

2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6 and "New Covenant Hermeneutics" A Response to Richard Hays

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*Does 2 Corinthians 3 provide a textual basis within the Pauline corpus for reader-response hermeneutics? This study engages that question by way of dialoguing with Richard B. Hays's monograph, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. Hays's work deals with the question of whether modern Christian readers can "read Scripture as Paul read Scripture." To that end Hays proposes numerous prescriptions and constraints, the most provocative of which is central to the major hermeneutical thesis of his work. He writes (191): "No reading of Scripture can be legitimate if it fails to shape the readers into a community that embodies the love of God as shown forth in Christ." This constraint not only resonates with so-called reader response theories, but is exegetically grounded in Hays's reading of 2 Corinthians 3.*

This study argues that Hays's community focused reading of the text does not adequately account for the specifically apostolic and/or Pauline features of 2 Corinthians 2:14 to 4:6. Whatever the merits, on other grounds, of Hays's hermeneutical prescriptions for reading scripture as Paul read scripture, this study argues that a sound exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3 does not in itself provide the ground for the hermeneutical conclusions to which Hays finally comes. The difference between Paul the apostle and the Corinthians as readers of his letters (and us) cannot be so easily effaced.

Key Words: Pauline hermeneutics, intertextuality, scriptural authority, reader-response theory

INTRODUCTION

One of the most stimulating studies in Pauline theology to appear in recent years has come from the pen of Richard B. Hays under the title *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.¹ This work is at one level

1. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

a study of Paul's use of the Old Testament; but, in fact, it is much more than that. It is an exercise in the newer literary methodologies which, using the notion of "echo" as a handle for understanding intertextuality in Paul, boldly bring us to questions related to both reader-response theory and hermeneutical legitimacy for the Christian community. Hays's fine study is a work for both professional and student alike. It deals specifically with the problems of intertextuality in Paul in a way that encompasses theologically everything from textual data to hermeneutical issues. Hays summarizes broadly but carefully the history of the discussion of intertextuality and attacks without flinching the central theological and hermeneutical problems related to Paul's use of the Old Testament—and all that in a way that, with a beautifully artistic and imaginative flair, is not only worthy of Paul, but is also in itself a pleasurable experience in reading, thinking, and listening.

Hays's reading of 2 Corinthians 3 is especially important for the provocative conclusions to which he comes relative to what he calls "new covenant hermeneutics." The challenging nature of Hays's proposals and the freshness of his reading of 2 Corinthians 3 have stimulated both my own re-reading of that passage and a serious grappling with the hermeneutical proposals and constraints suggested by Hays, especially as these are so closely related to one another and to the overall argument of his book. Therefore, because of the exegetical richness of his work and the clarity with which he confronts anew the thorny problems related to hermeneutical practices both in Paul and for us, I shall take Richard Hays's treatment of 2 Corinthians 3 (*Echoes*, 122-53) as my dialogue partner in examining the argument of 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 and its potential implications for hermeneutics.

Hays is certainly right to suggest the hermeneutical potential of 2 Corinthians 3. Historically, such issues have been repeatedly stirred up by the highly disputed exegesis of its salient phrases and/or metaphors. Our passage has often been leased as fertile ground for the possible harvesting of central clues to the Pauline hermeneutic. It is moreover evident that the text does contain such possibilities for several reasons. First, its use of the "letter-spirit" antithesis undergirds (rightly or wrongly) certain age-old models of reading scripture, not the least of which, in Christian exegetical tradition, has been "law versus gospel" or "rigid versus free." Second, the explicit comparisons in the text between the old covenant and the new covenant and/or the ministry of Moses and the ministry of Paul likewise invite the imagination to conjure with the potentialities of this text for hermeneutical models. Third, as Hays has so well argued with regard to the echo-like appearance of texts from Moses (Exod 31:18, cf. Deut 9:10-11),

Jeremiah (Jer 38:33 LXX; 31:33 MT), and Ezekiel (Ezek 36:26), the Pauline uses of scripture, i.e., the phenomena of intertextuality, may likewise model and/or suggest certain hermeneutical practices.

I have certainly found myself drawn by the literary charm, intellectual rigor, and imaginative sensibility of Hays's work toward his hermeneutical, even confessional, conclusions; but I must also finally admit to feeling a few sticking points in Hays's argument which may not in fact be easily smoothed over. I will state my reservations as we proceed, but let us first recapitulate Hays's conclusions and then attempt to focus the discussion at certain (in principle) verifiable points, i.e., on specific texts and the readings which drive Hays's conclusions.

To read Hays's provocative monograph is to hear his invitation to read scripture as Paul read scripture (178). In the end, therefore, we are asked the following questions (180):

1. "Are Paul's specific *interpretations* of Scripture materially normative?"
2. "Are Paul's interpretive *methods* formally exemplary?"
3. "What are the appropriate *constraints* on interpretive freedom?"

Hays's answer is a clear "yes" to the first two questions (183), the implications of which he summarizes with the following prescriptive remarks (183-86):

1. "If we learned from Paul how to read Scripture, we would learn to read it primarily as a narrative of election and promise."
2. "If we learned from Paul how to read Scripture, we would read it ecclesiocentrically" (by "ecclesiocentric" Hays refers specifically to questions of Jew-Gentile relations and the status of Gentiles *vis-à-vis* the church and/or the "Israel of God").
3. "If we learned from Paul how to read Scripture, we would read in the service of proclamation."
4. "If we learned from Paul how to read Scripture, we would read as participants in the eschatological drama of salvation."

It is this presupposition particularly which for Hays most clearly binds us, as co-readers, in solidarity with Paul. We are readers who may likewise expect to hear the word of God in the texts of scripture.

5. "If we learned from Paul how to read Scripture, we would learn to appreciate the metaphorical relationship between the text and our own reading of it."

As for the third question, the constraints on interpretive freedom, Hays may be summarized as saying (191):

1. "No reading of Scripture can be legitimate if it denies the faithfulness of Israel's God to his covenant promises."

2. "Scripture must be read as a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No reading of Scripture can be legitimate if it fails to acknowledge the death and resurrection of Jesus as the climactic manifestation of God's righteousness."

Thus, Paul's interpretive freedom is bound "to a relationship of faithfulness to the Christian kerygma" (191). So far, I find myself in a listening and sympathetic posture to Hays's conclusions in terms of both criteria and constraints. He has, however, a third hermeneutical constraint (see below), which it seems to me is the most challenging proposal of his book. Indeed, to hesitate here in following Hays may require a retrospective evaluation of several of his prescriptions for reading scripture as Paul read it. Those evaluative remarks will be reserved for the conclusion.

Based on his reading of 2 Corinthians 3—and it would be hard I think to overestimate the importance of Hays's exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3 for providing the underpinning for his final theological/hermeneutical constraint—Hays proposes the following (191):

3. "No reading of Scripture can be legitimate if it fails to shape the readers into a community that embodies the love of God as shown forth in Christ."

This final constraint and (to state it positively) the hermeneutical freedom and responsibility which Hays would give to the community of faith for reading Scripture as Paul read it, is based on Hays's reading of 2 Corinthians 3, a reading which suggests to Hays that the word of God is not a matter of inscription, i.e., that which is written on "tablets of stone," but is that which is written on "tablets of fleshy hearts" (3:3). The people of the new covenant are thus those who are members of living communities where the Holy Spirit is at work. They have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and they are "changed into his likeness" (3:18). As they read the text of Scripture and see Jesus Christ, they are simultaneously transformed; or, to use Hays's term, they become the "enfleshment" of the proper reading of the text (129-31). Thus, the legitimacy of a reading of scripture is vindicated by the response of the community and the work of the Spirit on the (reading) community. The community becomes a living inscription of the Spirit—the living presence of the voice of God speaking his new covenant onto living tablets of revelation.

While I find myself intrigued by these conclusions, I am nonetheless uneasy about the specific exegetical details heard (as echoes), adduced, and applied in Hays's treatment of the passage.² Before elaborating my demurrals, let me begin by stating two clear, and

2. Though, as seen below, I will prove loath, unlike Hays, to assimilate so completely the divinely given "competence" of Paul as apostle, exegete, and author to the

related, points of agreement. I believe Hays is right in his interpretation of τέλος in 3:13 as "goal" or "aim" and in his reading of the four references to καταργεῖν (3:7, 11, 13, 14) not as "fading," but as "transitory."³ In spite of the impression given by the dominant modern English translations, Paul is not doing a revisionist reading of Exodus 34 along the lines of a "fading" glory. The glory on the face of Moses is not burning out like a battery powered flashlight. Hays's translation of καταργεῖν as "transitory" is a good starting point for understanding καταργεῖν not as a re-telling of the narrative, but as a theological (and at that level "revisionist") reflection by Paul upon the nature of the Mosaic/old covenant glory (133–40).

Where Hays and I disagree ultimately orbits around the phrase "fleshy hearts," the subject of ἐπιστέψη in 3:16, and, in a larger sense, the "we/you" dynamic of at least this portion (I would probably apply it to the whole) of 2 Corinthians. To state it briefly from the outset before we look at any of the exegetical details, Hays reads the "fleshy hearts" of 3:3 (καρδίαῖς σαρκίνοις) as a reference to the *Corinthian* hearts. He further reads the subject of ἐπιστρέψη, "he turns," which occurs in the 3:16 citation of Exod 34:34 as "a man," i.e., "the (Corinthian) believer." Finally, he reads the "we all" of 3:18 as being primarily a reference to the community's beholding of the glory of the Lord. It is this series of exegetical decisions that has influenced Hays's reading of 2 Corinthians 3 as a Pauline model of and/or a justification for understanding the Spirit-empowered community as the enfleshment, and therefore the proper reading, of scripture. Again, I am not quite ready to reject Hays's final hermeneutical constraint. It *could* perhaps be sustained by other broader theological considerations in Pauline intertextuality: specifically, (1) the fact that the methods whereby New Testament writers read the Old

experience of the Corinthians as a given community of readers and hearers of scripture and apostolic letters.

3. See also the detailed monograph on the related τέλος in Rom 10:4 by Robert Badenas (*Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4 in Pauline Perspective* [JSNTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985]). Badenas argues convincingly for the teleological ("goal" or "aim") significance of *telos*. Cf. also A. T. Hanson, "The Midrash in II Corinthians 3: A Reconsideration," *JSNT* 9 (1980): 2-28; and Bo Reicke, "Paulus über das Gesetz," *TZ* 41 (1985) 237-57; see especially 251-53. See also Scott Hafemann's forthcoming work (*Paul and Moses. The Letter/Spirit Contrast and Argument from Scripture in 2 Cor. 3* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck]) where καταργεῖν as "transitory" is persuasively argued on the basis of the background of Exod 34:29-35 as reflected in Exodus 32-34 and contextually exegeted by Paul. I am indebted to Professor Hafemann for his willingness to share material from his forthcoming monograph with me. I first encountered Dr. Hafemann's well-argued thesis when he presented it in a paper ("The Glory and the Veil of Moses in 2 Cor. 3:7-14: An Example of Paul's Contextual Exegesis of the Old Testament") read before the November 17, 1990 session of the Pauline Epistles Section of the Society of Biblical Literature in New Orleans.

Testament cannot finally be extricated from the theological, apostolic conclusions to which they come; and (2) the eschatological assumption that Pauline readers share with Paul a participation in the ends of the ages and thus, like Paul, may still hear the word of God in the ancient texts. We shall say more on these issues later. Nonetheless, I am persuaded that a sound exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3 does not in itself provide the ground for the hermeneutical conclusions to which Hays finally comes.

To anticipate and summarize my own conclusions, I would argue (1) that the expression "fleshy hearts" of 3:3 is a reference to the hearts of the *apostolic* company, especially of course Paul; (2) that the subject of the verb "turns" (ἐπιστρέψῃ) in 3:16, commonly translated "a man," is best understood as a transposing reference by Paul from Moses to *himself*; (3) that the "we" of 3:18 is primarily a reference to the apostolic and Pauline "we"—though *if* the word "all" is to be included, the Corinthians/readers may be drawn into the picture as well, but that is not the main point of the argument; and (4) that the larger context surrounding 2 Corinthians 3 demands this more "apostolic" reading of 2 Corinthians 3, as opposed to Hays's more inclusively communitarian reading.

FLESHY HEARTS (3:3)

Hays is surely correct to point to the significance of the triadic echoes found in 3:1-3. Instead of needing (as apparently his opponents do—and have suggested for Paul) letters of recommendation either to or from the Corinthians, Paul insists that the Corinthians are his commendatory epistle, his ἐπιστολὴ συστατική. It is the Corinthians who, as his letter of reference, are "written on our hearts" (2:2). Indeed, they are "a letter of Christ . . . written . . . not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of fleshy hearts" (3:3). With these Pauline assertions there is, first, the reminiscence of Jer 31:33 in which there is the divine promise of a "new covenant" whereby, as the Lord promises, "I will give my laws in their mind, and upon their heart I will write them." As Hays suggests, this is no merely peripheral use of biblical language, for the new covenant is explicitly referred to and developed in 3:6-11. Furthermore, as Hays rightly maintains, both Exod 31:18 and Deut 9:10-11 point to God as a covenant writer: "[A]nd when he had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the Lord gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God." The Corinthians thus are likewise an example of the divine writing. For Paul, however, it is of course a more christocentric act, since the Corinthians are "a letter of Christ." Indeed, the heavenly origin of the letter is doubly clear, as the Corin-

thian letter is also said to be written "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (3:3).

The final echo to which Hays points is Ezek 36:26: "[A]nd I will give you a new heart, and a new Spirit I will give among you, and I will take away the stone heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a fleshy heart." The blending of the allusions to Jeremiah and Ezekiel accomplishes two very necessary functions, one consonant, the other dissonant. On the one hand this act of divine writing, a writing which takes place not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, is for Hays eschatologically fulfilled in the Pauline-Corinthian experience. The promise of the new covenant is fulfilled. The laws of God, now understood more in terms of Christ and the gospel, are written by Christ/the Spirit upon a fleshy heart. But the Pauline allusion does not refer to "hearts of stone." Instead of using Ezekiel's image of "stone hearts" as the alternative to "fleshy hearts," a stronger note of Pauline theological dissonance is struck by reference to "*tablets* of stone." The "tablets of stone" (πλαξιν λιθίναις) are a reference to the stone tablets on which God wrote at Mount Sinai, and thus we have hinted here the Pauline antipathy to any supposed soteriological efficacy in the Jewish law. The law *cannot* bring life. Rather, it kills.

To this point Hays and I are in significant agreement. Where we differ has to do with the significations implied by the triadic echoes. Hays assumes that the reference in Jer 31:33 to a God "who writes on the heart of his people" is thematically transferred unchanged into the Pauline text, so that, Hays argues, Paul "has pointed to the consistent authorial activity of God as one who writes on the hearts of his *people* (emphasis mine), both in Jeremiah's prophecy and in the Corinthians' experience" (128).

I would argue, however, that the phrase "tablets of fleshy hearts" in 3:3 is not a reference to *Corinthian* hearts, but a reference to the *Pauline* heart, or, to put it in the plural terms which are typical for Paul's apostolic "we," the fleshy hearts of the apostolic company (cf. 4:6).⁴ There are at least three clues to this fact, quite apart from the larger apostolic apologia which frames chapter 3. First, there is the explicit reference in 3:2 to the Corinthians, who are Paul's letter of recommendation, as being "written on *our* hearts" (ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν). Hays himself notes that the reference is to "*our hearts*" and frankly admits that the small textual problem with the "our" of 3:2, for which a very few texts substituted "your," is not

4. See the short but excellent study by William Baird ("Letters of Recommendation: A Study of II Cor. 3:1-3," *JBL* 80 [1961] 166-72) which focuses in detail on the necessity and larger contextual significance of reading 3:2 as a reference to the Pauline heart.

worthy of consideration. Hays refers to the phrase as both "odd" and somewhat "confusing," but attributes that to the fact that it attempts to make two points at once: namely, to emphasize Paul's love for the Corinthians and the fact that as an attestation letter which he carries, they are the proof of his legitimacy (127). Hays's evident discomfort with the expression leaves him undaunted: since the passage in Jeremiah has argued that God will write his laws "on the heart of his people," that is the meaning that Hays seems unable to shed when interpreting 3:3. But the Pauline affirmation of 3:2 at least is clear. The Corinthians are a letter "written on *our* hearts."

Second, the unusual expression in 3:3, διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν, which may be literally translated as "ministered by us," is likewise worthy of our attention in this connection. Hays is also somewhat uncomfortable with this expression, calling it "slightly unusual." Hays rightly says that the choice of this term anticipates the subsequent discussion of the Pauline ministry (διακονία) of the Spirit/righteousness (3:8-9) and Paul's role as a minister (διάκονος) of the new covenant (3:6). Hays asserts that the verb works on both metaphorical and non-metaphorical levels at the same time: on the one hand, he says, it draws to mind "the courier's careful handling of the letter and, at the same time, reminds the Corinthians of Paul's ministry among them" (127). I would argue that the image is not so much of a letter carrier carefully handling a letter that was already written, as it is Paul's reference to the (in this case metaphorical) "letter writing" process itself: i.e., Paul refers to his evangelistic preaching in Corinth as διακονία (see 3:6, 8-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; cf. 1 Cor 3:6).⁵ We would suggest that Paul's "ministering" of this letter is primarily on the order of his status as a διάκονος of the gospel. That is, Paul is a fellow worker with God. Christ/the Spirit of the living God writes the letter, but it is "*ministered* by us" (3:3). With this metaphor, Paul is more akin to the divine secretary than to the divine letter carrier. Thus, by his apostolic ministry, his preaching of the gospel, Paul "writes" the letter which is the Corinthians. He, as the founder of the church and God's διάκονος—the real author after all is Christ and/or the Spirit—brings them as a "letter" into existence. The rhetorical function of this metaphor is to reinforce the significant role of Paul in the Corinthian experience, and thus, alongside the reference in 3:2 to the Corinthians as written on *Paul's* heart, it has a small but cumulative effect upon the overall *apostolic* thrust (see below) of the imagery.⁶

5. See Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 204.

6. Here, as throughout, our reference to "Paul" as an individual is not to forget that the term in question is plural ("we"). Nonetheless, "we" certainly could be an

Third, as the following reference to the Corinthians as a letter that is "known and read by all people" (3:2) also clearly implies, the writing surface in this "recommendation letter" metaphor is once again his heart. That is, given the itinerant διακονία of Paul, and given too the image of 3:2 already in place with its reference to "*our* hearts," it is more likely that the stated "knowing and reading of all" is done by others in the Pauline sphere of ministry who thus read off the surface of Paul's heart, as tablet, rather than the Corinthians'.⁷

The upshot of this unusual but consistent set of images—i.e., the Corinthians as a letter of recommendation, ministered by Paul and both written on and read from the heart of Paul—correlates to the larger apostolic *apologia* of 2 Corinthians and the specific apostolic emphases of the nearer context of 2:14-4:6. The point of the emphasis thus is to emphasize the Pauline role, albeit of course subsidiary to the divine role, in the Corinthians' becoming the Pauline letter of recommendation.

The introductory context to 3:1-3 certainly demands this focus upon Paul's apostolic status. 2:14-17 solemnly asserts that it is through the *apostolic company* that the aroma of the knowledge of God is manifested in every place. They are the very embodiment of the great eschatological *krisis*. The apostolic emissaries are a fragrance of Christ to God both among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To some, namely those who are being saved, the apostles are an aroma from life to life. To others, the perishing, they are an aroma from death to death. But this "adequacy" (note the linking of 2:16 and 3:5 with the term ἰκανός), this apostolic "competence," is a divine act. Thus, Paul claims, "we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, as from God, we speak in Christ in the presence of God" (2:17; cf. 4:1-2). The focus thus of the "letter of recommendation" metaphor of 3:1-3 within the larger context of 2:14–4:6 is not simply upon the Corinthians as the letter of recommendation—or the Corinthians as the living incarnation of the text—but the emphasis is upon the Corinthians as a letter of recommendation *which commends the Pauline apostleship*.

I would thus offer the following theologically amplified paraphrase of 3:1-6a as a way of highlighting this apostolic focus: "We do not wish to seem as if we were commending ourselves. Or do we need, as some apparently do, letters of recommendation either to you or from you? *You* are *our* letter, written on our very hearts, known

"apostolic," a "literary," or a formal "we" and thus simply a reference to Paul; or it could be a more literal number used to incorporate the itinerant apostolic company. We know of no place, however, in 2 Corinthians where "we" (unqualified by πάντες, "all") is used to include the readers. See below for references regarding this issue.

7. Baird, "Letters of Recommendation," 170.

and read by all who encounter us in our apostolic travels. Thus, it is clear that you are a letter of Christ which is *ministered by us*, written of course not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, and not on tablets of stone, but on *our hearts*—all this God has accomplished through us in fulfillment of the prophetically promised 'hearts of flesh.' And *such* is our adequacy, an adequacy we have through Christ toward God. To be sure, our adequacy, our apostolic calling, is not such that we consider it of our own origin. Oh, no! Our apostolic competence is from God, who has nonetheless *made us* competent as those who are ministers of the new covenant. . . . "

One important result of this kind of focus upon the Pauline apostolic status is to provide some context for the otherwise disconnected affirmation of 3:4: "And *such* confidence we have through Christ toward God." The presence of *τοιούτην* cries out for some kind of antecedent. If 3:1-3 is read as we have read it, with its focus upon the Corinthians as the *Pauline* letter, "written on *our hearts* . . . a letter of Christ, *ministered by us* . . . written . . . by the Spirit of the living God . . . on tablets of our fleshy hearts," then there is an emotional/theological basis for the partial retreat begun in 3:4 ("*such* confidence")—a kind of personal qualification which, in light of the foregoing, adamant assertion as to the Pauline apostolicity, seeks to reassert dialectically that *such* confidence is in fact not grounded in ego but is divine in origin. It is the confidence of the divine commissioning. On the other hand, when 3:1-3 is read as Hays suggests, the "confidence" of 3:4 would at first glance seem to be the Pauline assertion that the *church*, the Corinthian community, is the enfleshment of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We then are surprised to learn in 3:5-6, however, that the "confidence" in question in 3:4 must in fact be the *apostolic* adequacy, the divine status of having been made competent, as the *διάκονοι* of the new covenant. On Hays's reading of 3:1-3, however, Paul's reference to "such confidence" (*πεποιθήσιν . . . τοιούτην*) seems abrupt and demands a rhetorical antecedent which is not obviously present, *unless* it refers to the *apostolic* claims of 2:14-3:3. Thus the triadic echoes of divine writing, the new covenant, and the establishing of the laws of God in a new way upon fleshy hearts represent Paul's arrogation to himself and/or his apostolic company of the fulfillment of those prophecies. Hays does not really include 3:4-6 in his exegesis of the passage.

THE "HE" OF 3:16

The comparison between the two covenants which is introduced in 3:6-11 in fact initiates a sustained comparison between the respective ministries of the apostolic "we" and Moses. Paul's *διακονία*, of

course, is that of the new covenant, the covenant of the Spirit, a covenant which gives life and has a greater, permanent glory. The *ἑταίρεια* of Moses is that of the old covenant, a covenant of *γράφμα*, a covenant which kills and has a comparatively lesser, and certainly transitory, glory.

As the *διάκονος* of the greater covenant, therefore, Paul again asserts his divine competence by referring in 3:12 to his boldness of speech. Then, in an extensive dissimile stretching from 3:12- 4:6, Paul contrasts himself to Moses, who put a veil over his face.⁸ Indeed, the veil over Moses' face, which covered the *τέλος* of God's old covenant glory, continues to separate the children of Israel—now Paul's contemporaries—from God's *τέλος*. Moses of course is no longer present, save in the texts of law still read in synagogue worship; but the veil of separation remains—now transferred by Paul, in a move that accentuates somewhat more the culpable responsibility of his Israelite kin, to "their heart" (3:15). Then (we will leave aside for the moment the exegesis of 3:16-18), the larger dissimile (3:12- 4:6) begun in 3:12 between Paul and Moses begins to conclude in 4:2 (or possibly 4:1b) with Paul's simultaneous renunciation of "things hidden" and his commendation of himself as transparent in the act of preaching—i.e., "by the manifestation of truth." Thus, 4:2, having been justified by the arguments of 3:13-4:1, restates the affirmation of 3:12 ("... we use great boldness in our speech") and is christologically reaffirmed in 4:5 with the Pauline assertion, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake."

The significance of 3:16-18 in the overall structure of 3:12-4:6 and with respect to the citation/paraphrase of Exod 34:34 in 3:16 is critical for understanding the climactic thrust of Paul's argument and must now be considered. The prominence of certain well-hammered exegetical *crucis* has, it seems to me, not only obscured larger questions of rhetorical flow and the polemical relationship of the various parts of the argument, but also left unquestioned a significant grammatical/exegetical issue, namely the subject of *ἐπιστρέψῃ* in 3:16 see below).⁹

Hays rightly points to the surprising (and, in terms of rhetorical structure, internal) reversal in 3:16-18 of the overarching dissimile employed by Paul in 3:12- 4:6 with respect to himself and Moses. However, we disagree as to the function of the ensuing simile. Thus

8. Hays refers to 3:12- 4:4 as the parameters of the dissimile. We prefer 3:12-4:6.

9. Some of the other issues are: how do "Lord" and "Spirit" relate to one another and/or to "Christ"? What is the relationship of 3:17 to 3:16? Is the *κατοπτριζόμενοι* of 3:18 to be understood as "beholding" or "reflecting"?

I will argue that 3:16 unexpectedly cites Exod 34:34 in a way that, as our interpretation of 3:17-18 which follows suggests, calls forth certain positive connections and correlations between the Pauline ministry and that of Moses, before resuming (in 4:2, or perhaps 4:1b) the dissimile of 3:12–4:6 in terms of the essential difference (in the rhetoric of our passage), i.e., the differences between Moses and Paul as to their *responses* to their respective visions of glory.

Most English translations of 3:16 preempt our appreciation of the Pauline citation by supplying "a man" as the understood subject of the verb "he turns" (ἐπιστρέψῃ).¹⁰ As the NEB at least reminds us, the "he" in question, at least in Exod 34:34, is Moses. To be sure, as Hays points out, Paul has certainly altered the Septuagint text. The name "Moses" which appears in the Septuagint is dropped from the Pauline citation. The tense and mood of the verb have been shifted from the imperfect indicative to the aorist subjunctive. Furthermore, the following verb "to remove" (περιαιρέῖν) has been changed from the imperfect to the present. Hays is manifestly justified in maintaining that these are "far-reaching manipulations . . . systematically calculated to facilitate Paul's metaphorical appropriation of the text"; but whether Paul's appropriation of our text is accomplished, as Hays further maintains, "by cutting the sentence loose from its immediate narrative moorings" (147) is quite another issue.

Certainly it is clear that something of an eschatological transformation of the text has taken place in the mind of Paul. The emphasis of the ancient text has been shifted from the past of Moses to the Pauline present. What remains to be answered, however, is *to whom* in the Pauline present the "turning to the Lord" and the "removing of the veil" need to be applied; and if the text has been eschatologically contemporized, are its *narrative* moorings to be completely discounted? The addition of "a man" to the text, welcomed by Hays, clearly suggests the all too common (but completely unjustified) translators' decision to generalize the text so that it refers to "any" person, especially therefore "anyone" as applied to the Corinthian congregation who has converted to Christ as Lord. I would suggest, however, that such a generalizing translation of the text does not fit the *narrative* pattern of dissimile/ simile that Paul has established between himself and Moses, nor is it even a grammatically probable rendering of the text (see below).

Most translators, Hays included, read 3:16 as the intertextual answer to the problem of Jewish hardness referred to in 3:14-15, i.e., the veil that "lies over *their* heart." "How or when can the veil be re-

10. *Pace* Professor Reicke's second person translation (as an aorist middle) of ἐπιστρέψῃ ("Paulus über das Gesetz," 252).

moved?" is the putative question that for many interpreters finds its answer in the allusion of 3:16, "whenever *a person* turns to the Lord." But we must first note that Paul did *not* change the text—and what we know of his textual liberties certainly leads us to deny timidity as the cause—to a plural form. The verb for "turning" in 3:16, ἐπιστρέψῃ, is still singular: "whenever *he* turns," not whenever "they turn" (ἐπιστρέψουσι). Nor did Paul add a relativizing τις to the narratively understood subject "he" (Moses). We would suggest that 3:16 must not be read over against an implied (Lutheran?) question purported to flow from 3:15, so as to suggest the means of removing the veil from "their heart," i.e., "turning to the Lord." The use of an aorist subjunctive simply cannot be used to argue for an "indefinitizing" of the subject so that the "he"/"Moses" must become "anyone."¹¹ Rather, we see 3:16 as establishing narratively the beginning of a countervailing simile, set within the dissimile of 3:12–4:6. That is, *it resumes the narrative* begun in 3:13—broken off (by way of theological commentary) in 3:14b with "for until this very day"—but does so in the form of a simile which establishes certain positive connections between the experiences of Moses and Paul. In other words, 3:16 is not primarily, in the rhetorical flow of the text, a citation which provides the theological solution to the problem of Israel's hardness. Rather, it is a resumption of the narrative, already begun in 3:13, which is reinvoked to further the larger, and now positively expressed, comparison of Paul and Moses. It (3:16) refers to the practice of *Moses* (not the readers) who, when he went before the Lord, *removed* the veil from his face. The elimination of the Septuagint's reference to Moses does not serve to generalize the septuagintal text into "anyone." (Again, the theodical problem of 3:15 refers to the veil which lies over *their* heart.) Rather, the shift to simile, the elimination of Moses' name (but the retention of the implied "he" in the finite verb), and the other changes of mood and tense more easily allow the readers to understand *Paul* as the "he" of the text—the entire passage is after all a comparison of dissimile and simile between Moses and *Paul*.¹²

11. N. T. Wright ("Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18," in L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright, eds., *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology: in Memory of George Bradford Caird* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987] 139-50) and I disagree that a specific goal of Paul's reinterpretation of the Exod 34:34 quotation is to include all those who "turn to the Lord." However, we clearly do agree that—while some kind of shift is underway as signaled by the changes in the text—"Paul certainly desires that the Exodus passage should still be in mind" (144) and that the connection to the Exodus narrative be maintained.

12. Note well that Paul's ἡνίκα δὲ εἰς ἐπιστρέψῃ . . . is the only New Testament occurrence of the classical expression ἡνίκα εἰς and is most naturally understood as a frequentative temporal clause and rendered with something like "every

This maneuver thus appropriates Exod 34:34 as a scriptural anticipation of the Pauline vision of Christ (see 3:18; 4:1, 6), and especially the subsequent Pauline apostleship and its attendant "unveiling" and/or "boldness of speech." Paul's use of this text as a simile only works if we understand that what Moses did before the Lord ("turned" to the glory and "removed the veil"), Paul did before the Lord *and* the people. Both simile and dissimile thus function to highlight Paul's central rhetorical purpose here, which has to do with Paul's proclamation, his "boldness of speech," in response to his vision. Indeed, it is "veiling" or "unveiling" which is the common term in a given appropriation of the Exodus narrative as simile or dissimile. If dissimile, based on various contextual considerations, is Paul's figure of choice, then Paul is unlike Moses with regard to *veiling*—in the presence of the people. If simile becomes necessary—so as, for example, to make use of the Exod 34:34 text to undergird scripturally Paul's vision and διακονία, then the practice of turning to the Lord and *unveiling* is the point of similarity. Again, both Moses and Paul have seen the glory (i.e., the τέλος) of God; but especially the *outcome* thereof—veiling or unveiling—is very different. I maintain that the difference in outcome between the respective visions of Paul and Moses (note well 3:12-13 and the reference, as dissimile, to Paul's "boldness of speech, unlike Moses who used to *veil* his face" before the people) is the key point of the narrative. Thus, the reference in 3:16 to "every time he (Moses) turns to the Lord, the *veil* is taken away" is not the answer to the problem of Jewish hardness, but is Paul's use of the narrative, now as simile, to serve again as a scriptural basis for Paul's "boldness in speech." Put another way, in 3:16 Paul's boldness of speech is narratively represented as "Moses' "unveiling." Simultaneously, however, this "unveiling" is now also understood and configured as a prophetically anticipated similarity between Paul and Moses, a similarity in which the narrative of Moses' vision of God (3:16a) and the "taking away of the veil" (3:16b) is transposed into Paul's vision of the Spirit Lord (3:17a; cf. also 3:18; 4:6) and further expanded interpretively in 3:17b to include the Spirit's gift of "freedom." Thus, freedom in 3:17b, the interpretive comment which parallels and expands the "taking away of the veil" in 3:16b, surely means (see below) a freedom in apostolic *preaching*. The use of Exod 34:34 in 3:16

time he returns" instead of "whenever he turns/returns" (C. F. D. Moule, "2 Cor. 3:18b, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος," in *Neues Testament und Geschichte*, ed. H. Baltensweiler and Bo Reicke [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1972] 231-37), a reading which also reinforces the retention of the particular narrative background of Moses, but, given the mood and tense shifts, also allows for a contemporizing (I would argue for a particular contemporizing having Paul in mind, as opposed to an indefinitizing) of the subject (cf. 234-35).

thus functions in two ways. As narrative it recalls Moses unveiled before the Lord. As an eschatologically contemporized appropriation of the Exodus text, it becomes a reference to Paul who—having turned to the Spirit Lord—is "unveiled" by the Spirit to experience a freedom of proclamation before the people. Thus, for both Paul and Moses there is an unveiled vision. But in this similarity lies the beginning (and thus the appropriate resumption of the dissimile in 4:2) of the difference in outcome between Moses and Paul, for Paul's vision leads to "boldness in speech" and a "freedom" in proclamation, whereas Moses' vision led only to revealing before the people.

Hays's reading of 3:13-15 moves from Moses and his contemporaries (who could not see the *τέλος*) to the Torah (the text of Moses read) and then to the Pauline contemporaries who likewise do not (because of the veil over their heart) properly "read" "Moses." In other words, playing off the word "turning" (3:16) as a so-called "enactment" of what the text of 2 Corinthians 3 hermeneutically describes and prescribes, Hays's reading of 3:13-15 goes from Moses, to the text of Moses, to the current misreaders of Moses, and thus primes us to read 3:16 and its references to "a man" (*sic*) as the final hermeneutical "turning" which referentially includes both Paul and the Corinthians—as *readers* of Scripture. For Hays, therefore, 3:16 supplies the conversionist and Spirit-empowered answer to the problem (of 3:15) of *misreading Scripture*.

With a stroke then, Hays, by including Paul and the Corinthians in "a man" of 3:16, (1) makes them equal partners in the salvation-historical drama (what happened to Paul's apostleship?), (2) empowers the Corinthians as divinely "competent" (cf. 3:5-6) *readers* of scripture whose "competence" may be compared to and/or lumped together with that of the Pauline apostleship (148, 184), (3) thereby fails to differentiate rhetorically and hermeneutically the occasional argument of 2 Corinthians 3 with respect to, on the one hand, the particular role of Paul as a gospel preacher—in the process of which he emerges as an interpreter of scripture and author (of 2 Corinthians)—and, on the other hand, the Corinthians as both those who hear the Pauline message, with its often eccentric but compelling interpretations of scripture, and those who *read* Paul's letters, and (4) thus suppresses the overriding polemic of 2 Corinthians 3, which relates to Paul both as an apostolic fulfillment of the scriptural promises related to the new covenant and as one made divinely competent (2:16; 3:5, 6) as the greater-than-Moses servant of the new covenant whose vision of the glory of God is *unveiled* in his unadulterated and transparent embodiment/preaching of the gospel via his apostolic experience. Put another way, and more briefly, we must not leap over the critical issue of 2:14-4:6—which is the importance and/or nature

of Paul's apostleship—to our more confessionally and professionally driven questions like, "how can we remove the veil?" or "how do we properly read scripture?" In any case, can we assume that 3:16 is a reference to *readers*?

Let us again recall that 3:16 dismantles the dissimile between Paul and Moses suggested by 3:13. Paul is *unlike* Moses insofar as Moses used to put a veil over his face (3:13) before the people; but he is, in ways that are *like* Moses when Moses went before the Lord, one who has, unveiled, seen the glory of God. Indeed, we know from 4:6 that Paul too had a vision of glory, one that—christologically transposed—was focused in the face of Christ (4:6). *Unlike* Moses, Paul is now able to manifest this divine treasure in complete transparency (4:2). Indeed, if his gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, those who—as the Israelites of old (3:13) who could not see the τέλος of God in the face of Moses—cannot now see the glory of God (Christ) in the *unveiled* gospel of Paul (4:2–4), a gospel carried and ministered by a broken body emblematic of the cross itself (see 4:7–12). These unbelievers, now blinded by Satan, cannot see *in the Pauline face*—the face of one who is being transformed into the likeness of the glory which he beholds (3:18)—"the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (4:4). Indeed, that is precisely what those who see Paul *should* see, he maintains, for the God who said "light shall shine out of darkness" is the one who has shone "in *our hearts* to give the light of the knowledge of the divine glory" which has been witnessed "in the face of Christ" (4:6). It is, after all, Paul (and/or his apostolic company) to whom the ministry of reconciliation has been given (not the Corinthian community) and through whom Christ pleads, "Be reconciled to God!" (5:18–20).

On this reading, it is difficult not to see the reference in 3:16 to the "he" who "turns to the Lord" (ἐπιστρέψῃ) *as a resumption of the Exodus narrative* which thus serves as an eschatologically reinterpreted reference to *Paul*, who, like Moses, saw (unveiled) the glory of God. The function of 3:17–18 as Paul's theological explanation of the Exodus text referenced in 3:16 confirms this as a *Pauline/apostolic* experience of "turning" by explaining that the "Lord" (Yahweh) referred to in Exod 34:34 is none other than the living Spirit Lord seen by Paul.¹³ It is this living Spirit Lord whom Paul, like Moses, has seen (4:6) with unveiled face, whose glory has been beheld (as in a mirror), and whose glory likewise transforms Paul progressively into its own image and likeness (3:18).

13. Note the anaphoric use of the article in 3:17, i.e., a "re-mentioning," as explanation, of the anarthrous reference to κύριος in 3:16 cited from Exod 34:34. See Moule, "2 Cor. 3:18b," 235–37; also J. D. G. Dunn, "2 Corinthians III.17—'The Lord Is the Spirit,'" *JTS* n.s. 21 (1970) 309–20; David Greenwood, "The Lord Is the Spirit: Some Considerations of 2 Cor. 3:17," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 467–72.

Again, the reference to ἔλευθερία in 3:17 is a similarly significant bit of theological commentary in that it initially and particularly refers not to the freedom from "hardness" (or bondage/the law/death, etc.) which conversion ("turning") gives to "anyone," but to the *freedom in proclamation* given to Paul—unlike Moses who had to veil his face in the presence of the people—inasmuch as his comparatively greater vision was focused on the Spirit Lord (3:17) of the new covenant whose dispensation is one of greater glory (3:9) and whose message must therefore be characterized by boldness (παρρησία; 3:12) in the apostolic speech: i.e., by openness, transparency, and the straightforward preaching of the word of God (4:2). The "freedom" of 3:17b which is thus given in the experience of seeing unveiled the glory of God parallels rhetorically the dissimile begun in 3:12b-13 ("we use great boldness in our speech and are *not* like Moses . . .") and thus gives not only Paul's interpretation of the "lifting of the veil" of 3:16b (an unveiled vision of the Spirit Lord may and must be accompanied by a correspondingly unveiled preaching of the gospel/the glory seen), just as 3:17a explains 3:16a, but also then (taking 3:17 as a whole) introduces as now scripturally justified the climactic statement of 3:18.

Often overlooked in the exegetical struggle to decide among the various options in 3:18 is the fact that 3:18 is the *continuation* (note well the δε . . . δε construction) of the interpretation of 3:16 begun in 3:17.¹⁴ The use of Exod 34:34 in 3:16 is the "text" which establishes another, resumptive point of contact with the Exod 34:29-35 story. With the anaphoric use of the article, 3:17 begins to contemporize interpretively the text of 3:16, identifying the "Lord" ("Yahweh") of Exod 34:34 as the Spirit and observing that the presence of the Spirit Lord (see also 3:18c—"from the Lord, the Spirit") constitutes freedom.¹⁵ The final interpretive expansion is 3:18, which fully translates the unveiled vision of God's glory in 3:16, represented by "whenever (or "every time") he turns to the Lord," into the "we who with unveiled face are beholding the glory of the Lord. . . ." ¹⁶ The parallelism between "removing the veil" in 3:16b and its interpretive counterpart in 3:17b, the "freedom" (in proclamation) given by the Spirit, is now

14. See note 12 above.

15. Note the reference in 1 Cor 15:45 to Christ as "a resurrecting Spirit"; cf. also Rom 8:9-11 where we have seemingly interchangeable references to "the indwelling Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," "Christ in you," "the Spirit," "the indwelling Spirit of him who raised Jesus," and "the Spirit who indwells."

16. The spiraling, interpretive relationship of 3:18 to 3:16 and 3:17 suggests an *ad sensum* parallelism between κατοπτριζόμενοι in 3:18 and the language of 3:16a (Exod 34:34; cf. also 34:29, 35) where "the Lord" is the one "turned to," which thus makes "beholding" the preferred translation over "reflecting" in 3:18, given the "glory of the Lord" as the object of κατοπτριζόμενοι.

reasserted in 3:18 in terms of the Pauline experience by "we are being transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit Lord." In interpretive progression the assertions of 3:16-18 move from text (3:16) to initial interpretation (3:17) and final contemporization (3:18). Not to be forgotten, however, is the conclusion ("therefore"), understood as outcome, to the transforming vision of 3:18—namely, the references in 4:1-2 to apostolic ministry as given by God with the attendant activity of open, unadulterated preaching. Thus 4:1-2 as an outcome of the transforming vision of God's glory in 3:18 also answers interpretively to the removal of the veil of 3:16 and the freedom of proclamation given by the Spirit of 3:17. Thus, like a series of interlocking rings, the affirmations of 3:16–4:2 collectively refer to (1) an unveiled vision of the Lord, (2) the transformation power of the Spirit, and (3) the unveiled proclamation of that vision. Our passage finds, therefore, its polemical and/or rhetorical center in the affirmation of Paul's unveiled vision of the glory and image of the Lord, a vision which simultaneously transforms the seer (Paul) into the likeness of the one seen (the Lord Christ, the τέλος of God) and commissions the apostolic seer to an unveiled proclamation (4:2, 5; cf. also 4:13).¹⁷

On this reading, then, 3:16-18 is strikingly reminiscent of the Damascus christophany, which was for Paul his apostolic calling.¹⁸ If then 3:16-18 posits *Paul* as the one who "turns to the Lord," the "therefore" of 4:1 makes abundantly more sense. That is, put another way, if 3:16-18 represents Paul's apostolic calling whereby he, like Moses, has seen the glory of the Lord, we can better understand why 4:1 begins with "*therefore* (note well the διὰ τοῦτο) since we have this ministry"—for both the "therefore" and the phrase "since we have

17. See the interesting article by W. C. van Unnik ("'With Unveiled Face,' an Exegesis of 2 Corinthians iii 12-18," *NovT* 6 [1963] 153-69), which suggests a linguistic link between παρρησία ("boldness of speech") and the various references to "veiling" or "unveiling" (3:13, 14, 15, 18). There is certainly a rhetorical connection, amplified and intensified by Paul's use of ἐλευθερία (understood especially as a reference to freedom in proclamation) as his interpretive expansion in 3:17b upon the reference in 3:16b to the removal of the veil. Thus, with or without the linguistic link proposed by van Unnik, there is a rhetorical consistency in our passage linking the interplay of expression between "boldness of speech" (3:12), "veiling" and "unveiling" (3:13, 14, 15, 16, 18; 4:3), "freedom" (3:17), "renouncing things hidden" (4:2), "not adulterating/watering down the word of God" (4:2), "the manifestation of truth" (4:2), and the "preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord" (4:5).

18. Cf. S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (2nd ed.; WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1984) 5-13, 233-39; Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 58-61; and Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) 164-240. These works take very seriously the impact of Paul's Damascus christophany for understanding the language and rhetoric of 2 Cor 3:16-4:6.

this ministry" refer to the grace of apostolic ministry *described in 3:16-18 in terms of Paul's Damascus christophany.*

Then 4:2-6 restores the larger dissimile (briefly interrupted by the simile of 3:16-18) and thus resumes the negative comparison begun at 3:12. For though Moses had to veil his face before the people, Paul, precisely because he (like Moses) has seen (unveiled) the Spirit Lord, is able to preach and minister an *unveiled* gospel. Those who cannot see Christ in the Pauline presence continue to experience the mysterious veil of blindness (4:3-4; note the positive comparison with Moses' audience of old and those in Paul's day, 3:13-15), a Satanic blindness that keeps them from seeing in the apostolic presence the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Further support for our reading is seen in the fact that Paul himself is the bearer of the "treasure" of glory (4:6-7), an assertion which thus restates in summary fashion the claim of 3:16-18. Beholding the glory of the Lord—which happens when Paul "turns to the Lord," sees the Lord who is the liberating Spirit, and thereby receives the ministry of glory (3:16-4:1)—thus corresponds to the experience of 4:6 whereby God "has shone in *our* hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

The "treasure in earthen vessels" of 4:7ff. continues the assertion of christocentric glory *in the Pauline apostolic ministry*, but qualifies it as a glory which is to be understood dialectically in terms of both the cross and the resurrection. The Pauline and apostolic experience of suffering in the cause of the gospel answers to the cross of Jesus; but the cross cannot have the last word insofar as Paul's suffering is a foil for "the surpassing greatness of the power of God" (4:17) and thus also a means whereby *life* is effected in the Corinthians (4:12). The Pauline ministry is the enfleshing of the gospel, a way of existence whereby he "bears in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body" (4:10). Hays's reading of 4:7-15 in terms of the *Corinthian* experience (148–49) is thus (as with 3:16-18) a too hasty translation of the apostolic experience into the experience of the readers. Such a shift, as modern application, *may* be hermeneutically justified on other grounds, but Paul's text clearly distinguishes the apostolic "we," specifically Paul, who bears in his body the dying of Jesus, from the "you" who, as a *consequence* of the apostolic bearing of the dying and living of Jesus, experience "life" (4:12).

"WE ALL" (3:18)

The constraints of space do not permit a full discussion here, but the appearance of "we all" (ἡμεῖς δε πάντες) certainly requires some

comment. Hays's view makes much, of course, of the "we all" in the text. "We all" apparently includes the Corinthians. As interpreters, however, we are confronted with what could at least prove to be a matter of sensibility and judgment. Hays no doubt would want to emphasize the *Corinthian* experience as suggested by the presence of "all," not to the exclusion, of course, of the Pauline experience. On the other hand I would suggest that the primary point of "we all" lies in the signification of the *apostolic* experience of calling which, to be sure, Paul—by the inclusion of "all"—applies to the Corinthians as well. Hays's rendering of the passage focuses more upon the community response, which includes Paul, whereas my reading would focus first upon the apostolic vision of glory, which is nonetheless not an exclusively apostolic experience and thus may include the Corinthians. To be sure, another issue, a textual one, must be squarely faced (see below). But, in any case, I would insist that the "all"—which, *if part of the text*, doubtless does include the Corinthians—must be understood in a way that does not disturb the overall force of the highly apologetic nature of the discussion here, as throughout 2 Corinthians, regarding Pauline apostleship.¹⁹ To include the Corinthians, as any reading must do if "we all" is the correct textual rendering, does not, however, mean that a theologically egalitarian reading is mandated. We must still understand the Corinthian experience as *interpreted along the lines of the Pauline experience*, an experience which continues to shape the primary focus of the passage and its narrative underpinnings.

In any case the very careful "we-you" dynamic of 2 Corinthians is not to be overlooked. Certainly further study is necessary at this point, but I do, nonetheless, offer this preliminary conclusion: it strikes me that "we" in 2 Corinthians strictly and always refers to Paul and/or the apostolic company, whereas "you" refers to the Corinthian readers.²⁰ The combining of "we" *with* "all" (πάντες) in 5:10 ("for we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for deeds done in the body, according to what each has done, whether good or bad") certainly serves rhetorically there to place the Corinthians and Paul on similar, if not equal, footing as regards the fact of coming judgment—but it also accentuates the

19. On the inclusion of "all," see below.

20. Helpful studies of such questions may be found in Karl Dick (*Der schriftstellerische Plural bei Paulus* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1900]), J. J. Kijne ("We, Us and Our in I and II Corinthians," *NovT* 8 [1966] 171-79), Maurice Carrez ("Le 'Nous' en 2 Corinthiens," *NTS* 26 [1980] 474-86), C. E. B. Cranfield ("Changes of Person and Number in Paul's Epistles," in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honor of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson [London: SPCK, 1982] 280-89), and George Lyons (*Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* [SBL Dissertation Series 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985]).

authorial force of the *unqualified* "we." Put another way, the extremely rare inclusion of "all" with "we" is apparently *necessary* when Paul seeks to draw the readers into his "we," a fact which, once again, reinforces the status of the unqualified "we"—in the absence of further explanation—as a reference to the apostolic/authorial company.

This brings us back to 3:18 and the textual issue which is usually ignored here.²¹ I am greatly intrigued by the fact that our by far oldest and most prestigious manuscript of the collected epistles of Paul, *p*⁴⁶, does *not* attest an "all" in 3:18. It must be readily admitted, of course, that *p*⁴⁶ stands virtually alone in its witness to the absence of πάντες, having only a Vulgate manuscript and patristic citations from Origen and Augustine to support it. Nonetheless, the absence of "all" by *p*⁴⁶ cannot be easily explained, whereas the inclusion of "all" in the majority of texts can (see below). Furthermore, the absence of "all" in *p*⁴⁶ seems clearly not to be an accident of textual history since *p*⁴⁶ in another (seemingly insignificant) place maintains carefully the we-you distinction—meaning the apostolic company and the Corinthians, respectively—characteristic of 2 Corinthians. This other place of note is 6:16, where *p*⁴⁶ and other weighty textual traditions (here, the majority reading) do *not* use what would otherwise have to be understood as an inclusive (meaning Paul and the Corinthians) "we" (ἡμεῖς), but say "you are the temple. . . ." It seems to me that the same precision reflected in *p*⁴⁶'s reading at 3:18—where the "all" is absent and thus there is no inclination to include the Corinthians in the "we" of 3:18—is likewise evident in 6:16, the only place in 2 Corinthians where a "we," if authentic, would without cavil include the Corinthians. Whatever the reason for the absence of "all" in 3:18 in *p*⁴⁶, it reflects a conscious, careful use of the given pronouns and their referential fields. Therefore, we conclude that the absence of "all" in *p*⁴⁶ is either the original and authentic reading, or it is the earliest (extant) testimony to the history of the exegesis of 3:18 that we have. In either case, the emphasis of 3:18 is seen to fall upon the Pauline experience.

As for the textual question itself, it seems to me far more likely to assume—given the canonical tendency (widely practiced even today in scripture readings) to flatten out historical contours and thus efface the distinction between author and reader—that a Christian scribe would have *extended* the great theological truths of conversion and spiritual transformation to *include* the readers by *adding* the reference to "all," than that a scribe, confronted with a clearly inclusive statement regarding the common mysteries of conversion and spiritual transformation, should feel compelled to *restrict* the more general

21. Note, e.g., N. T. Wright's shameless dodge—"The omission of πάντες in *p*⁴⁶ may safely be ignored"—in an otherwise sterling article ("Reflected Glory," 146 n 18).

application of 3:18 to the now departed apostolic company by omitting the reference to πάντες.

In p^{46} , then—again, our by far oldest and most prestigious text of 2 Corinthians—we have a reading that is on the one hand religiously *more difficult*—i.e., the text applies most particularly to Paul and/or his apostolic company—but on the other hand provides a not readily apparent, but nonetheless *greater* internal coherence for the apologetically particularistic and apostolic assertions of much of 2 Corinthians, and especially 2:14–4:6. Thus, two important and mutually reinforcing textual criteria—not to mention the age of p^{46} !—are met by adopting the reading of p^{46} . I submit that the reading of p^{46} is to be preferred. It provides a greater, though less obvious, coherence to a passage that is centrally focused upon the apostolic status of Paul who is the personal fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy about "fleshy hearts" and the greater-than-Moses servant of the new covenant who has seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

My reading of 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6 maintains that our passage does not deal primarily with the question of rightly reading scripture, but of people rightly reading *Paul*. Just as Moses was the servant of the old covenant, so Paul is of the new covenant. Hays's mistake, it seems to me, is to start with the notion that God has written Paul's letter of recommendation on the hearts of the *Corinthians*, so that the Corinthians, inasmuch as they have turned to the Lord, are the eschatological and charismatic resolution of and alternative to the ongoing Jewish misreading of Moses and the scriptures. This metaphorical misstep leads Hays to connect the Corinthians as a living letter (3:2, 3) with the non-γράμμα, or Spirit-inscripted, message of the new covenant (3:6) and, further, the Spirit-led reading of scripture that can occur when "anyone" turns to the Lord and the veil over the heart, the hardening of mind which prevents the seeing of Christ (the τέλος) in scripture, is removed (3:14-16). Instead of γράμμα, or the *written* texts of the old covenant, God is now writing on tablets of human hearts. Thus, it is the transformed community which is the enfleshment of the new covenant of the Spirit, a covenant which makes its participants divinely competent as readers of scripture.²² For Hays, then, the inscripturation of the Spirit in the new covenant is accomplished in the hearts of God's people and

22. And thus enters, for Hays, a *biblically justified* hermeneutic of reader involvement and competence. See Anthony Thiselton (*New Horizons in Hermeneutics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 272-312; 471-555).

reflected in the fact that, as readers of scripture, they manifest the truthfulness of their readings by their lives of love and faithfulness in the order of the Spirit and the new covenant. Hays's reading of 3:12-18, then, involves a dissimile (between Paul and Moses) which moves rhetorically from Moses to scripture to Jews misreading scripture and then to the conversionist and charismatic resolution of that misreading by those (i.e., Hays's "anyone" of 3:16) who "turn to the Lord." Christians are thereby made divinely competent as readers of scripture (and thus Hays declares all transformed Christian readers hermeneutically clean). However congenial I may feel to the ethical warmth and spiritual focus of Hays's hermeneutic, I do not think it is a legitimate derivative of 2 Corinthians 3.

I have argued that 2 Cor 2:14– 4:6 (and beyond) is focused on the fact and nature of Paul's apostleship and that the Corinthians as Paul's letter of recommendation are written on his heart (3:2). Paul has been made divinely competent as *διάκονος* of a new covenant of the Spirit manifested, among other ways, in the fact that he boldly *declares* the message and vision of glory he has seen, unlike Moses who, after seeing the vision, had to reveal himself. But like Moses, who removed the veil in the presence of the Lord, Paul turned to the risen Spirit Lord (who is none other than Christ, the *τέλος* of scripture) and saw the transforming glory and image of God (Christ himself; 3:18, 4:4). For Paul, however, the vision brought liberty (*ἐλευθερία*) to preach instead of revealing, and, thus transformed, Paul renounced hiddenness, so as to preach openly the truth of God (4:2) revealed in Christ Jesus the Lord (4:5).

Given these differences in our reading of 2 Corinthians 3, it seems appropriate that I address directly Hays's larger questions about the reading of scripture and specifically whether we can, as modern readers, imitate the Pauline exegesis. To be sure, Hays's truly magisterial work deserves a book-length reply, but I must in fairness at least indicate, however briefly, the points at which I feel constrained to demur.

When Hays asks, first, "Are Paul's specific *interpretations* of scripture materially normative?" I must answer "yes." If scripture has any ongoing significance at all for the church (as I believe it does), then no other answer seems possible. The answer to Hays's second question, however, is one which for Hays must match the answer to the first. The second question is: "Are Paul's interpretive *methods* formally exemplary?" Hays of course says "yes." I must now answer "no." Hays's own rejoinder to my answer is given already in *Echoes* (180-83), when Hays argues that, if Paul's readings are materially normative for Christian theology, then his *methods* must be accepted as well inasmuch as (and here I am willing with qualification to agree "there

is no possibility of accepting Paul's message while simultaneously rejecting the legitimacy of the scriptural interpretation that sustains it" (182). I respond by saying that it is one thing to say that Paul's methods are *acceptable*, but another thing to say that they are "exemplary." Thus, I would want to maintain that my acceptance of Paul's specific *interpretations* of scripture *does* lead to my appreciation and/or acceptance of his interpretive *methods*. On the other hand, it seems to me still possible to argue that on the basis of a simple distinction between author and reader that I may well be able to appreciate and/or accept a method which I am either incapable, disinclined, or (in this case) unauthorized to emulate.

By "unauthorized" I am finally grounding my view, and my difference with Hays, not in an arbitrary distinction between interpretations of scripture and exegetical methods (a distinction which Hays and I both agree cannot finally be sustained), but in the vital distinction that (it seems to me) Paul continually makes and/or assumes in the very text of 2 Corinthians, especially 2:14–4:6: that is, the distinction between Paul as apostle and the Corinthians (and myself) as readers of Paul. It seems to me that our text does raise—though it is not the primary issue—the question of reading scripture (3:14-15); but in terms of understanding the given "text" and/or making a hermeneutical response to the given message, our text draws a parallelism between *the scriptures* read in the synagogue by unbelieving Jews (3:14-15), on the one hand, and the *gospel preached by Paul* (4:3-4) (which is, to be sure, for Paul and canonical Christianity the correct interpretation of the scriptures) and also embodied by Paul (4:7-11), on the other. Thus, I would maintain that our passage is not primarily about the reading of scripture, even where the issue of scripture reading is most blatantly in the forefront. It is about correctly "reading" Paul and/or his apostolic status—especially as his apostleship impinges upon the nature and style of his ministry, his physical appearance, and/or his gospel.²³ There is thus an apostolic mediator between the church and the Old Testament. As to Paul's apostolic legitimacy, not only does 2 Corinthians throughout make explicit appeals to his divine calling as an apostle (1:1; 5:18-20; 6:4ff.; 11:5-15; 12:2), but the very thrust of our passage too relates to the fact, and especially the nature, of Paul's apostleship—the credibility for which he adduces: (1) the Corinthians as his letter of recommendation, (2) his competence as something given by God inasmuch as he is the servant of the new covenant, whereby he fulfills—a particular hermeneutical claim, indeed—the scriptural promises of God made by Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel regarding the writing of the divine law on tablets of

23. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit*, 64-72.

fleshy hearts, (3) the boldness/transparency of his preaching and ministry as over against the veiled διακονία of Moses, the servant of the lesser covenant, (4) his—like Moses'—vision of the τέλος of God in the face of Christ Jesus, the Spirit Lord who is the very image of God, and (5) his apostolic ministry, especially his suffering, as the enfleshed gospel, the very embodiment of the dying and the living of Jesus.

I think, therefore, that it is entirely appropriate to maintain the apostle-Corinthians/"we-you" distinctions which Paul himself so studiously maintained. This is not a "sacramental" (181) appeal to religious, revelational authority *per se*. Nor is it an artificial distinction between scriptural content and exegetical method. Rather, it is the refusal to engage in the canonically flattening technique of reading which so fuses author (in this case an apostle) and reader in such a way that the historical and religious distinctiveness of the author, should there be any—and in this case we maintain that apostleship is precisely such a historical, religious, and *hermeneutical* distinction worth maintaining—is obscured.

I fully agree with Hays that no reading of scripture can be legitimate if it denies the faithfulness of Israel's God to his covenant promises. I furthermore agree that scripture must be read as a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I similarly agree that to read scripture as Paul read it means (1) we must read it as a narrative of election and promise, (2) we must read it ecclesiocentrically, (3) we must read it in the service of proclamation, (4) we must read it as participants in the eschatological drama of salvation, and (5) we must learn to appreciate the metaphorical relationship between the text and our own reading of it. However, I ask for a bit more precision with regard to points 4 and 5 above: namely, to say that we are "participants in the eschatological drama of salvation" does not mean that we are participants with Paul *on an equal footing*. I still want to maintain—as historically prescribed and, it seems to me, insisted on by Paul himself—the historical uniqueness and consequent hermeneutical implications of his apostleship. Put another way, it is (it seems to me) a historical fact of religious and/or hermeneutical significance to remember that we read scripture "after" Paul (both temporally and substantively). It is simply no good trying to efface the traces of Paul's hermeneutical lead when it comes to reading the Old Testament. It is one thing to say that I can read Paul and, indeed, even appreciate and accept his readings of scripture in terms of both substance and method. It is something else to say that I am fully and thus apostolically "competent" *in the same way* to re-read scripture as Paul often creatively, charismatically, and/or eccentrically, re-read it. "All are not apostles, are they?" (1 Cor 12:29). As for our appreciation of "the metaphorical relationship between the text and our own reading of it," I say again:

the precise contours of that "metaphorical relationship" must not be understood so as either (1) to obscure the historical and rhetorical differences between writer(s) and readers, or (2) to obliterate the historical and hermeneutical distinction between apostle and hearers/readers.

Thus, I must admit that I am likewise uneasy about Hays's third and final hermeneutical constraint, his proposal (191) that "no reading of Scripture can be legitimate if it fails to shape the readers into a community that embodies the love of God as shown forth in Christ." I would simply want to maintain the distinction between a proper reading of scripture and a full and obedient response to that reading. Prophets (as both preachers and interpreters of scripture) who are truthful but disobedient are, after all, not unheard of. Surely we and the Corinthians also amply illustrate the need for hermeneutical constraints which do *not* depend upon the moral and spiritual ambiguity of human response. "Let God be found true though everyone is a liar." For if the Corinthians should fail "the test" of the indwelling Christ (13:5), that failure would not invalidate the prior Pauline/Corinthian reading of scripture upon which his gospel proclamation and their prior acceptance of it (as given by Paul), respectively, were based. Spiritual failure *ex post facto credendi* (note 1 Cor 15:1-2, 12) cannot invalidate a previously ratified reading of scripture so as to nullify its legitimacy. Or can a reading's legitimacy wax and wane with the community's response?

Again, Richard Hays's work deserves careful reading. He is to be commended for the honest and straightforward way in which he raises the most difficult of questions with regard to scriptural authority, interpretation, and exegetical method. Hays is to be further commended for his bold and nuanced attempt to derive his answers from an imaginative and provocative reading of 2 Corinthians 3. From his reading, however, I feel compelled to turn. Nonetheless, though Hays and I clearly disagree as to the reading of 2 Corinthians 3, we do not, I am sure, disagree that the glory seen in the face of Jesus and then preached by Paul in the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord commends the everlasting hope of the new covenant.