterns reflect this new reality. Just as they have put off the old man and put on the new man which is continually being renewed in knowledge, so must their attitudes reflect this new knowledge (Col 3:10). Just as they have been buried with Christ and will one day be raised with him, so too must they now live in a way that reflects newness of life (Rm 6:4-5). The only way for the Roman Christ-followers to break the distorting shaping influence of this present evil age is to experience ongoing renewal at the very deep level of their mind. They have to be shaped from now on by the new age.

Paul does not elaborate on exactly how this mind renewal comes about. He does, however, indicate that the necessary transformation is a work brought about by God’s initiative (μεταμορφοῦσθε is almost certainly passive, most likely being an example of the so-called ‘divine passive’). God is the one who produces this essential change in people and he does so through the renewal of a person’s mind. That is, God brings

¹²⁵ This range of meanings can be summarized: 1) The inner person inclined towards God and contrasted with the body or ‘flesh’ in its inclination towards sin, (Rm 7:23, 25); 2) Capacity for understanding, reasoning, thinking (Lk 24:45; 1 Cor 14:14-15, 19; Rv 13:18; 17:9); 3) Convictions, plans, thoughts (Rm 11:34; 14:5; 1 Cor 2:16; Phlp 4:7; 2 Thes 2:2); 4) Mindset, way of thinking (Rm 1:28; 12:2; 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:17; Eph 4:23; Col 2:18; 1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:15). Compare BDAG (2000:680) and TDNT (1967:958-959)).

¹²⁶ Other related words include: the noun καινότης (Rm 6:4, 7:6); the verb ἀνακαινώνω (2 Cor 4:16; Col 3:10); the verb ἀνακαινίζω (Heb 6:6); and the verb ἀνανεώω (Eph 4:23).

about a transformation in people as their mindsets are slowly reshaped. This renewal of the mind occurs as a person continually breaks away from the enslaving patterns of thought espoused by this age and adopts the new structures of thought of the age to come. Thus the Christ-follower is not a mere spectator in this renewing work, rather must actively reject all temptation to conform her thoughts to the former life and must seek instead to adopt the ways of thinking that are consistent with the new life. This is an ongoing process that will continue throughout the Christ-follower's life.

What is the ultimate purpose¹²⁷ of this transformation brought about by the renewal of the mind? Paul describes this purpose as εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ. What is clear, then, is that conformity to the world and its thought patterns clouds the capacity of people to discern God's will. If they are to 'approve' God's will they must have a change in mindset and live free from the distorting influence of 'this age'.

'Approve' (δοκιμάζειν) appears around fifteen times in Paul's accepted letters. It has four basic meanings in Paul: to examine or test something (1 Cor 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; 1 Th 5:21); to approve something that has been tested (Rm 14:22; 1 Cor 16:3; 1 Th 2:4); to see fit to think or do something (Rm 1:28); or to show the quality or nature of something by testing it (1 Cor 3:13). Paul's use here does not seem to fit in a precise way with any of these options. BDAG (2000:255) in a brief note states that the word can mean to discover. Byrne seems to concur and may be more on target stating that it has

the more specific sense of arriving at a decision as a result of a process of discernment between various possible courses of behavior; cf. the use of the verb with respect to ta diapheronta in 2:18 and Phil 1:10. The sense comes close to the verb diakrinein ("discern"), especially as the latter is used with respect to the discernment of prophecy.

(Byrne 1996:366)

The Roman Christ-followers need to be continually changed by means of a reformatting of their mindset so that they can discern God's will.

¹²⁷ Though εἰς τὸ plus the infinitive can denote result, it is most likely that Paul has a purpose clause in mind (Cranfield 1979:609; Moo 1996:757). But notice the comment by Boyer (1985:10), 'The relation between purpose and result is a close one and often difficult, sometimes impossible, to distinguish. Intended result is purpose; accomplished or realized purpose is result, and it is not clear in every instance which is in the mind of the author'. The same construction is found in Phlp 1:10 εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα. Both are probably infinitives of purpose.

There are at least two broad categories to describe how the New Testament describes 'the will of God'. First, the will of God can refer to his sovereign desire or decree, his eternal plan and purposes as manifested for example, through His sovereign calling in people's lives (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1); through His sovereign guidance in the present (Rm 1:10; 15:32) or His eternal work of salvation (Gl 1:4; Eph 1:5, 9, 11). But the sense that Paul has in mind in Romans 12:2 is more aligned with the second broad category, the will of God as referring to his moral imperatives (Moo 1996:757), the way that he wants people to live (1The 4:3; 5:18; Heb 10:36; 1Pt 2:15). Hence, what Paul is exhorting the Christ followers to do is to have their attitudes renewed so that they can clearly recognize and live out God's desire for their lives.¹²⁸ Their minds must be reformulated if they are to fully accept God's teachings as their practical guide for all of life. Paul then states that the 'will of God' can also be understood as that which is 'good, acceptable, and perfect'. These three terms stand in apposition to 'will of God' rather than as adjectives describing his will (Cranfield 1979:610). In other words, a renewed mind enables one to discern what is morally right, what will please God, and what is of the highest possible standard. That is, to grasp and obey God's will.

4.4 APPLICATION: Transformation in Romans 12:1-2

What does our exegesis of Romans 12:1-2 teach us about the concept of transformation? There are several important truths that emerge. First is an understanding of the need for transformation. Why is change necessary in the life of the Christ follower? We can look at the answer to this question from two different angles. In the first place, transformation is needed because of the sorry state of the person prior to coming to a new allegiance in Christ. Since conversion does not bring about an ontological change whereby the 'organ' of the mind and the heart are miraculously ripped out and replaced with 'new equipment', but rather constitutes a change of relationship, identity and standing, thus the change in the conduct and attitudes of the

¹²⁸ Byrne (1996:366) states with great clarity, 'The "renewal of mind" must therefore imply the liberation of the mind from its captivity to the old, sinful age (1:21, 28: 7:23, 25) and its transformation, through the Spirit, into an apt instrument for the discernment of God's will'.

Christ follower is gradual and intermittent. The newly regenerated believer does not suddenly have a heart devoid of all sinful passions, nor does she have a mind that is naturally able to discern God's will. Inclinations, motivations, and habits change slowly. When one considers the profound misshapeness of the person outside of Christ and the spotlessness and perfection of the desired goal of conformity to Christ, it is no wonder that Paul calls for an ongoing transformation. Thus Thompson's (1991:82) insightful comment seems correct, 'the action he calls for in 12.1-2 thus represents a reversal of the downward spiral depicted in Romans 1'. The profound ugliness displayed by this downward spiral, especially as it relates to the condition of the 'mind' of unbelievers, is clearly illustrated as we listen to the Pauline voice in Scripture.¹²⁹ The *voũs* is described negatively as: *ἀδόκιμον* – reprobate or rejected (Rm 1:28); *ματαιότητι* – futile (Eph 4:17); *τῆς σαρκὸς* – fleshly (Col 2:18); *διεφθαρμένων* – spoiled (1 Tim 6:5); *κατεφθαρμένοι* – corrupt (2 Tim 3:8); and *μεμίανται* – defiled (Titus 1:15). The heart is no better (Rm 1:21, 24; 2:5), nor is the body, as Romans 1:24 comments, sinners were given over 'to the dishonoring of their bodies'. The total person was malformed, a gross distortion of the image of God. Now that the person bearing this deformed caricature of God's image has been crucified with Christ the slow process of change is possible and must begin.

We can look at the need for transformation from another angle as well. The very fact that Paul commands the Roman Christ-followers to not be conformed to this age implies, at very least, the danger of such conformity. And most likely Paul highlights this threat because he was made aware that to some degree there was already some measure of conformity. The shaping influence of 'this age' and its malevolent forces were having success among the disciples. We see this same threat spoken of when in Romans 6:1 Paul asks the highly rhetorical question, 'Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound'? What follows is a very logical argument for why Christ-followers cannot and should not live in sin. Sin is incompatible with the new life in Christ. And yet, the very fact that Paul addresses this issue points to the fact that 'continuing in sin' is a

¹²⁹ The term 'Pauline voice' is used to refer to both the accepted Pauline letters and those disputed by some. That is, even if Paul is not the author of certain letters often attributed to him, these letters at the very least express Paul's 'voice'.

very real problem for Christ-believers. The need for ongoing transformation is revealed by the constant threat to 'let sin reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions' (Rm 6:12). Paul reiterates this pressing concern in Romans 8:13, 'For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live'. Christ-followers must live consistent with their new reality; they belong to the realm of the Spirit, having been freed from the realm of the flesh. Now they must live by the standards set by the Spirit, not those set by the flesh. But the very fact that Paul brings this to light probably implies that there were at least some who were living inconsistently; while belonging to the Spirit they were living as though debtors to the flesh. All of this highlights the true relevance of this exhortation to ongoing transformation. It is needed because people are spiritually deformed, shaped more by the attitudes, conduct, and passions of this world than by the image of Christ.

A second truth regarding transformation according to Romans 12:1-2 relates to the enemy of transformation. Paul presents 'this age' as an active evil force which seeks to mold people to its image and thus hinder true transformation into the image of Christ. 'As the use of the passive form indicates, Paul views "this aeon" as an evil power seeking to extend its tentacles once again about those set free by Christ' (Jewett 2007:732). Thus, 'this age' is not merely a period of time or a passive neutral force; it is a malevolent shaping influence ruled by a 'god' (2 Cor 4:4) and imposing its rebel standards (Eph 2:2) on all within its reach. Those who adopt the wisdom of this age (1 Cor 2:6) are entrapped by it (Gl 1:4) and thus are unable to 'discern' God's will (Rm 12:2). Even though Christ's sacrificial death rescued us from this present evil age yet its warping influence continues to pursue us, seeking to shape our thoughts and to guide our actions. In fact, as long as this present stage in redemptive history continues the Christ-follower, though free from slavery to this age, must face its intoxicating sway.

A third truth regarding transformation is the new capacity for transformation that those in Christ possess. Whereas the unbeliever (τῶν ἀπίστων, 2 Cor 4:4) is blind and enslaved under the tyrannical rule of this enemy (Gl 1:4), the Christ follower has been delivered from this slavery and thus has the ability to live free from the grip of this age. In fact, to

allow oneself to be shaped by 'this age' is to live contrary to one's true identity as a Christ-follower. Those who are in Christ have died and been buried with Christ (Rm 6:3-4) and thus can now live 'in newness of life'. Neither sin nor sin's governing force has any right to rule over the person who has been crucified with Christ. To be in Christ is to live 'in the Spirit' and thus to have the Spirit's life (Rm 8:10). This life in the Spirit means that Christ-followers now have the capacity to resist the maniacal claws of "this age". They can refuse to be conformed by it and to its ways. Thus Paul exhorts them 'Do not be conformed to this age', implying that the person indwelt by the Spirit has the capacity to resist being pressed into the mold of the world.

This new capacity for transformation is also evident because of the new 'location' of those who are in Christ. No longer are they citizens of this present evil age; they have been transferred into the new age. With the dawning of the 'age to come' through the saving work of Christ, all those who are united to him by faith are now to be shaped by the values, convictions, and perspectives of this new age. Their thought processes can no longer be determined by 'this age'; they must be completely reformatted so that they now take their cues from the new eon, the new age. 'Since the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, "this age" can no longer be the regulative principle of life for those who have died and been raised with Jesus (vi. 3 ff.). In Christ they have entered the new age' (Barrett 2011:214). It is precisely because those united to Christ by faith have entered the new age that this kind of ongoing transformation is possible.

In other words, one should not understand Paul's point to be that the Christi-follower is standing in neutral territory and is being tugged in two directions, on the one hand to be conformed to the old age, on the other to be conformed to the new. Rather Paul's idea is that the Christ-follower was already a 'resident' in the sphere of 'this age'. Conformity to its governance and to its moral and intellectual shape was a given. But now through the generous mercies of God the Christ-believer has been released from this sphere and ushered into the new age. Now he/she must continually be conformed to the ways and thoughts of this new world. Unfortunately there is still a pull backwards towards the

old age. The Christ-follower must resist this pull and must submit instead to the new standards and patterns of her new reality.

Fourth, we get a glimpse here of the true motivation for transformation, namely it is the logical response to the mercies of God. It is precisely because God has demonstrated such clear and multifaceted displays of his mercy towards us as deformed sinners that we should respond by offering our bodies as an act of worship and we should have our minds reshaped to reflect the new creation to which we belong. To continue to use our bodies as agents of sin is to commit idolatry, an offering of our bodies as a sacrifice to the god of this age. Likewise, to let our mindset be regulated by the rebellious world system that governs the 'now age' is idolatry, an offering of our mind to do the bidding of the god of this age. Such idolatry is the height of ingratitude towards one who has blessed us so profoundly with his rich expressions of mercy. The only rational response to God's mercy is a dedication of our bodies to God and of our minds to do His will.

Another truth about transformation expressed in Romans 12:1-2 is its importance. What is at stake if one does not experience this ongoing transformation is ignorance of God's will. Paul makes it quite clear that the purpose of breaking off all conformity to this age and instead being transformed by having one's whole thought structure renewed is so that one can discern God's will. Without this reformatting of the mind the will of God will remain completely foreign to the person, like a manifesto in an unknown language. And this blind ignorance to God's will makes it completely impossible to live in humble obedience to his desires. So then, without continual rejection of the sway of this age, without the ongoing shaping influence of the new creation in Christ, a person will remain in ignorance of God's will and thus will be unable to see it lived out in her everyday life.

Here we catch a glimpse of the importance of the *voũç* for a transformed life. It is not an exaggeration to say that as the *voũç* goes, so goes the life. That is, there is a very close relationship between the *voũç* and the conduct.¹³⁰ The direction of the *voũç* affects a

¹³⁰ For example, in Romans 1:28 Paul states that a 'reprobate mind' (*ἀδόκιμον νοῦν*) leads one to do what is not proper (*ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα*). The shape of the *voũç* affects the conduct of the person. Also, the writer of Ephesians exhorts the church in 4:17 that they no longer live as the Gentiles live 'in the futility of their minds'. Again, a person's 'walk' is influenced by the shape of their *voũç*.

person's actions, convictions, thoughts, and everything else in life. If the *voũç* is malformed because it has been sculpted after the image of this present evil age then the intellect, the priorities, the convictions, and the conduct of the person will give evidence of this same distortion.¹³¹ So intimate is this connection that Paul implies that a person who is conformed to this age will do the will of the forces and patterns of this age and will thus be incapable of discerning the will of God. The only way to be able to 'approve' God's will as a pattern and genuine guiding force for all of life is to have one's mindset reformatted so that it conforms to the new age rather than the present evil one.

Finally, we must consider the means of transformation. Paul is very clear that transformation takes place by the renewal of mind. Barth calls this 'renewal' repentance,

Repentance is the "primary" ethical action upon which all "secondary" ethical conduct depends and by which it is illuminated. Repentance is – the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the will of God, even what is good and acceptable and perfect'...Yes, repentance, as the "primary" ethical action, is the act of rethinking. This transformation of thought is the key to the problem of ethics, for it is the place where the turning about takes place by which men are directed to a new behavior.

(Barth 1968:436)

That is, true transformation requires first a 'rethinking', a change in the essential ways that a person perceives and responds to life. There will be no transformation of conduct until there is a fundamental change in the patterns of thought that govern a person's life. This radical reorientation of the mind is clearly not a one-time event, but a process, slow, arduous and continual. This process of renewing the mind is the essential means by which transformation takes place.

Can we be more concrete in our understanding of this process of transformation?

Transformation begins with an ongoing commitment to fully offer oneself to God (Rm

¹³¹ 'The phrase εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, is surely an intentional echo and response to the ἀδόκιμος νοῦς (Rm 1:28) ascribed to the Gentiles who did not 'present their bodies as living sacrifice that is pleasing to God, as a rational worship,' but whose preference for the creature over the creator led to the darkening of their own minds and hearts. Paul shares the logic of ancient moralists, who assume that moral behavior follows upon right perception, enabling ancient polemic to argue that just as good perceptions lead to proper behavior, so also wicked deeds suffice to demonstrate a derangement in thinking. Thus, just as the 'untested mind' of idolators led inevitably to vice, so the 'renewed mind' of the Gentile believer is to lead to virtue. The link between this understanding and specific attitudes and actions is a process of mental testing (δοκιμάζειν)' (Johnson 2003:219-220).

12:1). In other words, the person who wants to experience this ongoing transformation must continually offer herself to God as a sacrifice. This is where transformation of the Christ-follower begins. The body and all of its movements, its longings and impulses, must be surrendered to God. This is not to say that the body is evil and that desires are bad. Rather it means death to the ownership of our bodies and to the control of the passions and desires that animate them and move them to act. As long as our bodies remain unchecked and are enabled to serve as platforms for sin, transformation will be quite impossible. There must be a sacrifice of our bodies, but even beyond this, a complete renunciation and surrender of all that we are, to God. Life must become an act of worship for us.

This lifestyle of worship must then be accompanied by a continual resistance of the flirtations of 'this age'. Christ-followers cannot allow their lives to take the shape of the forces that oppose God. They cannot allow their conduct or their modes of evaluating life to be regulated by their environment or by the fads of society or the powers that govern the world in which they live. They must reject this kind of conformity to this present age. Change will come as their thoughts are continually 'refocused'. It must be remembered that a renewed mind is not an automatic thing that every Christ-follower possesses as a result of the regenerating work of the Spirit. Though the newly regenerate person is sanctified positionally (1 Cor 6:11), it is a gift from God, yet they must slowly be changed so that their daily reality eventually images the position they have inherited by God's grace. They must rid themselves continually of the vestiges of the old life and be continually transformed towards the image of Christ. This includes an ongoing transformation of the 'condition' of their mind. And as the Spirit-indwelt person slowly breaks away from conformity to this age and are renewed in their mindset, they will grow in their capacity to discern the will of God.

More concretely, the question that must be answered by the person who seeks to be transformed by the renewal of their mind is whose 'will' will govern their daily existence? When the mind is renewed it means that God's will becomes the chief directing influence and goal. The ethical commands of Scripture begin to take precedence in the

person's decision making. It is this practical will that shows one what is important, what path is the correct one to take, and what are the right attitudes and actions that should be reflected in all of life. While the compass that guides the thoughts and actions of the un-renewed mind is the will of 'this age', this will be less and less the case for the person whose mind is being slowly, yet continually renewed.

The mind which is being renewed will give evidence of 'truth internalized' (Stoessel 1963:168ff).¹³² That is, the truth of the gospel is an essential agent in the production of a renewed mind. One's mind is slowly reshaped as God's truth expressed in Scripture begins to push out and replace the convictions of the present evil age. It is not as simple as merely memorizing Bible passages or meditating on Christian clichés. Internalizing the truth means a change in the convictions that govern a person's life. Truth is truly internalized when it is accurately understood and when it is allowed to serve as the guiding force in ones' actions, attitudes, and beliefs. Therefore, humble and whole hearted acceptance of the convictions of the 'new creation' is a crucial part of the process of the renewal of the mind that brings about whole-life transformation into the image of Christ.

¹³² Stoessel's conclusions go far beyond exegesis and reflect his preconceptions rather than a clear expression of Paul's purpose in Romans. Nonetheless we agree with his general conclusion that transformation which comes through renewal of the mind necessitates an internalization of the truth of the gospel. Though Paul's purpose in Romans was not to define the ingredients of mind renewal, an error that Stoessel seems to fall into, though perhaps unintentionally, yet it is reasonable to assume that the theological convictions that Paul so profoundly communicates in Romans are a basis for the convictions which characterize the 'new age'.

Chapter 5

Transformation in 2 Corinthians 3:18

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The fourth text that directly speaks to the subject of transformation in Paul's writings is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18. In order to gain an adequate understanding of Paul's comment in this important passage, it will be necessary to examine the wider context, specifically 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. The apostle Peter once commented that Paul's letters contain some things that are 'hard to understand' (ἔστιν δυσνόητά τινα). Nowhere is this more obvious than in 2 Corinthians 3, a passage loaded with exegetical land mines. This study will not seek to resolve all of these complex issues; rather our task is to investigate what 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 teaches about transformation. The passage states,

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

ESV.

5.2 CONTEXT

2 Corinthians opens with the normal letter greeting found in each of the Pauline letters (2 Cor 1:1-2). However in 2 Corinthians this greeting is not followed by the usual prayer of thanksgiving, rather it is followed by a blessing to God for his comfort in the face of all kinds of trials (2 Cor 1:3-7).¹³³ God displays this comfort in the midst of suffering so that those who receive it might be equipped to share the same comfort with others who are

¹³³ Among the universally accepted Pauline letters only 2 Corinthians and Galatians do not include the normal thanksgiving section. Notice also that among the so called 'deutero Pauline' letters Ephesians, like 2 Corinthians, substitutes a blessing for the thanksgiving and 1 Timothy and Titus, like Galatians, omit both thanksgiving and blessing.

suffering. This is not mere theory, this is something that Paul had personally experienced ('the things that happened to us [our tribulations] in Asia', 2 Cor 1:8). Paul and his companions were burdened beyond their own strength and were so 'troubled' that they feared for their very lives (2 Cor 1:8 - ὥστε ἐξαπορηθῆναι ἡμᾶς καὶ τοῦ ζῆν). Fortunately God rescued them and Paul is confident that God will continue to do so. And yet Paul sees a greater purpose in all of this, namely that (ἵνα) 'we might not be confident in ourselves, but in God'. Thus Paul's primary focus in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11 is to praise God for His gracious and merciful protection and care during a very difficult time in Asia and to recognize that all of this suffering was purposeful; tribulations enable one to help others who go through the same suffering and to put our utmost trust in God and not in our own strength.

In 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4 Paul's praise quickly turns to a defense of his actions. In spite of what his critics might be saying, Paul's conduct both in general (ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) and specifically among the Corinthians (περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς), has been exemplar (ἐν ἀγιότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, 2 Cor 1:12). He is personally convinced that this is true (τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν) and the Corinthians themselves have witnessed this integrity (2 Cor 1:13-14) for even his letters are straightforward and clear, not hiding anything. Though the Corinthians only have a limited knowledge of Paul in the present, his hope is that they will know him more fully in the future so that there will be a mutual boasting in one another when Christ returns.

It was based upon Paul's confidence that his ministry was transparent and that the Corinthians knew him and would one day know him even better that Paul made plans to visit Corinth (2 Cor 1:15). Unfortunately his plans did not materialize, causing some to view the apostle as fickle (2 Cor 1:17). But changed plans do not negate God's faithfulness, nor do they tarnish the reliability of the gospel message preached among the Corinthians (ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν ὁ πρὸς ὑμᾶς) because Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, the one preached in the gospel, is proof of God's great faithfulness and of the gospel's reliability (2 Cor 1:19). In fact, all of God's promises reach their fulfillment in Christ, therefore, since the Corinthians have believed in him through Paul's preaching,

they can now glorify God and utter the same grateful ‘amen’ to God (2 Cor 1:20). It is God himself who has put both Paul and the Corinthians in Christ and has confirmed this work by giving them his Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22).

Having established that his ministry is firmly grounded in God’s faithfulness and the gospel’s reliability, Paul calls upon God as a witness demonstrating that Paul’s supposed ‘fickleness’ for not fulfilling his promise to visit Corinth was actually a merciful act. Paul wanted to ‘spare’ the Corinthians (2 Cor 1:23). His intention was not to control the people, but rather to work together with them so that they might experience real joy, since it is by faith that they stand confirmed in Christ (2 Cor 1:24). This is precisely why Paul consciously determined (ἐκρίνα) not to visit them again if it meant another painful confrontation. So instead of another difficult visit Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians, not with the idea of hurting them since they are the very ones who are supposed to bring him joy. Rather the purpose of this painful letter was so that they would know of his great love for them (2 Cor 2:4).

From defense, Paul turns to exhortation and instruction (2 Cor 2:5-11). It is clear that a sin had been committed that caused pain to the Corinthian church, though Paul asserts that he was not personally grieved by this sin. The church had responded to this sin and had applied the appropriate discipline. However, now it was time to forgive the sinner and to comfort and confirm the church’s love for him so that he would not be completely overwhelmed with grief. In fact, one of Paul’s reasons for writing the ‘severe letter’ was precisely to see if the Corinthian church would obey his injunctions. Paul ensures the church that he will forgive whomever they forgive and he will do so for their sake in Christ’s presence. But it must be made clear, forgiveness is necessary as a protection against Satan’s schemes.

In 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 Paul returns to a discussion of his recent travel experiences (picking up on 2 Cor 1:8-9; Harris 2005:235). Regarding Paul’s time in Asia, after leaving Ephesus he arrived at Troas where a host of opportunities to preach the gospel

opened up. However, when Titus did not show up as expected, Paul was deeply troubled and thus chose to leave for Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 marks a transition in Paul's argument from a defense of his actions (2 Cor 1:12, ἀνεστράφημεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, περισσοτέρως δὲ πρὸς ὑμᾶς) to a defense of his new covenant ministry.¹³⁴ This transition is marked by Paul's expression of thanksgiving, 'thanks be to God' (Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις). Paul's gratitude is directed to God who, like conquering Roman generals would often display their immense power and great victory by leading their captives in a great procession, so God leads his servants in Christ on a universal mission whereby they display his glory and make known the knowledge of Christ everywhere they go. That is, according to God's purposes the apostles are the fragrance of Christ among both those who believe in Christ and those who do not. To those who believe they represent salvation; to those who do not, impending judgment. Such an awesome and eternity-determining ministry leads Paul to ask, 'who is qualified for such a ministry'? In one sense Paul's obvious answer is, 'no one'! And yet Paul also insinuates that he is in fact adequate for this amazing task as he contrasts his ministry with the 'many' who are cheap marketers of the gospel. Paul's motives are pure, not financially motivated. He preaches as one sent by God, not some self-appointed peddler looking for personal gain. And, Paul's chief audience is God, not the faddish consumers of this world.

But is such a lofty view of his ministry a form of self-commendation as some have purported? Paul informs the Corinthians that the validation of his ministry does not depend upon the common custom of securing letters of recommendation from others (2 Cor 3:1). The fact is, the Spirit-wrought transformation in the lives of the Corinthians was sufficient validation of Paul's ministry, and Paul himself was deeply convinced of this. Christ's transforming work in them was visibly apparent for all to see and was a work that God had used Paul to accomplish (διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν; Seifrid 2014:113;

¹³⁴ We agree with Furnish (1984:186-187) that it is unnecessary to hypothesize that 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 is part of a separate letter, or that this section is misplaced from its original position in the letter, or that this is a great digression. 'Rather, Paul's thanksgiving is for what God accomplishes *always ... in every place* (v. 14) through his true apostles, and it does not look back to anything said in chap. 7' (emphasis in the original).

Harris 2005:263). This kind of validation is nothing less than a work of God's Spirit which impacts the inner life of a person and thus is a much more powerful form of recommendation than the typical letters the Corinthians sought (2 Cor 3:3). Such a deep personal conviction that his ministry was in fact legitimate came to Paul through Christ. This was no self-commendation or misguided sense of self-sufficiency; it was God himself who made Paul adequate for his apostolic ministry, a ministry of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:5-6a). This new covenant ministry is energized by the Holy Spirit and thus brings life and righteousness. But those who choose to live under the old economy (γράμμα) rather than the new (πνεῦμα) will experience only death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:6b-c). Though the old covenant ministry was glorious, the new covenant ministry in which Paul is actively engaged, is far more so (2 Cor 3:7-11).

Having established the legitimacy of his ministry as a God-given new covenant ministry energized by the Holy Spirit and producing life in others, of which the Corinthians themselves are living proof, Paul is now ready to develop an important implication of this call to new covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

5.3 EXPOSITION

In 2 Corinthians 3:12 Paul draws an implication from what he has been arguing in 3:7-11, 'Therefore, because we have such a hope, we use much openness'.¹³⁵ If the Corinthians wondered why Paul could speak with such 'audacity' (Seifrid 2014:161), the answer was 'because of the specific "hope" that he possessed (ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην

¹³⁵ The conjunction οὖν is inferential and the participle ἔχοντες is causal. This means that what Paul is going to say in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 is built upon his prior argument, especially in 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. Even more concretely, Paul is saying that this "hope" that he was speaking of is the cause of his boldness. It should be noted that although there is clear parallelism between 2 Corinthians 3:4 (πεποίθησιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν) and 2 Corinthians 3:12 (ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα) Paul's confidence and his hope are not the same; their content are different. Paul's "confidence" is found in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, namely that the Corinthians are Christ's epistle who give clear evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit deep within them. Paul was convinced of this spiritual work in their lives and it was Christ who produced this confidence in him. It was not some self-originating confidence or a feeling of self-sufficiency because of something Paul had done. It was a work of God who called Paul to a new covenant ministry. On the other hand, Paul's 'hope' is found in 3:7-11. His hope is just as firm as his confidence, but it has been only partially realized and thus is something for which he still waits. This hope refers to the surpassing glory and permanence of the new covenant and Paul's God-given role as a minister of this covenant.

ἐλπίδα). His hope fostered ‘candidness’ in his ministry. But exactly what was this hope that produced such openness (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα) in Paul? Paul’s hope can be summarized: just as the old covenant came with glory so the new covenant comes with even greater glory, a far surpassing and permanent glory. And this glory of the new covenant is both a present reality and a future expectation. That is, though some of the glory of the new covenant has already been revealed, its fullness is still a future expectation.¹³⁶ Paul, as a minister of the new covenant, has the firm confidence that his ministry, though maligned by some, presently gives evidence of this surpassing glory, and his sure expectation is that at the consummation of history the fullness of the new covenant’s glory will be finally and fully displayed. This hope in the glory of the new covenant as expressed through Paul’s ministry serves as the basis for his “openness”.

Paul’s hope-motivated παρρησίᾳ refers to the manner by which Paul carried out his ministry, both in action and in speech.¹³⁷ But the specific nuance that παρρησίᾳ carries here is difficult to determine. Belleville (1991:196) lists six different meanings for παρρησίᾳ and then chronicles at least eight different ways that scholars have defined παρρησίᾳ in this verse.¹³⁸ She finally opts for ‘the idea of open/public in contrast to obscure/hidden behavior’ (Belleville 1991:197). This fits the context well as she persuasively argues, ‘the consequences of Moses’ action are a “dulling” of perceptions (v 14a), a “lack of disclosure” (v. 14b), and a “veiling” of the heart (v. 15)’ all expressions

¹³⁶ ‘Paul’s hope is that as he embodies and proclaims the gospel of Christ the glory of God will continue to be manifest through his ministry as the initial proleptic experience of the believer’s future’ (Hafemann 1996:337).

¹³⁷ Belleville (1991:194) needlessly narrows the meaning of παρρησίᾳ in 2 Corinthians 3:12. She writes, ‘The term can be used of either speech or action. Yet παρρησίᾳ as descriptive of a certain kind of behavior is what best fits the context of 2 Cor 3:12ff., for there is nothing in the immediate context to warrant a reference to speech. It is the action of Moses in veiling his face that is described in v. 13. Also, turning to the Lord and the removal of the veil in v. 16 depict action, not speech, and the imagery of the unveiled face in v. 18 is more descriptive of behavior than speech’. While all of this may be true, Paul’s ministry was above all a speaking ministry (Seifrid 2014:163). His labor was centered on the preaching of the gospel. This ‘spokenness’ of Paul’s missionary work was the ‘context’ in which he served. Thus Hafemann (1996:338-339) is more in line with Paul’s sense here, ‘Paul’s use of παρρησίᾳ carries with it the connotation of shamelessness in one’s behavior and the consequent “freedom of speech” and “openness or plainness of speech” that it produces’. See also Garland (1999:181) and Fredrickson (1996:164) who sees it as only having to do with speech. Paul’s ‘boldness’ includes both his behavior and his speech; it is all-encompassing.

¹³⁸ The six different nuances of παρρησίᾳ that Belleville (1991:196) mentions are: 1) frank or truthful; 2) confident or proud; 3) clear or plain; 4) open or public; 5) bold or courageous; and 6) free.

that point to a situation where there is a concern with openness versus a lack of openness. As one scholar has written,

The contrast Paul draws between himself (and his associates) and Moses is not that of boldness (παρρησία) as opposed to timidity ... nor 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)

Thus, Paul's ministry was characterized by a freedom to speak and act candidly. That is, forthrightly or openly. There was no tendency to conceal the truth or to twist it to make it more palatable (2 Cor 4:2). Paul was frank and yet not crass, fearless and free in his speech, but not careless, bold and confident, but not self-sufficient.

This great openness that Paul exercised in his ministry was different from how others carried out their ministries. In fact, Paul illustrates the nature of his 'openness' through a startling contrast in 2 Corinthians 3:13, a passage which is fraught with exegetical complexities. In order to better understand this passage we need to examine several details. First, we must carefully observe the Moses narrative from Exodus 34:29-35 that stands behind our passage. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Israelites arrived at Sinai, the 'mountain of God'. Exodus 19:3 records that 'Moses went up to God' where he received instruction from the Lord and then transmitted this teaching to the people. Just a few days later God descended upon Mount Sinai and Moses 'brought the people out of the camp to meet God' (Ex 19:17). Moses then ascended to meet with God again as the people gathered below at the foot of the mountain and God manifested himself through thick smoke, thunder, lightning, and the sound of a trumpet (Ex 20:18) and proclaimed to the people the words of the covenant (Ex 20:1-17). Shortly thereafter, Moses again met with God and received the rules and regulations of the covenant (Ex 20:22-23:33). Once again Moses went up to meet with God, this time with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel and the text states, 'they saw the God of Israel' (Ex 24:10). We read in Exodus 24:15-18,

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

¹⁸ Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

This is the second time that Scripture records that someone had seen the visible display of God's glory (see Ex. 16:7, 10). After giving Moses instructions regarding the tabernacle, the priesthood, and a variety of other regulations, the text reads, 'And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God' (Ex 31:18). Moses had now enjoyed several encounters with God and other leaders had also seen something of God's visible glory. Moses had received the holy plates containing the 'ten words'. And yet up to this point, there is no mention whatsoever of Moses' face shining with glory. He and others met with God, yet there was no 'physical' or visible reflection that was evident from such an encounter.

Sadly, while Moses is on the mount receiving God's sacred instructions for the people, the people were in the camp engaging in idolatry (Ex 32). Impatient with the prolonged absence of their specially chosen mediator the people convinced Aaron to make them a golden calf to represent the 'gods who brought them out of the land of Egypt'. When Moses returns to the camp he sees the idolatry in action and in anger breaks the stone tablets of the law, destroys the golden calf with which the people had prostituted themselves, and then orders the Levites to slay the people. Three thousand men died that day and a short time thereafter the wrath of God falls upon the people in the form of a devastating plague bringing more death in judgment.

Exodus 33 is vitally important. God announces a dreadful judgment upon the people, 'Depart; go up from here ... but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people' (Ex. 33:1, 3). God will no longer accompany his people! Though some have seen this as an act of mercy since God's stated reason is 'lest I consume you on the way', it is more a threat of judgment than anything else.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ While it is certainly true that God's withholding of his presence here does express his mercy, the overwhelming emphasis in the text is not his mercy, but his judgment. This is further illustrated by the stripping of their ornaments. Hafemann's (1996:208) comments are insightful, 'Israel is now spoiled for her rebellion by YHWH just as Egypt was previously spoiled by Israel (cf. Exod. 3:22; 12:36). The long-

God's guiding, assuring presence will no longer lead the people as they venture on their dangerous journey. From this day forward the people ceased to dress in festive apparel; without God's presence there was no cause of rejoicing and no glory in which to rejoice!

Next, in Exodus 33:7-11 the author interrupts the flow of the narrative to describe Moses' regular custom of meeting with God in the tent of meeting. But this encounter with God's glorious presence took place far outside the camp, another expression of God's dreadful judgment on Israel.¹⁴⁰ The great cloud would descend and cover the entrance of the tent and while the people worshipped at the doors of their own tents, only Moses was permitted to meet with God. This whole episode depicts a clear sense of distance between the glorious presence of God and his stiff-necked people. He meets only with Moses but far outside the camp while the people look on longingly from afar from the doorway of their tents. Gone is the sense of God's closeness with the people, though Moses continues to enjoy face to face conversation with God. Yet it is interesting to note that even in this customary encounter between God and Moses which the people regularly witnessed, there is no mention of the reflection of God's glory shining on the face of Moses. Moses left God's presence time and again without any visible physical impact.

The author returns to the narrative in Exodus 33:12 where he describes Moses' decisive encounter with God. Moses has been called by God to lead this stiff-necked people to the Promised Land. However, now that God has declared that he will not accompany

term implications of her idolatry have become apparent to the people. Israel will leave Mt. Sinai stripped of her former glory, both the glory of YHWH's presence and the glories of her previous triumph over the Egyptians as God's people'.

¹⁴⁰ These new 'customs' or 'ground rules' are to be compared with the original instructions regarding the tent of meeting. Exodus 29:43-46 states of the tent of meeting,

There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. ⁴⁴I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests.

⁴⁵ I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

God's plan was to set up a 'tent' for his presence where he would meet with all Israel and where his presence would dwell among all the people. But the tent of meeting that Moses set up was far outside the camp where Moses alone met with God, where there was no special furniture and no offerings made, and where the people worshipped from afar. In the original design God's glory would be evident to all; whereas in the 'new' tent the glory of God would be separated from the people by a cloud.

his people, Moses wants to know who will go with him. Moses appeals to God to remove the judgment he has announced and to commit to going with the people. He bases his appeal on the fact that he has found favor in God's sight and that Israel is God's people (Ex 33:13). God responds to this request and promises to go with Israel once again. Emboldened by this favorable response Moses asks for the privilege to see God's glory. God denies this request since no one can see God's glory face to face without dying. Yet God does promise that Moses will see his 'goodness' and hear his holy name proclaimed. The broken covenant will be renewed (Hafemann 1996:214)!

Exodus 34 relates the specifics of the covenant renewal. Moses once again goes up the holy mountain and meets with God, this time carrying two new stone tablets that he himself had cut (Ex 34:4) and upon which God will eventually write the ten words as before¹⁴¹ (Ex 34:1, 28). Israel had broken the covenant by their worship of the golden calf and the two tablets written by God's very hand were smashed to pieces. As a consequence God had pronounced judgment on Israel denying them access to his presence. Now God calls Moses to go up the mountain alone, to cut out the tablets, and then he appears to Moses calling out his holy name. In this theophany God reveals himself as a gracious forgiving God, declares his pardon, and then reestablishes the covenant, repeating a brief summary of his law and commanding Moses to write the words of the covenant himself. It is after this covenant renewal that the author of Exodus records the visible reflection of God's glory manifested on the face of Moses,

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded,³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face

¹⁴¹ There is much scholarly discussion over this point. Though it is possible that the text in Exodus 34:28 intends to state that Moses wrote the ten words on the second tablets, it is also possible that Moses wrote the specific stipulations of the covenant which God had dictated (Ex 34:11-26) and then God, in fulfillment of his promise in Exodus 34:1, wrote the 'ten words' on the second group of tablets (Ex 34:28). For a clear and convincing argument of this position see R. W. L. Moberly (1983:101-105).

of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

(Ex 34:29-35)

Several observations can be made from a reading of this Old Testament narrative. First, there was an actual physical change in Moses' face that was visible to all who saw him. The text states that 'the skin of his face shone' (קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו). The Hebrew text has the idea of 'radiant', expressing the clearly visible and intense nature of this shining. Interestingly, the Septuagint translates δεδόξασται for the Hebrew קָרַן clearly emphasizing that the radiance on Moses' face was nothing less than the glory of God. Aaron and the people saw this change in Moses' skin and it evoked a strong reaction in them.

Second, the reason for this visible physical change was Moses' encounter with God. The Hebrew text states that the skin of Moses' face shone 'because¹⁴² he had been talking with him' (בְּדַבְּרוֹ אִתּוֹ). That is, it was Moses' communion with God that brought about the visible reflection of God's glory on the skin of his face. Yet the question must be asked, why now? Why all of a sudden does Moses' face shine due to his encounter with the presence of God when Moses had already enjoyed numerous such encounters without any visible impact? What has changed? The answer could be found in Moses' encounter with God as recorded in Exodus 33:13-17,

Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" ¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

¹⁴² The causal use of the preposition ב is supported by most translations and commentaries (see, for example, BDB 91). The Septuagint translates 'while he spoke with him' (ἐν τῷ λαλεῖν αὐτὸν αὐτῷ) giving a more temporal focus to the phrase. At the end of the day the emphasis is similar: the change of the skin of Moses's face was due to his time conversing with God.

This encounter takes place shortly after the tragic rebellion of the Israelites with the golden calf (Ex 32) and the ensuing judgment. The most devastating of God's discipline on stiff-necked Israel comes when he states, 'Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people' (Ex 33:3). This idea terrifies both Moses and the people of Israel; how could they continue their journey without the presence of God to lead them? They would travel alone and face their enemies and all adversity without the assurance of God's 'face' with them. It is this frightful and debilitating reality that leads Moses to ask God to show him his ways, and even more plainly, to ask that his presence go with the people as they make their way to the Promised Land. After all, says Moses, it is your presence with us (and the visible sign of this presence through the cloud) that makes Israel distinct from all other nations. God agrees and promises, 'This very thing that you have spoken I will do'. It is immediately after this amazing promise is given to Moses that God reconfirms his covenant and the glory of his presence begins to shine on Moses' face. Hence, this new demonstration of God's presence on Moses' face appears to be directly related to his renewed commitment to accompany his people. Hafemann (1996:226) clarifies, 'Israel's position before YHWH after the renewal of the covenant in 34:1 ff. is not identical with what it was prior to the golden calf. From now on, Israel's experience of God's presence and mercy must be mediated through Moses on their behalf.' This mediation of God's presence is evidenced through the radiance of Moses' face. Again Hafemann comments,

as a consequence of the unique experience of God's glory in 34:1-9, Moses bears the glory of God with him back into the camp. This is the means by which YHWH will place his presence in the midst of his people. Moses becomes not only the mediator of the covenant Law, but also of God's covenantal presence.

(Hafemann 1996:222)

Thus Israel's new situation post-golden calf tragedy means that God's glorious presence will graciously accompany them again, but only through the mediatorial ministry of their leader Moses, illustrated by the splendor shining on his face.

Third, Moses' shining face caused fear in the people who witnessed it (Ex 34:30).

Earlier when the people first met with God at the foot of Sinai they trembled with fear as

God manifested himself through powerful visible and audible displays (Ex 19:16). Now God is manifesting himself through Moses' shining face and once again the people respond in fear, 'Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him' (Ex 34:30). It is only after Moses calls to the people that their fear is relieved. Moses, radiating with the unveiled glory of God on his face, speaks with the Israelites informing them of God's instructions, and the people, though they are afraid, draw near and listen.

Fourth, Moses veils his face to cover the radiance of God's glory only during the in-between times when he is neither meeting with God in the tent of meeting nor publicly transmitting God's word to the people. In other words, the fear-inducing glory shone on Moses' face unimpeded as he spoke God's message to the people thus enabling even stiff-necked Israel to see the mediated glory of God in the face of Moses and still live. However, this glory was veiled most of the time. It was not continually on display for the people to gawk at; rather it was unveiled only when the message of God was being proclaimed or the messenger of God was meeting with the Lawgiver.

Finally, the reason for this veil is not specifically given in the Exodus narrative. There has been much speculation regarding its specific purpose, but the author of Exodus is silent on the matter. He merely describes Moses' custom of veiling and unveiling. As we will consider, it is Paul who expresses Moses' purpose most explicitly.¹⁴³

Before moving on, it will be helpful to briefly summarize our findings regarding the Moses narrative to which Paul alludes in 2 Corinthians 3:13. Moses becomes the mediator between God and rebellious Israel pleading to God for a renewal of the covenant and for the assurance of his guiding presence as the people go up to the Promised Land. God assents and summons Moses to meet with him on Sinai. In this

¹⁴³ The purpose for Moses' veiling of himself is mentioned also in Pseudo-Philo (*The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* 12.1) which states, 'And it came to pass after that, when Moses knew that his face was become glorious, he made him a veil to cover his face.' In addition, Belleville (1991:51) cites a portion of the Memar Markah which speaks of Moses as the one 'who dwelt in the cloud and wore the shining light for which was prepared a great veil from on high to magnify it, terrifying the minds of Israel so that they might not look upon the face'. See Belleville (1991) for other examples from ancient literature.

'face-to-face' meeting God enables Moses to see something of his glory and there proclaims his name and announces his forgiveness. The covenant, broken through the golden calf debacle, is renewed and a summary of the covenant stipulations are given. Moses then descends to the people with two new tablets with the 'ten words' engraved by God's hand in order to transmit to the people God's instructions. However, when the people see Moses they notice that his face is resplendent with the glory of God and they are shaken with fear. Moses then summons the people to come to him and talks with them and then teaches them God's words. After he finished conveying God's message Moses covered his face with a veil. This became his custom, unveiled he met with God and then spoke to the people, and then he would veil his face until the next time he met God in the tent of meeting.

This Moses narrative is important because Paul alludes to it in both 2 Corinthians 3:7 and 13. In 3:7-8 Paul writes, 'Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with glory so that the Israelites were not able to gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?' Paul's primary purpose in verses 7-8 is to demonstrate the greater glory of the new covenant ('ministry of the Spirit') over the old covenant ('ministry of death'). Both covenants came with glory, but the glory of the new surpasses that of the old. This is made evident through Paul's *a fortiori* argument,

⁷ Εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ... ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ,

⁸ πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ;

Arguing from the lesser to the greater Paul demonstrates a logical conclusion: if the lesser (ministry of death) came with glory then the greater (ministry of the Spirit) must surely come with glory. This is Paul's primary point here, a conviction that he further develops in 2 Corinthians 3:9-11.¹⁴⁴ The intervening ὥστε clause, therefore, is not

¹⁴⁴ Paul uses two more *a fortiori* arguments to make the same point (2 Cor 3:9, 11). It is important to note that Paul is not here disparaging the old covenant. He acknowledges three times (2 Cor 3:7, 9, 11) that it came with glory. What makes the new covenant 'more' glorious are two factors: The new is a ministry of the life-giving, righteousness-declaring Spirit and it is also permanent (τὸ μένον, 2 Cor 3:11) instead of

central to his main argument, but instead functions to explain the result of the old covenant coming in glory.¹⁴⁵ What happened as a consequence of the old covenant coming in glory? Paul's answer comes through an allusion to Exodus 34:30, a passage that illustrates this result. But Paul does more than allude to this encounter between Moses and the Israelites; he interprets it. The Exodus text merely states that the Israelites 'saw that the skin on his face shone and they were afraid to come near him'. Paul interprets this fear and concludes that they were 'unable to gaze at his face because of the glory' that was there. In other words, Paul understands their fear as leading to an inability to gaze at Moses' face (μη δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι).¹⁴⁶ Stated another way, the fact that the old covenant came accompanied with such glory – a glory illustrated by a visible display of radiance on the skin of Moses' face - resulted in the Israelites not being able to gaze at Moses' face precisely because of the glory (διὰ τὴν δόξαν) emanating from it. Such was the glory of the coming of the old covenant that it paralyzed the Israelites with fear!

having run its course (τὸ καταργούμενον, 2 Cor 3:11). This is why Paul asserts in 2 Corinthians 3:10, 'that which was glorious is not considered glorious now, (in this particular sense it is not now glorious), namely because of the surpassing glory (of the new covenant)'. In other words, the new covenant's moment in redemptive history – it came at the time of fulfillment (Gl. 3:19-4:7) - is one key reason why it is more glorious. Thus we agree with Hafemann (1996:324) when he writes 'The old covenant is no longer the locus of the revelation of God's glory in the world; the new covenant of the new age has arrived.' This arrival of the new age, the age of the Spirit, the inauguration of the new creation, necessarily results in the new covenant (which governs the new age) being more glorious.

¹⁴⁵ The question as to why Paul uses the comparison with Moses veiling himself in the first place specifically in 2 Corinthians 3:7 is answered by Belleville (1991:214), 'the first reference to Moses in v. 7 can be explained on the basis of a link between the Hellenistic letter of recommendation (vv. 1-3) and the tablets of the Law as types of external forms of ministerial commendation, so that the mention of Moses here is incidental to the inception of the old covenant ministry.' This is a viable suggestion though in verse 7 there is no mention of veiling. In fact, Paul's point in 2 Corinthians 3:7 is to show the incredible 'glory' with which the old covenant came, a glory so impacting that the Israelites were 'paralyzed' by fear and thus were not able to gaze at Moses' face. If the ministry of death came with such amazing glory, imagine the glory of the ministry of the Spirit, a glory that surpasses even this glory!

¹⁴⁶ We agree with Seifrid (2014:152) that 'Paul's attention is focused on the initial moment of encounter between Moses and "the sons of Israel." Here he interprets their initial fear as an inability to look at Moses' face, "on account of the glory of his face." The reason for the Israelites' fear is not explicitly defined either in the Exodus text or by Paul. It could well be that the fear was akin to the fear that the Israelites felt when God appeared at Sinai (Ex 19:16; 20:18-21). In that occasion it was the visible and audible displays of his theophany that brought fear. Here it may be the sheer radiance of his glory emanating from Moses' face or it could be that the people recognize that this shining was God's mediated presence and thus feared for their lives for having 'seen' God.

Perhaps we should state concretely what Paul meant when he comments that the ‘ministry of death’ came in glory. What was this ‘coming’ in glory? To answer this question Paul quickly jumps to Exodus 34, the renewal of the covenant and its aftermath, to illustrate what ‘coming in glory’ meant. God had made a covenant with Israel at Sinai and had given them his law, engraved on two stone tablets. But even before God had delivered the tablets through Moses, the people ran headlong into idolatrous rebellion and judgment fell and the tablets were smashed (Ex. 32). But through Moses’ humble intercession and God’s merciful forgiveness, the covenant was renewed and Moses once again possessed two stone tablets with the Law of God engraved on them. After Moses descended from the mountain to deliver the tablets, the glory of God – a visible manifestation of God’s presence displayed in the form of a shining light in the skin of Moses’ face – shone from Moses’ face, visible to the Israelites. This brilliant splendor emanating from Moses’ face as he carried the covenant tablets to the people – this whole encounter - is what Paul means when he says that the old covenant (‘ministry of death’) came in glory.¹⁴⁷

There is one final detail in 2 Corinthians 3:7 that is essential to understand: what does Paul mean when he describes the glory on Moses’ face as τὴν καταργουμένην?¹⁴⁸ One common translation is ‘fading’ (Belleville 1991:204-206; Harris 2005:283-285) referring to the view that the glow on Moses’ face was continually fading away only to be ‘recharged’ each time that he met with God.¹⁴⁹ This view does not, however, have a

¹⁴⁷ This raises the question, what is the difference between the ‘glory’ on Moses’ face and the glory that the old and new covenant ministries possess? The glory on Moses’ face was a physical, visible glory, a shining of the skin of his face. The glory of the covenants is not; rather it is a description of the splendor or value or importance of the covenants. Thus, the physical, visible glory on Moses’ face becomes a symbol of the ‘glory’ of the covenants. The glory of the covenants refers to their greatness precisely because they are a revelation of the presence, power, and greatness of God. They are glorious in that they reflect the glory of God, not in a physical way like Moses’ face, but in a metaphorical way.

¹⁴⁸ Paul uses καταργέω around twenty-three times in his undisputed letters: Romans 3:3, 31: 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6; 1 Corinthians 1:28; 2:6: 6:13; 13:8, 10, 11; 15:24, 26; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 11, 13, 14; Galatians 3:17; 5:4, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The word also occurs in Luke 13:7; Hebrews 2:14; and in the disputed letters in Ephesians 2:15 and 2 Timothy 1:10.

¹⁴⁹ Belleville (1991:205) holds that τὴν καταργουμένην in 2 Cor 3:7 is in the middle voice. She comments ‘it is to be questioned whether a passive sense fits the context. For to introduce an outside agent is to complicate unnecessarily the straightforward image of a visually fading facial glory.’ But though it is legitimate to doubt the passive sense, her argument that it complicates the image of a visually fading glory is unconvincing since the evidence for a ‘visually fading facial glory’ is limited at best. She finds some evidence in Pseudo-Philo, Qumran, the Zohar, and in Philo that potentially supports the idea of a

strong exegetical basis.¹⁵⁰ A second translation is ‘to render powerless,’ make inoperative or ineffective’, to bring to an end, nullify, or abrogate’ (Seifrid 2014:155-156; Hafemann 1996:301-309; Hays 1993:133-135; Wright 1987:144).¹⁵¹ This second translation has stronger exegetical support and yet it is not immediately clear how such a definition fits into Paul’s argument. Paul uses καταργέω four times in 2 Corinthians 3:7-14, yet the referent changes three times (*contra* Garrett 2010:758 who claims that καταργέω always refers to the old covenant in 2 Cor 3). What begins as a characteristic of the glory on Moses’ face in 2 Corinthians 3:7 (τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ τὴν καταργουμένην) quickly becomes a description of the old covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3:11 (τὸ καταργούμενον – which stands in clear contrast to the new covenant ministry described as τὸ μένον). Καταργέω cannot refer to the glory on Moses’ face in 2 Corinthians 3:11 because this would be totally redundant (i.e., ‘the glory on his face came with glory). Paul has thus shifted his focus to the differences between the old covenant ministry which came with glory and the new covenant ministry which came with even greater glory. However, in 2 Corinthians 3:13, Paul returns to the image of the glory on Moses’ face, stating that Moses veiled himself so that the Israelites would not gaze at τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. The mention of the veil and the act of gazing point logically to the glory on Moses’ face. However, it is precisely here that the lines become blurred. Though Paul has returned to his discussion of the Exodus text, it is quite evident that he is looking far beyond that incident as well. It is as Thrall (1994:258)

fading glory, but this evidence is not strong and could be interpreted quite differently than she does (see Hafemann 1996:287-298).

¹⁵⁰ Neither Belleville (1991:204-206) nor Harris (2005:283-285), for example, who support this interpretation, give exegetical support to prove their translation.

¹⁵¹ Garrett (2010:745), after examining the uses of καταργέω in classical Greek, the Septuagint, and the New Testament concludes, ‘Thus, it is highly improbable that Paul uses katargew in 2 Corinthians 3 with the anomalous meanings “fade away,” “come to an end,” or “remove.” He ultimately concludes that the best definition is ‘null and void’. Garrett is adamant that the translation ‘come to an end’ is not legitimate (2010:742, n.41), but Hafemann (1996:303) can state, ‘it is beyond dispute that Paul uses καταργέω to refer to the decisive act of abolishing or bringing something to an end.’ Garrett’s article is important, but his insistence that καταργέω cannot take on the stronger sense ‘to abolish,’ ‘to come to an end,’ or even ‘to destroy,’ is unfounded. This is especially clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 where Paul loosely alludes to Isaiah 11:4. The text speaks of the Messiah who will strike the earth τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ and who will ἀνελεῖ the ungodly. Paul picks up some key words (ἀνελεῖ, and τῷ ... τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ) and employs synonymous parallelism to prophesy about how Jesus will ‘kill’ (ἀνελεῖ) the lawless one by the spirit of his mouth, and will ‘destroy’ (καταργήσει) him by the manifestation of his coming. The parallelism is clear and thus the best translation for καταργέω is ‘to destroy.’ Garrett (2010:744-745) misses the parallelism and concludes that Paul is talking about two different matters. This is highly unlikely. The most natural way to translate καταργέω here is ‘to destroy’ (see also 1 Cor 6:13; 15:24, 26).

suggests, 'the symbol is replaced by the thing symbolized.' The glory on Moses' face now points to the glory of the old covenant ministry. Finally in verse 14 the image changes again so that this time καταργέω refers to the veil that covers the reading of the old covenant which only is abrogated in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται).¹⁵²

What then does καταργέω mean in 2 Corinthians 3:7? The glory on Moses' face 'came to an end'.¹⁵³ Here Paul is inserting an interpretive comment to the Exodus narrative. The very glory that shone on Moses' face, the glory that caused fear in the people so that they were unable to gaze at it, the glory that revealed God's accompanying, yet terrifying presence for the people was also a glory that was only temporarily manifested on the face of Moses. Like the glory of the old covenant, a glory symbolized by this brilliant glow on Moses' face, this glory was eclipsed by a greater glory,

Paul's katargoumenen is not a narrative description but a retrospective theological judgment. Indeed, the meaning of verse 7 is explicated by verse 10: the glory turns out to have been impermanent not because it dwindled away but because it has now been eclipsed by the greater glory of the ministry of the new covenant.

(Hays 1993:134)

Later Hays (1993:135) adds, 'the old-covenant glory did not just peter out like a battery-powered flashlight; rather it was done away by the greater glory of the new covenant in Christ (cf. v. 10)'. Thus Paul's first use of the Moses narrative in 2 Corinthians 3:7 demonstrates what it meant that the 'ministry of death' came in glory and the result that ensued – God's presence was mediated to the Israelites through a splendid and terrifying glow on Moses' face leaving the people paralyzed in fear and thus unable to gaze at Moses' face. Yet this glory that shone on Moses' face was soon eclipsed by the

¹⁵² The reason for Paul's use of the neuter participle in 2 Corinthians 3:11, 13 is elusive. The neuter makes sense in 2 Corinthians 3:13 because it probably refers to Moses' face (τὸ πρόσωπον) which is a neuter noun (though it seems to point both to his face and beyond it to what the glory on his face also symbolizes in the context), but why the neuter in 2 Corinthians 3:11? It is probably because the next closest referent in the neuter is τὸ δεδοξασμένον in 2 Corinthians 3:10 and Paul wanted to maintain a parallelism. However, there is a diversity of opinions regarding why Paul chose the neuter. For example, Seifrid (2014:164) sees the neuter as linked to γράμμα in 2 Corinthians 3:6. Belleville (1991:203) feels that Paul uses the neuter 'as a means of encompassing the entire thought of 7a'. Hafemann (2000:155) and Thrall (1994:252) see the neuter as a reference to the old covenant as a whole. Other scholars ignore the neuter completely.

¹⁵³ Compare the definition given in BDAG (525) 'To cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, abolish, wipe out, set aside'. Notice also the comment by Seifrid (2014:156, n. 224), 'Here as well as in vv. 11, 13, 14 the durative aspect of the present tense should be understood as expressing not an ongoing action but a state of affairs, and not one in the past but in the present'.

greater glory of Christ and the covenant that Moses mediated, though glorious, was surpassed by the greater glory of the new covenant mediated by Christ.

Paul's second use of the Moses narrative is found in 2 Corinthians 3:13. Once again Paul does not merely allude to Exodus 34; he interprets it. Unlike in 2 Corinthians 3:7 where Paul looks at the Moses narrative from the perspective of the 'sons of Israel', in 2 Corinthians 3:13 Paul has a different point to make and therefore looks at the Moses narrative from a different angle, this time from the perspective of Moses. Paul's concern, however, is not so much Moses the person or even his ministry, but rather Moses' specific action of veiling himself and the purpose behind that action.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, Paul draws the readers' attention to Exodus 34:29-35 once again. And yet, as was the case in 2 Corinthians 3:7, Paul does more than cite or allude to the details of the narrative; he interprets them. In Exodus 34 the author describes Moses' regular habit of putting a veil over his face (notice Ex. 34:34-35) yet he gives no clear explanation for why Moses did so. It is Paul who explains the reason why, stating, 'so that (πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι) the Israelites might not gaze at the τέλος of what had come to an end. Paul fills in the blanks that were either assumed or not revealed in the Exodus passage. We will look more closely at this purpose shortly. For now, we must ask the question, why does Paul choose this particular narrative at this juncture of his argument? In 2 Corinthians 3:7 he chose the Moses narrative because it clarified the result of the old covenant having come in glory – the Israelites were unable to look at Moses' face because of the glory shining on it. In 2 Corinthians 3:13 Paul chooses the Moses narrative for a different reason, because it illustrates the contrast that he wanted to highlight between his own παρρησία and Moses' action of veiling himself (καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα). Paul's 'openness' in his ministry is unlike what Moses did when he covered his face with the veil. Thus the Exodus passage serves as a contrast to what Paul's ministry represented.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ This is supported by the grammar of 2 Corinthians 3:13. Paul does not use a relative pronoun (i.e., Μωϋσῆς ὃς) thus emphasizing Moses the person, but rather states directly οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει, thus emphasizing Moses' action as contrasted with Paul's 'boldness'.

¹⁵⁵ A careful comparison of Paul's two uses of the Moses narrative reveals the difference in his purpose for each allusion. The purpose of 2 Corinthians 3:7 is to show the greater glory of the new covenant ministry. The mention of the Moses narrative is illustrative; it is not central to the argument. It shows the

We had stated above that 2 Corinthians 3:13 is rife with exegetical difficulties. We began, therefore by looking at the Moses narrative which stands behind the text. We have seen that Paul refers to Exodus 34:29-35 in both 2 Corinthians 3:7 and 13, and that in both passages Paul does more than allude to the narrative; he interprets it. This is especially true in the second passage where Paul delineates the purpose (πρὸς τὸ plus the infinitive) ¹⁵⁶ for which Moses used the veil to cover his face, a purpose that the author of Exodus does not explicitly reveal. What does Paul understand as the purpose for Moses veiling himself? Paul states that it was ‘so that the sons of Israel would not gaze at (ἀτενίσαι) the τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου’. This complex phrase has caused a host of exegetical nightmares. In order to understand the purpose for Moses’ action, it is necessary to first examine the key words included in this complex sentence.

We begin with the word ἀτενίζω. Martin (1986:68) holds that this is the key word in this verse and that ἀτενίζω does not simply mean ‘to look at’ but ‘to gaze at intensely’. Hafemann (1996:281-282) has a similar perspective. He sees a distinction between Paul’s use of ἀτενίζω and the simple meaning of εἶδον. He believes that Paul uses ἀτενίζω in 2 Corinthians 3:7 because Israel’s inability ‘specifically referred to gazing directly and continuously into the glory of God in a way that would affect them’ (Hafemann 1996:282). That is, the people were allowed to ‘see’ the glory of God on Moses’ face, but they could no longer ‘gaze directly and intently’ at it. Hence Paul’s use

result of the coming of the old covenant with glory and also serves to heighten the contrast with the glory of the new covenant ministry which is greater. Paul is saying, “if the coming of the old covenant ministry, a ministry of death, was accompanied by such glory that it caused a paralyzing fear in the Israelites to the degree that they could not look at Moses’ face because it was shining with God’s glory, imagine the glory of the new covenant which is even greater still”. This illustration is offered from the perspective of the Israelites, not from Moses’ perspective. That is, its emphasis is not on Moses’ action, but on the Israelites’ inability to act. The reason for this ‘angle’ is to emphasize the degree of ‘glory’ with which the old covenant of death came and thus magnify even more the coming of the new covenant in glory. On the other hand, the mention of the Moses narrative in 2 Corinthians 3:13 is intended also to heighten a contrast, this time a contrast between Paul’s ‘openness’ in his new covenant ministry and the ‘veiledness’ of Moses’ old covenant ministry. Paul’s ministry is not like Moses’ ministry in that Moses put a veil over his face with the purpose that the Israelites would not gaze at the outcome of what had come to an end, namely the glory on Moses’ face that was temporary, soon to be replaced by Christ.

¹⁵⁶ πρὸς τὸ plus infinitive occurs eleven times in the New Testament, each time it expresses purpose. Paul uses the exact same grammatical structure in 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 3:8 as he does here in 2 Corinthians 3:13 (πρὸς τὸ μὴ plus infinitive). Other New Testament occurrences of πρὸς τὸ plus infinitive are: Matthew 5:28; 6:1; 13:30; 23:5; 26:12; Mark 13:22; Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:11.

of ἀτενίζω rather than εἶδον focuses the problem on a ‘kind of seeing’ that was being forbidden; not simple sight, but a prolonged and intense gazing at the glory of God.

Compare this to Seifrid who writes,

The verb that Paul uses (atenizo) signifies “directing one’s gaze” or “giving one’s attention” to someone or something. The sense of the verb is that of “looking intentionally” and not that of “prolonging one’s gaze,” although, of course, duration may be incidental to such a beholding.

(Seifrid 2014:154)

So, is the focus in 2 Corinthians 3:7, 13 on a particular kind of ‘seeing’ or ‘gazing’ that the Israelites were forbidden to display or does ἀτενίζω¹⁵⁷ in this context simply mean ‘to direct one’s gaze upon’ and the point of emphasis lies elsewhere? We have already seen that in 2 Corinthians 3:7 the ‘inability’ of the Israelites to ‘gaze at’ Moses’ face refers to their immediate response of fear. If this is indeed the case then the distinction between ‘intensely gazing at’ and ‘directing one’s gaze towards’ is a moot issue. The point was not that their gaze was too intense or too prolonged. They saw (εἶδον in both Exodus 34:30, 35 in the LXX) the glory of God shining on Moses’ face and they became afraid. There is not the least hint in the Exodus narrative that the Israelites’ problem was the ‘intensity’ of their gaze and that therefore this ‘direct and continuous’ gazing needed to be controlled. The very fact of their seeing the glory of God on the face of Moses caused them to be afraid. Thus Paul recognizing this interprets their fear to mean that the Israelites were ‘unable’ to look at Moses’ face because of the glory that was there. Afterwards, Moses speaks to them and their fear is relieved and then they are able to see the glory on Moses’ face whenever Moses revealed it to them. This is the simplest and most obvious reading of the text. So then, in 2 Corinthians 3:13 the purpose of Moses’ veil was not related to a particular ‘kind’ of gazing, but to what was being seen, namely the τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου.

¹⁵⁷ The verb ἀτενίζω appears twelve times in Luke/Acts and two times in Paul, both in 2 Corinthians 3. It also appears 3 times in the Septuagint. As well, it appears together with εἶδον four times in Acts (6:15; 7:55; 11:6; 14:9) and once in the LXX (*Odes* 8:9). In the New Testament it refers to looking: at Jesus (Lk 4:26); Peter (Lk 22:56); ‘into heaven’ (Ac 1:10; 7:55); a lame beggar (Acts 3:4); the disciples (Ac 3:12); Stephen (Ac 6:15); an angel (Ac 10:4); a sheet from heaven (Ac 11:6); Bar-Jesus the sorcerer (Ac 13:9); a crippled man (Ac 14:9); the Sanhedrin (Ac 23:1); and the face of Moses (2 Cor 3:7, 13). Though the meaning ‘to gaze intensely and continuously’ is possible it certainly is not required in any of its New Testament uses.

What did Paul mean by the phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου? The first issue to be resolved is how to understand εἰς τὸ τέλος.¹⁵⁸ The prepositional phrase εἰς τέλος can be understood adverbially with a temporal sense meaning ‘to the end’ (Mt. 10:22, 24:13; Mk. 13:13; referring to the end of history) or ‘forever’ (Ps 9:19). The adverbial use can also carry an intensive sense meaning ‘fully’, ‘utterly’ (i.e., 2 Chr 12:12) or ‘continually’ (Lk 18:5). Quite frequently the phrase is ambiguous, leaving it unclear as to whether a temporal or intensive sense is intended (Jn 13:1; 1 Th 2:16).¹⁵⁹ However, it is doubtful that Paul’s intention was for εἰς τὸ τέλος to be understood adverbially since the verb ἀτενίζω generally takes εἰς plus the accusative as its object (see Ac 1:10; 3:4; 6:15; 7:55; 11:6; 13:9; 2 Cor 3:7).¹⁶⁰ Thus it is probably more accurate to consider the noun τέλος by itself. The noun can have either a temporal sense and thus be translated the ‘end’ or ‘termination of something (i.e., the consummation of history; Mt 24:6, 14; Mk 13:7; Lk 21:9; 1 Cor 1:8; 10:11; 15:24; 1 Pt 4:7; the end of one’s life [either μέχρι or ἄχρι τέλους] – Heb 3:14; 6:11; Rv 2:26; the end of his reign or impact -- Mk 3:26; the cessation of his kingdom – Lk 1:33), or it can have a telic sense and refer to the goal or outcome of something (i.e., Mt 26:58; Rm 6:22; 1 Tim 1:5). This second option could well be the sense that Paul intended here.

Paul’s interest in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 is to explain the practical consequences of the glorious new covenant ministry with which he has been entrusted, a ministry even more glorious than the old covenant ministry now eclipsed through Christ. The chief

¹⁵⁸ The exact phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος occurs only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint it appears only in Joshua 3:16 and as a superscript in fifty six different Psalms. More common is εἰς τέλος appearing six times in the New Testament (Mt 10:22, 24:13; Mk 13:13; Lk 18:5; Jn 13:1; 1 Th 2:16) and fifty one times in the Septuagint. The word τέλος appears forty times in the New Testament and one hundred fifty five times in the Septuagint. In Paul’s writings it has the full range of possible meanings, occurring twelve times.

¹⁵⁹ Garrett (2010:752-753) comments on Matthew 10:22 (also Mt 24:13 and Mk 13:13):

Because εἰς τέλος can here be understood in a fairly literal rendering, “unto (the) end,” interpreters have not recognized that this is a standard Greek idiom for doing something with constancy or completely. It is the idiomatic usage that accounts for the lack of the article here; εἰς τέλος of itself does not mean “until the end of the present age”.

He then gives several examples, but forces the passages so that they fit his definition. The more natural reading of these passages is ‘unto the end’. And the meaning of εἰς τέλος in John 13:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:16, and even Luke 18:5, is ambiguous potentially carrying either an intensive sense as Garrett assumes or a temporal sense. Both meanings fit well in the context.

¹⁶⁰ The verb ἀτενίζω can also take the dative as its object (Lk 4:20; 22:56; Ac 3:12; 10:4; 14:9; 23:1).

consequence is that Paul's ministry is expressed, both in word and in deed, with profound 'openness'. This openness can best be illustrated by contrasting it with Moses' action of veiling himself long ago when after communing with God and receiving his will for the people and then sharing God's commands with the Israelites, he would cover the radiant glow on his face, a glow that represented God's glorious presence. He did this so that the Israelites would not gaze at the 'outcome'¹⁶¹ (τὸ τέλος) of this radiant reflection of God's presence. That is, he did it so that they would not look at what was going to become of this glory – it was only temporary and would one day, according to God's purposes, be eclipsed by Christ. It was in this sense a prophetic act. But why would Moses do this?¹⁶² Paul does not explain Moses' motivation; he only states the

¹⁶¹ Hafemann (1996:357-358) is correct that εἰς τὸ τέλος means 'outcome' here, however his conclusion that that which was 'rendered inoperative' refers to 'the death-dealing judgment of the glory of God upon his "stiff-necked" people as manifested in the old covenant' is not correct. Neither 2 Corinthians nor the Exodus narrative clearly point in this direction. His view is largely based upon the conviction that the Golden calf incident changed everything so that after this tragedy 'the original intent of the Sinai covenant, that God would dwell in the midst of his people ... was aborted ... From now on, the unmediated presence of God among those in this rebellious state would only mean judgment. When YHWH comes to "visit," his "visit" will no longer be to bless Israel ..., but to judge her' (Hafemann 1996:286). Though the Golden calf tragedy was truly significant, there is no evidence to support the contention that God's visiting of his people from then on was to judge her. The text does not state or imply such a radical change in God's dealings with his people. In fact, the covenant renewal that follows Israel's great fall brings the promise of God's profound blessing (Ex 34:10).

¹⁶² A host of answers have been given to this question. For example, some say Moses veiled his face to keep the Israelites from seeing that the glory of his ministry was temporary (i.e., Barrett 1973; Furnish 1984; Lambrecht 1999) or that the old covenant was temporary (i.e., Thrall 1994:258; Martin 1986:68). On the other hand, Hanson (1980:13) claims 'The reason he put on the veil was to prevent the messianic glory of the pre-existent Christ from being seen by the Israelites...God knew that Satan would blind their minds. But God had provided for this: the very blindness of Israel would give an opportunity for the Gentiles to believe and thus become members of God's people'. Or the veil represented 'Moses' resignation to the fact that the Israelites would never see into the real purpose of having a covenant with God, even when it was quite literally shining like a beacon in front of them' (Garrett 2010:754). Or perhaps, 'it was God's will not to allow the Israelites, nor any human after Moses, to have intimate, personal fellowship with him until the full development of his plans were realized. When this took place in Christ, the temporary blockade of his glory, initiated symbolically with the veil over Moses' face, could be removed for those who believe in him' (Baker 2000:10). Hickling (1975:390) concludes, 'Moses veiled himself as 'a gesture of diffidence, culpably contrasting with Paul's own παρησιᾶ' and 'to conceal from the Israelites the fading of the glory ... from reverential motives, (i.e., it was too sacred for human gaze)'. Or perhaps the purpose of the veiling was condemnatory; it hardens the hearts of a rebellious people and prevents them from coming to faith in Christ (Provence 1982) or simply cuts off access to the glory of the Lord (Seifrid 2014:165). Finally according to Hafemann (1994:301) Moses veiled his face as an act of mercy in order to keep the Israelites from being destroyed by the reflected presence of God which, in view of the people's "stiff-neck" and idolatry with the golden calf, brought God's judgment. By the variety of views put forward by scholars it should be clear exactly how unclear the matter is. The truth is, in spite of Paul's confidence in the 'openness' of his ministry, here is one detail where he is not 'open'. Paul states Moses' purpose (i.e., so that the sons of Israel might not gaze at the outcome of what had come to an end), but he does not directly explain Moses' motive for this action, and neither does the Exodus text.

purpose for Moses' action – to keep the Israelites from looking time and time again at what was to eventually become of this radiance, a radiance that would prove to be temporary.

Paul's purpose, on the other hand, is clear. He is offering a vivid contrast with his own *παρησία* in ministry. He uses 'openness' in the practice of his ministry. But his explanation goes deeper than simply to express that his ministry is 'unveiled'. Paul has just expressed that in contrast to his new covenant ministry which has a permanent glory (*τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ*), the glory of the old covenant ministry can be described as that which has 'come to an end' (*τὸ καταργούμενον*; 2 Cor 3:11). This concurs with his earlier comment that the glory on Moses' face could be described as that which 'had come to an end' (*τὴν καταργουμένην*; 2 Cor 3:7). So now in 2 Corinthians 3:13 Paul uses a prophetic parable to illustrate the unfortunate result of a 'veiled' ministry, the consequences of which he will expound in 2 Corinthians 3:14-15; 4:2-4. Thus when Paul says that Moses blocked¹⁶³ the Israelites from seeing 'εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου' he is referring to the Israelites not having free access to the glory shining on Moses' face, a glory that represented God's presence with Israel, the very presence that set them apart from all other nations and was their comfort and guide. And yet this image points beyond this obvious meaning to the ultimate outcome of this reflected glory; it was to be replaced by the glorious presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. As Paul writes, 'in Christ' this glory 'comes to an end' (*ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται*; 2 Cor 3:14),¹⁶⁴ and the veil that impeded free access to this glory is taken away (*περιαίρειται τὸ κάλυμμα*) whenever someone turns to the Lord (2 Cor 3:16). Hence, Paul uses this Moses narrative in 2 Corinthians 3:13 to illustrate a ministry that

Perhaps we should be content with what he says openly and recognize that his silence about the motivation means that this is not his primary point in the text.

¹⁶³ Throughout this whole section the idea of the veil (*κάλυμμα*) is as a barrier. It obstructs one from seeing God's glory on Moses' face (2 Cor 3:13), it obstructs a proper 'view' of the old covenant (2 Cor 3:14, 15), and it obstructs one from receiving the gospel (2 Cor 4:3).

¹⁶⁴ It is not that God's glory ceases, but rather that the mediated expression of it on Moses' face that accompanied Israel at this stage in the history of redemption would cease. It was a temporary gift of God to his people, but one that would be replaced by the greater expression of God's glory in the incarnate God, Jesus Christ and through the preaching of the Christian gospel (2 Cor 4:4, 6).

is not 'open' and to point to the greater reality of how in Christ there is unveiled access to the glory of God through the new covenant ministry of the gospel.¹⁶⁵

And yet, not everyone enjoys this unveiled access to the glory of God in the gospel.

Thus in 2 Corinthians 3:14 Paul reveals why some do not experience this privilege. Paul begins 'but their minds were hardened' (ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν; 2 Cor 3:14a). The conjunction ἀλλὰ retains its normal adversative sense here.¹⁶⁶ However, what is the nature of the contrast Paul is making? We agree with Hafemann (1996:365) 'the contrast established is not between Moses' intention and the "hardened minds" of Israel, but between Paul's boldness and the fact that Israel's "minds were hardened". That is, Paul's contrast is not between 2 Corinthians 3:13b (πρὸς τὸ μὴ ...) which expresses Moses' purpose for donning the veil and verse 14a, the dullness of the people's minds. Rather Paul is contrasting his 'open' ministry (2 Cor 3:12) which is unlike Moses' habit of veiling himself (2 Cor 3:13) with the hardness of the people's

¹⁶⁵ We cannot agree with Garrett's (2010:754) reconstruction of this passage. He asserts that, 'the veil was put in place so that the Israelites would not be forever (εἰς τὸ τέλος) staring at Moses' face, but it was also Moses' resignation to the fact that the Israelites would never see into the real purpose (εἰς τὸ τέλος) of having a covenant with God, even when it was quite literally shining like a beacon in front of them'.

The problem with this conclusion is twofold. First, as we have shown above, it is unlikely that Paul intended an adverbial sense for the phrase εἰς τὸ τέλος because the object of ἀπενίζω usually takes εἰς plus the accusative. Garrett suggests that 'Moses' face' is the implied object and thus should be understood here. But though this does clear the way for εἰς τὸ τέλος to be taken adverbially, it makes τοῦ καταργουμένου superfluous. Paul almost certainly intended εἰς τὸ τέλος as the object of ἀπενίζω. Besides, though it is true that εἰς τὸ τέλος can often be ambiguous, it is quite doubtful that Paul had in mind both an adverbial sense and a telic sense. He could have had in mind both a temporal and telic sense for the noun, but not the adverbial sense for the phrase and the telic for the noun. This is highly unlikely. Second, and more weighty, is the fact that Paul does not speak in a tone of resignation as Garrett suggests, but rather speaks directly of the purpose for (πρὸς τὸ plus infinitive) Moses donning the veil. Paul is saying that Moses put the veil on to fulfill a specific purpose, to achieve a set goal, namely so that the Israelites would not gaze at the τέλος of the glory that had come to an end.

¹⁶⁶ There is much debate over the exact nuance of ἀλλὰ here and thus the nature of the connection between 2 Corinthians 3:14 and what comes before. Among the alternatives, ἀλλὰ could be intensive giving the sense, 'Indeed, their minds were hardened' (Provence 1982:76, 80). The idea would be that the veil of Moses blocking Israel from seeing the goal of the old covenant's fading is the same thing as having their minds hardened. Or ἀλλὰ could have its normal adversative sense and could point to 'a qualification of the entire preceding thought in v. 13. Verse 14a, then, would introduce a reaction on the part of Israel that is opposite to the action and intent of Moses' (Belleville 1991:219-220). Thus Moses intended his veiling to promote fidelity, but the Israelites responded with unfaithfulness and unresponsiveness. Finally, ἀλλὰ could be adversative, making a contrast with 2 Cor 3:13 as a whole. Thus Hafemann (1996:364) writes, 'In 3:13 Paul merely picks up and restates his assertion from 3:12, this time in a negated form. Hence, the reason for the unusual and awkward expression in v. 14a is that ἀλλὰ is commonly used after the negative οὐ to introduce a positive contrast to what precedes, either in respect to a clause or to an entire sentence'.

minds (2 Cor 3:14a). Paul's ministry is characterized by frankness and clarity, but the people did not respond, not because of some deficiency in the gospel Paul preached, or because of some defect in Paul, the messenger; but rather because of the poor spiritual condition of the people.¹⁶⁷

Paul speaks of the people's minds (τὰ νοήματα) as being 'hardened' (ἐπωρώθη). The term νόημα is not a common one in biblical literature. In fact, Paul is the only New Testament writer to use it and he uses it almost exclusively in 2 Corinthians.¹⁶⁸ The term carries the idea of one's 'thoughts' or 'perceptions' or even their 'ways of thinking'. It is sometimes translated 'mind' though it is clearly related to one's 'spiritual sight' (2 Cor 4:4) and to the 'heart' (2 Cor 3:15; 4:6). Perhaps what Paul has in mind here is the spiritual perception or capacity to respond to God and his word, and not just a person's intellectual side.

It is interesting to note that in each appearance of νόημα in 2 Corinthians the context is negative. Thus one of Satan's 'strategies' or 'plans' (τὰ νοήματα) is to exploit people (2 Cor 2:11). And as the 'god of this age' he is actively engaged blinding the 'minds' (τὰ νοήματα) of those who do not believe (2 Cor 4:4). But the evil one also attacks Christ-

¹⁶⁷ Thrall (1994:262) objects that the aorist tense (ἐπωρώθη) makes this position doubtful. Belleville (1991:219) agrees, commenting, 'The difficulty, though, is that the aorist tense, ἐπωρώθη, places this verse firmly in the historical context of the Exodus narrative. It is a description of the response of Moses' generation'. In other words, it cannot refer to Paul's contemporaries and thus cannot be directly linked to 2 Corinthians 3:12 and Paul's openness in ministry. But the use of the aorist does not cause a problem if it is understood that Paul is viewing the 'hardened minds' of the Israelites in a comprehensive sense. That is, he is making a bridge between the Israelites of Moses' day and Paul's contemporaries. Paul is viewing both groups together. Thus taken as a whole, the Israelites of Moses' day and those of Paul's day have proven to be 'stiff-necked' and thus unresponsive. Both confront a veil which impedes their being able to freely experience God's glory, whether on Moses' face or in their reading of law. This interpretation is supported by the γὰρ which follows and which connects the hardened minds to the people of Paul's day. The aorist then is not pointing to past time, but to "perfective" action and encompasses both the past and the 'present', seeing them as whole. It must also be added that those who see a causal relationship between Moses' veil and the hardened minds (i.e., Moses veiled himself 'because' the people had dull minds) tend to do so on theological grounds more than exegetical ones. The evidence of the text is not so clear. This is certainly a possible conclusion that one could draw (it is possible that ἀλλά carries a causal sense in Mk 6:52, for example, thus giving weight to such a view here), but it is more than the text states. This position is taken by Hafemann (1996:363); Wright (1987:143); Martin (1986:57); Garrett (2010:758-759); and Garland (1999:190).

¹⁶⁸ Νόημα occurs six times in the New Testament, five of which are in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 2:11; 3:14; 4:4; 10:5; 11:3), and one of which is in Philippians 4:7. The term also appears three times in the Septuagint (*Baruch* 2:8; *3 Macc.* 5:30; *Enoch* 5:8). The word was known in the ancient world (i.e., twenty-three times in Homer, eleven times in Plato, forty-three times in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, seven times in Aristophanes, four times in Plutarch, and others).

followers, thus one of Paul's fears for the Corinthians was that their 'thoughts' (τὰ νοήματα) would fall victim to the same corrupting influence that Eve fell under when she was deceived by the wily serpent (2 Cor 11:3). Since the 'mind' (νόημα) is one of the primary battle grounds that the enemy seeks to control and because it is susceptible to 'hardening' making one unresponsive to God (2 Cor 3:14), therefore, it is imperative that Christ-followers take control of every 'plan' or 'thought' (πᾶν νόημα) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God in order to bring them into obedience to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). In such a stressful and spiritually dangerous situation the believer must be devoted to prayer so that God's peace might 'guard' our hearts and 'minds' (τὰ νοήματα) in Christ Jesus (Phlp. 4:7).

Hence it should be clear from Paul's use of νόημα that he has more in mind than a person's individual thoughts or their intellectual capacity. Paul is thinking of their inner capacity to respond to God, a person's spiritual perception. It is precisely here that the enemy seeks to get a foothold. His desire is to warp a person's perceptions, to deaden their spiritual responsiveness. Unfortunately the Israelites, both of Moses' day and of Paul's, have had their spiritual perception hardened (ἐπωρώθη). Paul uses another uncommon term, πωρώ, that occurs only five times in the New Testament (Mk 6:52; 8:17; Jn 12:40; Rm 11:7-8; 2 Cor 3:14) and once in the Septuagint (Job 17:7) to describe what happened to the Israelites' spiritual responsiveness. The word is very rare in extra-biblical literature as well. It is generally translated 'hardened' and is akin to the Old Testament concept of a 'stiff-neck'.¹⁶⁹ It is a sign of spiritual dullness and even worse, of rebellion against God and his authority. The result of someone being 'hardened' is incapacity to respond, a spiritual numbness. Those who have been hardened have eyes that cannot see (Jn 12:40; Rm 11:8; Job 17:7) and ears that cannot hear (Rm 11:8), their spirits are dull (Rm 11:8), and they do not understand (Mk 6:52; 8:17). Their hearts have become hard (Mk 6:52; 8:17; Jn 12:40) and unresponsive. This was the situation with the Israelites both of Paul's day as well as those of Moses' day.

¹⁶⁹ The Septuagint uses σκληροτράχηλος to refer to "stiff-necked" (Ex 33:3, 5; 34:9; Dt 9:6, 13; Pr 29:1; Sir 16:11; Bar 2:30). The MT translates with הַרְעִיב־הַשְׂקָמָע (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Dt 9:6, 13).

In fact, Paul goes on in 2 Corinthians 3:14b-15 to explain (γὰρ) what it means that the Israelites of his day have become spiritually hardened.¹⁷⁰ He begins by drawing the readers' attention from the past to the present; Israelite spiritual blindness was not the domain only of the ancients of Moses' day; the 'present day' Israelites experience the same 'hardheadedness'. That is, this spiritual deficiency has 'continued right up until today' (ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας). And what is the nature of this blindness? Paul describes it as having a veil which obstructs them during the public reading of the old covenant. This comment calls for more explanation. First, it should be noted that Paul calls this obstruction, 'the same veil' (τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα). Paul is obviously speaking metaphorically here. The present veil is the same as the ancient veil in that they both served as obstructions hindering the Israelites from 'seeing' something. In the case of the Moses generation, the veil hindered the Israelites from seeing the glory of God on the face of Moses. In Paul's day, the same obstruction is evident, but the veil is no longer a literal cloth veil; the present veil is symbolic. This veil is a spiritual obstacle that affects the Jews when the old covenant is publicly read.¹⁷¹

Second, this veil is evident 'at the reading of the old covenant' (ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης). Though some scholars take the ἐπὶ as locative and conclude that the veil was covering the old covenant itself, this is doubtful (*Contra* Thrall 1994: 263-264, n. 511; and Belleville 1991:231-232). Paul does not say that the veil covers the 'old covenant', but the 'reading of the old covenant'. This emphasis points more naturally to a temporal use of ἐπὶ. The veil covers the Israelites at the time when the old covenant was read (see 2 Cor 3:15 where the veil is 'on their hearts' thus confirming that the problem was not the covenant itself, but rather the Israelites when they read it).¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ The γὰρ serves to point to an explanation. This means that what follows (2 Cor 3:14b-17) does not advance the argument, but rather clarifies in some measure what Paul has said about the 'hard-mindedness' of the Israelites, both of Paul's day and of Moses'. To some degree 2 Corinthians 3:14b-17 is a commentary clarifying what it means that some of the Israelites ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν.

¹⁷¹ One evidence that Paul is speaking symbolically and that he has moved away from Moses' veil to a metaphorical veil is that whereas the Israelites of Moses' day could hear the words of the covenant while gazing at the glory on Moses' unveiled face (i.e., the veil was taken away during these moments), the Jews of Paul's day had the veil on their hearts when the words of the covenant were read.

¹⁷² It is instructive however, that Paul can write in 2 Corinthians 4:3, 'even if our gospel is veiled'. Here it is the gospel message itself that is 'veiled'. Paul's point, however, is the same as he makes in 2 Corinthians

But in what sense does this veil obstruct the Jew during the reading of the old covenant? What concrete effect does it have? Many suggestions have been given: the veil prevents the Israelites from ‘understanding the real purpose of the Mosaic law’ (Thrall 1994:263; Harris 2005:302; Hooker 1994:286); it prevents them from seeing that ‘the order of which it speaks is a temporary one, which has now been superseded by Christ’ (Bruce 1971:192; Kruse 1987:97; Van Unnik 1963:164); it prevents them from embracing ‘its significance as a pointer to the glory of God, a glory which was intended to lead them to place their trust in God rather than in themselves’ (Provence 1982:80). While it is possible that Paul viewed the effect of the veil covering the Israelites as something more comprehensive resulting in both a lack of understanding of the real meaning of the old covenant and a lack of vision to see that the old covenant was replaced by the new, he most likely had something else in mind as well. Because the problem with the Israelites was a profound hardness of their spiritual perception and since their very hearts were veiled indicating something deep and controlling, it is more likely that the chief effect of the veil was volitional. Hafemann insightfully comments,

The problem signified by the veil is thus not a cognitive inability due to the lack of a special spiritual endowment, but an inescapable volitional inability as a result of a hardened heart untouched by the Spirit’s transforming power. It is not that Israel cannot understand the meaning of the old covenant, as if it were an esoteric secret to be unlocked by a special gnostic revelation, but that she will not accept it as true for her and cannot submit to it.

(Hafemann 1996:374)

The ultimate Israelite problem is a refusal to surrender to Christ who is the very one to whom the old covenant pointed. Each time they hear the old covenant read they renew their rejection of his authority and they demonstrate their inability to ‘see’ the glory of Christ as revealed therein. Their spiritual sensitivities are ‘petrified’ making them incapable and unwilling to respond appropriately to God’s revelation through the law. This heart-numbing obstacle remains on every Jew unless they turn to the Lord at which time the veil is stripped off (2 Cor 3:16).

3:14-16, namely that the ‘defect’ or ‘barrier’ is really in the blindness or hardness of the recipients (2 Cor 4:4 where even though the gospel is ‘veiled’ it is the ‘unbelievers’ who have been ‘blinded’ by Satan). Blindness or hardness of ‘mind’ is an obstacle to receiving the gospel; it is really a barrier (i.e., veil) that makes the gospel imperceptible and unacceptable to them.

In 2 Corinthians 3:14c we are confronted with a difficult grammatical decision. How did Paul intend us to understand the phrase, μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον, ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται and its relationship to the rest of the verse? The two most viable options are¹⁷³: 1) the same veil remains when the old covenant is read; it is not revealed to them that the old covenant comes to an end in Christ; or 2) The same veil remains when the old covenant is read; it is not ‘unveiled’ (i.e., taken away) because it is in Christ that the veil is abolished. Both options are possible and both make good sense in the context. The strength of the second option is that ‘veil’ is a more natural subject for both the participle μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον since they are both neuter, and for the verb καταργεῖται since the context does not call for such a sudden change of subject (i.e., from τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα to τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης). Also, the first option requires that μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον be an accusative absolute, a very rare construction in the New Testament (Thrall 1994:264). Seifrid (2014:168) rightly criticizes the common translations of the participle ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ‘unlifted’ or ‘not removed’. However, if this participle is rightly translated ‘unveil’ or ‘uncover’ (notice its use in 2 Cor 3:18) it can still support the second option and fit nicely into Paul’s argument. The same goes for the unfortunate translations of καταργεῖται. If it retains its normal usage, ‘to abolish’ or ‘render inoperative’ then it can still support the second option and fit the flow of thought. With the second option Paul is using graphic metaphorical language, a play on words, to drive home his point about the spiritual deadness of the Jews. First, the veil remains ‘not uncovered’ or ‘not unveiled’. That is, the same obstructive veil keeps the Jews from responding to the words of the old covenant. It hinders them from seeing the glory of Christ in the old covenant and from submitting to his authority over their lives. This obstacle remains, not yet having been ‘unveiled’. Paul’s second play on words refers to why it is that the veil has not yet been ‘uncovered’. Paul’s answer is ‘because it is in Christ that the veil is destroyed’. This dark obstructive covering remains over the hearts of the Jews when they hear the old covenant read because they have not yet come to

¹⁷³ There are other options that make subtle changes to the two options mentioned above (i.e., Belleville 1991:233-237; Garrett 2010:756-758).

faith in Christ. It is only through union with Christ that the veil is rendered powerless and in this sense destroyed.¹⁷⁴

In 2 Corinthians 3:15 Paul repeats with even greater clarity the point he just made in verse 14a-b, ‘indeed until today whenever Moses is read a veil covers their heart’. In this restatement Paul clarifies that when he refers to the old covenant he has in mind the Mosaic covenant. He is not thinking of the whole Old Testament; rather his focus is specifically on the Sinaitic covenant. This glorious covenant is now ‘old’, not because it has lost its glory, but rather because a new covenant has been inaugurated, a covenant that surpasses it in glory. It is this new covenant that Paul preaches, and it is because of the surpassing glory of this covenant and its permanence that Paul can carry out his new covenant ministry with great openness; nothing is concealed or hidden, there is no manipulation or falsehood (2 Cor 4:2-3). But the Jews have not responded to this new covenant ministry and its gospel message. Their hearts are covered over with a veil that hinders them from recognizing Christ and following him. This present veil is just like the veil that covered Moses’ face keeping the Israelites of his day from seeing the glory of God.

Then in 2 Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul points to a grand solution to this deep spiritual blindness, ‘but when Moses turned to the Lord, the veil was removed. And the Lord to whom he turned was the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’. Paul is almost certainly alluding to Exodus 34:34 in 2 Corinthians 3:16. Notice the comparison with the Septuagint version:

LXX - ἡνίκα δ’ ἂν	εἰσεπορεύετο Μωσῆς	ἔναντι Κυρίου	λαλεῖν αὐτῷ,
NT - ἡνίκα δὲ ἔαν	ἐπιστρέψῃ	πρὸς κύριον	
LXX - περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα	ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι		
NT - περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα			

¹⁷⁴ Notice the tantalizing suggestion by Thrall (1994:266), ‘There is an additional feature of the Exodus narrative, which Paul shows himself to be aware of in v. 16, which may provide a clue. This is that the veil of Moses was removed only temporarily, i.e. it was continuously both removed and replaced. Paul might wish to suggest that, with the coming of Christ, the barrier to perception is removed permanently, for good and all.

There are two important changes that Paul makes. First, Paul omits mentioning the subject of the main verb. In the Exodus passage it is Moses who enters and who takes off the veil. However, in Paul the subject is ambiguous. Various alternatives have been suggested as the intended subject (Thrall 1994:269-271): 'The heart' of verse 15; Israel; 'anyone'; a composite subject combining Moses with Israel or the Jews, or an individual Jew; Paul's Christian opponents; or Moses. Given that Paul is alluding to Exodus 34 it is most likely that Moses is the intended subject. This fact is strengthened by 2 Corinthians 3:15 where Paul replaces 'old covenant' and inserts 'Moses' as the subject of what is 'read'. 'Since Μωϋσῆς has been the expressed subject of the ῥήματα-clause in v. 15, (it) would naturally be seen as the subject also of the following verb expressive of personal action' (Thrall 1994:271). And yet there is purpose behind Paul's ambiguity in 2 Corinthians 3:16. Hafemann (1996:389) is surely correct when he comments, 'the absence of a direct reference to Moses as the subject of the verb ἐπιστρέψῃ makes it possible for Paul to establish a correlation between Moses and the indefinite person from within Israel now in view'. Moses' action of unveiling himself when he enters God's presence now becomes a promise to anyone who turns to the Lord in faith. The debilitating veil that covers the hardened hearts of the Jews can now be removed forever. Thus Moses' practice of unveiling himself when he visited with God becomes a typological expression of conversion. What he practiced in the wilderness is symbolic of what can happen to a person of any generation.

Second, Paul changes the verb εἰσπορεύομαι in the imperfect middle indicative to ἐπιστρέφω in the aorist active subjunctive. Whereas Exodus stated that Moses regularly 'entered' into the tent to speak with God, Paul changes it to read, whenever he 'turned' to the Lord. The verb ἐπιστρέφω is somewhat ambiguous as well. It can simply mean 'to return' and thus could be repeating the idea of Moses 'going in again' to converse with God. But more likely Paul has another purpose in mind,

The change from εἰσπορεύεσθαι to ἐπιστρέφειν πρὸς was doubtless prompted by Paul's desire to express spiritual rather than physical movement, ...and especially...in reference to a spiritual "turning to the Lord" (or, to God) in heartfelt repentance.

(Harris 2005:307)

The verb ἐπιστρέφω often carries this meaning of ‘turning to the Lord’, referring to conversion.¹⁷⁵ Thus Paul, with these two changes, has been able to set Moses’ action of unveiling himself when he met with the Lord as a ‘prototype of those within the remnant of Israel who follow him “to the Lord” (Hafemann 1996:389). His unveiling becomes the experience of all who turn to the Lord; they have ‘unveiled’ access to the presence of God, especially as it is expressed through the new covenant ministry of the gospel. That which once hindered them, a spiritual blindness, a hardening of their spiritual sensitivities, has now been stripped away through their repentance and new allegiance to the Lord.

There is one more detail to clarify in 2 Corinthians 3:16: to whom is Paul referring when he speaks of turning to the Lord? If Paul is indeed alluding to Exodus 34 as has been argued then κύριος must refer to Yahweh. Paul had made a similar comment in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 when he reminded the church that they had ‘turned to God’ (ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν). Given that the idea of turning to God was not foreign to Paul’s thinking and fits the context better it is most certainly the idea that Paul had in mind here.¹⁷⁶

Paul goes on in 2 Corinthians 3:17 to clarify his reference to ‘the Lord’. He writes, ‘Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’. This enigmatic statement has caused great theological angst.¹⁷⁷ What could Paul mean by saying ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν? Paul is not arguing ontologically here; he does not mean that the two are one being. Therefore, we should not distill theological conclusions regarding the triune nature of God and the relationship of persons in the

¹⁷⁵ See especially Dt 4:30; 1 Sm 7:3; 3 Sm 12:27; 2 Ki 23:25; 2 Chr 24:19; 30:9; 35:19; Ps 21:28; Jb 33:23; Sir 5:7; Hs 6:1; 14:2, 3; Jl 2:13; Is 19:22; and 1 Th 1:9 where the same phrase ‘ἐπιστρέφω πρὸς Κύριον’ appears and clearly refers to ‘conversion’ or ‘repentance’. See also Mt 13:15; Mk 4:12; Lk 1:16; Ac 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18; 28:27; 1 Th 1:9; Ja 5:19; 1 Pt 2:25 where ἐπιστρέφω refers to ‘conversion’ or ‘turning to the Lord in repentance’.

¹⁷⁶ Yet, one wonders if with all the purposeful ambiguity in 2 Corinthians 3:16 where Paul is linking the Exodus narrative to the present experience of the Jews of his own day, could it be that Paul’s use of κύριος is equally ambiguous, drawing the Jews to not only remember Moses returning to God with unveiled face, but also to see that through an acceptance of the new covenant gospel they can enjoy the same experience of an unveiled approach to the Lord Jesus?

¹⁷⁷ See the detailed discussion in Thrall (1994:274-282) and Belleville (1991:256-267).

Godhead from this statement.¹⁷⁸ Also, as was argued above and as the context clearly shows, κύριος refers to Yahweh.¹⁷⁹ Thus 2 Corinthians 3:17a is interpreting 3:16 and applying it to Paul's day; the κύριος to whom Moses 'returned' (Yahweh) is in some way related to the Spirit under Paul's new covenant ministry. The nature of this relationship being highlighted is not ontological, but experiential,

Paul is not identifying Christ and the Spirit, but making it clear that Moses' experience of YHWH in the tent of meeting is equivalent to the current experience of the Spirit in Paul's ministry, even as Paul could refer in 3:3 to the Spirit unleashed in his ministry as the "Spirit of the living God".

(Hafemann 1996:399)

Hence, as Moses turned to Yahweh with an unveiled face and thus experienced communion with his glorious presence, so too under the new covenant when a person 'turns to the Spirit' – that is, when they experience conversion - they enjoy this same freedom since,

The Spirit is the essential characteristic and the transforming power of the new covenant (3:3, 6). Conversely, it is by responding to the message of the new covenant which Paul preaches that this turning to the Spirit, foreshadowed by the Mosaic scripture, comes about.

(Thrall 1994:274)¹⁸⁰

And when a person blinded by the dark veil of spiritual hardness receives the 'Spirit of Yahweh' they immediately experience freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17b). This ἐλευθερία that the Spirit gives has been variously understood as 'freedom of speech (παρρησία), 'freedom from the law', 'freedom from sin', 'freedom in a comprehensive sense' and 'freedom from the veil'. While there is no question that all of these aspects of freedom are gifts that the 'spiritual person' richly receives in union with Christ, the context specifically points to the last option.¹⁸¹ The 'ministry of the Spirit' results in an

¹⁷⁸ 'It is not his purpose here to "define" the Spirit or to indicate anything very precise about the relationship of the Spirit to "the Lord" (Furnish 1984:236).

¹⁷⁹ 'The four anarthrous uses of κύριος refer to Yahweh, as does the one articular (=anaphoric) use in v. 17a' (Harris 2005:311).

¹⁸⁰ 'For Paul, universal access to the Spirit of God is the fundamental mark of the new covenant' (Garrett 2010:761).

¹⁸¹ Consider the insightful comment by Seifrid (2014:176), "Paul simply presents and announces eleutheria, "freedom," as a "hanging nominative," just as he does with kaine ktisis, "a new creation," in 5:17'. This implies that Paul is thinking more broadly when he asserts that the Spirit's presence gives freedom. This is very possible, and yet, for contextual reasons it is best to see Paul's primary focus as freedom from the veil, but with implications that are broader.

‘unveiledness’ whereby the obstructing veil over the heart of the person is ‘uncovered’ leaving them free from its blinding, ‘dumbing’ influence.

Finally, Paul reaches a conclusion in 2 Corinthians 3:18 to his argument developed in 3:12-18. The openness with which he exercises his new covenant ministry is not like Moses’ ministry which was a ‘veiled’ ministry since it prevented the Israelites from a free access to God’s glory. In fact, the Israelites minds were ‘hardened’ preventing them from perceiving God’s glory. Even the Jews of Paul’s day suffered from the same inability because their hearts were veiled hindering them from recognizing the glory of Christ in the gospel and thus from responding to God’s glory. However, just as Moses’ veiling of himself served as a prophetic parable of the blindness of the Jews, so too did Moses’ custom of unveiling himself as he ‘returned’ to the Lord typologically represent conversion for anyone who turned to God in faith. Those who respond to God in this way become ‘unveiled’ by the Spirit’s work in them. And now all Christ-followers are ‘unveiled’ and thus have free access to God’s glory through the new covenant gospel and thus are being changed through the power of this glory.

Paul’s intent in 2 Corinthians 3:18 has been understood in various ways. Three possible interpretations are:

Paul is contrasting all gospel ministers (like himself) with Moses according to Exodus 34:35 (Belleville 1991:278).

In this interpretation κατοπτρίζω means ‘reflecting’ and ‘we all’ refers to anyone involved in gospel ministry as Paul was. Thus Paul’s argument is that gospel ministers (like Paul) are not like Moses. Authentic gospel ministers leave their ministry open to public scrutiny and thus show that they are mirror images of one another since they are reflecting the glorious truths of the gospel and are slowly becoming better and better representations of this authentic gospel ‘image’.

This particular interpretation put forth by Belleville (1991:273-296) narrows Paul’s focus to a defense of his ministry in the face of his opponents. Thus Paul’s argument centers on polemics, not moral transformation. He uses a ‘phrase-by-phrase’ commentary on

Exodus 34:35 to show the stark contrast between his authentic, open ministry and that of his opponents who are not genuine gospel ministers because they ‘do not exhibit the type of open behavior that marks the true minister of the new covenant – despite any letters of recommendation they may bring’ (Belleville 1991:276).

The strength of this interpretation is that it ties together Paul’s concerns about the validation of his ministry with the illustration of Moses, thus maintaining the theme that began in 2 Corinthians 3:1. However, this interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3:18 is strained and unnecessarily limits the focus to gospel ministers. A broadening of the ‘we all’ to include all Christ-followers seems especially likely since Paul introduces the idea of ‘transformation’ here. In fact, Belleville’s interpretation of ‘transformation into the same image’ as referring to gospel ministers who are ‘being transformed into ... carbon copies of one another’ is highly unlikely (Belleville 1991:290). It misses the manner in which Paul has ‘broadened’ his focus beyond the missionaries to include all Christ-believers (i.e, through the use of the more inclusive ‘sons of Israel’ and its comparison with ‘whenever the old covenant is read’ which implies a wider audience – i.e, all Jews listening to ‘Moses’ being read in the synagogue) and unnecessarily narrows the focus of the Spirit’s transforming work to a few. Besides, the idea that Paul’s argument can be reduced to ‘the Spirit is making all gospel ministers ‘carbon copies’ of one another’ is extremely doubtful.

Paul is contrasting all Christ-followers with the Israelites, both of Moses’ day and of Paul’s (Wright 1987:144-150).

The word κατοπτρίζω means ‘beholding in a mirror’ and the ‘we all’ refers not only to Paul and other gospel ministers, but to all Christ-believers. In addition,

the main contrast in the passage is not that between Paul and Moses, but that between the Christians – even those in Corinth! – and the Israelites, both of Moses’ day and of Paul’s’. Paul can use boldness not because he is different from Moses but because those who belong to the new covenant are different from those who belong to the old.

(Wright 1987:143)

A unique feature of this interpretation is the ‘location’ of the glory that the Christ-followers ‘behold’ and the ‘place’ where the veil is removed. Wright comments,

I suggest that the “mirror” in which Christians see reflected the glory of the Lord is not, in this passage at any rate, the gospel itself, nor even Jesus Christ. It is one another. At the climax of Paul’s whole argument, he makes ... the astonishing claim that those who belong to the new covenant are being changed by the Spirit into the glory of the Lord: when they come face to face with one another they are beholding, as in a mirror, the glory itself ... Unlike the Israelites, those in the new covenant can look at the glory as it is reflected in each other ... It is the peculiar glory of the Spirit that is seen when one looks at one’s fellow Christians.

(Wright 1987:145)

He adds that the veil is taken off ‘not in private communion with God, but in the boldness with which Paul proclaims the gospel to the Corinthians’ (Wright 1987:146). Thus, all Christ-followers have the Spirit writing the new covenant deep within them and it is as they see the Spirit’s work in other Christ-believers that they are all being changed into the same image, one to another.

This novel interpretation has the strength of understanding ‘we all’ in the broadest sense of all Christ-followers. It also recognizes Paul’s interest in contrasting the Jews (those who are veiled and thus cannot see the glory) with those who have come to believe in Christ (those who are unveiled and thus behold the glory). However, it seems that Wright has lost Paul’s clear comparison with Moses (2 Cor 3:13, καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς; and 3:16, ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, referring to Moses as the one who ‘returns to the Lord’). In addition, his view that ‘transformation into the same image’ refers to Christ-followers all becoming like one another¹⁸² and his idea that the glory is seen primarily in the lives of other Christ-believers are both questionable interpretations.

Paul is comparing all Christ-followers with Moses according to Exodus 34:34
(Hafemann 1996:407-412; Seifrid 2014:178-187; Thrall 1994:282-283).

¹⁸² Wright (1987:147, n. 39) comments that this view of the significance of ‘the same image’ ‘is similar to, but stronger than, that of Van Unnik.’ However, Van Unnik (1963:167-168) is much clearer when he writes, ‘we all with our different shapes are transformed into one εἰκών. This may be that of Christ Jesus.’ Wright leaves the ‘one image’ so vague that it is difficult to see exactly what this ‘reflection’ actually is. His most direct statement about this ‘glory’ is a negative one, ‘Paul is not saying that one is changed into the same image as Christ. He is asserting that Christians are changed into the same image as each other’ (Wright 1987:147). He gives no clear definition of the nature of this ‘image’ into which the Christians are all being changed.

In this interpretation κατοπτρίζω means ‘beholding in a mirror’ and ‘we all’ refers to all Christ-followers, everyone who has ‘turned to the Lord’. Thus Christ-believers both from among the Jews and from the Gentiles are like Moses was as he met with God in the tent of meeting. Just as Moses enjoyed ‘unveiled’ access to God’s glory so too all believers in Jesus Christ now enjoy this same privilege – they have free access to God’s glory through the Spirit. As a result of this freedom to see God’s glory all Christ-followers are being progressively changed by the Spirit into the image of God.

This third interpretation is the strongest. There are five main issues to examine in order to demonstrate the strength of this interpretation. First, what did Paul mean by ‘we all with unveiled faces’? Up to this point in Paul’s argument those who have been ‘veiled’ include only Moses (2 Cor 3:13, 16) and the Jews at the public reading of the Mosaic covenant (2 Cor 3:14, 15). But Moses was also a person who could be ‘unveiled’ at times (2 Cor 3:16, ‘the veil is taken away’ whenever he returned to the Lord). Since in 2 Corinthians 3:16 Moses serves as a metaphor for anyone who comes to repentance and faith in Christ, Paul is implying that the ‘unveiled’ ones are all those who ‘turn to the Lord’ (i.e., convert). Thus a formerly veiled person can become ‘unveiled’. Paul also uses the word ‘unveiled’ (ἀνακαλύπτω) in its only New Testament occurrences: in 2 Corinthians 3:14 it refers to the condition of the Jews when they hear the public reading of the old covenant, they are still covered with a veil that has not yet been ‘unveiled’ (i.e., stripped off or ‘uncovered’); and 2 Corinthians 3:18 where it refers to ‘we all’ whose faces are ‘unveiled’. To be ‘unveiled’ means to have access to see the glory of God. Those who are ‘unveiled’ in this way are referred to as ‘we all’ (ἡμεῖς πάντες). Since Paul has argued that the Jews are ‘veiled’ and that this veil is ‘rendered inoperative’ in Christ (2 Cor 3:14), it stands to reason that here in 2 Corinthians 3:18 the ‘we all’ who are unveiled are all those who are ‘in Christ’ or who have ‘turned to the Lord’. That is, it ‘refers not just to “all of us apostles,” but to “all of us who believe,” all Christians’ (Furnish 1984:213).¹⁸³ So then, those who have turned to the Lord experience a Spirit-

¹⁸³ ‘2 Cor 3:18 follows as a logical conclusion. We all, says Paul, are being transformed. Not simply Paul and his co-workers are meant by the “all” but all who are within the domain of the new covenant, i.e. Jews and Gentiles alike ... Fellowship is now possible not simply for those who have been admitted on the basis of narrow presuppositions supported by those who bore letters of recommendation from Jerusalem

wrought freedom from the heart-and-mind-hardening veil (2 Cor 3:17) and can now be described as having an ‘unveiled face’. They are unlike Moses and his habit of having to veil his face when he left the presence of God and was not transmitting God’s commands to the people. Yet they are also like Moses, who ‘whenever he returned to the Lord, took off the veil’ (2 Cor 3:16).

Second, we must understand the meaning of the verb κατοπτρίζω. The present middle participle κατοπτριζόμενοι occurs only here in all of biblical literature and is also very rare in extra-biblical literature. Both *BDAG* (535) and *LSJ* (929) give as the primary meaning here in 2 Corinthians ‘to behold as in a mirror’. However, they both mention in a note that some scholars prefer the meaning ‘reflect’. Scholars are divided on the correct meaning.¹⁸⁴ Thrall (1994:291) can boldly assert regarding the translation “reflect” that it ‘is supported by no external evidence’. On the other hand, Belleville (1991:280) retorts, ‘although few in number, examples of κατοπτρίζεσθαι meaning ‘to reflect’ do exist’. And Garrett (2010:765) impatiently responds to those who may question the translation ‘reflect’, ‘it is misguided (and linguistically unsophisticated) to complain of the lack of occurrences in non-Christian Greek texts of the middle voice of κατοπτρίζω with the meaning “reflect (by means of oneself)”’.

The two sides are firmly drawn and a definite decision is obviously difficult to make. We must consider the evidence. The only extra-biblical reference to κατοπτρίζω in the middle voice which is contemporary with Paul is found in Philo’s ‘Allegorical Interpretation’ (3.101). Philo is speaking about how Moses was able to gain ‘knowledge of the First Cause not from created things’, but by lifting his eyes ‘above and beyond creation’ he thus obtained ‘a clear vision of the uncreated One, so as from Him to apprehend both Himself and His shadow’. It was this Moses who asked God to manifest

(cf. vv. 1-6), but for Jews and Gentiles alike. The blessings of the Sinai covenant by which God will be “their” God and they will be “his” people now operate within the new covenant structure. With “unveiled face” (i.e. with unrestricted access in Christ) all may behold the glory of Yahweh now revealed in the gospel’ (Dumbrell 1986:189).

¹⁸⁴ For example, Belleville (1991:281), Nayak (2002:22), Van Unnik (1963:167), and Garrett (2010:762-766) among others have decided that ‘reflect is the more appropriate translation’ in Paul. On the other hand, Furnish (1984:214), Thrall (1994:282), Seifrid (2014:180-182), and Hafemann (1996:409) among others translate it ‘to behold as in a mirror.’

himself to him. Then Philo relays Moses' appeal to God, 'I do not want you to reveal yourself to me through heaven or earth or water or air or some other created thing, nor do I want to find the reflection (κατοπτρισάμην) of your being in anything else but you God' (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.101).

It is clear that Moses' desire is to see God so that he might know him. He does not want a revelation of God that comes through the creation or from any other 'sources'. Moses longs for a direct knowledge, an unmediated revelation. The idea of κατοπτρίζω here has to do with 'seeing in a direct, unmediated way'.

The active voice of κατοπτρίζω appears in Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita Philosophorum*.¹⁸⁵ Like all the other occurrences of κατοπτρίζω, this passage was most likely written at least a century or more after 2 Corinthians and thus is less helpful in understanding Paul's use of the verb. In the context, the author is discussing how rainbows come to be (πῶς οὖν γίνεται ἴρις). He mentions that there are three ways that we 'see' things, the third being by 'reflection as in a mirror' (τὰ ἀνακλώμενα ὡς τὰ κατοπτρικά) which is exactly how a rainbow becomes apparent to us. After explaining his understanding of how rainbows appear he mentions the opinions of three others, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Metrodorus. It is Anaxagoras who holds that a rainbow is formed by the sun's rays bouncing off clouds and then straight down off of a star 'after the mode of the repercussion of a mirror' (κατοπτρίζοντος). The idea is clearly 'reflection'.

With so few extant examples of κατοπτρίζω it is difficult to be dogmatic about its precise meaning. We must depend upon context to give clarity to its specific nuance in 2 Corinthians 3:18. There are several questions to be answered. Is Paul comparing 'we all' who now have unveiled faces with Moses or is he comparing them with the Jews? If the comparison is with Moses then we must ask, is Paul pointing to the veil as a hindrance to the Israelites' capacity to see God's glory and thus as a barrier to Moses' reflection of God's glory or is he intending the veil as a barrier to Moses himself seeing

¹⁸⁵ This is sometimes referred to as Plutarch's *Moralia* 894 F. It is now largely believed that this work, though attributed to Plutarch, was actually written later by the so-called Pseudo-Plutarch.

God's glory? In other words, did Paul have in mind Moses as he entered the tent and 'unveiled' himself so that he could see God's glory (Ex. 34:34) or Moses as he left the tent and finished speaking to the people and thus veiled himself so that the Israelites could not see God's glory and thus Moses would not be a reflection of this glory (Ex. 34:35)? If Paul's focus is Exodus 34:34 and Moses' entrance into the tent of meeting then κατοπτρίζω clearly means 'to behold as in a mirror'. On the other hand, if Paul is thinking of Exodus 34:35 and Moses' veiling himself 'in the in-between times' then κατοπτρίζω could mean either 'to reflect' if Paul's specific emphasis is Moses no longer reflecting God's glory on his face, or it could mean 'to behold as in a mirror' if Paul is wanting to focus on keeping the Israelites from seeing the glory on Moses' face. Finally, if the comparison that Paul is making is with the Jews of his own day then the veil was an obstacle to their being able to see the glory of God in the gospel and κατοπτρίζω definitely means 'to behold as in a mirror'.

The key verse for answering these questions is 2 Corinthians 3:16. It is here that the idea of 'being unveiled' first comes into play. If as argued above, the subject of the verb 'to turn' (ἐπιστρέφω) is Moses then it is most likely that Paul is comparing 'we all' with Moses. The specific point of comparison would then be 'whenever he turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away'. That is, Paul is emphasizing Moses' experience of unveiling himself in the presence of God (i.e., each time he returned to God's presence) as illustrated in Exodus 34:34. The purpose of this 'unveiling' was so that Moses could have an unobstructed view of God's glory and it was this unfettered encounter with God's radiance that 'transformed' Moses, causing his face to shine with God's splendor. In the same way, everyone who turns to the Lord in repentance and faith, has the veil taken away enabling them (just like Moses) to behold the glory of the Lord, though now this vision of his glory is 'as in a mirror'. Thus κατοπτρίζω means 'to behold as in a mirror'. This nuance fits the idea of being transformed much more naturally than does the meaning 'reflecting God's glory'.

The central idea of Paul's use of 'beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord' (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι) seems to be that believers enjoy 'an indirect view of

God's glory'. The 'view' is indirect because it is a vision of Christ in the gospel and not a face-to-face beatific vision of God that Christ-followers enjoy in the here and now. Thus Harris is correct when he writes,

All mirrored knowledge is of necessity indirect knowledge, but indirect knowledge is not necessarily imprecise or inaccurate knowledge; a "mirror image" is indirect but may be perfectly clear. Significantly, there is no ἐν αἰνίγματι ("dimly," "with blurring") as in 1 Cor 13:12. The vision of God's glory accorded Christians is indirect, for it is mediated through the gospel, but it is clear, for the Christ who is proclaimed through the gospel is the exact representation (εἰκὼν) of God (4:4).¹⁸⁶

(Harris 2005:315)

All Christ-followers, those who have 'turned to the Lord' (2 Cor 3:16), those who have had the 'veil unveiled' (2 Cor 3:14, 18), those who now enjoy 'freedom' (2 Cor 3:17), can see the glory of God through the face of Christ as revealed in his new covenant gospel. The Jews who did not believe cannot see this glory as it shines through the gospel because a veil remains over their hearts obscuring not only the old covenant, but even the new covenant message. This 'hard-headedness' affects their capacity to recognize

¹⁸⁶ Contra Garrett (2010:762-763) who writes,

'Paul clearly does not mean that we look at ourselves in a mirror. Several scholars argue, therefore, that the middle voice κατοπτριζόμενοι in 2 Cor 3:18 means to "observe God's glory by means of a mirror." But why would Paul say such a thing? Such language would suggest that the glory of God were like Medusa's face, which Perseus had to look at via his reflective shield to avoid turning to stone. But this is the exact opposite of what Paul has in mind. Paul is not saying that we have an indirect experience of divine glory, with some intermediate device protecting us from its effect and to some degree obscuring it. His point is that we directly experience God's transformative power, with unveiled face, as Moses' did whenever he entered the tent. Note that Paul is not here alluding to Moses' experience of being in the cleft of the rock, when he saw YHWH's back (Exod 33:22); he is alluding to Moses' routine of removing the veil whenever he went in before YHWH in the tent (2 Cor 3:16; Exod 34:34). Indeed, having gone to great lengths to make the contrast between us who 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? ... It is in fact astonishing that, after carefully developing the concept of beholding God's glory with unveiled faces, Paul would at the last moment interject the idea of the intervening mirror with no explanation or identification. One cannot resolve the problem of the undefined mirror by identifying it with Christ. This reduces Christ to the status of a mirror that reflects glory originating from some other source. But for Paul, this is not possible; Christ is the glory of God and we look toward the radiance shines directly from his face'. Garrett's comments miss the point. First, there is a difference between an indirect revelation of God's glory through the gospel and having a veil that obstructs the possibility of seeing that glory. Garrett seems to view the veil as semi-transparent showing the glory but with a dimming effect. However, the veil does not dim the glory; it hides it so that it cannot be seen at all. Second, Christ-followers do not see the glory of God in an unmediated way as Moses appeared to have enjoyed (Numbers 12:8). They do not enjoy the 'beatific vision' in the present time. Even in Paul's day they did not see Christ face-to-face. They saw and see today the glory of God shining in the gospel. While this is surely a true revelation of God's glory (Thus believers are able to see τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. Also, God shone in their hearts πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ. Both statements indicate a true revelation that was 'effective') it remains 'indirect' which is exactly what Paul communicates through his choice of κατοπτρίζω rather than ἀτενίζω.

the glory of God in God's revelation of himself and thus hinders them from responding to this glorious revelation. Not so with Christ believers. They are free from the obstructing veil that covers the hearts of unbelievers. They are also free from the 'mosaic veil' and thus enjoy unfettered access by the Spirit to the glory of God as revealed through Christ in the gospel message.

The third issue to be resolved is, what did Paul mean when he wrote that we are being changed into 'the same image' (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα)? It should first be noted that μεταμορφώω is the main verb in this verse. So then Paul's primary point is the transformation that is taking place in the lives of those who now have an 'unveiled face' (Seifrid 2014:183; Barnett 1997:207). We have already considered the meaning of μεταμορφώω when we looked at Romans 12:2. There is a fundamental change¹⁸⁷ that is taking place as the 'unveiled ones' behold the glory of the Lord. They are being continually transformed 'into the same image'. Some commentators have understood this to refer to Christ-followers being conformed to one another (Belleville 1991:290; Wright 1987:147), but this is unlikely. Better is the comment by Garland (1989:35), 'believers are changed into the likeness they see'.¹⁸⁸ That is, unveiled believers see the glory of God on the face of Christ through the glorious new covenant gospel. As they behold this glory they are changed into the same image that they are beholding, the image of God in Christ. This is consistent with Paul's comment in Romans 8:29, that we are being 'conformed to the image of his Son'. It is also consistent with the author of Colossians 3:10 who writes that the church members should 'put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. The image into which Christ-followers are being transformed is the very same image that they behold through the preaching of the superior new covenant, the image of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6), the very same Christ who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4).

¹⁸⁷ Belleville (1991:288) is correct when she comments that 'in μεταμορφώω, then, Paul picks a verb that can readily apply both to the outward transfiguration of Moses' face and to the internal transformation of the gospel minister'.

¹⁸⁸ 'There has been no previous explicit reference to an image, but in all probability the allusion is to the image beheld in the mirror: into this same image Christians are transformed' (Thrall 1994:285). Notice also the comment by Lambrecht (1983:245), 'We are being changed into the same image which we are beholding (or reflecting)'.

Fourth, we must understand the phrase ‘from glory to glory’ (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). It is difficult to know the exact sense that Paul intended. A variety of options have been suggested including:

1. ἀπὸ δόξης refers to the source of the glory and εἰς δόξαν refers to its result (i.e., that into which one is transformed, Garrett 2010:768; Hafemann 1996:408; Wright 1987:147).

In this interpretation, ἀπὸ δόξης means that transformation comes from the glory of God (analogous to Moses looking at God’s glory with an unveiled face), and εἰς δόξαν means that believers are changed into the glory of God (analogous to how Moses had the glory of God reflected in the glow on his own face). In my view, this is a more natural reading of the Greek.

(Garrett 2010:768)

Hafemann (1996:408) agrees when he comments, ‘This gradual growth in obedience takes place on the basis of God’s initial revelation of his glory to us and results in our own becoming more and more like him until the final eschatological consummation and transformation’.

2. ἀπὸ δόξης refers to the previous status of Gentile Christians and εἰς δόξαν refers to their new status (Duff 2008:773).

The reference to the transformation "from glory to glory" in 3:18 should then be understood to refer to the (Gentile) Corinthians' own experience of transformation from their previous status, condemned before God (by ἡ διακονία του θανάτου [3:7]) and under the sentence of death (by ἡ διακονία της κατακρίσεως [3:9]), to their new status as reconciled to God.

(Duff 2008:773)

3. ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is an idiom referring to an increase in glory (Belleville 199:289; Furnish 1984:215).

Since Paul has been concerned about the difference between the temporary glory of the old covenant and the permanent glory of the new covenant he expresses the joyful note that the transformation that the new covenant minister experiences will result in an ever increasing rather than a fading glory. The glory now possessed is miniscule compared to the degree of glory that will later be enjoyed. Thus one scholar states this phrase

is set in contrast to καταργέω in vv. 7, 11, and 14: Moses’ glory as minister of the old covenant was a fading glory; by contrast, the glory of the new covenant minister is one that steadily grows.

(Belleville 1991:289)

4. ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is an idiom referring to a progression from glory in this life to glory in eternity (Baker 2000:14; Thrall 1994:286).

The idea that this view purports is not so much an increase in the amount of glory, but rather different stages of glory or glory of a different nature.

It is extremely difficult to decipher Paul's exact intention with this phrase. Our preference, however, is the fourth view. The word order seems to favor this view. Paul is speaking of a profound transformation from (μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ) one situation to a new situation (εἰς). In this case it is a change from the glory in the here and now to the glory that will be enjoyed when the transformation reaches its ultimate goal, conformity to the image of God in Christ. Beholding the glory of the Lord in the present is the believer's privilege, but it will be an even greater experience when the process of transformation is complete and the 'inglorious and weak human beings subject to sin, suffering, and death' (Seifrid 2014:183) are fully conformed to the eternally glorious Lord upon whom they now gaze.

Finally, what does the statement 'just as from the Lord, the Spirit' mean? The conjunction καθάπερ is comparative here probably pointing back to 2 Corinthians 3:16-17. The Spirit-wrought transformation on Moses' face each time he 'returned' to the Lord and the veil was removed can be compared to the Spirit's transforming work in 'all who are unveiled' and behold the Lord's glory. The comparison is not in the nature of the change, but rather in the agent of the change. In both acts of transformation it is God who is the producer of change. But whereas it was Yahweh whom Moses encountered and whose glory shone on the skin of his face, now under the new covenant those who are 'unveiled' are progressively transformed by the Lord of the new covenant, the Spirit of God.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ The phrase καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος has been variously translated and causes similar interpretive problems as 2 Corinthians 3:17. See Thrall (1994:287), Furnish (1984:216), and Harris (2005:317-318) for the options.

Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 can thus be summarized. Because Paul, as a minister of the new covenant, was supremely confident that his ministry, though criticized by some, gave evidence of the glory of God, he was able to exercise his ministry with great "openness". The candor and frankness of his ministry can be illustrated by a negative example, namely Moses' act of covering his face with a veil so that the Israelites could not see what was to eventually become of the glory on his face (i.e., it was to be replaced by the greater glory of Christ). But the Jews did not respond to Paul's open expression of the truth because their minds were insensitive to the gospel. In fact, this same inability to perceive the glory of God in the gospel affects the Jews right up until the present. Every time the Mosaic covenant is publicly read they are blind to how it reveals Christ and thus do not surrender to its message. But just as when Moses would turn to go back into God's presence and would take off the veil on his face so that he could have unfettered communion with God, so too when a person turns to the Spirit of God they are freed from the obstructing veil that blinds them. Now all believers in Christ enjoy this 'unveiled' communion with God as they see a clear reflection of his glory in the gospel. This 'unveiled look' at God's glory results in a profound Spirit-produced transformation in them as they are being progressively changed into the image of God in Christ.

5.4 APPLICATION: TRANSFORMATION IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Having analyzed the text, it is time to ask the question, what does Paul teach about the concept of transformation in this complex passage? Though Paul's primary purpose was not to set forth a doctrine of spiritual formation, his overall argument and especially his conclusion in 2 Corinthians 3:18 do set forth certain principles regarding his understanding of transformation. There are several that must now be considered.

The need for transformation is clearly illustrated by Paul throughout 2 Corinthians 3-4. Paul notes that there is a whole group of people, whom Paul titles 'the unbelievers' (τῶν ἀπίστων) in 2 Corinthians 4:4 or 'those who are perishing' (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις) in 2 Corinthians 2:15 and 4:3 who are described as having 'hardened minds' (ἐπωρώθη τὰ

νοήματα, 2 Cor 3:14). These people's 'petrified' mental perception is so debilitating that it obstructs them from recognizing and responding to Christ as he is revealed in both the old covenant (2 Cor 3:14-15) and the new (2 Cor 4:4). These individuals, though perhaps 'hearers of the word' when it is publicly read (2 Cor 3:14-15), are deaf to its message and indifferent to its demands. It is as though they had a veil covering their hearts (2 Cor 3:15) like Moses did over his face. They are victims of a satanic blinding (2 Cor 4:4) that has caused a complete black-out in their spiritual perception leaving them incapable of seeing the glory of Christ as it is revealed in the gospel. As a result of their blindness and spiritual obtuseness they have rejected Christ and thus stand on the outside of a covenant relationship with him. These people are in need of transformation!

However, 2 Corinthians 3:18 is not about that kind of transformation. The kind of transformation that these 'blinded ones' need is better described in 2 Corinthians 4:6, 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. This kind of transformation is an instantaneous work of 're-creation' whereby the Creator God speaks his powerful word into the heart of a 'perishing one' enabling them to see what they formerly could not see, 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'. This is a divine work of 'unveiling' whereby the 'hardness of mind' is broken up and the spiritual blindness is healed. And this radical 'unveiling' is performed by the Spirit of God (2 Cor 3:17) and results in 'freedom' from the obstructing veil and the satanic blindness. The recipient of such a Spirit-wrought work is now an 'unveiled' one who has been 'illuminated' to see God's glory as reflected in the face of Christ through the gospel.

But once this initial work of transformation has occurred, it is followed by a life-long process of transformation¹⁹⁰ by which the newly 'unveiled' believer is slowly conformed to the image of God in Christ. What is the nature of this transformation that the 'unveiled ones' experience? The goal of this transformation is to be 'changed into the same

¹⁹⁰ The progressive nature of this transformation is demonstrated both by the present tense of μεταμορφώω and by the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν.

image'. We have already concluded that this 'same image' refers to the image of God in Christ. But what did Paul mean when he wrote of being conformed to the image of Christ? In what way is a Christ-follower conformed to this image? It is important to understand from the outset that conformity to the image of God in Christ is a holistic concept that includes the totality of the person. That is, it is not a mere change of a person's morals or of their attitudes, nor is it merely a change of conduct. It includes all of this and so much more. We can summarize the nature of this transformation in five key affirmations.

First, it is based upon a real participation in the redemptive work of Christ.¹⁹¹ This vitally important truth is central to Paul's conviction that all Christ-followers enjoy the privilege

¹⁹¹ Scholars debate as to the correct terminology to describe the nature of this conformity to the image of Christ. Should this transformation simply be called 'imitation' or 'participation' or is it more accurate to refer to it as 'theosis' or 'deification'. The answer depends upon exactly what one means by these terms. Obviously the more provocative term is theosis or deification which though especially strange to western Christians is very common among Eastern Orthodox believers. In fact, Clendenin (1994:366) boldly asserts, 'It is not too much to say that the divinization of humanity is the central theme, chief aim, basic purpose, or primary religious ideal of Orthodoxy. Theosis is the ultimate goal toward which all people should strive, 'the blessed telos for which all things were made'. But what does theosis or deification mean? Litwa (2012b:32), a Christian from the West, writes, 'the basis of deification...is sharing in ... the divine identity — that is, sharing in those distinctive qualities which make (a) God (a) God.' And yet he clarifies,

there are shareable and unshareable aspects of the divine identity. The power to create the physical world, it is safe to say, is an unshareable aspect of the Jewish God's identity. Those who argue for deification in Paul do not normally assert (to my knowledge) that deified humans share God's power to create the universe. Though perhaps some in the modern world would disagree, in biblical thought, at least, humans cannot create physical worlds. Deified humans, therefore, will never fully overlap with the divine identity. In this way, then, God's identity remains ever distinct. In this aspect (and many others) God remains transcendent.

(Litwa 2012b:262)

Still he affirms without mincing words, 'Thus to be transformed into the image that Christ is (as I interpret it) is to be changed into the divine image. This amounts to, I argue, a participation in Christ's divinity. The transformation is thus a deifying transformation' (Litwa 2012b:220). Therefore he takes Hafemann (1996) to task for writing,

But the reference to being transformed into "the image of God" in 3:18 and the subsequent identification of this image with Christ as the glory of God in 4:4, 6 primarily presuppose the conception of Christ in his humanity, albeit his resurrected humanity, as the "second Adam".

(Hafemann 1996:417)

Litwa (2008) believes that Hafemann has made an illegitimate separation between the human image and the divine image of Christ. In response to the above quote he asks, 'But how, when it comes to describing the eschatological salvation of believers, is there a separation between Christ's divinity and his humanity?' (Litwa 2008:120). He concludes that such a separation is unnatural and so remarks: 'Thus believers are transformed into Christ's theological image just as much as they are into his anthropological image' (Litwa 2008:121). That is, for Litwa to be conformed to the image of Christ means to be transformed into his divine image just as much as his human image since the two really form one 'inseparable image'. Or stated more concretely, when believers are transformed into the image of Christ

of unfettered access to God's glory through Christ and thus will be transformed into his image. Paul does not develop this foundational truth in 2 Corinthians 3, but he does so in his other letters, especially in Romans 6:1-14. Here Paul argues that living in sin should be totally foreign to believers; it is inconsistent with what has happened to them and with their new identity as 'the kind of people who have died to sin' (οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ). Paul bases his argument on the believer's participation in Christ's redeeming work. By faith they truly participate in his death (Rm 6:3), his burial (Rm 6:4) and his resurrection (Rm 6:5). Their old unregenerate self was crucified with Christ (Rm 6:6) and now they are no longer slaves to sin, or the law, or the old lifestyle. They can and must live in 'newness of life'. This new life is the life of the new age, a resurrected life. It is living in conformity to Christ! Gorman (2009:124) captures the idea when he writes, 'Paul speaks to the ancient (and contemporary) desire for Godlikeness by claiming that through participation in Christ's death and resurrection we "can become like God through conformity to God's son".'

Second, it is an inner transformation whereby one reflects the character or virtues of Christ. God's work begins inwardly where humankind has a hard heart. He is radically remolding the inner nature so that it less and less shares the image of the 'present evil age' and so that it more and more is a brilliant reflection of Christ. Thus God reshapes a person's character and the virtues that are reflected by this inner nature. One scholar comments that to be conformed to the image of Christ

they are transformed into the image that Christ is, a human-divine image. And yet Litwa (2012b:262) qualifies his definition, 'deification requires not full, but only a partial overlap with the divine identity. Deification is about participation in, not a complete overlap or fusion with God's nature'. Though Litwa's clarifications make it evident that he is not saying that believers become Gods in the exact same way that God is God, nonetheless I am uncomfortable with his elaboration of this theme, especially provocative statements like 'This, I dare say, is the logic of Chalcedon: If Christ really became fully human, why cannot humans really become divine?' (Litwa 2012b:261). I think he goes too far in his desire to demonstrate that conformity to Christ is conformity to Christ as he is (i.e., the God-man) and not just a part of Christ (i.e., his humanity). Because of the potential for exaggeration or confusion it seems that it would be better to avoid the terms 'deification' and 'theosis'. Perhaps Blackwell's (2010) 'Christosis' or Finlan's (2007) 'Christified' are better ways to describe this conformity to Christ. We do not want to negate the profound truth of our union with Christ nor our participation in his redemptive works, nor even the amazing nature of the goal towards which our lives are directed (conformity to the image of Christ), yet care must be taken to assure that the Creator-creature distinction is not blurred, fused, or confused. Terminology if carelessly applied or not properly understood can lead to such problems. For other treatments of theosis or deification by western Christians see Gorman (2009), Finlan (2007), and Blackwell (2010).

refers to having one's character changed to be aligned with the character of Christ, where "character" indicates the non-material aspects of man. To be conformed to the image of Christ is to become like Christ so that the character of Christ is manifested in the life of the believer.

(Samra 2006:107-108)

Third, conformity to the image of God in Christ is an inner transformation whereby one's structures of thought ($\nu\acute{o}\eta\mu\alpha$, i.e., attitudes, perceptions and worldview) reflect the 'mind of Christ'. This third aspect could be joined to the second, but is separated to emphasize the fact that the profound inner transformation that Christ-followers experience has a noetic element as well as a character element. God is changing the mind of people so that it reflects more closely 'the mind of Christ'. He is reformatting their structures of thought, their ways of perceiving things. This is powerfully illustrated by Romans 12:2 as we saw in a previous chapter. The same is true here in 2 Corinthians 3. Thus in Paul's treatment of transformation, 'the emphasis of God's current work is upon inward renewal, such that the life-giving work of the Spirit consists of present moral enablement and noetic enlightenment' (Blackwell 2010:216-217).

Fourth, this process of transformation is a visible transformation whereby this Christlike character and 'mind of Christ' demonstrate themselves more and more in concrete Christlike actions. Thrall (1994:285) asks 'is this a purely inward transformation'? She then correctly answers,

There must be a visible element. Moses, the type of the Christian convert, had possessed a visible glory. In the case of the Christian, the thought must be that of assimilation to Christ as the image of God produces a visibly Christ-like character, so that the divine image becomes visible in the believer's manner of life.

(Thrall 1994:285)

In the same vein Blackwell writes,

However, with the use of glory and image to clarify the shape of this transformation, we see that it transcends just a mere inward transformation to include a full christiformity that involves both suffering and death but also future glorious resurrection.

(Blackwell 2010:171)

This transformation is 'life-shaping' to such a degree that the totality of the person is affected, not just their inner life, but their actions and ultimately their future state. So then, this transformation is both inward and visible, both present and future,

transforming the heart and mind, but also the lifestyle. The ‘unveiled one’ is progressively being changed so that he/she inwardly reflects the character of Christ and outwardly lives in a manner consistent with this christoform character. Thus the Christ-follower is continually being ‘remade’ in the inner person (ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα, 2 Cor 4:16; cf. Col. 3:10, τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν) and this ‘new self’ begins to live out this new character through concrete Christlike actions (cf. for example, Phlp 2:1-8; Gl 5:16-26; Col 3:1-17; Eph 4:21-5:21). Litwa (2008:128) agrees stating that this transformation consists of a ‘life of joyful obedience to God’s commands’. When Gorman (2009:124) thinks of being conformed to the image of Christ he refers to it as ‘cruciform holiness’. To be changed into Christ’s image results in a ‘new morality’ governed by the law of Christ (1 Cor 9:21) and a whole new ethical system governed by God’s will (Rm 12:2; Eph 5:8, 17). And yet this new morality is not a mere set of rules or the repetition of certain rituals; it is an intimate communion with the person of Christ, the giver of the ‘new law’ that ushers in ‘both cruciform and anastiform living’, (Finlan 2007:78).

Fifth, this conformity to the image of God in Christ is an eschatological transformation whereby at the consummation of history one’s body becomes like Christ’s glorified body. This is proclaimed by Paul in Philippians 3:20-21, ‘we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself’. Also, in Paul’s majestic discussion of the future bodily resurrection he adds, ‘Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven’ (1 Corinthians 15:49). Hence the climax and consummation of the Spirit-wrought transforming work of God in the life of his followers can be described as ‘somatic resurrection’ (Blackwell 2010:229).

Yet some might suppose that this radical and holistic transformation is nothing more than a pipe dream or mere religious chatter with no basis in reality, especially after examining the real lives of everyday Christ-followers dirtied by the corruption of this world and battered by the storms of life. Yet Paul makes it quite clear that such a Spirit-

produced transformation is in no way inconsistent with our frailty and failings as Christ-followers living in this world. As Paul so aptly puts it, 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay' (2 Cor 4:7). It was God's very purpose to contain and display his marvelous glory through the broken lives of earthly sinners. Seifrid (2014:185) captures Paul's idea, 'yet the transformation that he affirms is no less real for its being hidden behind human weakness and failure'. Far from obscuring this glory; human vulnerability and frailty makes its display even more brilliant.

One last aspect of this transformation must be addressed, namely, what are the means by which this transformation takes place? Paul is clear that the process of transformation is a Spirit-produced work (2 Cor 3:18, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος), but what means does the Spirit use to bring about this transformation? In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul focuses on one particular 'means,' namely 'beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord'. He uses a present participle, κατοπτριζόμενοι, which in this context functions adverbially to express the way by which transformation is accomplished. Paul states that transformation is realized through 'beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.' What does it mean to 'behold as in a mirror' and how do we do this in concrete terms? If Paul is indeed playing off of Moses' example in Exodus 34:34-35 as argued earlier, then he purposely chose the verb κατοπτρίζω rather than a verb of more direct sight (i.e., ἀτενίζω) because he wanted to emphasize that an 'unveiled' person though enjoying free access to God's glorious presence beholds this presence in an indirect way, 'as in a mirror'. In other words, 'to behold as in a mirror' refers to an indirect yet very personal encounter with the glorious presence of the living God. This encounter is indirect because it is a vision of God in the face of Christ as he is revealed through the gospel.

This is not a direct vision of the Lord himself, nor of his glory. The Christians do not (= no longer) see the glory of the earthly or the risen Lord itself, nor is their seeing the eschatological direct vision. They have only a mirror-type reflection of this glory in the gospel.

(Lambrecht 1983:250)

And yet it must be stressed that this indirect encounter with the glory of God is still very real. Its impact is not nullified simply because it is indirect. When a person truly

encounters God's radiant glory as it is manifested through the gospel, they are gradually changed by this encounter, and this change continues little by little until the consummation of all things when the person will ultimately be found fully conformed to the image of God in Christ.

But how does one 'behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord' in a concrete way? Paul does not elaborate this concept with specifics. Nonetheless, we can pinpoint at least three concrete ways that this 'beholding' can be experienced. It must be remembered from the outset that the only ones who are able to enjoy this personal encounter are those who have by the Spirit of God become 'unveiled'. That is, only those who have 'turned to the Lord' and by the Spirit been given freedom from the obstructing veil. Without this supernatural sovereign work of God's Spirit in the life of a person they remain 'veiled' and thus are denied access to this glorious presence in the gospel. So then how can these 'unveiled ones' experience God's glory in the face of Christ through the gospel. First, a Christ-follower can 'behold the glory of the Lord' through personal communion with Christ. The face of Moses began to shine 'because he spoke with the Lord' (Ex. 34:29). In the same way, it is as a disciple of Christ experiences a personal interaction with the God who is glorious that she is transformed. Moses enjoyed this personal communion with God through a face to face encounter and then Moses became a living reflection of this glory for the people to see as he spoke God's commandments to them. But Moses and his radiant face have been replaced by the glory of God as revealed in the new covenant gospel. Therefore, for citizens of the new covenant this personal interaction comes as one communes with the ever-present One through His Word. That is, God comes to a person through the proclamation (i.e., preaching, reading, meditation) of the gospel. As God comes to the person through His word, God is truly speaking, and His speech is personal, and this person is then able to respond to God's speech by listening and obeying and responding back to Him in prayer. This ongoing conversation with God is a real communion with the God of glory. And this very personal communion is transforming. Listening to God and joyful obedience to His voice through His Word bring about changes in the one so privileged to commune with the Ever-present One. This kind of friendship encounter is a concrete

way of ‘beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord’ and thus to be transformed into His image.

A second example of ‘beholding’ is through a personal awareness of the presence and power of his glory in all places at all times. Moses ‘wore’ this glory on his face from day to day and this facial radiance was a constant reminder of God’s glory and presence, though Moses covered his face (i.e., the glory) so that the Israelites would not see its certain outcome, the fact that it was to be replaced by a greater glory to come, the glory of Christ. Now this greater glory has indeed come. And this glory, the glory of God in the face of Christ as revealed in the gospel, is a permanent glory that neither fades nor fails. It is not limited to an experience or a place. It is a universal glory that shines in all of creation at every moment. As we who are ‘unveiled’ live in the awareness of this glory and its power and reach, we are transformed by God’s inescapable presence and unlimited power, and this process of change continues until we will one day be fully formed into the image of Christ. Thus ‘beholding’ is not some mere religious experience or ritual. It does not come because we are gathered in a religious place. A Spirit-indwelt person through a gospel-saturated heart and mind, a constant awareness of the glory of God in all places at all times, can enjoy an experience of ‘beholding’ God even in the mundane things of life, and this recognition and enjoyment of God’s glory at all times and all places is transforming.¹⁹²

Finally, a Christ-follower can ‘behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord’ through a personal reflection and application of the gospel of Christ.¹⁹³ It is the gospel understood

¹⁹² Though using different terminology Hafemann (1996:421) captures something of this sense when he writes, ‘though not to be denied or discouraged ... the experience of the resurrection power of Christ in the Spirit ultimately shows itself to be genuine not in its ecstatic or mystical manifestations, but in its ethical transformations. Morality, not the miraculous, becomes the true expression of genuine spirituality, though as Paul’s argument shows, morality is not viewed as a replacement for the experience of God’s glory’.

¹⁹³ Lambrecht’s (1983:250-251) insightful comment is helpful at this point, ‘the mirror motif present in the participle κατοπτριζόμενοι points to the gospel. One should understand this, however, in as broad a sense as possible. “Gospel” means certainly proclamation and listening. But the mirror-type reflection of Christ’s glory is equally present in the whole richness of authentic Christian life: liturgy, prayer, and the inner experience of the Spirit, meditation on Scripture, goodness and holiness, and all kinds of charisms and ministrations ... What then is “beholding”? it is decidedly more than visual or intellectual activity. It must be related with that existential confrontation which is contained in the preaching of the gospel. We

and lived out that results in changed hearts, minds and lives. Thus to truly encounter Christ in the gospel means not merely reading it or listening to its words, but to engage with it with all one's heart. It is through a careful, humble reflection of the message and an earnest application of it to everyday life that the Christ of the gospel and the gospel of Christ become our 'clothing' with which we present ourselves before the daily affairs and challenges of life, the lens through which we interpret and engage life, our compass which guides us through life's decisions, and the narrator that determines the story we live out. We 'behold' the glory of God and His glorious Son when we ingest the message and then put it into practice in concrete ways. As we do this, we are beholding His glory and progressively being transformed into His image.

Before bringing this chapter to a close it is necessary to mention two more principles that Paul touches on in this chapter. First, true commendation in ministry is not dependent upon human credentials but on life transformation. The Corinthians wanted letters of recommendation to 'prove' a ministers' worth, to validate his/her aptitude and call to ministry (2 Cor 3:1). Paul says that such letters prove nothing. The true validation of a divine calling and God-honoring ministry is the fruit born in the lives of people (2 Cor 3:2). Degrees and titles do not prove that a person is called to ministry or that they are truly successful in the exercise of ministry responsibilities. Genuine aptitude for ministry is evidenced by the Spirit's work in and through a person resulting in lasting fruit both in the person's life and in the lives of others who benefit from his/her ministry.

Second, true freedom in ministry (the kind of frankness, candor, boldness, openness that Paul experienced, 2 Cor 3:12) comes as a result of confidence in the surpassing value of the new covenant gospel (2 Cor 3:7-12). It is not dependent upon personal gifts or the traditions of the past; rather it is a persevering hope in the permanence, glory, and power of the gospel in spite of the diverse obstacles one might face. And it is only

are thus confronted with what God did in Christ. We see Christ, as a mirror, in the gospel and in that specific Christian way of life the gospel inspires. It is also an interior experience of God's active, "splendid" and forceful presence with us in Christ'.

the Spirit of God who brings freedom and the presence of Christ in this glorious gospel that can result in a truly and permanently transformed life (2 Cor 3:17-18).

Chapter 6

Other Pauline texts that treat the concept of transformation

6.1 Introduction

We have already examined four key passages in Paul's letters that directly treat the concept of transformation. However, so prevalent is the idea that Christ-followers are being transformed that a study of this topic requires more than a study of just a few key words. As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, what is being attempted in this study is not a full-orbed Biblical Theology of Paul's view of transformation. Thus chapters 2-5 merely analyzed one thread of Paul's teaching on spiritual transformation, namely his use of words that use the $\mu\omicron\pi\omicron$ root, words chosen because they emphasize the idea of someone being 'shaped' or 'formed'. However, in this chapter our focus will be to look beyond these $\mu\omicron\pi\omicron$ root words to consider several passages that clearly speak to the concept of transformation though they use a different vocabulary. This chapter will not treat all the Pauline passages that address the subject (that is, it is not an exhaustive list of texts), nor will this study be as thorough as it has been with the four passages already treated. The desire is to broaden the reach of the study of Paul's view of transformation.

6.2 2 Corinthians 4:16

Before examining this text, it is important to follow Paul's flow of thought in the immediate context. The entire section, 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, is connected to what precedes it by the linking phrase $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ τοῦτο which indicates that Paul is drawing an implication from what has been previously stated and is also connected to what follows by the explanatory $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ of 2 Corinthians 5:1. In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 Paul defends the integrity of his ministry. Whether he is responding to specific criticisms made against him or simply exposing the great difference between his ministry and that of others who

had made their mark in Corinth is a debated issue.¹⁹⁴ What is evident, however, is that Paul wants it to be clearly understood that he exercises his ministry with upright motives and transparent practices.

Paul had already affirmed that it was God himself who ‘qualified’ him for his new covenant ministry (2 Cor 3:6). Now, he begins in 2 Corinthians 4:1 by affirming that it is precisely because¹⁹⁵ God mercifully (καθώς ἠλεήθημεν) gave him this ministry (τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην) that he is able to persevere in it without losing heart.¹⁹⁶ This faithful continuance in his ministry stands in stark contrast to the ways and motives of the false apostles (i.e., those who ‘peddle’ the word of God according to 2 Cor 2:17). Paul renounces all the shameful, dishonest, and manipulative ways and motives that these self-serving preachers display (2 Cor 4:2) and instead by means of both a lifestyle of transparency and integrity and through his faithful preaching of the glorious gospel he commends himself in the sight of God to the conscience of the people around.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Many scholars hold that Paul is doing both things at the same time. For example, Furnish (1984:246) writes that Paul ‘may be thinking of criticism that arose’ but then adds ‘it is equally possible that 4:2 is written less in self-defense than in criticism of his opponents’. Martin (1986:77) also sees both ideas in play when he states that ‘Paul had his immediate sights trained on what his Corinthian accusers have leveled at him ... and is launching out into an offensive assault on what his opponents are guilty of’. Barnett (1997:213-214) also holds that Paul’s purpose was both apologetic and polemical. That is, that he was both defending himself against direct criticism and that he was criticizing the ‘peddlers’. However, we think it most likely that Paul was primarily leveling criticism against the false teachers and their methods rather than defending himself against criticisms by the Corinthians.

¹⁹⁵ The present participle ἔχοντες is causal.

¹⁹⁶ The aorist tense verb ἐγκακούμεν has been variously interpreted as ‘to not give up’ (Guthrie 2015:235), ‘to not shrink back’ (Furnish 1984:217), ‘to not neglect our duty’ (Barrett 1973:126), or ‘to not fail or act wrongly’ (Seifrid 2014:190). Each of these nuances is related. The idea stated positively is that Paul perseveres in the exercise of this ministry in spite of all the obstacles that present themselves. This perseverance could include psychological endurance (not becoming discouraged, so Belleville 1996:114), moral endurance (no moral failure, so Seifrid 2014:190), or emotional endurance (not giving in to fear, so Garland 1999:204).

¹⁹⁷ The phrase ‘manifestation of the truth’ (τῆ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας) stands in contrast both to ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν and to the three sinful ways that Paul has renounced (τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης, μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). The idea therefore of φανέρωσις is to make known, to reveal, to manifest as opposed to that which is ‘hidden’ or ‘veiled’ or that which is ‘distorted’. Paul’s point is that the way that he commends himself to people’s consciences is not through letters of commendation (2 Cor 3:1), but through making the truth clearly known. Rather than hiding or distorting the truth, he manifests it. That is, he displays it clearly or makes it evident. He accomplishes this not only through his preaching, but also through the way he lives (thus Paul speaks both of ‘not *walking* with deceitfulness’ and of not ‘adulterating the word of God’ through his preaching). The clear presentation of the gospel through the integrity of his life in ministry and through the open proclamation of the unadulterated word of God is what Paul practiced and this integrity was evident to others and served to ‘recommend’ Paul to the brethren.

But this raises an important and potentially ‘damning’ question, why then if Paul is supposedly ‘manifesting the truth’ are there so many who have rejected both his message and him as messenger? Paul’s response in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 is that it is the ‘perishing ones’, those who are ‘unbelievers’ (τῶν ἀπίστων), who have not understood or accepted his gospel. The unbelief of these people demonstrates not the inadequacy of Paul’s preaching or the hypocrisy of his life, but rather Satan’s blinding effect in their lives. The gospel message is ‘veiled’ to them because the ‘god of this age’ has blinded their ‘minds’ (τὰ νοήματα) hindering them from seeing¹⁹⁸ the light of the gospel which reveals the glory of Christ, himself the very image of God. In other words, these people don’t grasp the truth not because of some flaw in Paul and his presentation of the truth, but because they themselves have been rendered incapable of grasping it through the devil’s power over them.

Now in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 Paul brings us back to the end of verse 2. He manifests the truth and thereby commends himself to the consciences of those who receive his message. This message that Paul preaches is not a self-aggrandizing message. In fact, though it is Paul’s gospel in that it is the one he preached, yet he is not the center of this gospel. Paul preaches Christ Jesus as Lord. It is a Christ-centered gospel in which Jesus is declared as preeminent over all. Paul, on the other hand, far from being the focus of this gospel, is declared to be a servant to the very people to whom he preached. That is, Paul is this gospel’s servant, ministering its message to others and serving those who receive it, all for the sake of the Lord of the Gospel, Jesus Christ. And the very reason why Paul is able to preach this gospel of the Lordship of Christ is because the Creator God himself broke through the ‘mind-blindness’ that Paul himself

¹⁹⁸ Paul’s description here abounds with metaphorical language. The ‘mind’ is here portrayed as a ‘seeing’ organ which has been ‘blinded’ so that the unbeliever is incapable of ‘seeing’ the light of the gospel. Earlier it was the ‘heart’ that was veiled (2 Cor 3:15) and the mind that was hardened (2 Cor 3:14). The heart and mind are being used synonymously. They refer to that aspect of a person that ‘perceives’ the truth and responds in faith. A blinded mind means an incapacity to recognize or discern the truthfulness of the gospel and a refusal to submit to its demands. Those who have rejected Paul’s gospel through unbelief are really enslaved to the ‘god of this age’ who has so influenced their mental and spiritual perception that they have been rendered blind to its truthfulness and numb to its authority over them and thus remain in their unbelief and under the judgment of condemnation (i.e., they are perishing).

once suffered and penetrated Paul's heart (and of all who believe) so that he was able through Christ to see the glory of God in the gospel. In other words, God himself enabled Paul to see and accept the gospel of Christ and the Christ of the gospel.

Once again it is easy to imagine Paul's opponents raising an objection here. If Paul has experienced a work of 'new creation' in his heart by which God's creative word brought the brilliance of the knowledge of God's glory in Christ then why is it that his life does not display such glory (Thrall 1994:321)? Paul responds in a very clear and practical way in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. Simply put, 'we are trustees' of this glorious treasure which the gospel is (Harris 2005:339) and yet we serve this gospel in the midst of our frail humanness (ἐν ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν). In other words, God has entrusted to weak imperfect agents like Paul the ministry of the glorious new covenant which manifests the glory of Christ and the power of God. God's purpose (ἵνα) for such an assignment was so that the creative power that 'un-blinds' those who are perishing and makes them new creations might be God's supernatural power and not the sinful agent's merely human power. Therefore, in Paul's case, even though he was personally weak and unimpressive, lacking any clear evidence of God's power in his person, it was precisely because of this frailty and the gospel's saving power *in spite of* this weakness that proved that Paul's ministry was authorized by God. All of Paul's afflictions as catalogued in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, the loss he suffered and the humiliation he experienced, far from disproving his apostolic legitimacy were further evidence of God's power at work in and through him because in all of these hardships he was preserved by God (2 Cor 4:8-9) and the gospel was advancing.¹⁹⁹

In 2 Corinthians 4:10-12 Paul gives a Christological interpretation of the catalog of afflictions he mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (Furnish 1984:283). Paul's hardships were not mere misfortune; they were a participation in Christ's sufferings. He was

¹⁹⁹ Regarding 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 Harris (2005:345) perceptively comments, 'When these four pairs of antithesis are read, as they might be, as illustrations of the thematic statement in v. 7, it is clear that in Paul's estimation, this "hardship catalogue" demonstrates, not his virtuous character or his buoyant self-sufficiency or his steadfast courage amid adversity ... but his utter dependence as a frail human being on the superlative excellence (ὑπερβολή) of God's power'.

continually dying with Christ through the persecution and privations he suffered in the exercise of his mission and yet there was purpose in this, namely so that Jesus' resurrection life might also be evident in his body. Time and again Paul and the other apostles were handed over to death for Jesus' sake, yet each time this dying with Christ proved to be a manifestation of Jesus' life in and through them. All of this was visible proof of Paul's initial affirmation: the treasure that the life-giving gospel represents is most clearly manifested by its stark contrast with the humble state of the one proclaiming it. It was for the sake of the gospel that Paul continually experienced suffering so that ultimately through this same gospel those blinded by Satan might see and might experience Christ's resurrection life. This is exactly what has happened for the Corinthians as Paul's conclusion in 2 Corinthians 4:12 asserts, 'the conclusion of all of this is the following: death works in us as we suffer in the transmission of the gospel, but you all experience life as a result'. That was the glorious cost of the gospel mission, the suffering of the messenger is endured so that new life can reach those who are perishing. Paul's continual dying with Christ resulted in the Corinthian's reception of the resurrection life of Christ.

Finally, in 2 Corinthians 4:13-15 Paul expresses his motivation for his deep commitment to share the gospel even in the face of such hardships. It is 'because he has the same spirit of faith' that was expressed by David in Psalm 115:1 (*LXX*), 'I believed, therefore I spoke' that Paul too has committed himself to proclaiming the gospel. That is, the fact that he has come to believe the gospel has impelled Paul to preach the same saving gospel to the Corinthians and others. That is, it was Paul's deep conviction²⁰⁰ that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead would also raise both Paul and the believing Corinthians and would one day present both together before God's majestic throne.

2 Corinthians 4:15 serves as a summarizing explanation (γὰρ). Paul has willingly endured the hardship that his mission brought and specifically in this present case, has

²⁰⁰ This deep conviction is expressed by the perfect tense participle εἰδότες. This participle is causal and should be translated, 'because we know'. The idea, thus, is that it was because of Paul's knowledge, his deep conviction of the future resurrection, that he was compelled to preach the gospel.

endured all kinds of hardships for the good of the Corinthians because this humble sacrificial service ultimately will result in God's grace abounding through the many whose lives have been transformed causing an enormous measure of gratitude to be expressed redounding to God's glory. In other words, all of the afflictions that Paul endures in bringing the glorious gospel to the Corinthians has been worth it because it results in the multitude of God's people being channels of (διὰ) this same abundant grace and the overflowing of this grace through these transformed lives will bring an incredible harvest of thankfulness to God who will be thus glorified.²⁰¹

The context then of 2 Corinthians 4:1-15 can be summarized: Because God has mercifully entrusted Paul with his apostolic ministry he perseveres, making the truth of the gospel known both through his life and his preaching. By divine design this mission results in a participation in Christ's sufferings so that others might experience the new life that Christ gives. It is this deep conviction, that death will ultimately give way to resurrection life, that impels Paul to endure proclaiming the gospel. And ultimately it is the knowledge that the fruit of this labor will result in God's name being glorified that motivates Paul to self-sacrificially face death for the sake of others.

This leads us to our text in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 where Paul gives an inference (διό) from what he has affirmed in 2 Corinthians 4:1-15. Actually this passage is a bridge text that both concludes what has been stated before (2 Cor 4:1-15) and introduces what is coming in 2 Corinthians 5. The clear link with what has already been communicated becomes especially evident through Paul's expression in 2 Corinthians 4:16a, 'therefore we do not lose heart' (διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν) which marks an *inclusio* with 2 Corinthians 4:1. The link with what follows is evident through an emphasis upon what is 'eternal', a theme Paul develops further in 2 Corinthians 5.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 is made up of a series of contrasts that are crucial for understanding Paul's argument. The first contrast is between the 'outer man' (ἔξω ἡμῶν

²⁰¹ 2 Corinthians 4:15 is grammatically complex. For the different interpretive problems and possible solutions see especially Thrall (1994:344-347) and Harris (2005:355-356).

ἄνθρωπος) which is ‘wasting away’ (διαφθείρεται) and the ‘inner man’ (ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν) which is being ‘renewed’ (ἀνακαινοῦται). There has been much discussion about what Paul intended by outer versus inner man. Some scholars recognizing the incompatibility of Platonic dualism with Pauline theology have concluded that Paul must be speaking soteriologically of the new man versus the old man (i.e, Rm 6:6) or eschatologically of the man of the new age versus the man of the present age. However, Paul’s focus is anthropological here.²⁰² Though he will quickly transition into a discussion of the eschatological in 2 Corinthians 4:17-5:10, his emphasis in 2 Corinthians 4:16 is the present reality he is facing. Thus Paul contrasts his frail bodily existence that is undergoing constant decay as he struggles through the variety of afflictions he has been enduring with his ‘spiritual life’ that is continually being strengthened and transformed. In referring to the ‘outer man’ Paul is again stating what he affirmed in 2 Corinthians 4:1, ‘we have this treasure in clay pots’. This is further supported in the context by his reference to ‘our mortal flesh’ (τῆ θνητῆ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν) in 2 Corinthians 4:11 and our ‘earthly tent’ (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους) in 2 Corinthians 5:1. The outer man for Paul refers to his external bodily existence but includes more than mere physicality; it also involves emotions. Paul is recognizing that his physical and emotional limitations

²⁰² Betz (2000:340) is correct in his comments regarding Paul’s use of ἔσω and ἔξω ἄνθρωπος, ‘While rejecting the Middle-Platonic dualism of an immortal soul imprisoned or entombed in a material body, Paul saw the need to work out an anthropology that could answer the questions raised. He appropriated the concept of ἔσω and ἔξω ἄνθρωπος which must have figured prominently in the Corinthian discussions. Whether Paul was aware of the origin of the concept in Plato and how he first learned about it cannot be determined ... When Paul accepted differentiating between the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ human being, he did not favor the ἔσω ἄνθρωπος as the only part to be saved. While retaining the terms ἔσω and ἔξω ἄνθρωπος, he reconfigured them conceptually, in order to preclude a split in the person between an immortal soul and a material body’ (Betz 2000:340). Though I do not agree with everything that Betz affirms in his article, I do think he is correct in seeing Paul as eschewing Platonic dualism and yet affirming a kind of practical dualism. It is our contention that Paul’s anthropology is best described as ‘holistic dualism’. For a careful defense of this position see Cooper (2000). At the same time it is necessary to clarify that although Paul firmly believed that Christians are already participants of the new age and that they are in fact ‘the new man’, this is not Paul’s point here where he distinguishes inner and outer man. His point here is a very practical one which explains his present struggle. This is why there is no danger of a faulty Platonic dualism; this was far from Paul’s mind. Rather Paul’s emphasis is the difference between his visible external realities (i.e., he is suffering a host of real historical trials that affect his everyday earthly existence, including his physical body, his emotions, his strength and motivation) and his invisible internal spiritual realities (i.e., his conviction of God’s faithfulness, his experience of communion with God, his perseverance even when he is tired and discouraged). The outer man is decaying, but the inner is alive and growing. This is not to say that the two (inner and outer) are not intimately related. They are, yet Paul is experiencing a continual renewal inwardly even as he is experiencing a decay in his physical, emotional, self.

are more and more obvious as he endures the painful grind of walking endless miles on dusty roads and facing the angry lashes of religious opponents. Exhaustion and hunger, sickness and injury, anxiety and stress have all been his constant companions during the exercise of his vast ministry and thus Paul is deeply aware of his humanness and 'clay pot existence'. His catalogue of suffering (2 Cor 4:8-9) is undeniable evidence that his 'outer man is being consumed'. As Belleville (1996:126-127) explains, 'the outward person is that aspect of the self that is wasting away. This involves more than the body. It is the progressive weakening of our natural faculties, emotional vitality and physical stamina'²⁰³. Furnish (1984:289) adds, 'the outer person is that aspect of one's humanity which is subject to the various assaults and hardships of historical existence (4:8-9) and which, because of its vulnerability to these, may be likened to earthen pots' (4:7). This aspect of Paul, what he calls the 'outer man', is slowly decaying. It is dying little by little.

In contrast, Paul's 'inner man' though intimately tied to his external aspect is at the same time separate. That is, Paul is one unified ἄνθρωπος, and yet that unity expresses itself in a duality, inner and outer man. The inner man refers to that aspect of a person by which the spiritual life is expressed. It is variously referred to by Paul as the 'mind' or the 'heart' (*contra* Harris 2005:360). For example, in Romans 7:22 Paul contrasts the 'inner man' (τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) with 'my members' (τοῖς μέλεσίν μου) which coincides with his contrast in 2 Corinthians 4:16. The outer man thus refers to man's bodily existence with all of the frailty and limitations that it entails. What of the inner man? In Romans 7:23 Paul substitutes 'my mind' (τοῦ νοός μου) for 'inner man'

²⁰³ The relationship between inner and outer is obviously quite complex. Louw and Nida (1988:320) refer to the 'inner man' as 'the psychological faculty, including intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects, in contrast with the purely physical aspects of human existence'. TDNT (1964:365) refers to the inner man as 'the Christian according to his Godward, immortal side'. NIDNTTE (2014:304) speaks of the difference between 'a person's essential being (often expressed in terms of the "heart," ...) and the outward appearance'. BDAG (2000:82) sees the inner man as 'humans in their transcendent significance, striving toward God'. This complexity is clearly felt when one attempts to 'locate' the emotions or certain other faculties. Belleville (1996:126-127) locates the emotions in the 'outer man' whereas Louw and Nida (1988:320) in the 'inner man'. It is experientially evident that the emotions come from deep within a person, and yet they are also tied closely to that which is transitory, temporal, even broken in the person (Not that the emotions themselves are bad, rather that they are affected by the fall and thus often distorted). What is clear is that Paul is not giving a psychology of human faculties here. His point rather is to demonstrate that though he faced extremely difficult circumstances and often 'despaired of life itself' (2 Cor 1:8) and was 'perplexed' (2 Cor 4:8), both strong emotional reactions, yet God was refreshing him in his 'essential being'.

thus showing that they are parallel concepts.²⁰⁴ Ephesians 3:16 also refers to the 'inner man' (τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) and relates it to having Christ dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17) and to being filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19). Hence it can be concluded that when Paul refers to the 'inner man' he is speaking of that aspect of his person that is internal, not external, invisible, not visible, immaterial and not material. The inner man is akin to the νοῦς and the καρδιά and is that aspect of the unified ἄνθρωπος where 'Christ dwells' by faith and the Spirit operates, producing renewal even in the person whose outer man is decaying. This aspect of Paul's existence was continually (ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα) being renewed (ἀνακαινοῦται) rather than ebbing away as his outer man was.

To be 'renewed' is therefore, the opposite of wasting away.²⁰⁵ As Thrall (1994:351) comments, 'the renewal would be identical with the gradual transformation into glory of 3.18'. Belleville (1996:127) insightfully adds, 'The deposit of the Spirit within us sets in motion a regenerative overhaul of the self that culminates in complete transformation at Christ's return'. Even though Paul has endured fierce opposition, physical discomfort, emotional pain and a host of other trials that have robbed him of strength yet each day he is 'made new' in the core of his being. He does not give up the battle that his mission in an obstinate and dark world entails, rather he perseveres precisely because he is not only strengthened continually for the task, but even more, is being changed little by little. He is being progressively shaped into the image of the one who created him and who shed the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ into his heart.

Paul concludes in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 by explaining (γὰρ) the eternal perspective that is part of the 'renewal' going on in his inner person. In his explanation Paul continues with the stark contrasts that he began in 2 Corinthians 4:16. Here he contrasts between momentary (παραυτίκα) light (ἐλαφρὸν) and eternal (αἰώνιον) weight (βάρος) in verse 17. Then in verse 18 the contrast is between things that are temporary (πρόσκαιρα) and

²⁰⁴ It should be noticed as well that in Romans 12:2 it is the 'mind' that is to be renewed, forming another parallel between the 'inner man' and the mind.

²⁰⁵ 'The two verbs διαφθείρεται and ἀνακαινοῦται depict incessant and therefore simultaneous processes' (Harris 2005:359).

visible (τὰ βλεπόμενα) and those that are eternal (αἰώνια) and invisible (τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα). Paul's point is abundantly clear: The suffering we endure in the present, though it may seem unbearable and unending, is in fact light and temporary when compared with what it is actually producing for us in the future, namely an eternal 'weight' of glory that is indescribably great (καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν). Paul's apostolic labors have often resulted in intense trials that cause his physical life to eek away slowly and yet this 'carrying about of the death of Christ' though real and painful, is so infinitesimally 'weightless' compared to the immeasurable 'weight of glory' that this participation in Christ's sufferings is producing for him. Here Paul reveals a profound mystery. He is saying much more than what he said in Romans 8:18, 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us'. (Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς). In the Romans passage Paul is simply stating that the glory of the future is far greater than the pain presently endured. This is undoubtedly true and serves as a great comfort. However, in 2 Corinthians Paul goes further. Not only is the glory then greater than the pain now, but even more surprisingly, the pain now 'produces for us' (κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν) a 'weight of glory' that is so indescribably great that words cannot be found to describe it (Seifrid 2014:218).²⁰⁶ Suffering for Christ in the exercise of our mission is producing eternal glory for us, not as a reward we earn for our pain, but as a God-determined fruit that comes through 'bearing the death of Christ in our bodies'.²⁰⁷

Finally Paul concludes in 2 Corinthians 4:18 stating that renewal of the inner man and the production of eternal glory come as a person's spiritual eyes are fixed upon the invisible eternal realities of life.²⁰⁸ In other words, a person's perspective greatly

²⁰⁶ Harris (2005:362) writes, 'in the divine economy, affliction actually generates glory. This δόξα is not presented as a reward for suffering, as if suffering of itself were meritorious. But δόξα is the God-ordained outcome of θλίψις; where there is suffering διὰ Ἰησοῦν (4:11), there is glory κατὰ χάριν (cf. Rm 4:4)'.

²⁰⁷ Compare the same idea in Romans 8:16-17, 'The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him'. The glory that follows is a fruit of the suffering endured for his sake.

²⁰⁸ The relationship between 2 Corinthians 4:17 and 18 is difficult to define. The genitive absolute (μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν) is 'not strictly grammatical' (Furnish 1984:263) since the subject has already been declared in the previous verse. This has led to a host of conclusions regarding its function: conditional

influences their inner condition. As a person recognizes that present suffering for Christ is supremely purposeful and in fact produces the indescribable blessing of future glory for them, they are continually made new internally. Deep change in the character and spiritual life of the person comes even in the face of tribulation and loss as their minds adopt an eternal perspective on all things, painful or joyful, whereby they see the unseen work and purposes of God in their lives in all things and re-interpret them in the light of eternity. Living with this kind of mindset, the same one that Christ displayed according to Philippians 2:5-11 and Hebrews 12:2-3, is essential for inner renewal even in the face of outward decay.

To summarize the teaching of 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 then, Paul perseveres in the living out of his apostolic mission even in the face of intense suffering because he is keenly aware that these sufferings are a participation in Christ's sufferings and as such are producing for him profound eternal glory. In every and all circumstances he is focused on seeing God's eternal purposes and not fixating on simply what he is experiencing at the time since he is convinced that things present to the naked eye are temporary and cannot be compared with the glorious and permanent invisible realities which are eternal. Thus, even though his physical and emotional life are often ebbing away, yet he recognizes that God is at work in his inner man transforming him continually.

6.3 Romans 6:4

The next passage that refers to the concept of transformation is found in Romans 6. In chapter 4 of this study we looked at the flow of Paul's argument in Romans. There is no need to review that argument again. However, if we are to correctly understand our present text of Romans 6:4, we must locate it in its immediate context and understand the thrust of Paul's argument here. Paul has established the universal guilt of humankind and thus the inescapable accountability of all people. All are guilty and thus

(Belleville 1996:129), causal (Harris 2005:363; Barnett 1997:253, n. 20), explanatory (Guthrie 2015:273), conclusion (Garland 1999:244), attendant circumstance (Thrall 1994:355), or an independent sentence (Furnish 1984:263). That there is a close relationship between 2 Corinthians 4:17 and 18 is evident by the linking of the idea of 'temporary' and 'eternal'. The sense (though not exact) is quite similar if the genitive absolute is understood as conditional, causal, or attendant circumstance. We have opted for the latter as it seems to fit Paul's flow of thought best.

no one has an excuse before God. The only means of escape from this tragic plight is through God's gracious work of justification by which he pardons guilty sinners through faith in Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. Paul makes it abundantly clear that no one is able to escape God's righteous wrath for sin through the Mosaic law. In fact, Paul asserts that the law was instituted so that transgression might increase. That is, so that it might be clear that man's sin was nothing less than a violation of God's will and thus fully culpable. And yet, it was exactly at this point in history, when sin abounded under the light of the law, that God sent his Son Jesus as a sacrifice for sin to make propitiation for God's wrath. In other words, it was during the epoch of the law, a time when sin abounded, that God's grace 'super-abounded' for it was during this time that Christ the righteous One died for the unrighteous and brought justification to sinners.

Having made this incredible point, that God's grace as demonstrated through Christ's sacrifice, was made available to humankind in greatest abundance at the very time when sin had most abounded, Paul, echoing the opinion of his opponents, asks rhetorically, should Christ-followers therefore continue a sinful life so that grace might overflow more and more to them? Paul answers this question in Romans 6:2-23. However, it is sufficient to focus on Romans 6:1-11 and especially Romans 6:4 where Paul reveals that Christ-followers can now live a completely new life. This new life is a clear indication of a spiritual transformation.

In response to the rhetorical question raised in Romans 6:1 as to whether Christ-followers should continue a life of sin, Paul is completely incredulous (μη γένοιτο). He cannot fathom such an attitude. He thus responds with a rhetorical question of his own, how can people like us who have truly died with relationship to sin, continue to live under sin's tyranny? Paul's response to this question in Romans 6:2 highlights three vital truths. First, the ετι of Romans 6:2 shows that sin was the believer's former reality. The believer once lived 'in sin', but now Paul asks, how can they live in it 'still'? It is important to note that sin throughout Romans 6 does not generally refer to specific concrete acts of sin, but to sin as a force or power under whose authority a person lives. It is a controlling influence that governs the direction of people's decisions. Or stated

another way, sin is depicted as a despotic king who has evil intentions and enslaves mankind. This tyrannical ruler dominates the lives of those who have not surrendered themselves to Christ's rule and leads them to commit acts of sin. In this way the two concepts, sin as an evil force and sin as concrete acts of transgression, are 'finally inseparable' (Schreiner 1998:304) though Paul's primary emphasis in Romans 6 is the former. Paul's point is that the Roman Christ-believers once lived under this oppressive rule, but something has happened to change their situation.

This key event that has changed their situation is the second vital truth highlighted by Paul in Romans 6:2, namely that believers have died to sin. What does Paul mean when he asserts that 'we died to sin'?²⁰⁹ Death to sin means that a person's relationship to sin has dramatically changed. The person is no longer a willing subject under sin's dominion; sin's ownership rights have been annulled and the once enslaved sinner has been released from the obligations sin imposed upon her. Citizenship in sin's kingdom has been revoked as the person has died in his allegiance to sin as master. In this way the person has died to sin.

The third vital truth is that precisely because of the Christ-follower's death to sin, living a sinful existence under the dominion of sin is not in any way compatible with their new reality. Being dead to sin is the Christ-follower's new reality; it is their new status which characterizes who they are and how they should live. This means that living 'in it' (sin) now is a terrible and unthinkable contradiction.²¹⁰ Christ-followers are now a new kind of

²⁰⁹ Cranfield (1990:299-300) shares four possible interpretations of 'we died to sin': 1) A juridical sense which refers to God's eternal decision whereby he declares them to be dead through Christ's death on their behalf. 2) A baptismal sense which refers to a person's baptism where they both died to sin and were raised up. 3) A moral sense which speaks of the freedom to live in daily obedience to God. 4) An eschatological sense which refers to the moment of their physical death when they will die to sin finally and irreversibly and to the coming of Christ when they will be raised. If one speaks of the timing of the 'death to sin' then surely view 2 is the right answer. The Christian dies to sin through baptism, a rite which was intimately linked to conversion. That is, Paul does not speak of baptism as a magical event that brings about death to sin through the mere act. Rather baptism is a symbol of the faith expressed in conversion. It is when a person responds in genuine faith to the gospel message and publicly declares this conversion through the visible act of baptism that their death is enacted. So then it is in the moment of conversion/baptism that a person is united to Christ. Paul's point throughout Romans 6 is that it is through this union with Christ in his redemptive work that one dies to Christ and rises with him.

²¹⁰ Paul's use of a rhetorical question increases the force of his argument and adds intensity to the 'disbelief' that he expresses.

people. One of the crowning characteristics of this new identity is that they are ‘dead to sin’. This means that a real historical death to sin has occurred and therefore it is totally inappropriate to live in the present under sin’s hegemony as they once did.

In Romans 6:3 Paul adds force to his argument that living in sin is totally incompatible with the Christ-follower’s new reality. His reasoning is the same as in Romans 6:2, namely that followers of Christ have died with Christ. Once again he uses a rhetorical question to make his point, ‘or are you ignorant that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?’ The phrase ‘or are you ignorant’ implies that the recipients of this letter should have had at least some understanding of the relationship between baptism and death.²¹¹ The content that they should have understood (ὅτι) is introduced by a chiasm:

*ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν
εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν*

The probable point of the chiastic structure here is to show the parallelism between being baptized into Christ and our having died with Christ. In other words, Christian baptism is nothing less than a participation in the death of Christ. To be baptized is to display the reality that one has been incorporated into the death that Christ died.

It is often noted that Paul’s baptismal ‘formula’ here is unusual. This comment, however, does not fit the evidence. It is true that in the book of Acts the most common formula is baptism ‘in the name of’ Christ (though Luke uses a variety of ways to express this).²¹² However, in Paul’s letters the ‘in the name of’ formula is not as common, appearing only in 1 Corinthians 1:13 (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε) and 1:15 (εἰς τὸ ἕμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε). More common in Paul is the shorter, ‘baptism into’ (εἰς) something without

²¹¹ Jewett (2007:396) comments, ‘the opening formula of this verse is typical of a diatribe, suggesting in a gently reprimanding manner a reality that the foolish suggestion in v. 1 had overlooked. “Or do you not know”... implies by the disjunctive particle (ἢ) that the following material ‘surely’ should be understood but apparently is not fully grasped The classical parallels point toward material that the audience does not yet fully comprehend as the speaker or writer thinks they should’.

²¹² Notice the variations: Acts 2:38, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, though with textual variations; Acts 8:16 and Acts 19:5, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ; Acts 10:48, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Matthew 28:19 uses another variation, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Thus although the most common ‘formula’ includes ‘in the name of’ there is variety in how this ‘formula’ is expressed.

adding 'the name of'. For example, observe 1 Corinthians 10:2, namely εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσαντο. Note also 1 Corinthians 12:13 (εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν), while Galatians 3:27 adds εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε. So then Paul's baptismal formula in Romans 6:3 does not appear so strange. In fact, it is his usual way to express baptism. What then does this particular baptismal formula seek to communicate? Moo (1996:360) mentions two options. Paul's formula could be 'shorthand' for the more common 'into the name of Christ'.²¹³ Or Paul could be emphasizing the Christ-follower's union with Christ; they are baptized 'into union with Christ'. We could add a third possible option, namely that Paul had both ideas in mind. True though this may be, the point to be emphasized is what the second option demonstrates, namely the Christ-follower's union with Christ. This is supported by the emphasis throughout Roman's 6 on the believer's participation in Christ's redemptive work: baptized into his death (Rm 6:3); buried together with him (συνετάφημεν, Rm 6:4); united with him (σύμφυτοι) in the likeness of his death (Rm 6:5), crucified with him (συνεσταυρώθη, Rm 6:6), died with him (Rm 6:8), to be raised with him (συζήσομεν αὐτῷ, Rm 6:8), and living to God in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Rm 6:11). Paul's message throughout Romans 6 is that through baptism a person is united with Christ and by faith this union means that the believer participates in Christ's death and resurrection. He/she has died with Christ and thus has died to sin. Also, the Christ-follower has been raised with Christ and thus can live for God as expressed through a whole new life.

Having affirmed once again that the Christ-believer has died with Christ, Paul reaches a conclusion (οὖν) in Romans 6:4. Paul repeats his key affirmation that the believer has died, 'therefore we were buried with him through our baptism into his death'. To be buried is not a new 'redemptive' event, but serves to certify our death with Christ. Burial proves that death has occurred and is a seal pointing to its finality. There is no doubt left; the buried person is dead. The evident consequence is that the dead Christ-follower

²¹³ For example, Cranfield (1990:301) writes, 'It is unlikely that the choice of εἰς Χριστὸν (Ἰησοῦν) rather than εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ... is particularly significant ... All that Paul wishes to convey in this clause is the simple fact that the persons concerned have received Christian baptism. But at the same time the expression which he uses implies ... what was no doubt generally acknowledged throughout the primitive Church – that baptism has to do with a decisive personal relationship between the individual believer and Christ.'

cannot maintain his/her former relationship with sin; because a real death has occurred the former life has truly been buried. And this death occurred through the person's baptism, not the act itself, but in the complete identification of the person with Christ through conversion and its symbolic representation in baptism.²¹⁴ That is, Paul's focus is not on the sacrament, but on what it points to, death and burial with Christ. Once again Paul has graphically announced the believer's death with Christ and thus to sin.

The purpose (ἵνα) of this decisive death-certifying event is revealed in Romans 6:4, so that 'we might walk in newness of life'. The Christ-follower was hung on Christ's cross and placed into his tomb so that she might be a new creation who lives a transformed life. In order to express this vital purpose, Paul introduces a comparison with the victorious resurrection of Christ. He writes that the result of our co-burial through baptism is just like Christ's resurrection from the dead through God's glory. Just as Christ was raised to new life, a life whereby he participated in all the glory of God's kingdom, so too, disciples of Christ through their death and burial with Christ die to their old life so that they might experience the resurrection life of Christ. That is, so that they might live a new creation life. We will return to this point at the end of exegesis of Romans 6.

In the remainder of Romans 6:5-11 Paul elaborates on what it means that Christ-followers have died with Christ and been raised to a new life. He begins with a conditional statement in Romans 6:5. If it is true that we died²¹⁵ with Christ, and this is something that Paul has affirmed continuously throughout Romans 6:1-4, then it will undoubtedly be true that we will share in his resurrection in the future. We have this assurance, says Paul, because we are convinced that our old man truly died on the

²¹⁴ The comment by Moo (1996:366) is helpful, 'Just as faith is always assumed to lead to baptism, so baptism always assumes faith for its validity. In vv. 3-4 then, we can assume that baptism stands for the whole conversion-initiation experience, presupposing faith and the gift of the Spirit'.

²¹⁵ When Paul speaks of being united to 'the likeness (ὁμοιωματι) of his death he is simply affirming that the Christian's death, though real, is not exactly the same as Christ's death in every way (i.e., his death was physical and the Christian's is a redemptive-historical 'by faith' death). The Christian's death to sin is like Christ's death. (see Schreiner 1998:313-315; and Moo 1996:368-371).

cross together with Christ (Rm 6:6).²¹⁶ The purpose of this co-crucifixion was so that the 'body of sin'²¹⁷ might be destroyed.²¹⁸ And through the destruction of the sin-controlled body another purpose is achieved, namely that Christ-followers would no longer live as slaves to sin. Or stated another way, the purpose of the Christ-follower's death with Christ was so that she might die to sin's control, definitively and decisively.

Paul goes on in Romans 6:7 to explain (γὰρ) how it is that through the death of the old man the power of sin is broken in the life of a Christ-follower. His answer is that the one who has died (with Christ)²¹⁹ has been justified from sin. That is, whenever a person is united to Christ in his death, this person is declared righteous and can now live in righteousness, victorious over sin's reign.²²⁰ So then, in the act of justifying sinners, not

²¹⁶ The 'old man' refers to the unregenerate self. It speaks of the definitive end of all that a person was in Adam. Those who are in Christ are the new man; they have been transferred out of 'Adam' and now exist 'in Christ'. Thus old man versus new man are redemptive-historical categories, not 'natures' living simultaneously in the redeemed person.

²¹⁷ It is important to recognize that σῶμα 'does not denote the physical body as such, rather a fuller reality which includes the physical but is not reducible to it. It is man embodied in a particular environment, the body being that which constitutes a social being, a being who relates to and communicates with his environment. It is as an embodied entity that he can act upon and be acted upon by his environment...Hence in our present case, "body of sin" is not to be designated as a gnostic disparagement of the body...but denotes man as belonging to the age ruled by sin ... man under the rule of in and death' (Dunn 1988a:319-320). The point, therefore, is that the 'body of sin' refers to the whole person controlled by sin and living in a world controlled by sin. The physicality of the body controlled by sin is part of what Paul is emphasizing, but it goes beyond this to include humankind in all of his capacities as he interacts in the world. This aspect of humankind has become an agent of sin. This stranglehold of sin over the σῶμα has been decisively broken through the believer's death with Christ because through this death the unregenerate self, man in his union with Adam and the old epoch in which Adam was the representative, was crucified together with Christ.

²¹⁸ For the meaning of καταργέω see Chapter 5. The idea is 'to destroy', 'to terminate', or 'to bring to an end'. Obviously Paul's point is *not* that Christians no longer have a body, but rather that their σῶμα is no longer an unwilling slave to sin's domination. Sin no longer has authority over the person, nor does it have unbridled freedom to use the body as a platform for evil. Sin should no longer 'exercise mastery' over the body and thus over the person (Schreiner 1998:316).

²¹⁹ It is evident that the 'one who died' (ὁ ἀποθανών) of Romans 6:7 refers to the person who through faith has died together with Christ. This is demonstrated by what Paul says in Romans 6:8, 'and if we died together with Christ'.

²²⁰ The exact meaning of the perfect passive indicative verb δεδικαίωται is notoriously complex here. On the one hand, some scholars see Paul as quoting a common maxim that basically affirms that dead men cannot sin and thus are free from sin's guilt. But as Cranfield (1990:310-311) demonstrates 'it is certain that Paul did not think that a man's death atoned for his sins in relation to God, or that a dead man was no longer accountable to God for his sin. The Rabbinic principle is, in fact, singularly inappropriate as a confirmation of what has just been said.' On the other hand, Byrne (1996:197) asserts that 'in the present context the issue is not justification from the guilt of sin but liberation from its power and control.' A solution is difficult. Perhaps Schreiner (1998:319) is right that the key is to recognize that 'righteousness is more than forensic in Paul' and that 'justification cannot be separated from sanctification'. Thus, 'those who are in a right relationship with God have also been dramatically changed; they have also been made

only is the guilt of sin removed, but sin's rightful claim is renounced and thus its power over the Christ-believer is broken. The Christ-follower as dead to sin and justified from sin can now live a new life free of sin's domineering influence.²²¹

In Romans 6:8-10 Paul shifts his focus from the believer's death to sin through death with Christ, to their resurrection with Christ and the new life that results. Just as he did in Romans 6:5 Paul uses a conditional clause in Romans 6:8 to further his argument. Paul's point once again is that if it is in fact true that Christ-followers died together with Christ, then surely it will be true that they will live together with him. Their death with Christ assures their life with him. The addition of 'we believe' (πιστεύομεν) adds force to Paul's argument. This is not a statement of mere opinion; this is a deeply held conviction. We Christ-followers believe that our past death with Christ assures our future life with him.²²² The basis (εἰδότες is a causal participle) of such confident assurance of a future share in Christ's resurrection is revealed in Romans 6:9, namely the knowledge that through resurrection Christ conquered death once and for all. Christ has died, but this death was victoriously overturned by his resurrection so that Christ will never die again. In his case, death has been defeated and has no right to exercise lordship over him. Since we have shared in his death and his death was overcome by his resurrection, we too will share in his resurrection and thus will live as he does. Our union with Christ is confirmed both in his death and in his resurrection. Why is this so? Paul explains in Romans 6:10, 'it is because the death that Jesus died was a death to sin and it was a once-for-all-time death'. That is to say, Jesus' death overcame sin's powerful rein in a definitive, never to be repeated way. Just as death has no right to rule over him because it has been soundly defeated by his resurrection, so too sin has been decisively dethroned by his death. Jesus is alive again and lives for God. The

righteous'. Paul's point would be, therefore, that anyone who has died together with Christ has been acquitted from sin's guilt and also freed from sin's power.

²²¹ The justified person is not yet free from the presence of sin. This partially explains why it is that they continue to struggle with this dethroned despot. Living 'between the times' in the already but not yet means that not all of the rights, privileges, blessings, and resources are fully experienced in the present time and thus our victory over sin, though real and historic, is not fully realized in daily experience.

²²² The future tense verb συζήσομεν does in fact refer to the future. This is not to say that there is no sense in which Christ-followers already enjoy the resurrection life. Paul has already affirmed that they walk in newness of life, a clear sign of the future resurrection-life invading the present. However, the full realization of the resurrection is future and what we now can experience is simply a foretaste.

inescapable conclusion therefore for the Roman Christians (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς) is that they must adopt this same attitude²²³ (Byrne 1996:193) and recognize and accept what has been declared to be true about them (Rm 6:11). They are in fact dead to sin just as Christ is because they died with Christ. This is no mere pipe dream; this is their new reality based upon their union with Christ. But there is more, they must also recognize that they are alive to God just as Jesus is alive to God. They share in Christ's resurrection and thus they share in his life, a life lived to God and with God through their union with Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). A conviction of the truth of this new status is essential; Christians must 'reckon' to be true that which has happened to them and for them through their participation in Christ and their share in his redemptive work.

It is now time to summarize our exegesis of Romans 6 and specifically relate Romans 6:4 to the concept of transformation. Paul's key affirmation in Romans 6 is that Christians have died to sin and thus cannot continue to live under sin's domination. To do so is to live contrary to everything that has happened to them through their union with Christ. It is to deny the consequences of their very real participation in the redemptive work of Christ. It is to live contrary to what they are 'in Christ'. The climax of this exhortation by Paul comes in Romans 6:4 where Paul asserts that the Christ-follower's death with Christ was purposeful in that it opened up the possibility of living in 'newness of life'. Christ died to sin and was raised to life again, a life whereby he shared in his father's eternal glory. In the same way Christians died with Christ so that they too could experience this same resurrection life. All of this becomes reality through the Christian's union with Christ. But what is this 'newness of life' that the Christian should experience? Paul links this 'newness' (καινότης)²²⁴ with a Christian's share in Christ's resurrection in Romans 6:5. So then 'newness of life' is resurrection life. It is the life of the new age experienced in the present age. Or as Paul states in Romans 7:6 it is the new way of the Spirit (καινότητι πνεύματος). Paul's point is that in the here and now

²²³ The present tense imperative λογίζεσθε means to 'reckon'. Cranfield (1990:315) states that it 'denotes not a pretending (as if), nor a mere ideal, but a deliberate and sober judgment on the basis of the gospel'. It means to determine to accept as fact what God says is true about us based upon the redemptive work of Christ and our union with him.

²²⁴ The noun καινότης appears also in Romans 7:6 where it is contrasted with παλαιότης. In the Septuagint it appears twice (Ezk 47:12; 1 Ki 8:53a).

Christians can live a brand new life with actions, attitudes, values, desires, and thoughts that reflect the realities of the eschatological age. They can evidence a new creation existence in the present because of their union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. So just as Christ died to sin Christians died with him and thus share in his victory over sin's maniacal influence. They do not have to surrender to sin's inclinations, nor follow sin's authority. They are free from sin's governance over their hearts and minds and bodies and therefore can live each day as a new creation reflecting the ethics of the kingdom of God and eschewing those of the kingdom of darkness. Also, as Christ was raised from the dead and lives for God's will so too Christians now share a foretaste of and will share in the fullness of his resurrection and thus can display his glory through their lives. Newness of life is a reality for them because they are 'in Christ' and share in the fruits of his redemptive work.

How does this become active in the Christian's daily existence? Newness of life is the Christian's privilege, yet the experience of this newness requires that they 'reckon' it to be so (Rm 6:11) and then live a life consistent with this new reality (Rm 6:12-14).²²⁵ In other words, a Christian must believe what Scripture claims is true of them. The Christian may not feel like they have died with Christ, they may feel like sin is very much alive to them, but this 'feeling' and even their daily experience can be contrary to their glorious status 'in Christ'. By faith they have in fact died to sin and been raised to walk in newness of life. They must confidently acknowledge that these things are true and then appropriate these truths and live consistent with them. One must 'put on' the new man (ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον; Eph 4:24) which is the believer's new identity. But they also must choose moment by moment to present themselves in obedience to God and not to sin's slavish cravings. In this way they will be reflecting the newness of the age to come in the present and rejecting their former inclinations which belong to the very 'old self' that was crucified together with Christ. The Christian can live a

²²⁵ Notice the commands Paul directs towards the Roman Christians in Romans 6:12 and 13 and their focus on lifestyle. Paul gives the command, 'don't let sin reign (Μὴ βασιλεύτω) in your mortal body'. Then he adds, 'don't present (μὴδὲ παριστάνετε) your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. Both commands demonstrate that 'reckoning' is not enough; the Christ-follower must act in harmony with what is 'reckoned' to be true. They must add obedience to their acknowledgement of the truth.

transformed life by living in light of their death to sin and their union with the resurrected Christ. This is living in newness of life.

We will conclude this section by briefly considering two more passages:

6.4 2 Corinthians 7:1

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1²²⁶ Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers regarding matters of purity and more specifically, their relationship with the unbelieving world. 2 Corinthians 7:1 is the conclusion of this section where Paul gives a concrete application (οὖν) to the community of believers in light of ‘these promises which we have’. Paul’s argument in the section begins with a strong prohibition to avoid the contaminating influence of unbelievers (ἀπίστοις, 2 Cor 6:14) followed by an explanation of why this must be so. This explanation comes in the form of five rhetorical questions all beginning with the interrogative pronoun τίς and expecting a strong negative answer (2 Cor 6:14-16). Each rhetorical question includes a direct contrast between that which characterizes believers and that which characterizes unbelievers. The fifth rhetorical question gives rise to a summarizing explanation reinforcing why the Corinthians should not be ‘unequally yoked to unbelievers’, namely because they are the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16). This summarizing explanation is then supported by a catena of quotations from the Old Testament which fall into three groups, each including an introductory formula indicating that it is God who is speaking.²²⁷ The first (primarily from Lv 26:12 and Ezk 37:27) and third quotations (primarily from 2 Sa 7:14) graphically illustrate God’s promise to be intimately present with his people and to maintain a close family relationship with them. The second quotation (primarily from Is 52:11) serves as an exhortatory implication to the people to separate themselves from that which is unclean. Paul concludes in 2 Corinthians 7:1 by drawing a practical implication for the Corinthians. It is interesting to note, as well, that Paul begins and ends with exhortation.

²²⁶ For arguments supporting the originality of this section see Harris (2005:14-25).

²²⁷ The first group of texts is introduced by καθὼς εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς. In the second group of texts which Paul introduces with the inferential conjunction διὸ, Paul breaks up the quote into two parts interrupted by the introductory formula λέγει κύριος. The third group concludes with an introductory formula λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ, taken from 2 Samuel 7:8.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14 he exhorts the Corinthian believers to avoid inappropriate unions with unbelievers. This same prohibition is repeated in 2 Corinthians 6:17a, 'come out from their midst and be separate'. Paul ends with the exhortation to 'cleanse ourselves', a command that he repeats in 2 Corinthians 6:17b, 'do not touch the unclean thing'. These two injunctions to purity in relationships and in moral conduct frame Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

It is necessary to examine Paul's argument a little more closely. Paul's primary concern in this passage is the purity of the Corinthian believers. He thus begins with a strong command for them to avoid 'being yoked together with unbelievers' (Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις). The verb ἑτεροζυγέω does not appear anywhere else in ancient literature, though the adjective ἑτερόζυγος appears in Leviticus 19:19. The idea in the Leviticus passage is that the farmer should not allow crossbreeding between two different kinds of animals. Deuteronomy 22:10 prohibits plowing a field with a donkey and a calf under the same yoke. The focus is on the total incompatibility of two things which are distinct, unlike one another. These things should not be joined nor put to work together. Paul applies this prohibition to relationships with unbelievers.²²⁸ He does not specify the kind of relationship or the nature of the task for which they are joined.²²⁹ His point is to show that a believer in Christ should not be intimately joined together with one who does not believe. Obviously Paul does not mean that a believer and an

²²⁸ When Paul refers to 'the unbelievers' does he have in mind the generic category of those who do not believe in Christ (Thrall 1994:472; Furnish 1984:371-372; Belleville 1996:179), a specific group of unbelievers who attended worship in the Greco-Roman and mystery cults of Corinth (Barnett 1997:342), or is he referring specifically to his opponents who though they professed Christ were, in Paul's eyes, phonies (Seifrid 2014:290)? Paul's use of the term ἀπίστος (1 Cor 6:6; 7:12, 13, 14, 15; 10:27; 14:22, 23, 24; 2 Cor 4:4; 6:14, 15) strongly supports the idea of 'one who does not believe the gospel' and thus is not a follower of Christ.

²²⁹ Various suggestions have been offered. For example, Thrall (1994:473) comments, 'Doubtless he does have in view the contraction of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, but he might be thinking also of business partnerships In addition, the prohibition would include participation in cultic meals in pagan temples. It is unspecific, and therefore widely comprehensive'. Matera (2003:162) states, 'he is saying that although they may associate with unbelievers in the ordinary affairs of life, they must maintain boundaries between themselves and unbelievers in those things that lead to idolatry'. Seifrid (2014:292), on the other hand, writes, 'the warning against being unequally yoked is thus an admonition against common labor with unbelievers'. Barnett (1997:345) asserts, 'Paul does not ban social interaction with "unbelievers"... nor does Paul discourage believers from remaining in the bonds of marriage with unbelievers... The Corinthian believers must not be joined with Corinthian "unbelievers" in the cultic life of the city'.

unbeliever can have no contact at all. This would totally contradict much of what Paul himself demonstrated through his mission to the gentiles (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-13; 9:19-23). Rather Paul's point is that believers should not form intimate unions with unbelievers since the two 'are going in different directions' and thus are incompatible in this sense.

To support his strong prohibition, Paul launches five sets of opposites which were clearly incompatible: righteousness and lawlessness; light and darkness; Christ and Belial; believer and unbeliever; the temple of God and idols. The Corinthians upon reading Paul's rhetorical questions would be forced to respond with resounding agreement that these things cannot be 'yoked together'. They are completely opposite and thus totally incompatible. Paul then brings his argument home to the Corinthians by explaining that 'we are the temple of the living God'. There is no other conclusion that can be reached, the Corinthians, as the temple of God, should not form close unions with unbelievers. They must live distinct lives. Paul has moved from specific prohibition to general examples to a very direct and personal application, we Christians are God's temple and thus can have nothing to do with idolatry or uncleanness or anything which is incompatible with who we really are. We therefore cannot yoke ourselves to unbelievers, says Paul.

But Paul's *tour de force* is not yet complete. He now brings in scriptural support to demonstrate that as God's temple Christians have the assurance of God's presence and God's favor (2 Cor 6:16), 'I will dwell among them and I will walk about in their midst and I will be their God and they will be my people.' Knowing that God promises his intimate abiding presence to his people, however, brings responsibilities (2 Cor 6:17), 'therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate'. This is a repetition of his earlier prohibition in 2 Corinthians 6:14. But then Paul moves in a different direction as he adds, 'do not touch the unclean thing and I will receive you.' This points downward to 2 Corinthians 7:1 and Paul's concluding exhortation to pursue holiness. Paul then ends this scriptural support by reassuring them once again that God 'will be a father to you and you will be my sons and daughters' (2 Cor 6:18).

What Paul has done in this text is command the Corinthians and all Christ-followers to avoid forming close partnerships for life, ministry, or labor with unbelievers. The reason is because of the incompatibility of the two groups. Christians are God's temple, the very 'place' where God walks about and where he dwells. They are his family and his treasured people. Thus they must live accordingly, separating themselves from all that is unclean and defiles. By doing this they will enjoy the promise of God's presence and favor.

Paul finally brings his argument to a conclusion with a very practical application in 2 Corinthians 7:1, 'therefore, because we have these promises, beloved ones, we must cleanse ourselves from all contamination of flesh and spirit, perfecting (ἐπιτελοῦντες) holiness in the fear of God'. Paul links his application to the fact that Christians enjoy 'these promises'. The promises to which Paul refers are those described in the scriptural quotations. Because God has promised to dwell among the Christian community as his temple and to be their God and father, Christians must respond with a specific lifestyle. More specifically they must cleanse themselves (καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς) from all defilement of flesh and spirit. Paul uses the language of ritual purity, but does so in a metaphorical way to refer to personal moral decisions in the life of the believer.²³⁰ The Christian as God's temple, the 'place' where God moves about, must not be contaminated (μολυσμός)²³¹ with sinful relationships or sinful practices. Thus they must 'cleanse themselves'. Paul is not suddenly changing his theology to a works righteousness – people as 'self-purifying' – rather as already mentioned, this imperative is based firmly upon the promises of God (ταύτας οὖν ἔχοντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας) and the Christian's unique status as God's temple (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος). To 'cleanse oneself' is therefore a response, in fact the only appropriate response to God's prior gracious work of indwelling and making a person a part of his family. As is so

²³⁰ The concept of 'cleansing' or 'clean' is not a common one in Paul. This is the only verse where he uses the verb καθαρίζω, though notice 1 Corinthians 5:7 where he uses ἑκκαθαίρω. Also, he uses the adjective καθαρὸς in Romans 14:20. The adjective ἀκάθαρτος Paul uses only in 1 Corinthians 7:14 and 2 Corinthians 6:17 and the noun ἀκαθαρσία he uses in Romans 1:24; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; and Galatians 5:19.

²³¹ The noun μολυσμός is a hapax legomenon. It is found three times in the Septuagint (1 Esd 8:80; Jer 23:15; 2 Macc 5:27). It can refer to spiritual contamination caused by intermarrying with pagans, or the idolatry and faithlessness of the prophets, or the violations of the law of God (cf. 2 Macc 6:2).

common in Paul, the indicative propels the imperative. The person who has been cleansed by Christ (1 Cor 1:30) must keep the temple clean. This is Paul's emphasis here, that Christians must separate themselves from anything whatsoever that can contaminate them (ἀπὸ παντός), whether it be something internal or something external (σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος). In other words, this 'all forms of contamination' is purposefully general and includes anything, relationships, actions, thoughts, or anything else, that can pollute a person's 'flesh or spirit'.²³²

Finally, Paul adds ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ. The relationship between the participle ἐπιτελοῦντες and the command to 'cleanse ourselves' has been understood in several ways.²³³ However, most likely Paul's point is that the expected result of 'cleansing ourselves' of all that spiritually pollutes is that we will 'perfect holiness'. That is, that we will bring holiness to its intended goal. When a person's life is contaminated with all kinds of 'polluting' influences, the process of becoming holy is hindered. Thus, in order to facilitate a person's growth towards the goal of holiness it is essential that they labor to rid themselves of everything that defiles. This means avoiding compromising relationships (2 Cor 6:14, 17a). It also means abstaining from practices that can stain a person's 'flesh and spirit' (2 Cor 6:17b; 7:1). But all of this is to be done with 'the fear of God'. That is, it is to be done with reverence toward the Holy God. The one who would reach the goal of the Christian life, true holiness, must reflect a deep respect for and true fear of the one who promises to 'walk in our midst' and to be our father and our God.

²³² Paul's use of σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος here is not proof of a dichotomy between these two terms, nor is Paul speaking in his normal 'theological' sense of the flesh as the inclination towards rebellion and sin and the spirit as a reference to the Holy Spirit. Rather, we agree with Harris (2005:512), 'there is evidence in Paul's letters of a non-pejorative use of σὰρξ where it is synonymous with σῶμα and of a popular, non-theological use of σὰρξ and πνεῦμα where they refer, in a complementary not antithetical way, to the outward and inward aspects of the person. So we propose that σαρκὸς and πνεύματος are objective genitives after μόλυσμοῦ and refer to the whole person viewed physically and spiritually, outwardly and inwardly'.

²³³ Matera (2003:168) believes that it is an adverbial participle expressing means. Harris (2005:513), on the other hand, comments that it is 'preferable to render ἐπιτελοῦντες by "(and) let us complete ... or "(Let us cleanse ourselves ... and) complete," which indicates that this participle is in effect imperatival and expresses an additional exhortation.' However, we agree with Guthrie (2015:360-361) who states that the participle is an adverbial participle of result and thus comments, 'So, as believers cleanse themselves "from every impurity of flesh and spirit", this results in them "making ... holiness complete."

It is precisely here, in the discussion of ‘perfecting holiness’ that the idea of transformation is most clearly seen. Paul uses the verb ἐπιτελέω six times, three times to refer to the completion of the offering for the poor (Rm 15:28; 2 Cor 8:6, 11) and three times to refer to the process of sanctification reaching its intended goal (2 Cor 7:1; Gl 3:3; Phlp 1:6). It is this second meaning that fits best in our current text. Paul’s concern throughout 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 has been that the Corinthians live in purity both inwardly and outwardly. This purity is realized through a refusal to engage in ungodly relationships and a commitment to guard their entire selves, body and spirit, from anything that may defile them. These two sides to the maintenance of purity are aptly summed up by the final participial phrase, ‘perfecting holiness in the fear of God’. This is the goal of the Christian’s ongoing pilgrimage, a process of becoming transformed more and more until holiness is made complete in them. Avoiding improper unions with unbelievers and cleansing oneself continually from every kind of contaminating influence are part of the process of becoming perfect in holiness.

Galatians 3:3 is another important text where Paul uses the term ἐπιτελέω to refer to progress toward the goal of sanctification. This passage is a forceful rebuke of the Galatian Christians. Paul calls them ‘foolish’ – lacking discernment (Logenecker 1990:99) – and ‘bewitched’ – cast under a spell - because they have strayed from the pure gospel as a result of the influence of the Judaizers. It appears that these Judaizers had convinced the Galatian Christians that even though they had begun their Christian lives by believing the Gospel, in order for them to push on to maturity in the faith they would need to devote themselves to obeying the Mosaic law. But this was utter foolishness according to Paul! Paul unmasks the Galatian Christians’ imprudence for believing such nonsense by reminding them of three vital experiences that they had enjoyed each of which should have been enough to ward off the bewitching lies of the false teachers.

The first experience was that these people had witnessed the crucified Christ. Paul comments, ‘It was before your eyes (οἷς κατ’ ὀφθαλμοῦς) that Jesus Christ was publicly

portrayed as crucified’ (προεγράφη ἑσταυρωμένος, Gl. 3:1). They had already experienced a powerful and graphic placarding of the Crucified Savior through Paul’s gospel preaching and thus had ‘seen’ Christ given over as the sacrificial offering that freed them from this present age and yet they are now blind to its implications, wanting instead to return to the same fruitless bondage as before! The second vital experience that these Galatian Christians had enjoyed was their own conversion. Paul writes in Galatians 3:2, ‘Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith’? Paul goes on to remind the Galatians that they received the Holy Spirit by their response of faith to the gospel message, not by performing works of the law.

The third experience that Paul calls to mind is a present one (notice the present tense participles ἐπιχορηγῶν, ἐνεργῶν), something that is going on in their midst (ἐν ὑμῖν), they are ones who are experiencing the powerful works of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith” (Gl. 3:5). This is a repetition of the same charge Paul made in Galatians 3:2, though this time rather than a past event it refers to their present reality. God has been at work in the churches by His Spirit. It is evident that visible manifestations of God working through His Spirit among the Galatians were part of their Christian experience. But on what basis? God’s working among them was once again attributed to faith and definitely not works of the law. The Galatians had believed the gospel message and God gave them His Spirit. They continue believing the message and God’s miraculous working continues among them.

And so, the Galatian Christians are showing themselves to be foolish because in spite of these three vital experiences – their having ‘seen’ Christ crucified placarded graphically through the preaching of the gospel, their own conversion experience, and the present work of God by His Spirit in their midst – they have fallen prey to the Judaizer’s distorted message which influenced them to rely on adherence to the Mosaic law instead of faith in Christ and the working of God’s Spirit. But the height of the Galatian’s folly is captured by Paul’s torrid rebuke in Galatians 3:3 ‘Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh'? The contrast that Paul draws is between their conversion (ἐναρξάμενοι) and their process of growth towards the goal of maturation (ἐπιτελεισθε). There has been a change in the Galatians' thinking. They began their Christian life 'by the Spirit'. That is, the Holy Spirit was the agent who brought about their conversion experience and incorporated them into Christ. However, now (νῦν) the Galatian Christians, no doubt because of the malignant influence of the Judaizers, are charting a new course. Instead of continuing 'by the Spirit' they are seeking to progress towards the goal 'by the flesh'. The instrument involved in the beginning work (πνεύματι – a dative of means) and the one they are now convinced will propel them on towards the completion (σαρκὶ – a dative of means) are stark opposites. It is important to note that σὰρξ in Galatians 3:3 does not have the same meaning as in Galatians 2:20. Here σὰρξ refers not to our 'mortal bodies' but to our human efforts devoid of the Spirit. No doubt Paul is using a play on words. On one level to try to reach the goal by the σὰρξ meant to pursue maturity by being circumcised. And yet it would certainly involve more than this one act. It would also involve the larger commitment to do all the works required by the law. And so it would appear that the heart of Paul's contrast is pursuing the goal of the gospel life either by ἔργα νόμου (here described as σαρκὶ) or by ἀκοῆς πίστεως (here described as πνεύματι). Stated more concretely, Paul's deep concern is that, even though the Galatian Christians learned and understood that the Christian life begins by a work of the Holy Spirit received by faith – an experience that was obviously real to them as Paul confirms here – somewhere along the line they have been duped into believing that one can continue the Christian life and ultimately reach the goal of the Christian life, only by trusting in one's own obedience to the law. They have come to believe that 'Jewishness' is essential for godliness, that one must submit to the 'works of the law' in order to grow up in Christ! This tragic misstep has caused deep concern for Paul because he knows that this new direction rather than promoting progress towards maturity is in fact evidence of a dangerous lack of wisdom that will certainly derail any real advancement towards the goal. What the Galatians must understand is that the goal of the Christian pilgrimage is attained in the very same way as the initiation of the Christian life, as a work of the Holy Spirit received through faith in Christ.

In other words, the means by which ongoing transformation towards the goal of Christlikeness occurs is the same as the means by which one begins the Christian life (ἐναρξάμενοι). It is from beginning to end a work of the Spirit of God, a work experienced by faith. Or viewed from the opposite perspective, a person does not begin the Christian life by successful performance of ‘law-works’ nor does she experience the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit through ‘law-works’. Simply put, progress towards the goal of the Christian life – conformity to the image of Christ – is never attained through raw human effort (σάρξ or ἔργων νόμου), no matter how diligent. One cannot and will not reach Christian maturity through the works of the law, whether through rituals like circumcision or baptism or through adherence to specific rules or regulations like religious feasts or even acts of self-denial.

Now perhaps it appears that these two texts (Gal 3:3 and 2 Cor 7:1) are in competition with each other. On the one hand, 2 Corinthians 7:1 encourages Christians to ‘cleanse themselves’ and the result will be ‘perfecting holiness’. However, in Galatians 3:3 Paul is adamant that all spiritual progress towards the goal of the Christian pilgrimage is realized by the Spirit through faith and is in no way a result of the σάρξ. But there are at least three reasons why these two passages, far from conflicting with one another, are necessarily complementary. First, the context to which they each are speaking is very different. In Galatians Paul is combating the deceiving influence of the Judaizers who were ‘troubling’ (ταράσσω) the Christian communities there and had ‘distorted’ (μεταστρέψαι) the gospel by demanding that the believers be circumcised and thereby bring their faith to perfection (ἐπιτελείσθε) ‘by means of the flesh’ (σαρκί). On the other hand, in Corinth Paul’s concern was the active daily purity of the disciples who seem to have been forming unholy relationships and thereby polluting their ‘flesh and spirit’. The different emphasis in the two passages is partially reflected by the differing contexts and thus differing needs and problems to be addressed. Second, Paul’s view of sanctification is ‘two-sided’, involving both a sovereign work of God and the participation of the person. It may be that Paul emphasizes one side or the other in a particular context, but the work of ongoing transformation is always wrought by God who is the

active power producing change, but he performs this work through the efforts of the believer. This union of the two ‘forces’ is most clearly seen in Philippians 2:12-13, ‘work out your own salvation ... for it is God who works in you’. The believer must obey, must work, and yet this work is made possible because of God’s prior and ongoing work in the life of the believer. So then, transformation can never be experienced solely by the raw effort of a person devoid of the Spirit of God. It is God who works as the primary agent in transformation. And yet God generally does not perform this work alone, but rather brings it about through the active participation of the Christian who must ‘cleanse himself’ and must ‘work out his salvation’. Third, the indicative/imperative framework so common in Paul must never be lost from sight. The Corinthians are both ‘those sanctified in Christ Jesus’ (ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 1 Cor 1:2), those for whom Christ has become their ‘righteousness, and sanctification and redemption’ (1 Cor 1:30) and those who must ‘purify themselves’. That is, the redemptive work of Christ has already brought about a change of status. Now the Christ-follower must live consistent with this new status and make his standing visible in his daily life. Both Galatians 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 7:1 are valid; they represent the indicative and the imperative, two sides of the same process.

6.5 Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:21

Before bringing this chapter to a close, we must at least mention that Paul also uses the concept of transformation to refer to the ultimate change that will occur in all Christ-followers whereby they will be finally and fully conformed to the image of Christ. This eschatological transformation represents the final goal of our salvation and occurs through the future resurrection. Thus Paul asserts in Romans 8:29, ‘those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed (σύμμορφος) to the image of his Son’. God has preordained the goal of the Christian’s faith, namely that they will one day be shaped into the image of Christ. Humankind was originally created in God’s image, but this image was distorted through sin. However, when a person is united to Christ through faith a new process of transformation begins whereby the warped image is progressively being re-formed until it ultimately takes on its God-ordained shape, a truly

Christo-form shape. That is, until it is fully conformed to the image of Christ. This goal is not reached during this life, but rather at the final resurrection.

Paul speaks in a similar tone in Philippians 3:21 though his emphasis there is 'bodily'. He declares that Christ 'will transform (μετασχηματίζω) our lowly body to be conformed to (σύμμορφος) his glorious body'. The image-shaping that Paul refers to here is primarily 'somatic'. Christ will produce a radical reformulation of our body so that it will no longer be characterized by humility (futility, sin, weakness, earthiness), but rather will take the form of Christ's glorious resurrected body. We will thus be prepared for eternity. This is further explained in 1 Corinthians 15:49, 'Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust (εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ), we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven' (τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου). This change (ἀλλάσσω, 1 Cor 15:51-52) is total transformation of the nature of our bodies. They will no longer bear the image of the first Adam; rather they will be conformed to the image of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. This final transformation will be a result of resurrection together with Christ.

6.6 CONCLUSION

God is at work in the life of the Christ-follower in the present time re-shaping her inner self, renewing it so that it will progressively reflect the image of Christ more closely. At the same time, the person who is being thus changed has already been joined to Christ in his death and resurrection making it possible for this person to 'walk in newness of life'. Though the Christ-follower lives in the present fallen world, their actions, attitudes, and perspectives can and should reflect the 'shape' of the new age. They should live lives in the 'now time' drenched in the ways of Christ's future kingdom since they have died and risen together with Christ and are being sculpted to be more like him. Finally, this ongoing transformation will reach its glorious goal of full conformity to Christ at the consummation of the ages when the Christ-follower is resurrected and Christ transforms his body so that it takes on a whole new nature, that of Christ's glorious resurrection body. In this way the Christ-disciple will be shaped like Christ as her inner person becomes Christiform and her body becomes like his glorious resurrection body.

Chapter 7

Was Paul among the Contemplatives?

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Was Paul among the contemplatives? Before one can answer such an intriguing question, there is a more fundamental question that must be asked, what is the Contemplative Tradition? Richard Foster (1998) examines what he believes to be the six major 'streams' of Christian tradition that have flowed throughout history. One of these 'streams' is what Foster refers to as the 'Contemplative Tradition'. But what exactly does Foster mean by Contemplative Tradition? He quips, 'Put simply, the contemplative life is the steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us' (Foster 1998:49). He subtitles the Contemplative life, 'a prayer-filled life' (Foster 1998:48), and lists as its key characteristics, love, peace, delight, emptiness, fire, wisdom, and transformation (Foster 1998:49-51). When Foster thinks about the Contemplative Tradition's greatest strengths he finds four:

The first and most fundamental contribution of the Contemplative Tradition is that it constantly fans the flames of our "first love" ... Second, the Contemplative Tradition forces us beyond merely a cerebral religion ... The stress upon the centrality of prayer is a third contribution ... Contemplatives do not think of prayer as a good thing, or an important thing, but as the *essential* thing, the *primary* thing ... Fourth, more than other approaches to faith the Contemplative Stream emphasizes the solitariness of our life with God.

(Foster 1998:51-52)

And yet, after reading Foster's discussion of the Contemplative Tradition it would seem that that which most fundamentally characterizes it is a deep devotion to the practice of the spiritual disciplines. This is evidenced by Foster's two shining examples of the Contemplative Tradition, one ancient, one modern. The ancient adherent is the desert monk, Antony, who escaped into the Egyptian desert for twenty years in the pursuit of God and to do war with the devil. Foster (1998:28-29) writes,

Throughout this process of desert temptation the role of spiritual discipline was prominent. In fact, the very purpose of going into the desert was for training in spiritual discipline. This life involved solitude and fasting for the sake of intense, internal focus; meditation and prayer for the sake of deepening spiritual communion; Scripture study and reflection for the sake of the transformation of the mind; and manual labor and exorcism for the sake of doing the works of the Father. Now, the purpose of these Disciplines of the Spiritual Life was to

train the body and the soul in righteousness. This, in turn, produced established men and women who could stand firm in the time of trial.

These same commitments were evident in the other desert fathers (and mothers) and carried through to others who exemplified the Contemplative Tradition throughout history. For example, Foster gives the life of Frank Laubach as a contemporary example of the Contemplative Tradition. What distinguished Laubach was his deep devotional life and specifically his life of prayer. Laubach himself commented, 'if there is any contribution that I have to make to the world that will live, surely it must be my experience of God on Signal Hill' (Foster 1998:44). Laubach was concerned because he, like most people, struggled to concentrate his thoughts on God for any extended amount of time. He wrote, 'Less than ten minutes a week given to thinking about Christ by one-sixth of the people is not saving our country or our world; for selfishness, greed, and hate are getting a thousand times that much thought' (Laubach 1953, *The Game with Minutes*).²³⁴ So Laubach developed 'The Game with Minutes', a devotional exercise whereby he sought 'to try how many minutes of the hour you can remember God at least ONCE each minute; that is today, bring God to mind at least one second out of every sixty' (Laubach 1953). This exercise of 'practicing the presence of God' was typical of Laubach's relationship with God and his commitment to spiritual disciplines. He was, according to Foster, a modern example of a contemplative.

This is the Contemplative Tradition. It is the stream of Christians throughout history deeply rooted in the practice of the spiritual disciplines, especially the disciplines of solitude and prayer. This 'stream' flourished in the desert fathers of the fourth century and was maintained in the practices of the Catholic mystics during the Middle Ages. This same Contemplative Tradition has experienced a revival in the twentieth century through the writings of Catholic mystics such as Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington, and Brennan Manning, among others. But now into the twenty-first century the Contemplative Tradition has moved well past the borders of Catholic mysticism

²³⁴ The copy of Laubach's *The Game with Minutes* was found at http://hockleys.org/wp-content/uploads/Game_with_Minutes.pdf, viewed on December 2015.

and is proving very influential in the Evangelical Church.²³⁵ Authors like Richard Foster and Dallas Willard have written extensively about the spiritual disciplines and their essential role for spiritual transformation. It is these authors who claim unequivocally that Paul was among the contemplatives!²³⁶

Our goal in this chapter is to analyze such a claim. Was Paul a mystic? Would he classify himself as a contemplative? Did he see the spiritual disciplines as an essential and necessary part of the process of transformation? It is to these questions that we must now turn. But before we can venture into this territory, we need to clarify the borders of our analysis. It is almost impossible and thus quite unfair to formulate rigid categories which catalogue contemporary 'contemplatives'. There is no 'society of contemplatives' with clearly defined characteristics distinguishing to which subgroup each might belong. However, some kind of grouping is necessary so that we can narrow our focus in this study. We have therefore chosen to examine those authors who identify in some way with the Contemplative Tradition, but who would place themselves in the 'evangelical camp'. Thus we have chosen not to include Catholic contemplatives such as Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton or Brennan Manning. In addition we have chosen to adopt the categories suggested by Bruce Demarest (1999:75-79). He helpfully divides the representative voices of 'Christian spirituality' into 'three categories: progressive, moderate, and conservative'. Though perhaps subjective, these categories provide a way to narrow the field and make evaluation of central characteristics more manageable. Our focus will be on those whom Demarest calls 'moderate'. And even more specifically, our analysis will focus on two of the more prolific authors within this

²³⁵ Notice the comment by Ursula King (2004:109), 'Christian mystical experience is by no means a thing of the past ... Many contemporary mystics exist, both inside and outside the churches. Modern mystics are found among Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians around the world. In fact, there exists a greater number and variety of mystics than ever before, no longer exclusively tied to the monastic and ascetic traditions of the past'.

²³⁶ This is clear from comments such as 'it is clear that ascetic practices were seriously engaged in by Jesus as well as by St. Paul. Both were upon occasion intensely involved, for long periods of time, with solitude, fasting, prayer, poverty and sacrificial service, and not because those conditions were unavoidable. It would seem, then, that those who would follow Christ, and follow Paul as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1), must find in those practices an important part of what they should undertake as His disciples' (Willard 1985).

group of moderates from the Contemplative Tradition, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard.²³⁷

Our goal is not an exhaustive analysis of the tradition, or of its chief adherents. Rather our aims are much more modest, to answer the question, was Paul among the contemplatives? Even more concretely we want to answer the question, how does this Contemplative Tradition compare and contrast with Paul's view of transformation as already examined thus far in this study? What are some points of agreement and what are major points of disagreement? Even more to the point we will seek to contrast Paul's view of the means by which transformation takes place with that espoused by the modern Contemplative Tradition, especially Foster and Willard. We have chosen Foster and Willard because of their profound influence in the Evangelical Church. Through their numerous publications, prolific teaching and conference ministries, and the organizations that they formed the message of the key role of the spiritual disciplines for transformation has been dispersed with amazing effectiveness.

7.2 LINES OF AGREEMENT

The first matter to be considered is what are the lines of agreement between contemplative writers like Foster and Willard and the theology of Paul with regards to the concept of transformation? There are several lines of agreement. First, both the modern contemplatives and Paul recognize that genuine transformation is always a work of God and that humankind's efforts *alone* will never be capable of producing real change. For example, we read,

The instrumentalities of Christian spiritual formation therefore involve much more than human effort and actions under our control. Well-informed human effort certainly is

²³⁷ Regarding Foster, Demarest (1999:76) writes, 'Foster arguably has done more than any other contemporary evangelical to unfold the treasures of Christian spirituality for the church'. It is interesting to note, however, that Foster himself gives much credit to Willard for his development in the Contemplative Tradition. He writes, 'It was through the friendship and teaching of Dallas Willard that I first saw the meaning and necessity of the Spiritual Disciplines. His life is the embodiment of the principles of this book' (Foster 1978:vi). Later Foster adds, 'Those teachings gave me the *Weltanschauung*, the worldview, upon which I could synthesize all my academic and biblical training' (Foster 1978:xiv). The significant influence that both Foster and Willard have had on the Evangelical Church, especially in the area of spiritual formation, is the primary reason why we have chosen to interact with their writings.

indispensable, for spiritual formation is no passive process. But Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment. It is, finally, a gift of grace.

(Willard 2002:23)

Thus Willard is careful to affirm God's initiative in the process of transformation. Spiritual formation is a work of grace, not something humans achieve merely by grit and sweat.

Foster is in agreement,

When we despair of gaining inner transformation through human powers of will and determination, we are open to a wonderful new realization: inner righteousness is a gift from God to be graciously received. The needed change within us is God's work, not ours. The demand is for an inside job, and only God can work from the inside. We cannot attain or earn this righteousness of the kingdom of God; it is a grace that is given.²³⁸

(Foster 1978:5)

Foster insists that all transformation is a result of 'indirection'. He explains,

We cannot by direct effort make ourselves into the kind of people who can live fully alive to God. Only God can accomplish this in us. Only God can incline our heart toward him. Only God can reprogram the deeply ingrained habit patterns of sin that constantly predispose us toward evil and transform them into even more deeply ingrained patterns of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

(Foster 1978:5)

Indirection, insists Foster, is the key to understanding how God transforms us. He alleges,

Indirection affirms that spiritual formation does not occur by direct human effort, but through a relational process whereby we receive from God the power or ability to do what we cannot do by our own effort. We do not produce the outcome. That is God's business.

(Foster 2008:155)

Paul would give wholehearted applause to this emphasis that God is the one who produces transformation in the Christ-follower. He unashamedly insists that all transformation is a result of God's active working in the life of a person. For example, each of the key passages already examined in Chapters two through five of this study that contain a word connoting transformation ($\mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{o}\omega$ in Gl 4:19, $\sigma\upsilon\mu\mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ in Phlp 3:10, $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{o}\omega$ in 2 Cor 3:18 and Rm 12:2) use the passive voice, almost certainly reflecting the 'divine passive'. It is God who is at work conforming and transforming.

²³⁸The *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* agrees when it states, 'Willpower and discipline alone can never fix your soul. Striving, pushing, trying harder will not recover your life. Unforced rhythms of grace depend on something more than self-mastery and self-effort' (Calhoun 2005:16).

Transformation is not in the first place, a human achievement; it is a divine operation (Gal 3:1-5). A person's efforts are powerless without the working of the Spirit of God in their life. This truth is even more explicitly asserted in passages like 2 Corinthians 3:18 where Paul announces that 'all of us Christ-followers enjoy free access to God's presence and therefore as we gaze at the glory of God we are being changed into the very image we behold, a change from the present stage of glory to the eternal stage we will one day enjoy. This work of transformation is wrought by the same "Lord" that transformed Moses' face, the Spirit of God'. Simply stated, the Spirit is the agent of the believer's transformation. Philippians 1:6 is just as clear, 'God who began the good work²³⁹ in you will bring it to its intended goal when Jesus appears again'. Once again, transformation is God's work. Paul is emphatic about this conviction when he asks the rhetorical question in Galatians 3:3, 'you began your Christian life by the Spirit and now are you trying to reach your goal through your own efforts (νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε)? He calls such a confidence in 'the flesh' ignorance because the Galatians should recognize that the agent who brings about ongoing transformation is the same agent who enables them to begin their Christian journey; it is the Spirit of God. And so Paul is abundantly clear that it is the Holy Spirit who is the author of any change that takes place in the Christ-follower's life. If anyone is to make progress towards the goal of Christ-likeness it must be the result of the Spirit's work in them. On this point, Paul and the contemplatives are in agreement.

Second, both Paul and the adherents of the modern Contemplative Tradition believe that there is a divine human cooperation in the process of transformation. That is, though they clearly affirm a divine work as the necessary power to bring about transformation, God does not act alone. There is a synergistic working that brings about conformity to Christ. God is the power behind all transformation, but He uses means to accomplish this change. The modern contemplatives are quick to emphasize this point. In fact, this may be Dallas Willard's most emphatic contribution. He writes,

True character transformation begins, we are taught to believe, in the pure grace of God and is continually assisted by it. Very well. But action is also indispensable in making the

²³⁹ As explained in chapter 3, the 'good work' that God began and will complete is a reference to the all-encompassing work of God in the life of the believer. It is his work of transformation.

Christian truly a different kind of person ... Failure to act in certain definite ways will guarantee that this transformation does not come to pass.

(Willard 1988:20)

God does not work alone. Human effort is indispensable and no transformation will occur without human acting. Thus we read,

While the initiative in the revival and reformation of the soul originally comes from what lies beyond us, we are never *merely* passive at *any* point in the process. This is clear from the biblical *imperatives* to repent and to believe, and -- for the person with new life already in them -- to put off the old person and put on the new, to work out the salvation that is given to us, etc. etc. It is certainly true, as Jesus said to his friends, "without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). But it is equally true for them that "If you do nothing it will be without me." In the process of spiritual reformation under grace, passivity does not exclude activity and activity does not exclude passivity.

(Willard 2006:149-150; emphasis in the original)

Again Willard (1997:348) asserts, 'Reliance upon what the Spirit does to us or in us, as indispensable as it truly is, will not by itself transform character in its depths. The action of the Spirit must be accompanied by our response'. Hence the Christian can never be passive if there is a sincere desire for spiritual formation. God's working alone is not sufficient; the person must join God in working for change. Hence we read,

Spiritual formation is something we human beings can and must undertake – as individuals and in fellowship with other apprentices of Jesus. While it is simultaneously a profound manifestation of God's gracious action through his Word and Spirit, it is also something we are responsible for before God and can set about achieving in a sensible, systematic manner.

(Willard 2002:25)

Foster (2008:13) communicates the same basic commitment. God uses means to accomplish the transforming work of grace in us. If the believer is to know the 'with-God kind of life' then there must be a mutual working, God and us. Thus he comments,

But such a life does not simply fall into our hands. Frankly, it is no more automatic for us than it was for those luminaries who walk across the pages of our Bible. There is a God-ordained means to becoming the kind of persons and the kind of communities that can fully and joyfully enter into such abundant living. And these "means" involve us in a process of intentionally "training ... in godliness.

(Foster 2008:13)

Paul is in fundamental agreement with this point. Though, as we have already witnessed, Paul strongly asserts God's sovereign working in the transformation of Christians, yet as we read Paul's letters they are filled with exhortations which seek to

motivate the Christian community to ‘work out their salvation’ (Phlp 2:12). If transformation were only a divine work and the human subject were simply to remain passive or inactive then Paul would have no reason to command the believers to engage in the process of change. And yet we find Paul issuing concrete commands which make the Christian responsible for her progress in the faith. Thus in 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul gives the injunction, ‘let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates us inwardly or outwardly’. Somehow the believer who is already ‘clean’ must cleanse himself, just as the person who is ‘saved’ must work out her salvation. The person who is already dead to sin must not let sin reign in them (Rm 6:12) nor should they present their bodies to serve sin (Rm 6:13), rather they must present their bodies for righteousness (Rm 6:19). All of these commands from the pen of the apostle demonstrate that the Christian is an active participant in the transformation process. Paul’s view does not allow for personal passivity. For Paul transformation is something in which the believer must actively contribute. In this matter he is in agreement with Willard and Foster.

Third, both Paul and the contemplatives agree that transformation is a process, long, slow, and often arduous. For Paul transformation has a starting point and is headed towards a definite goal. It begins with an instantaneous miraculous work that ushers in a long arduous process of change which ultimately concludes with another instantaneous divinely wrought work of change. The initial work refers to the Spirit’s regenerating transformation that brings the dead sinner to new life and makes progress towards the goal of Christ-likeness possible. Once this work has been realized in the life of a person, it inaugurates a life-long process that will continue until at the future resurrection the Christian is fully conformed to Christ’s image.

In Galatians 4:19 Paul describes this ongoing work of transformation as being like childbirth. The Galatians are pregnant and the embryo within is Christ. The pains of childbirth²⁴⁰ continue until Christ is formed in them. It is a long laborious process of

²⁴⁰Interestingly, Paul speaks of his suffering the travail of this pregnancy even though it is the Galatians who are ‘with child’. He says nothing of their pain in this process; only his. This, however, does not negate

maturation. We see the same idea of process in Philippians 3:10. Paul's passionate desire is to know Christ. This knowledge is expressed through experiencing the power of Christ's resurrection and participating in his suffering. As Paul experiences Christ's suffering he is being slowly shaped into the image of Christ's death. This is not an instantaneous change, but rather is a process, a slow, difficult work of re-shaping Paul. Later in the same passage Paul reiterates the fact that he is 'in process'. He acknowledges that 'I have not already attained the goal, nor have I been made perfect, but I keep on pursuing the goal' (Phlp 3:12-13). In 2 Corinthians this same idea of transformation as a process is evidenced by Paul's statements that the change going on is 'from one stage of glory to another' (2 Cor 3:18), and that the inner man is being renewed 'day by day' (2 Cor 4:16). So it is quite clear that Paul understood transformation to be a long process that God began at a point in time, but that continues throughout the Christian's life. This process is arduous and sometimes uncomfortable, but ultimately concludes when the final goal is reached.

This same emphasis upon transformation as a long slow process of change can be seen in the writings of contemplatives like Foster and Willard. The latter comments,

There is no "quick fix" for the human condition. The approach to wholeness is for humankind a process of great length and difficulty that engages all our own powers to their fullest extent over a long course of experience.

(Willard 1988:70)

In a speech given to Christian philosophers, Willard (1985) stated, 'The body thus understood is not transformed by religious conversion or ritual alone, much less by mere intellectual enlightenment, but by intense, large-scale and long-run experience, and especially by ascetic practices or spiritual "disciplines".'

This same conviction of spiritual transformation as a long process is evident throughout the Contemplative Tradition. Hence we can read,

Spiritual growth is, in large measure, patterned on the nature of physical growth. We do not expect to put an infant into its crib at night and in the morning find a child, an adolescent or

the clear evidence that the transformation whereby Christ was slowly being 'formed' in them was a process.

yet an adult. We expect that infant to grow into maturity according to the processes that God has ordained for physical growth to wholeness. The same thing is true of our spiritual life. (Mulholland 1993:21)

It is quite clear then that both Paul and the contemplatives are in agreement that transformation is not an instantaneous event, but rather is a process which is long, slow, and often difficult. The believer will be in this process throughout life and will experience the ebbs and flows, the ups and downs that come with this spiritual battle.

Finally, both the contemplatives like Foster and Willard and Paul agree that the goal of this transformation is to be conformed to the image of Christ. But what does this mean in practical terms? One author states,

Spiritual formation, for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself ... Its goal is an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ. (Willard 2002:22)

Or stated differently, 'the ideal of the spiritual life in the Christian understanding is one where all of the essential parts of the human self are effectively organized around God, as they are restored and sustained by him' (Willard 2002:31). Foster (2009:12) concludes that 'Christian spiritual formation is a God-ordained process that shapes our entire person so that we take on the character and being of Christ himself'. So then, the goal of spiritual formation is genuine Christlikeness. But this conformity to Christ does not consist in an 'external manifestation of "Christlikeness", like "peculiar modes of dress, behavior, and organization", but rather refers to "genuine transformation of who I am through and through – Christ's man or woman, living richly in his kingdom" (Willard 2002:23).²⁴¹

Paul describes the goal of transformation in a similar way. Perhaps Paul's view of the goal towards which transformation is directed can best be described by the image of a

²⁴¹ Willard (2002:41-42) reiterates, 'spiritual transformation only happens as each essential dimension of the human being is transformed to Christlikeness under the direction of a regenerate will interacting with constant overtures of grace from God. Such transformation is not the result of mere human effort and cannot be accomplished by putting pressure on the will (heart, spirit) alone'.

sculpture. Though the sculptor carefully shaped and molded the clay to form a beautiful representation of himself, the passing of time, inclement weather, and the work of graffiti-painting and art-destroying delinquents had so distorted the form of this once glorious statue that it was now nearly unrecognizable. It was nothing more than a gross caricature of what it was intended to be. It was so badly misshapen that it gave little resemblance of its original form. It needed to be completely reshaped so that it could once again conform to the image of the sculptor who originally formed it.

In the same way, humankind suffers from a gross misshapeness. Though created to image God, they have been malformed by malignant forces so that now they are 'conformed' to the wrong pattern, to this present age (Rm 12:2). Or to use another Pauline image, they are 'unformed' like an embryo in a mother's womb (Gl 4:19). This gross distortion of their 'shape' affects the totality of their being, their inner self as well as their outer. They are twisted in every possible way and thus completely unable to reflect their sculptor. What is needed is a radical reshaping.

Paul refers to this reshaping work in two different, but complementary ways. First, he speaks of reshaping as Christ being formed in me (Gl 4:19). Paul uses a graphic but somewhat convoluted metaphor to depict the needed transformation in the lives of the Galatian Christians. They were clearly spiritually deformed due to their naïve acceptance of the Judaizers' false teachings and the erroneous decisions and actions that resulted. Paul's conclusion about their condition was that Christ was improperly or only partially formed in them. That is, Christ as fetus in their 'pregnant womb' was still unformed. He was not yet ready to be delivered and thus they were evidently still in the gestation process. The clear implication is that the Galatians should be much further along in this process than they were. Paul would be in pain until the process was complete and Christ, the child in their spiritual womb, came to full form within them and was delivered as a healthy full-term child.

Thus, to have Christ formed in one is for the person's life to bear fruit that reflects a mature Christ. They are to bear Christiform fruit. Christ's shape is to be the determining

factor in the shape of their lives. And so his character, his will, and his actions are to be reflected through their everyday lives. Their attitudes, relationships, and conduct should all give evidence of the fact that Christ has been fully shaped in them.

Second, Paul speaks of this reshaping as the Christian being conformed to Christ. This is a more natural image whereby the Christian's life once viewed as misshapen and in need of serious reshaping takes on a new form, the form of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul speaks of this as 'a change into the same image', in the context referring to the image of God reflected in the gospel of Christ. In Philippians 3:10 Paul shockingly focuses his desire for conformity to Christ to conformity to his death. Paul's longing was to be shaped by the cross, to have a cruciform life which gave clear evidence that Paul had the same mindset as Christ did as he sacrificed himself on Calvary. Hence Paul's point is that transformation refers to the Christian's sinful and distorted life being sculpted and re-formed until it more clearly resembles Christ, even Christ in his moment of greatest sacrifice.

These are some of the key ways in which it can be demonstrated that Paul stood in basic agreement with the concept of transformation as delineated by modern contemplatives like Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. But are there certain ways in which Paul's view of transformation differs from that of the contemplatives? Yes, and now it is time to address a few of these areas of difference.

7.3 LINES OF DISAGREEMENT

Where do the two groups differ? This study will focus upon three areas of disagreement.

7.3.1 TRANSFORMATION BASED UPON OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE REALITIES

When Paul writes about what undergirds his view of transformation he generally focuses upon certain objective realities that are true for all Christ-followers. On the other hand, the adherents of the Contemplative Tradition tend to focus more on subjective

realities. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the concept of union with Christ, a concept which is central to Pauline theology, but which is only slightly addressed in the writings of contemplatives like Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. For Paul, although union with Christ has definite experiential benefits – the one united with Christ enjoys real communion with the living Christ – yet this union is rooted in objective historical events – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁴² It is these objective historical realities that serve as the basis for Paul’s theology of transformation.

But this emphasis is not often addressed by Willard and Foster and when it is addressed, it almost exclusively focuses on the subjective side of union with Christ. For example, Willard comments,

So our union with God – his presence with us, in which our aloneness is banished and the meaning and full purpose of human existence is realized – consists chiefly in a conversational relationship with God while we are each consistently and deeply engaged as his friend and colaborer in the affairs of the kingdom of the heavens.

(Willard 1999:56)

Thus for Willard, union with Christ is almost exclusively subjective. It refers to our personal relationship with the indwelling Christ who is the remedy to our loneliness.

Later on in the same book he again addresses the topic of union with Christ,

But in the progress of God’s redemptive work communication advances into *communion* and communion into *union*. When the progression is complete we can truly say, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me When communion advances into union,

²⁴² Note the comment by Campbell (2012:327), ‘while the plethora of approaches to the theme of union with Christ abound ... one fact remains constant: in the mind of Paul, union with Christ is inextricably linked to the work of Christ’. Even more clear is the comment by Ridderbos (1975:59), ‘It has come to be understood increasingly, however, that with this “mystical” explanation of “in Christ” and “with Christ” one is on the wrong track. This is evident even from the fact that “being in Christ,” “crucified, dead, raised, seated in heaven with him,” obviously does not have the sense of a communion that becomes reality only in certain sublime moments, but rather of an abiding reality determinative for the whole of the Christian life, to which appeal can be made at all times, in all sorts of connections, and with respect to the whole church without distinction ... Rather than with certain experiences, we have to do here with the church’s “objective” state of salvation’. Dunn (1998:397-398) recognizes that for Paul ‘there is the more objective usage, referring particularly to the redemptive act which has happened “in Christ” or depends on what Christ is yet to do.’ He also recognizes ‘there is a more subjective usage, where Paul speaks regularly of believers as being “in Christ” or “in the Lord.” The point is that Paul’s theology of ‘union with Christ’ does include a subjective sense, but even this subjective sense is rooted in the objective sense of our participation in what Christ has accomplished through his saving death and vindicating resurrection. This objective sense undergirds all that Paul says about the believer’s transformation. The adherents of the Contemplative Tradition tend to emphasize the subjective and only infrequently mention the objective. This is a weakness in their concept of transformation.

however, the sense of “mine” and “thine” may often be absent ... This condition of union is realized in a marriage where the two partners have indeed become one. For this reason marriage can serve as a picture of the relation between Christ and his church, and between the soul and God. It is this union beyond communion that Paul speaks of when he says the redeemed have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) as well as when he exhorts us to have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5).

(Willard 1999:155 emphasis in the original)

Evidently for Willard union with Christ is a part of a process towards which one must strive, but not all achieve. As our personal relationship matures it can reach a level of intimacy that is akin to the marriage relationship, a true union. Those who do not achieve this communion which eventually grows into union cannot truly say the words of Galatians 2:20. But are these words merely experiential? Is Paul asserting that co-crucifixion with Christ and the indwelling of Christ in the Christ-follower are merely subjective experiences and thus the privilege of only those who somehow reach communion and then union? Willard seems to be espousing this. In the same way, Willard holds that a Christian’s possession of the ‘mind of Christ’ is something that is developed over time, the end of a process of deepening communion towards a ‘union with Christ’. Is this Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 2? Clearly it is not. The problem is Willard’s truncated view of union with Christ as something mostly subjective and as the ‘end’ of a process of deepening communion, without the undergirding indicative which is so vital to Pauline theology and which is completely objective.

In Willard’s book *The Spirit of the Disciplines* he attempts to work out concretely how our habits are transformed. Our essential response, he claims, is found in Romans 6:13, ‘neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God’. In order to understand what this means Willard claims that we must understand three stages of personal redemption. The first stage is ‘baptized into Christ. Regarding this stage he explains,

We were baptized *into* Christ and brought to “experiential union” with him. What he experienced *then* we *now* also experience through our *communion* with him. And this also means that we share his death to sin powers that run the world. As they were not what moved *him*, so they are also not what move us. We participate in the new form of life, the one in Jesus and the one so powerful it could overcome physical death. Remember, this is a matter of what we find in our conscious experience. This new form of life provides not only

new powers for our human self, but also, as we grow, a new center of organization and orientation for all of the natural impulses of our bodily self.

(Willard 1988:114 emphasis in the original)

While Willard is correct that Paul is teaching that baptism into Christ results in death to sin and the powers behind sin, he is wrong to assume that Paul is speaking of purely subjective realities. In other words, the question is, is Willard correct that Paul's focus in this text is on our subjective experience? Or is this a statement of something objectively true, regardless of our experience? Is it something that a person can now experience through communion with him, as Willard asserts, and thus, by implication, when a person lacks vital communion with him fails to be true, or is it something that is true regardless of the state of one's communion? This is not to deny a subjective side to the Christ-follower's union with Christ, but rather to observe how Willard seems to neglect the objective side, which for Paul is fundamental to one's identity in Christ and thus is crucial to one's capacity to overcome sin's practical reign in their life. Paul's point is that Christ-followers have in fact been baptized into Christ and this objective historical reality has practical implications – they are dead to sin and thus sin has absolutely no right to rule over them. This is the case whether or not one subjectively feels that it is true. It is even the case whether or not the person is presently enjoying sweet subjective communion with Christ. Her union does not change, though her enjoyment and appropriation of the benefits of this union may be affected.

Willard does not seem to grasp this side of the believer's union with Christ. Thus he asserts about union with God, 'It is less a status than it is a modulated flow of life in which transformative experiences of God come and go, along with a constant undertone of divine presence interwoven with the events of a normal human existence' (Willard 2006a:35). Once again, he sees union with Christ as a subjective experience and makes no mention of the objective side.

This is quite a different perspective than the Pauline concept of union with Christ. For Paul the most important feature of his concept of transformation is its rootedness in the redemptive work of Christ and the believer's union with Christ-crucified, buried, and resurrected. It is precisely here, at the cross and the empty tomb, that the believer finds

the only glimmer of hope for true life-change. The possibility of transformation does not stand upon our subjective experience, but on unchanging objective realities. That is, the hope of real life change does not depend in the first place on the strength or depth of the Christian's commitment, or upon the passion of his individual efforts of personal reformation, nor on the rites and rituals she engages in, no matter how pious they may be. The possibility of transformation finally, does not reside at all with the Christian and what she is doing; rather it rests squarely upon Christ and what he has already accomplished on the sinner's behalf, an accomplishment that then accrues to the Christian's benefit through her union with Christ by faith. Again, the possibility of transformation rests not upon the Christ-follower's subjective experience, but rather on certain objective historical realities – the redemptive work of Christ and the believer's union with Christ in these saving works.

In order to properly understand this vital principle, there are three matters that must be examined. First, it is important to understand the Christ-follower's 'location' as Paul perceives it. Paul views each individual Christ-follower's history as having two distinct 'spheres' of existence. Prior to coming to faith in Christ the person lived 'in the sphere of Adam' (ἐν τῷ Ἀδᾶμ, 1 Cor 15:22). That is, Adam was his representative and thus defined the person's identity. The person was tied to Adam's failure and Adam's fate. Thus Paul explains that in this 'adamic sphere' all died (πάντες ἀποθνήσκουσιν, 1 Cor 15:22) because it was through their father Adam that 'sin entered the world (Rm 5:12) and through sin, death entered and became the reality of every member belonging to this sphere' (Rm 5:12). Sin, in this adamic home, was more than an existential experience, it was a ruler whose autocratic governance resulted in abject slavery to sinful passions leading to a life of rebellion against God and resulting in the unhappy verdict of eternal death. Every person belonging to this 'adamic sphere' was thus living under a death sentence, controlled by sin, and at enmity with God (Rm 5:10). However, something dramatic happened to the sinner when they turned to Christ in faith, they were rescued from 'Adam's realm' and transferred to a new location, a new sphere of existence (cf. Col 1:13). Paul calls this new sphere 'in Christ' (ἐν Χριστῷ) and it is here, in this new location, that the Christian acquires a new identity precisely because their

fate is tied to a new representative, Jesus Christ. No longer are they characterized by sin and death, but by righteousness and new life (Rm 5:18) for in this new 'sphere' – this place of 'union with Christ – sin has been dethroned and Christ rules as Lord. This is the Christ-follower's objective situation based upon her union with Christ; it is not dependent upon her subjective experience.

Paul sees this new reality, this 'in-Christness', as fundamental to the believer's new life.²⁴³ It is here in this new 'sphere' that the Christian acquires a new identity, an identity completely wrapped up in Christ and his accomplishments and resources instead of a 'self-defined' identity based upon the individual's own accomplishments, resources, and subjective experience. It is here that the Christ-follower finds a storehouse of spiritual treasures, redemptive resources that provide everything the believer needs to escape the corruption of this world and to live in freedom in the here and now. These resources include such amazing benefits as redemption (Rm 3:24), eternal life (Rm 6:23), acquittal (Rm 8:1), God's love (Rm 8:39), sanctification (1 Cor 1:2), grace (1 Cor 1:4), new creation (2 Cor 5:17), and innumerable others. This new identity and these unlimited resources mean that transformation is now possible because the believer is united to the victorious Christ and becomes heir to his vast storehouse of resources. Here in this 'new location' under the powerful rule of her new governor, a rule that has overcome both sin and death, the Christ-follower has the capacity to live a new life.

Second, it is essential to grasp, as a part of the Christ-believer's union with Christ, the profound importance of the believer's co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Christ. Thus Paul can exclaim, 'I have been crucified with Christ' (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι, Gl 2:19) and 'our old man was crucified with him' (Rm 6:6). Also, Paul asserts that 'we have been buried with him' (συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ Rm 6:4). And if we have died and been buried with him Paul is confident that we will also share with him in his resurrection (Rm

²⁴³ Dunn (1998:399) is not exaggerating when he writes about the significance of the phrase 'in Christ', 'Paul's perception of his whole life as a Christian, its source, its identity, and its responsibilities, could be summed up in these phrases'.

6:5, 8).²⁴⁴ Paul is making a radical claim in these texts: Christ-followers participate in Christ's redeeming works through their union with him. They die together with him, are buried together with him, and rise together with him. His death becomes their death just as his resurrection becomes their resurrection. These are not pipe dreams or pious platitudes; these are deep objective realities that the believer experiences by faith and must reckon to be true in daily practice (Rm 6:11). The person who is 'in Christ' shares in Christ's redemptive works, having been crucified and resurrected together with Christ. Again, these are objective realities and not mere subjective experiences. There are subjective, 'this-worldly' results, for sure, but even during a 'bad day' these truths hold up and remain objectively true for the one who by faith is 'in Christ'.

The Christ-follower's real participation in the redemptive accomplishments of the Savior – the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection – results in at least four concrete benefits that make transformation possible. In the first place, because they were crucified with Christ, they have died to sin (Rm 6:1-6). This means that sin no longer has jurisdiction over them as it once did. This does not mean that the Christ-follower is automatically sinless, but rather that sin's right to enslave her has been revoked. Or as Paul states in Romans 6:6, 'our old man was co-crucified (with Christ) so that the body controlled by sin might be destroyed', not its physical nature so that we somehow become 'disembodied', but rather the body in its slavish submission to sin's domineering power. In other words co-crucifixion frees the body from its inability to break sin's control. A co-crucified one can now overcome sin's violent pull in his life. He is truly dead with Christ and this death with him puts an end to sin's rightful reign over the one united to Christ so that it can rightfully be said, 'I died to sin'. Just as Paul could claim 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live' (Gl 2:19-20) so too can the Christ-follower today declare 'I am crucified with Christ' and therefore I am dead to sin and can reject its attempts to govern my life.

²⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that in Colossians 2:12 and 3:1 as well as Ephesians 2:6 the author speaks as though we have already been raised with Christ. Paul probably has this in mind in Romans 6, though he recognizes that the fullness of this resurrection must wait for the future resurrection. This is another example of the tension between the already and not yet.

A second benefit of participation in Christ's redemptive work is that Christ-followers have been rescued from the present evil age. Paul expresses this amazing truth in Galatians 1:4: Jesus Christ 'gave himself for our sins so that he might rescue us from this present evil age'. Paul's point is that Jesus, in obedience to his Father's plan, is the very one who willingly sacrificed himself to atone for the sins which his people had committed. He did this so that he might free them from the oppressive realm in which they were caught. This oppressive realm is called 'this evil age' which refers not only to the present stage in history, but far more to the whole invisible sphere of existence that is characterized by evil, governed by an evil ruler (2 Cor 4:4), and promotes evil living in its enslaved citizens.²⁴⁵ This present evil age is the environment that once governed, or better, tyrannized, the Christ-follower while she still lived 'in Adam'. But Christ sacrificed himself paying the necessary ransom to free his oppressed children from such a realm. Now, though still living within the borders of this enemy territory, they are no longer its citizens. They are free of its obligations and despotic control because they are now citizens of a whole new kingdom through their union with Christ in his death. They belong to the new creation and are free to express new creation attitudes and new creation lives. Once more, this reality does not depend upon my own subjective situation, but rather rests firmly on objective historical realities, the saving work of Christ and the believer's union with Christ in this death.

The third benefit of co-crucifixion with Christ is death to the world. Paul illustrates this in Galatians 6:14 when he announces that it is through Christ's death that 'the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world'. Paul is not only assuming co-crucifixion with Christ, a participation in the Messiah's saving death, he is also acknowledging that this union with Christ in his death brought about two other 'deaths': the world died in its relationship to Paul and Paul died in his relationship to the world.²⁴⁶ That is,

²⁴⁵ Fung (1988:41) comments, 'This present age is thus Paul's description of the totality of human life dominated by sin and opposed to God.' Also, De Boer (2011:32) states, 'This drama in turn suggests that the two ages are not only temporal epochs but also two spheres or zones in which certain powers hold sway or in which certain kinds of activity take place. The final judgment entails God's defeat and destruction of evil cosmic forces'.

²⁴⁶ Paul's use of κόσμος here parallels his use of αἰών in Galatians 1:4. It occupies 'the same semantic space as "the present evil age"' (Moo 2013:396). Notice Louw and Nida (1988:508) where they group the

both the κόσμος' power over Paul as his governing authority and Paul's submission and attraction to the world have been broken. Not only did the world lose its charter to govern over Paul, but Paul also renounced all allegiance to the world and all dependence upon the riches and delights that it offers. He rejected the world's attractions and every object of boasting that the world holds to be important. Paul's only boast from now on will be the death of Christ and no longer his own religious achievements or his share in the world's offerings.²⁴⁷

But if Paul has died to this world and been rescued from the present evil age, where is his new home? Where is his citizenship? Under what government has he placed his new allegiance? Paul affirms that he is now a citizen of a new creation (καινή κτίσις; Gl 6:15). The καινή κτίσις is not primarily an anthropological reference,²⁴⁸ as in 'I am a new creature', though this is certainly included. Rather the idea is far more cosmic in its focus, 'I am part of the new creation that God has inaugurated'. In other words, what Paul is declaring to the Galatian disciples is that the death of Christ has ushered in a whole new world!²⁴⁹ The old κόσμος which formerly governed humankind, the sphere of

two together with the meaning 'the system of practices and standards associated with secular society (that is, without reference to any demands or requirements of God).

²⁴⁷ Notice Burton's (1921:354) contribution, 'Paul's world, κόσμος, with which he severed his relation, when the cross of Christ acquired for him its new significance, was that of Israelitish descent, circumcision, the rank and dignity of a Pharisee, the righteousness that is in law, touching which he was blameless. To this world he became dead by the cross of Christ, because in Christ's death on the cross he saw a demonstration that God's way of accepting men was not on the basis of works of law, but on that of faith in Christ'. In other words, all that Paul once considered a cause of boasting, everything in which he formerly found his significance and through which he sought acceptance with God and favor with men, could be described as perspectives and priorities that came from the κόσμος which governed his existence and defined his reality. This has now ceased through his death to the world and the world's death to him. Dunn (1993: 340-341) has a similar thought when he states, 'What Paul means is that every rationale for individual and corporate existence which is independent of God (as in Rm 1:21-22), together with its system of beliefs and values and corresponding life-style, has been condemned and put to death so far as he is concerned; and that he himself has likewise been rendered inoperative so far as the attractions of such rationales, belief and value systems and life-styles are concerned'.

²⁴⁸ Adams (2000:226) perceptively notes, 'The debate continues as to the meaning of κόσμος and καινή κτίσις in these verses. The basic issue is whether the terms have an anthropological reference or a cosmological one ... Is Paul referring to the individual believer, the believing community, or a new cosmic order? Adams sees Paul as referring to a new cosmic order. However, Jackson (2010:4) states, 'In my estimation, Paul's conception of the new creation has both anthropological as well as cosmological dimensions. Jackson is probably right, though the primary emphasis in Paul is undoubtedly that of a "new cosmic order".'

²⁴⁹ Consider the comments of Adams (2000:227), 'With the terms κόσμος and καινή κτίσις, Paul is invoking the apocalyptic spatio-temporal dualism of "this world" and "the world to come"/"the new creation". He is doing so without in any way reducing the cosmological overtones of this conception. His

the flesh where the Law was the ruling constitution and the works of the flesh were the typical characteristics of people's existence, this κόσμος has been crucified, put to death. Now those who have received the Spirit and exercise faith in Christ, having been rescued from this 'present evil age' inhabit the new creation, a whole new κόσμος, the sphere of the Spirit where love is the ruling constitution (Gl. 5:13-14) and the fruit of the Spirit are what characterize the lives and relationships of its citizens.

In this καινή κτίσις everything has changed. As Martyn incisively observes,

Paul draws on the widespread tradition in which the elements of the cosmos are found to be pairs of opposites, antinomies Bringing this tradition of antinomies into a thoroughly apocalyptic perspective, Paul makes in Galatians an astonishing – indeed, a frightening – announcement: The antinomies that lay at the foundation of the cosmos have now disappeared. Previously, there were such elemental pairs of opposites as Jew/Gentile, circumcision/uncircumcision, the Law/the Not-Law. With the advent of Christ, however, these antinomies, and thus their cosmos itself, have come to an end.

(Martyn 1997:570)

There has been a total 'transvaluation of values' (Bruce 1982:271). So much of what was important before is no longer important. For example, the people of God no longer live under the law. Therefore, to pursue circumcision would be to return to the old κόσμος. In fact, the whole issue of whether to circumcise or not, is no longer an issue. That conversation was part of the old economy which has come to an end. In the new creation 'neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love' (Gl 5:6). In the new creation the operative word is 'freedom', but not freedom to do as I please and thus to plunge into sin, but rather freedom to 'serve one another through love' (Gl 5:13). In the new creation, we must 'walk by the Spirit' because in this way we will rid ourselves of the old way of life that offended God (Gl 5:24). And rather than the ethnic and social distinctions that governed the old age, now 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and

thought is this. In the event of the cross, God has declared that "this world" is on its way out and that a new cosmic order is on its way in. Believers, through participation in Christ's death and resurrection, have already been separated from the old world (cf. 1:4) and are in some proleptic sense already participating in the life of the new world'. And Moo (2013:397) comments, 'These texts together assert that the coming of Christ introduces a whole new state of affairs in the world. Distinctions of ethnicity, social class, and gender that are determinative for this world – they no longer matter. All "simply human" factors become meaningless in the face of God's world-transforming work in his Son Jesus Christ. The old state of affairs is ended'.

female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gl 3:28). Everything is new in the new creation! And because of the believer's share in Christ's death she is a citizen of this glorious new creation and heir to its innumerable benefits. This new creation membership is not a merely subjective experience; it is an objective reality regardless of my 'feelings' or the kind of 'day' I am having.

The fourth benefit of co-crucifixion with Christ is that the believer can live a brand new life in the here and now. Paul comments in Romans 6:4 that the believer's share in Christ's death and resurrection had a clear purpose, namely 'that he might walk in newness of life'. In other words, this death and resurrection together with Christ have a very practical end in mind, to make it possible for the Christ-follower to live today according to the pattern of the new creation. The co-crucified one is also a co-resurrected one and can therefore enjoy a new life, a resurrected life. This means the capacity of living in joyful obedience to God's will instead of merely slavish surrender to the dictates of 'this age'. Rather than being helpless in the face of sin's manipulative advances, the Christ-believer is capable of living in faithfulness to God expressing holiness in all of life. Newness of life also means humbly serving others and loving them sincerely, expressing hope even in hardship and joy in the face of suffering. Newness of life is a resurrection life where one is evidently alive to God and dead to the world, sin, and everything that reflects this present evil age. This kind of newness is the believer's privilege and is a genuine possibility even in the here and now.

But there is a third issue that must be understood if the Christ-follower is to truly grasp the significance of her present standing as being rooted in Christ's past accomplishments. The Christ-follower must understand her present 'setting' as being lived out 'in the in-between' time of history. Just as their identity is both that of dead ($\zeta\omega\ \delta\epsilon\ \text{o}\acute{\upsilon}\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$) and alive at the same time ($\delta\ \delta\epsilon\ \nu\acute{\upsilon}\nu\ \zeta\omega$, Gl 2:19-20), of buried and resurrected, of dead to sin, but daily struggling under its sway, and of rescued from the present evil age, but still living under its influence, so too can it be said that the believer is a citizen of both the present and the future. The Christ-follower lives out her Christian life in the present age suffering all the limitations of her frail humanness and facing all

the obstacles of a sin-crazed world in rebellion against God. And yet, she is not at home in this age, and in fact, she has been freed from the reign of this present darkness and empowered to live in 'newness of life', the life of the future. Her world is an 'already but not yet' world. She enjoys the benefits of eternity, but only experiences them in seed form in the here and now. Her old 'man' has been crucified, it is dead and gone, and yet, though her identity is clearly the 'new man', she must constantly put off the old man and put on the new. She is living at the intersection of two ages.

This realization that as disciples of Christ one exists 'in-between' the times in the 'already and not yet', is vital to Paul's view of transformation. It explains how it is that one's identity in Christ, though certain, can still be in process, how one's participation in Christ's redemptive work, though true, can still appear to contradict their daily experience, and how though a person has been sanctified and cleansed from sin he or she still needs to pursue sanctification and cleanse themselves. As scholars have so aptly concluded, the process of spiritual transformation is simply becoming what you are. It is seeing one's identity become their life-style, their position become their daily condition, and their future invade and control their present.

These three important matters, the Christian's location 'in Christ', the centrality of co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Christ, and the reality that the believer's union with Christ is experienced today in the intersection between the present and the future are foundational to understanding the significance of union with Christ. And union with Christ as an objective reality is essential to the Christian's ability to live a new life and overcome sin's tyranny in daily life. These crucial truths so evident in Paul's theology of transformation are sparse indeed in the teachings of contemporary contemplatives.

A second example where Dallas Willard bases his view of transformation on subjective realities whereas Paul bases them on objective ones can be seen in Willard's view of the believer's crucifixion of the flesh as quoted in Galatians 5:24, 'And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified (ἐσταύρωσαν) the flesh with its passions and desires'. Willard (1988:108-109) comments that in this particular passage Paul is referring to 'a

real and definite action or type of action by believers through which the claims of normal feelings and desires are suspended and removed from control of their lives. It is the same as what Jesus calls the denial of one's self and the taking up of the cross'.

He then continues to give an even more concrete explanation to his understanding of Paul's point by adding,

Paul was a *summa cum laude* graduate of the school of self-denial, and he knew from experience what he was talking about. His crucifixion of the flesh, and ours, is accomplished through those activities such as solitude, fasting, frugality, service, and so forth, which constitute the curriculum in the school of self-denial and place us on the front line of spiritual combat.

(Willard 1988:109)

But is this what Paul meant in Galatians 5:24? Did Paul have in mind the believer's subjective attempts to conquer the flesh? No, Paul is not calling the believer to continually crucify the flesh through self-denial; rather he is referring to what has already been accomplished through co-crucifixion with Christ. The Christian lives in the realm of the Spirit through union with Christ. She no longer lives in the realm where the flesh reigns. Therefore, the flesh's power and control have been broken and this should result in a different kind of life, a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and not by the passions and desires of the flesh, a new age kind of life, not the life of this present evil age where the flesh reigns. The already-crucified one is free from the flesh's governorship. Or as one scholar has stated,

the formulation "you have crucified the flesh" is thus a description of the new, eschatological situation of "those who belong to Christ," which is the result of the gift of the Spirit. Paul's formulation is not to be taken as an admonition for believers to go and crucify the Flesh ..., for that has already taken place "in Christ".

(De Boer 2011:367)

This is what Paul had in mind.²⁵⁰ He was once again calling the disciples to recall vital objective realities, not to implement subjective ones. Willard misses this emphasis. He

²⁵⁰ Dunn (1993:314), in explaining Paul's meaning in Galatians 5:24, comments, 'Implicit also, therefore, is the further echo of ii.19: what is in view is he being-crucified-with-Christ there spoken of. That is to say, Paul doubtless had in mind the whole theme of the believer's sharing in Christ's sufferings and death ... It is another way of expressing the eschatological significance of Christ's death, as an act which broke the power of "the present evil age" ... as expressed not least in the power of fleshly weakness in captivating and dominating with its "passions and desires". The only way that power could be broken was by putting the flesh on the cross, that is, by bringing it to its natural end in death, that is, by killing it! But that could

therefore tends to focus on the Pauline imperative while missing the Pauline indicative. Yet in Paul's theology of transformation both are essential. The contemporary contemplatives tend to emphasize the subjective and miss the objective realities that must always undergird them.

7.3.2 TRANSFORMATION THROUGH IMITATION OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST VERSUS RELIANCE ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST

A second point of separation between Paul's theology of transformation and that of many adherents of the Contemplative Tradition is that whereas the contemplative tradition tends to focus more on the life of Christ – imitation of the way he lived and specifically the practices he engaged in – Paul focuses more on the death of Christ and its impact on our identity and thus ultimately, the way we should live in light of this death. It is not that the Contemplative Tradition says nothing about the death of Christ, nor that Paul says nothing about the life of Christ. The point rather is one of emphasis. Notice, for example the following comment,

As Jesus walked this earth, living and working among all kinds and classes of people, he gave us the divine paradigm for conjugating all the verbs of our living. Too often in our concern to make doctrinal points we rush to expound upon Jesus' death, and in so doing we neglect Jesus' life. This is a great loss. Attention to Jesus in his living gives us important clues for our living.

(Foster 1998:3)

Certainly Foster is not saying that we should neglect the death of Christ. Such a conclusion would be a completely unfair conclusion to draw regarding Foster's perspective. However, that Foster and others see the earthly life of Christ as the chief factor in the transformation of Christians today seems to be a fair conclusion to draw based upon all of the evidence. In fact, it seems to be Foster's point when he continues,

We are, to be sure, reconciled to God by Jesus' death, but even more, we are "saved" by his life (Rom 5:10) – *saved* in the sense of entering into his eternal kind of life, not just in some distant heaven but right now in the midst of our broken and sorrowful world. When we carefully consider how Jesus lived while among us in the flesh, we learn how we are to live – truly *live* – empowered by him who is with us always even to the end of the age. We then begin an intentional *imitatio Christi*, imitation of Christ.

only be achieved safely ... and effectively ... by participation in the one death of flesh which had broken through the cul-de-sac of death in the present evil age, that is, the death of Christ'.

(Foster 1998:3 emphasis in the original)

Foster appears to be saying that though the death of Christ brings reconciliation, the life of Christ brings even more, it brings salvation. But has Foster correctly understood what Paul has written in Romans 5:10? No, in fact Foster misunderstands Paul, neglects the context, and even misquotes Paul's words. What Paul wrote to the Roman Christians was 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, *now that we are reconciled*, shall we be saved by his life'. The addition of '*now that we are reconciled*' is important to Paul's overall point, serving as the foundation for what follows, 'we shall be saved by his life'. Reconciliation precedes salvation; it is the basis for what follows, namely salvation by his life. Foster's exclusion of this phrase puts the emphasis where Paul never intended it to be. In addition, Foster quotes Romans 5:10 without considering Romans 5:9, yet Romans 5:10 is a restatement of Romans 5:9 with the exception that Paul substitutes reconciliation language for justification language (Moo 1996:311). Therefore, we cannot miss the parallelism as Foster does:

	A1	B1	C1
Rm 5:9	<u>δικαιωθέντες</u> νῦν	<u>ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ</u>	<u>σωθησόμεθα</u> δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς
	A2	B2	C2
Rm 5:10	ὄντες <u>κατηλλάγημεν</u>	<u>διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ</u> <u>υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ</u>	<u>σωθησόμεθα</u> ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ
	πολλῶ μᾶλλον <u>καταλλαγέντες</u>		

Paul's point is that justification (A1) and reconciliation (A2) come through Christ's death (B1 and B2). If we have in fact experienced this justifying, reconciling work through the death of Christ, then there is assurance that we will likewise be saved by his life (C2). But two questions must be answered. First, to what does this salvation refer? Foster claims that it is our future and present experience of eternal life. But when verses 9 and 10 are viewed together it is evident that Paul is referring to salvation from the wrath of God not to a *quality* of life that we can experience both now and in the future. Perhaps we could restate Paul's emphasis by asking, how is it that a person can escape God's wrath and thus eternal condemnation? The answer Paul gives is through the

reconciliation and justification won by Christ through his death. Second, to what does being saved by 'his life' refer? What is 'his life'? In Foster's quote 'his life' clearly refers to Christ's earthly existence, his lifestyle and specifically the spiritual disciplines in which he engaged. But according to the context Paul has in mind, not Jesus' earthly existence, but rather his resurrection. Christ's vindicating resurrection secures our salvation (Rm 4:25). Paul is affirming that it is the death and resurrection of Christ that assures our salvation from God's wrath. He is not speaking about Jesus' earthly life as the purveyor of eternal life. So Foster has misunderstood Paul and has re-interpreted his words (specifically, 'his life') to support his conviction that it is the earthly life of Christ that is key to a person's transformation. Such a focus is not what Paul intended and it cannot be supported by the evidence of Paul's letters.

This same emphasis on the earthly life of Christ as the key to a person's transformation is present in other writers of the contemporary contemplative stream,

My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in, by arranging our whole lives around the activities he himself practiced in order to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father.

(Willard 1988:ix)

Thus the key to Christlikeness is imitation of the life of Christ and specifically the habits he engaged in. Foster (1998:21-22) speaking of Jesus states, 'We see ... that he trained himself in prayer, solitude, worship, and like disciplines. And we are to imitate him in this, as in all central aspects of his living'. Willard is in total agreement,

The secret involves living as he lived in the entirety of his life – adopting his overall life-style. Following "in his steps" cannot be equated with behaving as he did when he was "on the spot." To live as Christ lived is to live as he did *all* his life.

(Willard 1988:5)

And if we ask, what does it mean in concrete terms to live as Christ lived in all his life, Willard responds with something very concrete,

I am writing about what it *means* to follow him and about how following him fits into the Christian's salvation. I want to explain, with some precision and detailed fullness, how activities such as solitude, silence, fasting, prayer, service, celebration – disciplines for life in the spiritual kingdom of God and activities in which Jesus deeply immersed himself – are

essential to the deliverance of human beings from the concrete power of sin and how they can make the experience of the easy yoke a reality in life.

(Willard 1988:10 emphasis in the original)

Thus, as we will see, for Willard and Foster and others of the Contemplative Tradition, the key to a transformed life is to live like Jesus. And to live like Jesus requires that one practice the same spiritual disciplines that Jesus practiced. This is what it means to imitate Jesus and this kind of imitation – engaging in the same activities that Jesus engaged in – should lead one to a truly transformed existence. In other words, imitation of the lifestyle and daily practices of Jesus is what makes a person ‘new’. Thus we read,

so, basically, to put off the old person and put on the new we only follow Jesus into the activities that he engaged in to nurture his own life in relation to the Father’... his use of solitude, silence, study of scripture, prayer, and service to others all had a disciplinary aspect in his life. And we can be very sure that what he found useful for conduct of his life in the Father will also be useful for us.

(Willard 1997:354-355)²⁵¹

But does this square with what Paul taught regarding the key to a transformed life?

There is no doubt that Paul often spoke of imitating Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phlp 2:5:5-11; 1 Th 1:5-7; cf. Rm 15:1-3) or even of imitating Paul himself (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Gl 4:12; Phlp 3:17; 2 Th 3:7-9) or one of the churches (1 Th 2:14). Generally speaking these are calls to follow specific attitudes or virtues.²⁵² That is, the focus of imitation is ethical (Clarke 1998:340). Paul does not seem to tie this imitation to the means of a personal

²⁵¹ This concept of the imitation of Christ as the key to spiritual transformation is one of the central themes in both Willard and Foster. Quotes supporting this idea are abundant. Here we add just a few more: ‘So if we wish to follow Christ – and to walk in the easy yoke with him – we will have to accept his overall way of life as our way of life totally’ (Willard 1988:8). ‘Certainly we cannot reasonably hope to do his deeds without adopting his form of life. And we cannot adopt his form of life without engaging in his disciplines – maybe even more than he did and surely adding others demanded by our much more troubled condition’ (Willard:1988:29). Foster (1998:1) entitles chapter 1 of his book *Streams of Living Water*, ‘Imitatio: The Divine Paradigm’, which assumes that imitating Christ is God’s ordained means for bringing about a transformed life.

²⁵² For example, in 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul calls the Corinthians to imitate his commitment to seek the benefit of others and not his own benefit so that people might be saved. This is the same attitude Paul witnessed in Christ. Also, in Philippians 2:5:5-11 the call is to imitate the mindset that Christ displayed in his self-sacrificing incarnation and death. Rather than seeking to exalt self, Paul calls the congregation to follow Christ’s example of selfless humility whereby he emptied himself of the enormous privileges he enjoyed and chose costly obedience instead. In Romans 15:1-3 although Paul does not use the language of mimesis the idea is clearly present. If love and unity are to prevail in the congregation then the prevailing attitude must be the one Christ himself portrayed, an attitude whereby no one seeks self-pleasure but rather the good of the other.

transformation. In fact, more often imitation is described as an evidence of a transformation that has already taken place (1 Th 1:6-10), not the key to seeing transformation occur. In other words, imitation for Paul is the natural result or product of a transformed life, not the vehicle that brings it about. Therefore, it is an overstatement to conclude,

When Paul calls himself a μιμητῆς Χριστοῦ, or when he tells the Thessalonians they must show themselves to be μιμηταὶ τοῦ κυρίου, the point is that both he and they are followers of their heavenly Lord. There is thus no thought of an imitation, whether outward or inward, of the earthly life of Jesus either individual features or total impress. The call for an *imitatio Christi* finds no support in the statements of Paul.

(Michaelis 1967:672)

Paul does in fact call the Christian community to imitate the earthly example of Jesus even though the language of mimesis is missing (Phlp 2:5, Rm 15:1-3). Nonetheless, a call for an *imitatio Christi* as espoused by the Contemplative Tradition – a call to imitate the daily habits and disciplines he engaged in – is certainly not prominent.²⁵³

So then, if Paul's emphasis regarding personal transformation does not rest on an imitation of the earthly life of Christ, on what does it depend? It rests on the death of Christ. Paul illustrates this most powerfully in Romans 6:6. Paul begins in Romans 6:5 by assuming that the believer's death with Christ, something that he has asserted throughout Romans 6:2-4, implies that the believer will also share in Christ's resurrection. The Christ-follower's death with him guarantees her resurrection with him. What is the basis of this confidence? In Romans 6:6 Paul grounds the Christian's confidence in the knowledge of something that is already universally known by Christians (τοῦτο γινώσκοντες), namely the death of our 'old man' (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη). The 'old man' refers to the pre-conversion status of the person. It is what she was 'in Adam'. This former identity is gone because of the Christian's union with Christ in his death. That is, her co-crucifixion with Christ. But then Paul shares the assured result of having died with Christ, 'the body of sin was

²⁵³ It is interesting to note that though Jesus invited people to follow him and become his disciples, though he called these disciples to obey his teachings, he is never recorded to have called people to imitate his lifestyle. The language of mimesis is missing. Even when mimesis is in sight (Phlp 2:5, Rm 15:1-3) it is focused on Christ's suffering and death. It is not a call to imitate his earthly practices, but is a call to a cruciform life.

destroyed' (ἵνα καταργηθῆ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας). That is, that aspect of our person that lived enslaved to sin has been decisively killed. As a result sin's rightful reign over the disciple's life has ended (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ). The Christian no longer must live as an unwilling pawn to sin's inclinations. She is free! This implies a radical transformation. And this transformation that results in new life, a life of victory over sin and freedom to live God's will, is firmly based upon the death of Christ. This is not mere doctrinal truth; it is practical Christian living. The Christian has died with Christ and therefore is truly able to conquer sin in daily practice. Now she must live consistent with this truth.

This same emphasis on the death of Christ rather than his earthly life as the basis for transformation is implied also in several passages in Galatians. Paul begins his letter by recognizing that one of the glorious purposes of Christ's death was 'to deliver us from the present evil age' (Gal 1:4). Later Paul ends the same letter by affirming that his only boast is 'the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Then he relates what this death has accomplished for Paul, 'through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal 6:14). In these two statements Paul avows that something dramatic has occurred that has resulted in a wholesale transformation in his existence. Paul's whole 'location' has changed. He no longer lives in the sphere of darkness ruled by the forces of darkness. He no longer is an unwilling slave to the warped system that opposes God. The death of Christ has 'relocated' Paul. He has been transferred from Satan's realm, from Adam's world, to the kingdom of Christ, to the realm of the Holy Spirit. Although Paul does not specify in these verses the practical consequences of this resettlement project, they are nonetheless implied. This 'evil age' no longer enslaves those who have died with Christ. The 'world' no longer enthralls and controls those united to Christ in his death. Freedom is the operative word. The co-crucified ones are free to live in obedience to their new governing authority, the Crucified and Risen Christ.

In the same letter Paul adds another reference to the death of Christ and its impact on the disciple's daily life. He writes, 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who

loved me and gave himself for me'. Paul affirms that his present earthly life, his life in the flesh, is radically different now. It is a life lived 'by faith' whereas before his life was a life under the law. He has 'died to the law' so that he may now 'live to God'. Once again his life has a radically new orientation. To what does he owe this whole new direction in his life? He has died together with Christ! This miraculous act has resulted in a radical change in his life so that now he is free to live a 'by faith' life with Christ living in and through him. This new faith-controlled life will result in new fruit, a truly transformed existence. The change is a result of the death of Christ.

This focus on Christ's death as the primary factor in the initial and ongoing transformation of the Christian's life is central to Paul's theology. Though the adherents of the Contemplative Tradition would probably give a hearty 'Amen' to this emphasis it is not always reflected by their writings. More often than not their emphasis rests on imitating the life of Christ rather than focusing on the death of Christ. This is an unfortunate weakness in their theology of transformation. Such a misplaced emphasis treads dangerously close to transformation by personal effort, a claim that the very same advocates of the Contemplative Tradition would soundly deny. And yet, when so little attention is given to the death of Christ as foundational for all true transformation and so much attention is dedicated to *imitatio Christi*, one begins to wonder what are the true convictions regarding transformation. Paul's emphasis is clear; the death of Christ is the key factor in the reshaping of misshapen persons so that ultimately they take on a new Christoform shape. This clear emphasis is lacking in the Contemplative Tradition.

7.3.3 THE PRIMARY MEANS OF TRANSFORMATION: THE PRACTICE OF THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

With this third point we come to the heart of the difference between Paul's view of transformation and the view of the key authors of the contemporary Contemplative Tradition. What is the means by which transformation is produced in a person? For the Contemplative Tradition the primary means of transformation is the practice of the

spiritual disciplines. This is unequivocally asserted by this tradition's adherents. For example, Foster (2008:18) is abundantly clear, 'Training in Spiritual Disciplines is the God-ordained means for forming and transforming the human personality so that in the emergency we can be "response-able" – able to respond appropriately'.²⁵⁴ Mulholland (1993:136) communicates this same unwavering conviction, 'without our performance of the disciplines, God is, for all practical purposes, left without any means of grace through which to effect transformation in our lives'. He also comments,

The classical disciplines of the spiritual pilgrimage are the practices that the church has come to realize are essential for deepening one's relationship with God, enriching one's life with others and nurturing one toward wholeness in Christ.

(Mulholland 1993:76)

Dallas Willard makes the bold claim,

We will establish, strengthen, and elaborate on this one insight: *Full participation in the life of God's Kingdom and in the vivid companionship of Christ comes to us only through appropriate exercise in the disciplines for life in the spirit.* Those disciplines alone can become for average Christians "the conditions upon which the spiritual life is made indubitably real". It's true. And if this point can be made as convincingly as its truth and its importance deserves, the practical effects will be stunning. There will be a life-giving revolution in our personal lives and in our world.

(Willard 1988:26 emphasis in the original)

Later, he is even more concrete,

'The question is How, precisely, am I to go about doing my part in the process of my own transformation? What is my plan? The answer to the question is, in general formulation: by practice of spiritual disciplines or disciplines for the spiritual life'.

(Willard 2006:150)

And so the obvious conviction of the Contemplative Tradition is that the primary means by which transformation takes place in the life of a person is through the regular practice of the spiritual disciplines. Yet as one reads Paul's letters seldom if ever does one find

²⁵⁴ It is interesting that though Foster asserts that the spiritual disciplines are God's ordained means for bringing about transformation he can also state, 'And, of course, while the Spiritual Disciplines are the foundational means for our formation, they are not the only means. Far from it. Sometimes God will use extraordinary circumstances' (Foster 2008:191). At the same time, both Willard and Foster claim that the essential process by which transformation occurs is described by VIM; Vision, Intention, Means, where means refers to the practice of the spiritual disciplines. For example, Foster (2008:xi) asks, 'How, you may ask, does such a transformed life come into being? Vision. Intention. Means', referring to the VIM process developed by Willard (2002:85). And Willard (2002:85) writes, 'If we are to be spiritually formed in Christ, we must have and must implement the appropriate vision, intention, and means. Not just any path we take will do. If this VIM pattern is not put into place properly and held there, Christ simply will not be formed in us'.

clear reference to the practice of spiritual disciplines as the means by which transformation occurs. Why is this so? When one asks why Paul did not write more directly about the spiritual disciplines the typical answer from contemporary contemplatives is that for Paul and the culture in which he lived the practice of the spiritual disciplines was so readily understood and so commonly practiced 'that he would feel no need to write a book on the disciplines for the spiritual life that explained systematically what he had in mind' (Willard 1988:95). In other words, Paul took it for granted that his readers understood that he had developed the habit of practicing the spiritual disciplines. Besides, such concepts as 'put off the old man' and 'put on the new man' or 'train yourself for godliness' or 'I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage' or 'put sin to death' were clear references to the practice of the spiritual disciplines, references that Paul's readers would recognize without further elaboration. Thus we read,

The Bible called people to such Disciplines as fasting, prayer, worship and celebration but gave almost no instruction about how to do them. The reason for this is easy to see. Those Disciplines were so frequently practiced and such a part of the general culture that the "how to" was common knowledge.

(Foster 1978:3)

Even more pointed,

Zeal without knowledge or without appropriate practice is never enough. Plus, one must train *wisely* as well as intensely for spiritual attainment. Paul did not have to explain or argue for this assumption. It was commonplace to the developing Christian Church, as well in the surrounding culture, whether Jewish, Hellenistic, or Roman ... It is almost impossible in the thought climate of today's Western world to appreciate just *how* utterly unnecessary it was for Paul to say explicitly, in the world in which *he* lived, that Christians should fast, be alone, study, give, and so forth as regular disciplines for the spiritual life.

(Willard 1988:98-99 emphasis in the original)

Thus, we see two very clear convictions present in the writings of the Contemplative Tradition. First, the primary means by which God transforms Christians into the image of Christ is the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Second, even though there are few direct references in Paul's writings to the practice of the spiritual disciplines and especially as the means of spiritual change, so prevalent was this conviction, so well-known and so commonly practiced in Paul's context that there was little need for him to even mention it in his letters. It was a given; something taken for granted.

One must ask, however, whether this was in fact the case or if perhaps modern adherents of the Contemplative Tradition are simply reading into Paul the practices and beliefs of contemplatives from the fourth century on. There is little question that Paul was a man of prayer and of the study of Scripture, yet he does not often link the practice of these and other spiritual disciplines to the process of transformation. Thus in spite of such strong protestations from modern contemplatives, clear concrete evidence that Paul was a 'contemplative' is difficult to find. Though some confidently assert, for example, 'This behavior is a *fact* and can be confirmed by a casual reading of the biblical literature, as well as other written records of the time' (Willard 1988:100; emphasis in the original), no direct evidence is provided, only arguments from silence. And Paul himself is relatively silent on this matter. We must conclude, therefore, that Paul had a different idea regarding the means for realizing ongoing transformation.

Now, before considering Paul's perspective on the means by which transformation takes place, it is necessary to consider more carefully why the contemporary contemplatives believe the spiritual disciplines are so necessary for transformation. There are three crucial points to consider. First, it is important to understand what the spiritual disciplines are according to the Contemplative Tradition? Foster (2008:16) states, 'a Spiritual Discipline is an intentionally directed action by which we do what we can do in order to receive from God the ability (or power) to do what we cannot do by direct effort'. Willard (2006b:133) agrees stating that a spiritual discipline is 'any activity that is in our power and enables us to achieve by grace what we cannot achieve by direct effort'. He elaborates,

A discipline for the spiritual life is ... nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom. When we understand that grace (charis) is gift (charisma), we then see that to grow in grace is to grow in what is given to us of God and by God. The disciplines are then, in the clearest sense, a means to that grace and also to those gifts. Spiritual disciplines, "exercises unto godliness," are only activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power without harm to ourselves or others.

(Willard 1988:156)

Second, it is necessary to understand what the Contemplative Tradition understands as the role of these spiritual disciplines. This role is stated in a variety of ways which we

can summarize in four concrete purposes. In the first place, the spiritual disciplines put a Christian under God's gracious sway so that he can progressively transform them. God is the transforming power who works in the life of believers who desire such transformation. But how will God bring about this change?

When we engage in the Spiritual Disciplines, we are seeking the righteousness of the kingdom of God through "indirection." You see, we cannot by direct effort make ourselves into the kind of people who can live fully alive to God. Only God can accomplish this in us. Only God can incline our heart toward him. Only God can reprogram the deeply ingrained habit patterns of sin that constantly predispose us toward evil and transform them into even more deeply ingrained habit patterns of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" ... we ... train with Spiritual Disciplines ... This indirect action will place us – body, mind, and spirit – before God as a living sacrifice. God then takes this little offering of ourselves and in a divine time and in a divine way produces in us things far greater than we could ever ask or think.

(Foster 2008: 15-16)

Willard concurs when he comments, 'these disciplines make room for the Word and the Spirit to work in us' (Willard 2002:155). So then, the practice of the spiritual disciplines places us in God's way where he then can bring about significant changes in our lives. His working is never alone; our action is required, but this action is intended to locate us where God can 'reach' us and open us up so that he can do his heart surgery in us.

In the second place the spiritual disciplines function to make the God-life or Christlikeness more natural to us. That is, they train us to be able to respond and live like Jesus did in the moment of crisis. Willard explains the problem at hand,

A successful performance at a moment of crisis rests largely and essentially upon the depth of a self wisely and rigorously prepared in the totality of its being – mind and body ... This is not a truth to be set aside when we come to our relationship with God Grace does *not* mean that sufficient strength and insight will be automatically "infused" into our being in the moment of need ... A baseball player who expects to excel in the game without adequate exercise of his body is no more ridiculous than the Christian who hopes to be able to act in the manner of Christ when put to the test without the appropriate exercise in godly living.

(Willard 1988:4)

What is needed, therefore, to adequately prepare for the crisis, long before the crisis arises? Foster (2008:153) gives the answer, 'The bottom-line goal of practicing the Spiritual Disciplines is so that when the moment of action comes, our automatic default-mode is to "act naturally" according to the Spirit, not the flesh'. In other words, the way that a Christian can successfully prepare herself to live like Christ in all ways and at all

times is through a regular lifestyle of practicing, as Jesus did, the spiritual disciplines. When a person's regular routine incorporates solitude, silence, fasting, prayer, and the other disciplines of the spiritual life these disciplines will 'bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order' (Willard 1988:68). Why is this? It is because the disciplines 'enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself' (Willard 1988:68).

In the third place, the role of the spiritual disciplines is to bring our bodies into submission to God's righteousness and thus defeat evil desires that arise in us. This is necessary because 'within the embodied self there are diverse and powerful forces that turn the individual personality into a battlefield' (Willard 1988:84). In other words, 'trained in a world of wrongness and evil, the body comes to act wrongly "before we think," and has "motions of sin in its members," as Paul said, which may thwart the true intent of our spirit or will by leaping ahead of it' (Willard 2002:35-36). The body must therefore 'be re-formed to become our ally in Christlikeness' (Willard 2002:36). How does this happen?

The automatic and persistent active tendencies toward evil or wrong-doing are diminished, redirected or even replaced through appropriate ascetic practices in such a way that "the flesh" becomes the ally of "the spirit," and the individual becomes free and able to do the good which he or she would and to avoid the evil which is in fact not intended.

(Willard 1985)

What are these ascetic practices that bring the body into submission?

Following upon this general surrender is the practicing of specific disciplines, such as solitude, silence, fasting, study, worship, service, and so forth, to quell our desires that have been running our life and embed the will of Christ into our body in its social setting, making his will our embodied will. That is what Paul has in mind with "I bruise my body and make it my slave" (1 Cor. 9:27). The radical disciplines of abstinence, solitude, silence, and fasting, are especially useful and necessary to re-train our body, along with the other active components of the self.

(Willard 2008:86)

Speaking even more precisely about the role of the spiritual disciplines,

A major service of spiritual disciplines ... is to cause duplicity and malice that is buried in our will and character to surface and be dealt with. These disciplines make room for the Word and the Spirit to work in us, and they permit destructive feelings – feelings that are usually veiled by standard practices and circumstances and by long accepted rationalizations – to be perceived and dealt with for what they are: our will and not God's will.

(Willard 2002:155)

Hence, the spiritual disciplines are essential for winning the battle that rages in our embodied selves. These practices train and re-form our bodies and uncover our sinful tendencies bringing them into eventual conformity to God's righteousness.

Fourthly, the spiritual disciplines serve to reshape our lives in every aspect and to conform the totality of our beings to the kingdom of God. Foster (2008:164) comments, 'the Disciplines reorient us for life in the kingdom of God by retraining our habits, our thoughts and attitudes, and our behavior according to a radically different way of life from what passes for "normal" in this world'. Willard agrees,

the aim of disciplines in the spiritual life – and, specifically, in the following of Christ – is the transformation of the total state of the soul. It is the renewal of the whole person from the inside, involving differences in thought, feeling, and character that may never be manifest in outward behavior at all.

(Willard 2006:151-152)

In another place he adds, '*The disciplines for the spiritual life ... help by assisting the ways of God's Kingdom to take place of the habits of sin embedded in our bodies*' (Willard 1988:86 emphasis in the original). One can see, therefore, how absolutely essential the spiritual disciplines are for personal transformation. Their role is crucial according to the Contemplative Tradition.

It is important to mention, also, that adherents of the Contemplative Tradition are quick to clarify that the spiritual disciplines, though essential for spiritual transformation, are not an end in themselves. 'The activities constituting the disciplines have no value in themselves' (Willard 1988:138). That is, 'the Spiritual Disciplines in and of themselves have no merit whatsoever ... Their purpose – their only purpose – is to place us before God' (Foster 2008:17).²⁵⁵ 'These time-resilient disciplines give the church in every age and culture ways to keep company with Jesus' (Calhoun 2005:18), but they are not a

²⁵⁵ Foster (1978:7) writes of the spiritual disciplines, 'they put us where he (God) can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God's means of grace. The inner righteousness we seek is not something that is poured on our heads. God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us'.

magic potion or a self-serving exercise. Their role is to work with God as he transforms the person into the image of Christ.

Returning to the matter of why the spiritual disciplines are so essential for the Contemplative Tradition, there is a third and final reason, namely because of the nature of persons as 'embodied selves'. Thus Willard writes,

the human body is the focal point of human existence. Jesus had one. We have one. Without the body in its proper place, the pieces of the puzzle of new life in Christ do not realistically fit together, and the idea of really following him and becoming like him remains a practical impossibility.

(Willard 1988:29-30)

He adds,

The main reason why the idea of spiritual transformation through merely being preached at and taught usually doesn't work is because that does not involve the body in the process of transformation. One of the ironies of spiritual formation is that every "spiritual" discipline is or involves bodily behavior. We have to involve the body in spiritual formation because that is where we live and what we live from ... Spiritual formation is never merely inward but is always also explosively outward.

(Willard 2008:85)

As a result,

The proper retraining and nurturing of the body is absolutely essential to Christlikeness. The body is not just a physical thing. As it matures, it increasingly takes on the quality of "inner" life ... That is, the body increasingly becomes a major part of the hidden source from which our life immediately flows.

(Willard 2002:165)

Because the body is so "essential" to what we are as persons it must also be re-formed just as our total person needs radical changing. This re-formation is accomplished through regular practice of the spiritual disciplines,

The human body is, then, the plastic bearer of massive intentionalities of will, feeling and perception which do not depend for their functioning upon self-conscious awareness or direct effort, but rather provide the essential foundation of such awareness and effort. The body thus understood is *not* transformed by religious conversion or ritual alone, much less by mere intellectual enlightenment, but by intense, large-scale and long-run experience, and especially by ascetic practices or spiritual "disciplines". Such a transformation is essential to bring us to the point where we effectively do what we would (ought) and do not do what we would (ought) not.

(Willard 1985)

Now that we have listened to the Contemplative Tradition as they have discussed the central role of the spiritual disciplines in the process of transformation, we must briefly

evaluate a crucial question that arises through interaction with their writings, which activities should be included as spiritual disciplines? It is important to remember that according to the Contemplative Tradition the practice of the spiritual disciplines is the primary way that God works with the believer to bring about ongoing transformation. Thus it is important to be able to identify with clarity what are the practices that qualify as spiritual disciplines capable of fulfilling the role attributed to them. Yet after reading the explanations offered by key adherents of the Contemplative Tradition, it seems quite legitimate to question whether many of the practices that they denominate spiritual disciplines really qualify. After all, authors such as Foster and Willard have asserted that the spiritual disciplines are a means of grace, having the power to break deeply ingrained sin patterns and reshape broken persons into the image of Christ. Can this power rightfully be claimed for all of the practices that they allege are spiritual disciplines? Skepticism abounds. This skepticism is aptly applied, for example, to Foster when he asserts,

Whatever leads to the genuine formation of our spirit in Christlikeness can become for us a “spiritual” discipline: walking in the woods; singing and making music; creating a work of art; laughing with friends in the goodness of companionship; caring for animals; or ... performing simple tasks associated with meeting food and shelter needs for self and others.
(Foster 2008:147)

It appears that almost any activity whatsoever is a so-called ‘spiritual discipline’. It almost borders on the ridiculous when he advises us ‘to make “play” a Spiritual Discipline’ (Foster 2008:147) or when he mentions ‘pleasurable walks or bicycle rides’ and instrumental music as spiritual disciplines (Foster 2008:168). When every activity from the most mundane and common to the most ‘ascetic’ is considered a spiritual discipline one wonders if the concept of spiritual discipline really has any significance at all. In what way is caring for my pet or riding my bike truly ‘sin-destroying’ or capable of creating true intimacy with Christ? While it is perfectly valid that we should avoid the kind of dualism that divides life into sacred versus secular activities, it is not at all helpful to apply the term ‘spiritual discipline’ to any activity thus implying that all of these practices, even going to a baseball game (Foster 2008:147), have the power to truly transform the inner most being. This seems to be the error into which Foster falls.

Let's consider a concrete example of this problem. Both Foster (1978:96-109) and Willard (1988:160-162), as well as several other contemplatives, assert that solitude is a vital spiritual discipline.²⁵⁶ They quote many biblical examples where both Jesus and Paul practiced solitude, thereby declaring these examples as evidence that solitude is a spiritual discipline that should be regularly practiced by all Christians eager to experience transformation.²⁵⁷ Willard (1988:101) goes so far as to say, 'It is solitude and solitude alone that opens the possibility of a radical relationship to God that can withstand all external events up to and beyond death'. He also boldly asserts, 'Nothing but solitude can allow the development of a freedom from the ingrained behaviors that hinder our integration into God's order' (Willard 1988:160). Truly by this measure solitude is absolutely essential to spiritual growth and should be included on the list of spiritual disciplines. But do these claims square with the biblical evidence and should solitude be considered a spiritual discipline, in the sense of an activity that is a means of

²⁵⁶ Willard (1997:357) states that there are some spiritual disciplines that are 'absolutely central to spiritual growth'. He states that from the side of disciplines of abstinence the two that are essential are solitude and silence. These are essential because 'it is solitude and silence that allow us to escape the patterns of epidermal responses, with their consequences' (Willard 1997:358). In another place he declares, 'of all the disciplines of abstinence, solitude is generally the most fundamental in the beginning of the spiritual life ... this factual priority of solitude is, I believe, a sound element in monastic asceticism' (Willard 1988:161).

²⁵⁷ For example, Willard (1988:102) states that Jesus sought solitude 'not as an activity done for its own sake, but one done to give him power for good. He cites as examples Mark 1:35, 3:13; 6:31, 46. Yet none of these examples even hints at the conclusion Willard makes. In Mark 1:35 and 6:46 Jesus' purpose was prayer. Solitude was the condition he sought so that he could engage in prayer. In Mark 3:13 there is no definite purpose mentioned, though in the parallel passage in Luke 6:12-13 Jesus goes to a mountainous place to pray and it appears that his prayer was connected to his choice of the twelve disciples. In Mark 6:31 the purpose of seeking solitude is to rest. Hence none of the passages cited by Willard give credence to his claim that solitude itself was a discipline engaged in so that Jesus could be empowered to do good works. His use of scripture neglects the context and the author's intention. He makes dogmatic arguments where the text itself is vague or even silent. This same flaw is apparent when Willard (1988:104) writes, 'So it is in the light of Paul's *practice*, the way he lived, that we must interpret the statements he makes about his experience and behavior and about what we are to do. When he elsewhere directs us to "mortify" the deeds of the body through the spirit (Rom. 6:13) or to mortify our members that are upon the earth (Col. 3:5), we are to interpret his words in light of his acts. And when we do so there is no doubt that he is directing us to undertake the standard activities for training the natural desires toward godliness, ones that are readily recognized by anyone at all familiar with the history of religion. And these activities are solitude, fasting, "watching," silence, routines of prayer and study, the giving of one's time, energy, and goods in various kinds of service, worship, frugality, submission to the spiritual fellowship and its leaders, and so forth' (emphasis in the original). Willard makes the assumption that Paul's point was to call the congregation to practice the spiritual disciplines. But is this really what Paul had in mind when he called the church to 'by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body'? Or was he calling them to a whole lifestyle of obedience to God? It would appear that Willard is reading into the passage the practices of the Contemplative Tradition rather than discovering what Paul really meant in the context. This is a common problem in the writings of many adherents of the Contemplative Tradition.

grace that brings about transformation? Plummer's (2009:110) study shows the many flaws in the position that solitude and silence are essential spiritual disciplines. He concludes, 'silence and solitude should not be thought of as spiritual disciplines in and of themselves. They are conditions that aid in the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and biblical meditation'. Plummer correctly demonstrates that solitude is not a practice, but a condition though Foster, referring to solitude, insists that

The Spiritual Disciplines are things that we do. We must never lose sight of this fact. It is one thing to talk piously about "the solitude of the heart," but if that does not somehow work its way into our experience, then we have missed the point of the Disciplines. We are dealing with actions, not merely states of mind.

(Foster 1978:126)

Do Willard and Foster really mean to imply that solitude is 'transformative', so much so that it is the *only* thing that can free a person from ingrained behaviors or ensure a radical relationship to God? Where is the biblical support for such a notion? It is not enough to notice that Jesus sought solitude or that Paul was alone and thereby conclude that they were practicing a discipline that is vital for freedom from sin and intimacy with Christ. That conclusion goes way beyond the evidence.²⁵⁸ It would be more accurate to assert that solitude and silence are important conditions that create an environment whereby a person can more easily and in a more focused, uninterrupted

²⁵⁸ See Plummer (2009) for a brief, but clear study showing various weaknesses in the position of both Foster and Willard that sees solitude and silence as spiritual disciplines. One of the weaknesses revealed by Plummer is the tendency to ignore both context and authorial intent. This is clearly illustrated when Willard (1988:101-102) commenting on Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, quips, 'Most to whom I have spoken about this matter are shocked at the suggestion that the "wilderness," the place of solitude and deprivation, was actually the place of strength and strengthening for our Lord and that the Spirit led him there – as he would lead us there – to ensure that Christ was in the best possible condition for the trial. Willard goes on to claim about Jesus fasting in the wilderness for forty days that 'only then was Jesus at the height of his strength. The desert was his fortress, his place of power' (Willard 1988:102). But is Willard correct here? There is no indication in the text that what Matthew wanted to communicate was that Jesus was at a point of strength through solitude and fasting. This idea is clearly imported by Willard who reads the text through the eyes of the Contemplative Tradition. In addition, Willard fails to see how Scripture treats the wilderness as the place of testing, not the place of strength. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested, not to be strengthened. The emphasis of the text is not a place of strength, but of utter weakness, of temptation and testing. Also, the temptation of Jesus is set in the same context as the temptation of Israel. Both 'sons' were placed into a situation where their sonship was being tested. Israel failed the test in spite of God's gracious provision throughout the time of testing. Jesus passed the test and relied upon his Father's provision. But Matthew does not imply that the reason Jesus passed the test is because he had been practicing solitude and silence and therefore was made strong for the temptations. Rather Matthew's emphasis seems to be Jesus' resolve even in the face of great weakness to fulfill his mission as Son of God according to the Father's plan, taking the way of humility and suffering, without taking the short-cuts that Satan proposed.

way engage in the disciplines which Scripture does in fact clearly describe and even command, such as study of Scripture, prayer, fasting, or biblical meditation.²⁵⁹

So then, it appears that many within the Contemplative Tradition display a major weakness at the very point of delimiting what practices should be included as spiritual disciplines. In the case of Foster and Willard, at least, they clearly include practices on the list of spiritual disciplines which may not be such 'transformative' practices at all; at least, Scripture does not seem to portray them as 'means of grace'. At the same time, Foster and Willard have the tendency to read the practice of the disciplines back into New Testament passages where these disciplines may not have been intended by the biblical author at all (i.e., 1 Cor 9:27; Rm 6:13). This anachronistic reading of New Testament texts distorts the author's intended meaning and gives the false impression that the spiritual disciplines were more central to the Bible's view of transformation than they in fact appear to have been.

We have demonstrated that the Contemplative Tradition holds strongly to the idea that the spiritual disciplines are the primary means by which transformation comes to Christ-followers. We have also stated that Paul does not explicitly share this idea, at least a careful reading of his letters shows almost no mention at all of the practice of spiritual disciplines as a means of transformation. This is not to say that Paul was somehow against the practice of specific disciplines which brought one into close contact and communion with the God who transforms. Paul's letters demonstrate with great clarity that Paul was a man of prayer and a man of the Scriptures.²⁶⁰ He practiced these particular spiritual disciplines, it would appear, with great regularity. However, what we do not clearly see is Paul connecting the use of these disciplines to the means of transformation as though the practice of prayer itself was the necessary means by

²⁵⁹ 'It is undeniable that there is a scriptural expectation for believers to pray, fast, read Scripture, care for others, evangelize, etc.' (Plummer 2009:102). That is, 'spiritual disciplines' is a biblical concept, but solitude should not be included in this category. More helpful is the perspective of Mulholland (1993:136), who rather than including solitude in the list of spiritual disciplines, calls it one of the 'inner dynamics of how we engage in the disciplines, the deep inner posture of being we bring to the disciplines'.

²⁶⁰ See, for example, the many prayers of Paul (Rm 1:9-10; 10:1; 15:5-6; 13; 30-33; 2 Cor 1:11; 12:8; 13:7-9; Phlp 1:9-11; 4:6-7; 1 Th 3:10, 11-13; 5:17, 23-24, 25; 2 Th 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:1-2, 5, 16; Phlm 6).

which God brought about changes in him. In other words, it is not clear that Paul believed that by engaging in the discipline of prayer itself that this engagement in prayer was the effective means by which transformation occurred. Rather what we see are Paul's prayers as petitions to God asking him to work in the lives of others. The act of prayer was not the means of transformation and thus a discipline that Paul had to engage in in order to be changed. Rather prayer was the means of communication with God whereby the needy one brought his requests to the great source of transforming power. God would do his work in any way and at any time he so desired. It was not dependent upon the person's frequency or fervency in prayer. In fact, there is an interesting example where we see in Paul's prayer that the means of spiritual blessing is not in the act prayer itself, but in something else. In 1 Thessalonians 3:10 Paul comments, 'we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith'. Paul's stay in Thessalonica was cut short (1 Th 2:17) and thus he was not able to accomplish with the believers all that was necessary for them to have a mature faith. Paul realizes this and thus prays that God would work in such a way that Paul would be able to return to them. But there is an ultimate purpose in this desire to return. Paul wants to be the instrument that God uses to 'shore up the deficiencies in their faith'. Their growth towards greater maturity, whether in this case it implied a deeper or more accurate knowledge of certain areas of the faith (1 Th 4:1-5:11), or if it had a moral component (1 Th 4:1-12), the point is the same, Paul sees himself as the 'means' that God will use to supply what is lacking in their faith. No doubt this is a reference to Paul's teaching ministry. Paul's pastoral presence and his explaining of the gospel faith is what will shore up that which is lacking. Prayer is not the means to transformation here; it is the vehicle through which Paul communicates his burden and desire to see the believers and to be the 'means' God uses to strengthen their faith. This same function for prayer is common in Paul's letters. In fact, prayer for Paul is generally petitioning God for him to work in others or expressing thanksgiving to him for what he has or will do; it is not usually a discipline which when practiced brings about change in the person praying. It is thus less a discipline to be habitually practiced and more a vehicle of communication to be enjoyed.

So then, if Paul did not espouse the practice of the spiritual disciplines as the primary means of transformation, what was Paul's view? When summarizing Paul's view of the means of transformation we find five key 'means' that Paul develops:

7.3.3.1 Transformation is experienced through faith (Gal 2:19-20; 3:3; Rom 6:11)

Paul makes this important claim in Galatians 2:19-20. He argues that he had been crucified with Christ. The result of this co-crucifixion was that Paul had died. He almost certainly is echoing what he later wrote in Romans 6:6, 'our old man was crucified together with Christ'. Thus when Paul asserts that he 'no longer lives' he is signifying that his old man, all that he was in his unregenerate state, has ceased to exist. And yet Paul can go on to claim that 'the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God'. Paul has died, yet he lives. But the nature and mode of this new life is vastly different from the old life. Christ lives in him now. That is, he lives through Christ's indwelling presence, something that was not true of his old man. His life is fully identified with Christ so that his new life is a Christ-empowered, Christ-energized life. In addition, this new life that the new Paul lives is a 'faith-life' (he lives ἐν πίστει). Contextually this refers to the fact that he does not seek to be justified by the works of the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), but rather by faith in Jesus Christ (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). He recognizes that he has died to the law and now lives to God. Paul's point can be summarized, 'the new life as a Christ-follower is a life lived by faith. This new life begins by faith and progresses towards its ultimate goal by faith, not by law-works'.

Galatians 3:1-6 is even clearer regarding this matter of faith as a means of spiritual transformation. Paul's interest is to clarify how one reaches the goal of the Christian pilgrimage (ἐπιτελεῖσθε). It appears that the Galatians have been influenced to believe that they could reach maturity in Christ by means of the 'flesh' (νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε). The apostle corrects this erroneous idea and points the Galatians towards the only adequate means of transformation, namely 'by the Spirit,' the very same way that they were brought into a relationship with Christ.²⁶¹ In other words, the means by which

²⁶¹ Dunn (1993:153) is correct when he states regarding the Galatians' experience of 'receiving the Spirit' (Gal 3:2) that 'this formulation was already more or less a technical term to speak of conversion and the

ongoing transformation towards the goal of Christlikeness occurs is the same as the means by which one begins the Christian life (ἐναρξάμενοι). It is from beginning to end a work of the Spirit of God. But Paul is even more concrete in his description of the proper means for spiritual transformation. Notice the parallels and the contrasts that Paul draws:

Galatians 3:2	Galatians 3:5
ἐλάβετε τὸ πνεῦμα	ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν
ἐξ ἔργων νόμου	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου
ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;	ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

Paul uses two rhetorical questions each of which expects the same answer – ‘*by the hearing of faith*’ – to demonstrate that both the beginning of the Christian pilgrimage (that is, the moment when a person receives the Holy Spirit), and the ongoing life of the Christian (described here as the powerful working of the Spirit in the midst of the church) take place through a believing response to the gospel (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως). The Christian life begins and continues by faith! Or viewed from the opposite perspective, a person does not begin the Christian life by successful performance of ‘law-works’ nor does she experience the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit through ‘law-works.’ But notice how Paul amplifies this parallelism as a third rhetorical question from Galatians 3:3 is added to the comparison:

Galatians 3:3	Galatians 3:2	Galatians 3:5
ἐναρξάμενοι	ἐλάβετε τὸ πνεῦμα	ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα...
πνεύματι	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου	ἐξ ἔργων νόμου
νῦν ἐπιτελεῖσθε;		
σαρκί	ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;	ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

It is evident that Paul equates πνεύματι (a work of the Spirit) and ἀκοῆς πίστεως (a believing response to the gospel). At the same time, Paul equates ἔργων νόμου (obedience to the requirements of the law) and σαρκί (human effort). In other words, seeking to receive the Spirit or to experience an ongoing work of the Spirit through ‘law-works’ is the same as attempting to reach the goal of the Christian life ‘by the flesh’. In

beginning of Christian discipleship ... It focuses the fact that for Paul and the first Christians this was the decisive and determinative element in the event or process of conversion and initiation; hence the nearest thing to a definition of ‘Christian’ in the NT’.

the same way, receiving the Spirit and experiencing His ongoing work through ‘the hearing of faith’ is the same as beginning and continuing ‘by the Spirit’.

Paul’s point is simply that progress towards the goal of the Christian life – conformity to the image of Christ – is never attained through raw human effort (σάρξ or ἔργων νόμου), no matter how diligent.²⁶² One cannot and will not reach Christian maturity through the works of the law. Galatians 2:16-3:10 demonstrates with all clarity the total inadequacy of ‘works of the law’-- no one is justified by the works of the law (Gl. 2:16), no one receives the Spirit by the works of the law (Gl. 3:2), no one experiences the Spirit’s ongoing works of power by the works of the law (Gl. 3:5), and all who live depending upon the works of the law (Gl. 3:10) are under a curse. His point is clear; progress towards the goal of Christian maturity is a work of the Spirit of God. And Paul equates this ‘Spirit-work with ‘the hearing of faith’. In other words, to be brought to completion (ἐπιτελεῖσθε) by the Spirit goes hand in hand with responding with faith to the Christian message. Or to relate this to the work of transformation, true change comes through faith.²⁶³ Faith is an important means by which the Spirit realizes his transforming work in believers.

We see this same emphasis on faith as a means of transformation illustrated in Romans 6:11, ‘reckon yourselves (λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς) dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus’. Paul has persuasively argued that all who are ‘in Christ’ have died to sin and

²⁶² Even practices as ‘spiritual’ as the spiritual disciplines when turned into obligations or when viewed improperly as a person’s indispensable contribution to their sanctification can become like ‘works of the law’ and thus can impede rather than help growth in godliness.

²⁶³What is faith? Though Paul does not here define faith, he sets it in direct contrast to ‘works of the law’ and to ‘flesh.’ Therefore we can conclude that whatever faith is it does not consist in ‘law-works’ nor in ‘human effort’. This is not to say that there is no relationship between faith and works. All true faith will inevitably show itself by the works it produces (James 2:14-26). Luther expressed, ‘Faith doesn’t ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn’t do such works is without faith’ (Luther 1954:xvii). Yet faith itself is not a work. It was for this reason that Calvin spoke of faith as ‘a kind of vessel, because we are incapable of receiving Christ, unless we are emptied and come with open mouth to receive his grace’ (Calvin 1989:III, XI 43). Faith, therefore, is our trusting dependence upon Christ. It is both a gift of the Spirit and the means by which we receive the Spirit. And Paul asserts that it is through this faith in the message of Christ that one not only is justified and receives the Holy Spirit at conversion, but also is brought to completion in the Christian life and continues to experience the ongoing powerful work of the Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit and the response of faith are united here. Transformation is thus a work of the Spirit which is experienced through faith. Faith is, therefore, a means by which the Spirit transforms believers into Christ-likeness.

thus are alive to God. Now they must 'reckon' this to be true for them in their daily lives. This means to personally recognize that what Christ has accomplished for us and our participation in these redemptive works are both true. He did die for our sins and I was truly crucified with him. Thus what he did for me and what he says about me is true, it is valid, and I must believe it and appropriate it in my daily life of obedience to him. This I do by faith. I may not feel dead to sin nor may I feel like one who has been raised with Christ, but I must respond by faith, judging these things to be historically valid for my life because of my union with Christ by faith. As I reckon these things to be true and as I live in obedience to Christ, God's transforming work progresses in my life. Once again, Paul has demonstrated that faith is a means of transformation.

But somehow this first 'means' will seem somewhat theoretical or impractical to those who want a pragmatic duty to perform. How then is faith exercised in a concrete way so that it becomes a means of transformation? Since faith is 'trusting dependence upon Christ' then a 'faith-life' is a moment by moment trusting in him. It involves believing his word and what he says he has accomplished for our salvation and trusting in the personal implications of this redemptive work for us. That is, it requires a deep personal conviction that the 'indicative' is true and then an obedient response to the imperative that results. In concrete terms, it means being personally convinced that 'I died with Christ' and then 'reckoning' this to be true by giving no allegiance to the passions and desires of the old man since my death with Christ means sin no longer has authority over me. It means having the personal conviction that I really was 'buried with Christ through baptism' and then living in sincere obedience to the fact that I must now 'walk in newness of life'. Faith as a means of transformation means a whole-hearted belief in the accomplishment of Christ's saving death and vindicating resurrection and then a moment by moment 'reckoning' of these truths to be true and necessary in my daily decisions, reactions, and actions. It means being convinced that my true identity is the 'new man' who is in Christ and then living in harmony with this new identity through moment by moment trusting dependence upon the indwelling Christ. This kind of exercise of faith is one of the means by which God brings us to 'completion' in Christ.

7.3.3.2 Transformation comes through a renewal of the mind (Rm 12:2)

To the degree that a person's mind is mired in the thought patterns of 'this age' their life will reflect the 'will of this age' and thus confusion regarding the will of God. Thus Paul in Romans 12:2 urges the Roman Christians to avoid all conformity to the present evil age and instead to be profoundly changed. This change will come, according to Paul, as the Christian's mindset is reformatted. Their whole structure of thought must be made new, and they must begin to 'rethink' life from a totally new perspective. No longer can they adopt and reflect the attitudes and perspectives of the depraved world system that serves as their daily environment. Instead they must embrace the mindset of the 'age to come'. As people who have been rescued from this present evil age they need new creation attitudes that give evidence of their new location – they are now 'in Christ', - their new capacity for obedience – they are free to 'walk in newness of life' - and their belongingness to the new eschatological age – they are citizens of the kingdom of God that has invaded this present world.

But how does this 'renewed mind' come about? Barth (1968:436) says that the renewal of the mind is 'the act of rethinking'. This implies that there must be a fundamental change in the patterns of thought that govern a person's life. The mind is renewed as one recognizes 'this age' modes of thinking and rejects them in favor of 'new creation' attitudes and convictions. So for example, rather than a self-promoting and self-exalting individualism, Paul exhorts the Christians not to think more highly about themselves than they ought to think, 'but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned' (Rm 12:3). They are to recognize that they are members of the body of Christ where there is unity in the midst of diversity and each is to find their appropriate place according to the χάρισμα they received from God. Or rather than being overwhelmed by the tribulations that often afflict us during this earthly pilgrimage Paul espouses another outlook, a new creation one, which can foster the renewal of the inner person day by day (2 Cor 4:16-18) even in the face of continued hardship. Recognize that the trials of this present life though real and painful are temporary and are in fact actively producing something indescribably greater for us, an eternal weight of glory. Therefore, rather than having our minds fixed on our pain, we

are to adopt a perspective that enables us to ‘see’ the unseen realities and promises of the age to come. This eternal perspective will bring deep inner renewal and will result in ongoing transformation in our lives. To renew the mind, therefore, is to replace any ‘this worldly mindset’ that we might have with a new creation mindset. This is not a mere superficial change of opinions or a simple exchange of old ideas for new ones. Mind renewal means a deep internalizing of the convictions, priorities, and attitudes of the new age to replace those of the present age. As this ‘rethinking’ process works itself out in the believer’s life, they are progressively transformed.

How can this process of mind-renewal occur in concrete terms? To begin with, there must be an awareness of what are some of the destructive and erroneous ‘this-age’ beliefs and convictions that control our present thought structures. That is, a person will not ‘renew’ the mind unless they can identify ways in which their mindset has been conformed already to ‘this present age’. Perhaps the best way to discover some of these attitudes and opinions is by saturating one’s mind with the biblical worldview. As God’s thoughts begin to fill one’s mind and are believed and put into practice – mere accumulation of knowledge is never sufficient, these godly ways of thinking must seep into the heart and begin to be expressed by the life – they come into conflict with competing ideas and convictions that are already imbedded there, but which are contrary to God’s truth. In the clash of these two systems of thought one is faced with a decision as to which idea is the right one to hold. When God’s truth crashes into a long-cherished ‘this age’ idea and the person chooses to believe God’s truth, this collision dislodges the old idea. As the ‘new creation’ idea is reinforced by further exposure and by continual acceptance of it, it slowly becomes ‘attached’ and over time takes over as the imbedded conviction to which the person now holds. The mind is thus renewed little by little through this ongoing process of collisions between ‘this age’ thinking and ‘new age’ thinking and the adoption of God’s thoughts and rejection of this world’s thoughts.

7.3.3.3 Transformation comes through beholding as in a mirror the glory of God (2 Cor 3:18)

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul compares Christians with Moses who enjoyed unfettered access to God. Whenever he returned to God's presence he went 'unveiled' and was thus able to see God's glory which had a transforming effect on him, causing his face to shine with this very same divine glory that he beheld. In the same way, says Paul, all Christians are now 'unveiled-ones' who have been granted the incredible privilege of open communion with the God of glory. This communion, however, is 'as in a mirror'. That is, it is now indirect, coming through fellowship with Christ in the gospel. Yet, this communion with the glory of God in the face of Christ through the gospel still has a transforming impact on those who enjoy it. As the Christian enjoys personal communion with Christ in the gospel she is gradually changed by this encounter into the same image of the one whom she beholds. In other words, she is progressively becoming more like Christ by beholding his image.

But what does it mean in concrete terms to 'behold the glory of the Lord' in such a transforming way? We must first understand the significance of this 'beholding' being indirect, rather than the direct vision that Moses enjoyed. Our vision of the glory of God, for now, is 'as in a mirror'. We see reflections of Christ in various ways, but they are indirect ways. They are, however, in no way less significant, nor are they less real. They are in truth encounters with the divinely glorious living Christ, but they are not now face to face. They are rather mediated by His Spirit through the gospel. When the gospel is proclaimed, when it is read or heard, or meditated upon, the Christian because she is unveiled, both in heart (unlike the Jews, 2 Cor 3:14) and face (like Moses, 2 Cor 3:16), can see clear manifestations of the living Christ in it. And here in the gospel where the glory of God is revealed, as the Christian truly 'sees' this glory, as she recognizes it and internalizes it, and as she enjoys communion with Christ through it, she is being changed into his image. This change is not something magical that simply comes as a result of reading or hearing. The transformation is wrought as the person internalizes the gospel, as the gospel is understood, applied, and lived out in all of life it results in changed hearts, minds and lives. Thus to truly encounter Christ in the gospel means not

merely reading it or listening to its words, but to engage with it with all one's heart. It is through a careful, humble, honest reflection on the message and an earnest application of it to everyday life that the Christ of the gospel and the gospel of Christ have a molding influence over us, shaping us into the image of the Christ we behold in his gospel.

7.3.3.4 Transformation comes through a participation in the sufferings and mission of Christ (Phlp 3:10)

Paul's deepest longing was to know Christ in a profound and personal way. This kind of deep intimate knowledge of Christ meant for Paul experiencing both the power of Christ's resurrection – the comprehensive power of God displayed through Christ's victory over death, through his eternal glory, and through his mighty work in and through the church – and a participation in Christ's sufferings – the sufferings he endured as a result of his earthly life and ministry. And as one actively participates in the sufferings of Christ, Christ is at work re-shaping the person, conforming them to the image of his death. In other words, the process of transformation into a cruciform person is the effect of participating in Christ's sufferings.

If then participation in the sufferings of Christ serves as a means of transformation, what does it mean to participate in Christ's sufferings? In the first place it must be understood that participating in Christ's sufferings is not to be equated with just any kind of suffering. It is not the mere fact of enduring suffering that results in conformity to Christ's death, for one can go through suffering with bitterness and arrogant defiance, railing at God and cursing those all around. This kind of attitude does not result in conformity to Christ. At the same time, there is suffering that is a normal part of life in a fallen world and suffering that is caused by sin or irresponsible living; this kind of suffering is not what Paul means by a participation in the sufferings of Christ and these trials do not necessarily bring about transformation into the image of Jesus. Rather to have a share in Christ's sufferings refers to any hardship that is a result of engagement in the gospel mission or sincere identification with Christ and his cause. As noted in Chapter 3 this is most clearly illustrated by the 'mind' of Christ displayed in Philippians 2:5-11. Christ's

decision to not use or abuse his privileged status for his own gain (Phlp 2:6), his total self-emptying by which he took on the form of a servant (Phlp 2:7), his extreme self-humiliation through which he demonstrated whole-souled obedience (Phlp 2:8), and his ultimate self-sacrifice, whereby he gave himself up to be publicly crucified for sinners (Phlp 2:8), all of these decisions and actions are graphic examples of Christ's suffering. All of his privations, persecution, and humiliation that he experienced in fulfillment of his mission constitute 'his sufferings'. Paul too participated in these sufferings as he selflessly engaged in gospel mission and was continually hounded and mistreated. His decisions to consider loss all that he had gained, to forsake his own righteousness and to consider everything as rubbish in exchange for Christ was evidence that Paul was sharing in Christ's sufferings and thereby was being conformed by the divine hand into a cruciform image, the very 'form' that Christ had in his death.

In the same way, as Christians engage in the gospel mission which inevitably exposes one to suffering of some kind, and as they make decisions to pursue the knowledge of Christ at all costs, God is at work molding them to the image of the crucified One. As they selflessly serve others even at great cost to themselves, as they empty themselves of all self-righteousness in order to receive the righteousness of God through sincere faith in Christ, as they humble themselves to live in joyful obedience even when this means death or personal humiliation, and as they willingly participate in any kind of suffering for Christ and his church, they are being re-formed, slowly molded into the very cruciform shape that Jesus himself bore as he died for them. Transformation comes through a real participation in the sufferings and mission of Christ.

7.3.3.5 Transformation comes by severing all conformity to this age (Rm 12:2; 2 Cor 7:1)

One of the chief obstacles to the transformation process is the continual pull of the forces of 'this age' which persist in exercising a shaping influence in the lives of Christians. Though the Christian has been rescued from 'this age' and has been crucified to the world yet these enemy forces display incredible resilience in their ongoing efforts to mold Christians to their image. Thus Paul was forced to exhort the

Romans 'do not be sculpted by this age' (Rm 12:2). Earlier he had charged the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from everything that pollutes (2 Cor 7:1) including inappropriate relationships with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14) and through this they would 'perfect holiness in the fear of God'. The threat of being sucked into the filthy vortex of this age or being contaminated by the muck of the ungodly world is ever present. Therefore, the Christian, in order to promote the transformation process must break all allegiance to this present evil age.

How does the disciple of Jesus do this? Paul understood that in a very real sense there already was a 'clean break' from the powers of this age. He professes that Christ 'gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age' (Gl 1:4). Later in the same letter he announces 'the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gl 6:14). Thus living free of the '(mis)shaping influence' of the world was possible for the Christian. But how does the Christ-follower experience this 'already-won' freedom from this age? The primary way is through active obedience to the commands of Scripture. Thus Paul encourages the Roman Christians 'do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts'. Paul has already stated the holy indicative – the Christian is dead to sin (Rm 6:2) and thus sin has no right whatsoever to reign over her. Now he follows with the necessary imperative – don't let sin reign in your body (Rm 6:12)! In order to accomplish this there is a negative side and a positive side. On the one hand the Christian must not offer his body as an instrument to commit sin. On the other hand she must offer her body to God (Rm 6:13). In fact, the total dedication of one's body to God is the only logical response to God's multitudinous displays of mercy (Rm 12:1). This act of staving off the world's influence through continual decisions to reject sin's advance and to dedicate oneself to God is a crucial part of chipping away at the obstacles to transformation. By severing all ties to this age, whether through abstention from sinful desires, by rejecting the thought patterns that characterize this world, or by avoiding compromising relationships, the Christ-follower is fostering change away from a 'this-world-conformity' towards Christoformity, the very goal of his pilgrimage. Hence, there is no short-cut, no magical potion, and no instant holiness. The believer must actively obey the commands of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

In summary, though the Contemplative Tradition alleges that the primary and most essential means by which transformation comes about in the life of a Christ-follower is through the practice of the spiritual disciplines, Paul seldom mentions these disciplines, and even when he does he does not usually associate them with the active means of transformation. The means of transformation that Paul highlights probably appear ‘impractical’ or not concrete enough for many people in our pragmatic world. Yet the desire for concrete answers does not give us license to import into Paul’s theology practices that he does not link with the means of transformation. As admitted above, Paul certainly believed in certain of the spiritual disciplines and would not belittle their usefulness for the spiritual life. Yet when his letters are scoured for answers regarding what he personally adduces as the appropriate means by which God brings about transformation what one finds is faith, the renewal of the mind, internalizing the gospel of Christ, participating in his sufferings, and disengagement from conformity to this age’s patterns, priorities, and convictions.

7.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on a comparison and contrast between the Paul’s concept of transformation and that of the contemporary Contemplative Tradition, specifically the teachings of Dallas Willard and Richard Foster, two of the most widely published adherents of this ‘stream’ of Christianity. This study found that though there are some agreements, there are at least three important differences. The most significant difference relates to the specific means that bring about transformation towards the goal of conformity to Christ’s image. Thus we read from the pen of one contemplative,

That, briefly, is how spiritual formation in Christ is done: vision, intention and method, in that order. In this way we succeed, as Paul says in Romans 6:13, in “yielding ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” It can be done. It can be yours and it can be mine, and we can give it to other people, if, in the fellowship of Christ, we offer them the vision, exemplify and help them with the intention, and teach them the method.

(Willard n.d.)²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ This quote is from an unpublished article entitled, “Spiritual Formation: What it is, and How it is Done” found on <http://www.dwillard.org/articles>, viewed on December 22, 2015.

This almost formulaic approach that proposes that VIM – vision, intention, and method, where ‘method’ refers to the practice of the spiritual disciplines – is the sure path to spiritual growth, is vastly different from Paul’s emphasis. Paul did not neglect spiritual practices, but neither did he tie them in such a direct way to the means of spiritual transformation. For Paul, the essence of transformation was the Christian living consistently each day with his new identity in Christ – a new creation citizen united with Christ in his redeeming works.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This study has attempted to analyze Paul's concept of transformation, especially as it is described in four passages from his letters where Paul explicitly uses words containing the $\mu\omicron\pi\phi$ root, which are generally translated 'transformation': Galatians 4:19, Philippians 3:10, Romans 12:2, and 2 Corinthians 3:18. The study also briefly interacted with other Pauline texts that address the concept of transformation: 2 Corinthians 4:6, Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 7:1, and Romans 8:29 with Philippians 3:21. The study then sought to compare and contrast Paul's view of transformation as described in the passages mentioned with the view of transformation often witnessed in the writings of the Contemplative Tradition, specifically Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. The goal of this concluding chapter is to briefly summarize the main points of each of the preceding chapters and then to offer some general conclusions related to both Paul's view of transformation and its relationship to that of the Contemplative Tradition.

The first passage analyzed was Galatians 4:19. This particular text speaks of Paul's deep emotional distress caused by the recent spiritual failings of the Galatian Christ-followers who have regressed in their Christian discipleship, choosing to return to their former slavery under the impotent $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ and to seek justification through 'works of the law' rather than through faith in Christ. This distressing misstep was caused by the manipulative and deceitful influence of the 'agitators' who duped the brethren into trying to advance in their faith through adherence to works of the law like guarding feast days and circumcision and thereby effectively rejecting the gospel Paul preached. This foolish infidelity brought such intense anguish to Paul that it reminded him of the difficult time he experienced when he first preached the gospel to the Galatians. He had invested so much in their spiritual development and yet all appeared for naught as they stumbled backwards towards the slavery and deception that once characterized them in their pre-Christian lives. Paul's pain is so sharp that it could best be compared with a woman in labor. Paul acknowledges that this same agonizing pain has overtaken him

once again and asserts that it will continue until God's ongoing work of bringing His Son to full expression in the Galatian Christians is complete. That is, Paul has become painfully aware of the deficiencies in their faith and now knows that their process of spiritual development which has obviously been short-circuited (Gl 5:7) must continue until it reaches the ultimate goal of maturity, a maturity which Paul graphically describes as an embryo being fully shaped and reaching the point where it is ready to be born. Paul is experiencing labor pains, but it is the Galatians who are pregnant! Christ is the embryo within them, but he is as yet woefully 'unformed' or 'misshaped' as evidenced by recent events and thus Paul must continue in pain until this Christ-forming process is complete in their lives. They are not yet ready to 'give birth' because Christ, the embryo in them, has not been fully formed.

This passage is really a sharp rebuke of the immaturity and foolishness of the Galatian believers. It is evident that Paul feels that the Christ-formation that is going on in them should have been far more advanced by now and that the labor pains he is experiencing should have subsided. Unfortunately this is not the case as the embryo in them is still unformed and the Galatians are to blame because of their foolish and unthinking acceptance of the Judaizing teachings of those whom Paul calls 'the agitators'.

But how can this Christ-formation in the Galatians progress as it was intended? Paul addresses one necessary ingredient in the larger context, specifically in Galatians 3:1-5, namely faith. He asks the Galatians in 3:3 if they are 'so ignorant' to think that even though they 'began by the Spirit' that they can now reach the goal of their Christian walk (ἐπιτελέω) by the flesh (σάρκι)? The clear answer expected by Paul is an unequivocal, NO! In other words, Paul is forcefully correcting the recent 'ways' of the Galatians. They received God's Spirit by faith (Gl 3:2), but now they are living as those the only way they will experience ongoing spiritual transformation towards the goal of maturity in Christlikeness is through their own efforts, efforts like submitting to circumcision, obeying feast days, and other 'works of the law'. This is impossible, demands Paul. Just as the Christian life begins by a response of faith to the gospel, so it moves forward to

its intended goal by faith. The Galatians have lost sight of this evidently because of the bewitching influence of these false teachers and their judaizing message. The way back, therefore, is to return to a life of faith and thus to a full submission to the Pauline gospel, thereby rejecting the 'other gospel' preached by Paul's opponents. This same call to return to a faith-life is echoed in Galatians 2:20 where Paul reminds the Galatians that they were crucified with Christ; they are in fact 'dead'. Yet they live, but their new life is actually energized by Christ living in them. His resurrection life is that which gives them new life. This new life is expressed and lived out 'by faith in the Son of God'. It cannot be lived out in any other way. The life of faith is a life of active dependence upon the indwelling Christ, a life affirming co-crucifixion with Christ and Christ's resurrection life in them as the believer's new reality. It is such a faith-life which is the way by which Christ the embryo is brought to full term in their lives. They must live by faith, by whole-souled dependence upon Christ in them, if they are to reach the goal of Christlikeness.

The second Pauline text considered in this study was Philippians 3:10. In this passage Paul warns the Philippian Christians to be on the lookout for certain opponents who were advocating a pursuit of the kind of 'righteousness' that comes from circumcision or other 'works of the flesh' when in fact this was a self-originating 'righteousness' which was totally worthless. Paul had once been immersed in this same kind of fruitless pursuit, but had since renounced this 'me-righteousness' in exchange for an 'of God' righteousness which God gives not because of one's obedience to law, but rather through one's faith in Christ. As a result, Paul had 'recalculated' the value he assigned to everything in his life. The things which once held worth, like status, personal achievements, family heritage and religious attainments were now viewed as empty and worthless. On the other hand, the one thing he formerly despised above all things, now stood as supreme in his affections and on his list of that which was truly valuable, the knowledge of Christ. Everything else was trash in comparison with an experiential knowledge of Christ. For Paul, to know Christ consisted of two vital experiences. First, it involved experiencing the unlimited, all-encompassing power of his glorious resurrection. Second, it involved an active participation in the very sufferings that Christ endured. This 'participation' could be attained through sacrificial service in gospel

ministry with all of the hardships, persecutions, and deprivations that this entailed, and through full identification with Christ and his mission, no matter the cost. This 'share' in Christ's suffering and humiliation had a formative influence in Paul's life, progressively shaping him so that he took on more and more the same 'form' that Christ himself had as he suffered humiliation and ultimately crucifixion. Paul wanted to take on the same self-emptying, the same self-humbling, and the same willing self-denying obedience that Christ himself displayed as he stepped down from heaven's glory, donned humanity's flesh, and ultimately surrendered his life to the cruel cross. Thus as Paul gave himself to the gospel mission to which he was called and as he endured all of the hardships that such a mission and a sacrificial Christ-centered life entail, God was at work slowly shaping him into a cruciform person, a person who took on the very 'form' of Jesus himself, but Jesus as he hung on Calvary fully devoted to his father's purposes. Paul was aware that this 'remolding' process had to continue until he ultimately reached his yet unreach goal, to be raised with Christ. Thus Paul continued persevering in the pursuit of his final goal, to be with Christ eternally and thus to be like him.

How then does this 'formation' into the image of the crucified Christ take place? This transformation occurs primarily as the Christ-follower 'shares' in Christ's sufferings through a sacrificial engagement in gospel life and mission. Such involvement in living out the gospel and serving gospel purposes in the world often exposes the believer to hardship and persecution. As the disciple of Jesus remains faithful in the face of this identification with Christ's suffering, she is progressively 're-shaped' as self-righteousness and self-dependence are slowly stripped away and the person learns to adopt the same mindset that Christ himself displayed in his incarnation, earthly ministry and especially his sacrificial death. Such a transformation process ultimately prepares the Christian for the future resurrection when Jesus Christ himself will 'transform her lowly body to be like his glorious body' and thereby the Christian will reach the goal 'of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'.

The third passage examined in this study was Romans 12:2. Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to offer their entire lives to God as a sacrifice since they have been recipients

of God's indescribable mercy. But the nature of this self-giving is very different than the typical sacrifices offered to God. This sacrifice is to be a living one, one which involves the giving of the very existence of the person and one which 'keeps on giving' throughout the whole of their life. Though the gift given is irretrievable, it is not a once for all sacrifice of the person; it is rather an ongoing moment by moment dedication of the totality of life to God as the truly appropriate expression of worship to Him who has displayed such mercy to sinners.

But not only are the Roman Christians to offer their very lives as a sacrifice to God, but they also are to continually resist all attempts by 'this age' to sculpt them in such a way that they take on its distorted shape. Instead they are to be continually transformed through a total makeover of the way they see and think about life. That is, that which is to be the primary shaping influence over their mindsets is no longer the malevolent forces of the present world in which they live – whether the dark and dastardly desires of demons and spiritual forces, or the fads and fashions of Hollywood, the priorities and passions of Wall Street, or the whims and wiles of governments and academia or media outlets. This bondage has been broken by Christ and therefore must be soundly rejected at all moments. In its place, the whole structure of their thought processes must be made radically new. They need a brand new orientation to life which will come about as their minds are slowly transformed and thus molded into new creation minds which will enable them to discern God's will and thus to continually live out the 'rational worship' for which they have been redeemed. As Paul clearly teaches in Romans 12:2, the practical means by which this transformation takes place is 'the renewal of the mind'. This implies a continual 're-formatting' of the person's manner of thinking. The will of God is to become the governing standard in all of their thinking. In order to make this a reality the person must identify 'this age' kinds of thinking and replace them with 'new age' perspectives. A life saturated with gospel truths which replace not just individual thoughts, but the whole framework of convictions, thoughts, and attitudes is what is ultimately required. This renewing of the mind so that the person's whole mindset is re-focused and re-oriented around God's will is one of the primary means by which transformation takes place.

The fourth text analyzed in this study is 2 Corinthians 3:18. This complex passage can be summarized: God had called Paul to be a minister of the permanently glorious new covenant, a covenant that far surpassed even the old covenant in glory. However, the fullness of the glory of this new covenant had not yet been manifested; it awaited a future day when that glory would be revealed in its completeness. Because of this firm hope Paul was able to exercise his ministry with great freedom, a freedom to speak and act candidly and openly, without feeling the pressure to conceal anything. The candor and frankness of his ministry was quite different from what happened with Moses who covered his face with a veil so that the Israelites could not perceive what was to eventually become of the glory shining there, namely that it would one day be gone, replaced by the greater glory of the coming Christ. Unfortunately the Jews did not respond to Paul's proclamation of the gospel because their spiritual perception was numb. This same inability to perceive God's glory in the gospel plagues the Jews even up until the present time, says Paul. Whenever the old covenant was publicly read they were incapable of seeing its revelation of Christ and thus refused to believe and obey its message. But in the same way that Moses unveiled himself to commune with God, so too when a person turns to God's Spirit they are freed from the obstructing veil that blinds them. Thus all Christ followers now enjoy 'unveiled' communion with God and thus enjoy a vision of his glory as mediated through the glory of Christ expressed in the gospel. This vision of God's glory in the gospel is transformative; the Spirit reshapes the lives of everyone who beholds this glory so that little by little they take on the very same image they behold, the image of God in Christ.

This passage discloses the truth that the Christ-follower is progressively transformed as she beholds the glory of God as revealed in Christ through the gospel. Hence, a vision of Christ through the gospel has power to change lives. When a person's life-gaze is directed firmly at the glorious Jesus as he is powerfully presented in the gospel, the Holy Spirit acts and 're-shapes' the person into this very image that the person is fixed upon. But to fix one's gaze upon the glory of God expressed in the gospel is not some superficial ritual or occasional act. It is rather a life centered in the gospel. It is a mindset saturated by the truths revealed in the gospel. It is to take on a gospel attitude and

gospel priorities. It is simply to be shaped in every way by the person of Christ, by his teachings, attitudes, character, and ways as they are revealed in the gospel.

Chapter six looked a sampling of passages that, though not using words generally translated ‘transform’, clearly express the concept of transformation. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul declares that even though his physical and emotional life are often ebbing away as he experiences intense suffering in the exercise of his apostolic mission, yet he recognizes that this participation in Christ’s sufferings is not in vain for it will bring eternal blessings. At the same time, he fully understands that in spite of these physical hardships God is at work in his inner man transforming him continually. Inner renewal is being produced in him despite increased physical weakness. Thus Paul’s point here is closely akin to Philippians 3:10. In Romans 6:4 Paul affirms that the Christ-follower’s union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection makes it possible for her to live a brand new life. This new life is really ‘resurrection life’. That is, based upon their objective participation in the redemptive works of Jesus, Christ-followers can now partake of the life of the ‘new age’ in the present. Above all this means that they can live in victory over sin here and now. No longer must they or should they live as slaves to sin’s control. They can experience a foretaste of resurrection life in this life. But to experience the reality of these benefits in concrete ways the disciple of Christ must be convinced that he or she is really so and thus think and act according to this new reality. By faith the person must live moment by moment like one who is really dead to sin and alive to God. That is, they must live consistent with their new identity and status, choosing to live in newness of life.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul’s main concern is the purity of the Corinthian believers. He is concerned about the purity of their relationships and the purity of their inner lives. They cannot be contaminated by ungodly people or ungodly practices. He reinforces the importance of this separation from all ungodliness by stringing together several passages from the Old Testament which not only prohibit union with the world, but also promise God’s presence and favor for such separation. Paul concludes this argument by exhorting the Christians to cleanse themselves from everything that could make

them unclean and in this way to 'perfect holiness in the fear of God'. Paul's point is that abstention from the polluting influences of this world is one means by which a disciple of Christ can be transformed so that they experience holiness in their lives. This is not a self-righteous or flesh-propelled work of transformation since Paul grounds this charge on the promises of God. It is, however, a recognition that though it is God who is the active power producing all change, yet he generally does this sanctifying work in harmony with the Christian's active obedience.

The final passages discussed in this study were Romans 8:29 and Philippians 3:21 both of which speak of the eschatological transformation that will occur in all Christians at the future resurrection. Romans 8:29 asserts that God has already determined that those whom he is redeeming will in fact experience the ultimate change whereby they will be finally and fully conformed to the image of Christ. In Philippians 3:21 Paul reveals that Jesus himself will one day re-form our bodily existence so that it is conformed to his glorious body. We will be refitted for eternity, not just the inner person, but even the outer!

In Chapter seven this study provided a comparison and contrast of Paul's concept of transformation with that of the contemporary Contemplative Tradition, specifically two major representatives of this tradition, Dallas Willard and Richard Foster. We found four general lines of agreement between Paul and the contemporary Contemplative Tradition. First, both agree that God is the primary agent in transformation. Humankind's effort alone is totally inadequate to bring about genuine life change; thus transformation is always ultimately a work of God's grace. Second, having said this, both sides agree that God does not work alone in transformation; there is always a divine-human cooperation in the process of life change. Third, both sides recognize that transformation is a long and difficult process that will continue throughout this life. There are no quick fixes and no shortcuts to transformation. Finally, both assert that the goal of transformation is conformity to the image of Christ.

And yet, there are some substantial differences between Paul and the contemporary Contemplative Tradition. Our study considered three such areas. In the first place, there is a significant difference in emphasis regarding the foundation for spiritual transformation. On the one hand, contemplatives like Willard and Foster tend to base their concept of transformation upon subjective realities like a person's daily experience of communion with Christ, whereas Paul's focus is generally upon certain objective realities. For example, contemplatives like Willard and Foster view the vital doctrine of the Christian's union with Christ from a very distinct lens than the one through which Paul sees it. The contemplatives see union with Christ as primarily an experience to be enjoyed and the end part of a process of deepening communion with Christ. Paul, on the other hand, while not denying a subjective element, gives primacy to the objective reality of a Christian's union with Christ. The Christian IS united to Christ through faith, and this is true whether or not her daily experience confirms it at any given moment. This is not to deny the need for pursuing intimacy with Christ in daily experience, but rather to point out that for Paul the foundation and hope of all transformation rests squarely on Christ's already accomplished redemptive works and the Christian's union with him in these works by faith. The believer has in fact died with Christ, been buried with Christ, and been raised with Christ through faith in Christ. This is an objective truth, not dependent upon subjective experience. The practical results of this union include death to sin, rescue from the present evil age, death to the world and the world to us, and the freedom to live a new life in the here and now. All of these results indicate objective realities that presently belong to the one 'united with Christ'. The contemplatives often omit this emphasis as they seek to describe the work of transformation in the lives of Christ-followers.

A second area of disagreement between the contemporary contemplatives and Paul is the primary direction of their focus in the work of transformation. Whereas the Contemplative Tradition tends to focus on the life of Christ – imitation of the way he lived and specifically the practices he engaged in – Paul focuses on the death of Christ and its impact on our identity and thus ultimately, the way we should live in light of this death. The contemplatives boldly state that the way to 'become like Christ' is by

practicing the types of activities he engaged in. Imitation of his habits should bring about a truly transformed life. Paul, however, though not denying calls to imitate Christ, puts his emphasis on the centrality of the death of Christ for the transformation of the Christian. Even when Paul does encourage Christians to imitate Christ his thrust is not principally the daily actions that Christ engaged in, but rather his 'mindset' or the ethics he espoused. The key to true transformation, however, from Paul's vantage point is the death of Christ and what it has accomplished for the believer. The one 'united to Christ by faith' has been crucified with Christ and thus is truly dead to sin and alive to God. In this fact lies the real key to a transformed life.

The third and most significant difference between the contemporary Contemplative Tradition and Paul rests on their view of the means by which transformation takes place. Everywhere in their writings that which most clearly characterizes their teaching about transformation and what seems to truly define what the Contemplative Tradition is, centers on the practice of the spiritual disciplines, especially the disciplines of solitude and prayer. According to the contemplatives the spiritual disciplines are God's effective tool for applying his transforming grace to their lives and thus bringing about change. This is God's main way of producing transformation. And yet, as we peruse Paul's letters we do not find him attributing this role to the practice of the spiritual disciplines. He surely engaged in certain spiritual disciplines like prayer and fasting, but we do not see him explicitly linking the practice of these or other disciplines to his own process of change. In fact, when Paul speaks of the means of transformation he tends to focus on five other elements: faith, renewal of the mind, beholding the glory of the Lord as it is mediated to us through the gospel, participation in the sufferings and mission of Christ, and breaking all ties of conformity with this age. Each of these 'means' was elaborated on in this study and represent some of the key ways that Paul understands transformation to be produced in the disciple of Christ.

Having summarized the main thrust of each of the passages analyzed in this paper and having considered the differences between Paul's view of transformation and that of the

contemporary Contemplative Tradition, we are now ready to conclude this study by adding a few general considerations related to the idea of spiritual transformation.

First, any view of transformation which can be considered consistent with the Pauline voice must seriously grasp the profound need for a total ‘reshaping’ of the believer’s life. Each of the passages examined in this study and beyond them, the whole of Pauline theology shares in common the clear conviction that humankind has been utterly twisted ‘out of shape’. Humankind, though skillfully formed by the Divine Sculptor in the very image of God, has seen this image be grossly distorted, marred nearly beyond all recognition by the malevolent forces of this age and the deceitfulness of sin. The unfortunate consequence is a profound ‘misshapeness’. Like a masterful sculpture that has been defaced by shameless delinquents, the image of God that humankind is, has been disfigured to such a degree that it now stands as a sad caricature of its original form. The solution is a complete ‘reshaping’ (συμμορφίζω, μορφώω, or μεταμορφώω) a re-forming of the now distorted sculpture until it is molded once again to the form originally intended for it. This is the process of transformation about which Paul has been writing in the passages we have considered in this study.

Second, this process of transformation is a God-wrought work realized through a variety of means. The most significant and most foundational element in this process of transformation is a whole-souled dependence upon the redemptive accomplishments of Jesus Christ and the Christian’s participation in these works through their union with Christ by faith. The Pauline voice in Scripture echoes this truth time and again. When all is said and done the most important ‘action’ in our transformation is not what we can do to bring about change, but what He has already done to make change possible. This truth must not be merely implied, it must stand at the center of any theology of transformation. Christ’s death and our union with him in this death, our co-crucifixion with him, is the very key to all hope of change. All transformation is therefore Christ-centered, Christ-dependent, and ultimately moving towards ‘Christ-formity’, the formation of Christ in us.

Third, our dependence upon what the Christ event accomplished should not lead to passivity, but rather to active participation in the process of transformation. Our role is an active one. We are to trust, living in moment by moment dependence and obedience to Christ and his commands as expressed in the Scriptures. We also are to renew our minds an ongoing practice that implies actively rejecting the thought patterns of ‘this age’ and choosing instead to align ourselves with ‘new creation’ thinking. Also, we must engage in gospel ministry and endure and persevere in the midst of the suffering and hardships that this sacrificial service may bring. God is at work through this ‘participation’ in Christ’s sufferings and invites us to joyfully endure and submit to God’s greater purposes in these trials. We can also enjoy vistas of God’s glory in the face of Christ through an internalization of the gospel. As we saturate our lives with the gospel of Christ and the Christ of the gospels – hearing it, reading it, thinking on it, sharing it with others, and letting it form and transform every part of our lives – we are progressively being changed into the very image of the one we behold there. And we should break all illegitimate and soul-damaging ties with the forces and ways of ‘this age’ and the desires and actions that come from it, choosing instead to align ourselves with God’s will. These are some of the ways that we actively participate in our transformation. This active role undoubtedly will involve the practice of certain spiritual disciplines, most especially those that are clearly emphasized in the Scriptures.

Finally, crucial to the whole process of transformation from Paul’s perspective is an eschatological mindset that recognizes our location in the ‘already and not yet’ stage of redemptive history. This emphasis is not readily apparent in the writings of contemplatives like Foster and Willard, and where they do talk about the future it is not clear exactly how the future impacts the present, except to give the Christian hope. But in the context of Paul’s theology of transformation it is vital that the Christian understand the significance of the in-breaking of the new age into the present. The new creation has been inaugurated and the life of the coming kingdom is partially available in the ‘now time’. This has important consequences for the believer’s experience of transformation. The Christ-follower has been rescued already from this present evil age. At the same time the he/she has truly died to sin. And the believer can in fact ‘walk in

newness of life', even the life of the future kingdom. Yet this eschatology is not fully realized. The Christ-disciple enjoys many of the blessings of the future in the present but mostly in seed form. A host of tensions between what is 'already' and what is 'not yet' exist. Still the Christ-follower needs to see life from the focal point of existence in the 'in-between times' as this will give greater clarity to their present identity and status and also, bring encouragement and good hope as they trod the difficult road in the midst of this present evil age.

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Abbreviations

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- ESV The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.
- LSJ Liddell, H.G., Scott, R., Jones, H.S. and McKenzie, R., 1925, *A Greek-English Lexicon*
- NIDNTT Brown, C., (ed.), 1967, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.
- NIDNTTE Silva, M. (ed.), 2014, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*
- TDNT Kittel, G. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*