

Did the Glory of Moses' Face Fade? A Reexamination of καταργέω in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

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The translation of καταργέω as "fade" in 2 Cor 3:7-18 has little justification outside biblical literature or within it. Most scholars have abandoned this translation as inaccurate. Yet, it persists in modern Bible versions. Examination of the lexical evidence finds no support for this translation nor does reexamination of the Exod 34:19-24 context that the word is intended to describe. Moses' face does not diminish in its glory; it is merely blocked or "rendered ineffective" by the mask. Finally, examination of 2 Cor 3:7-18 reveals that a translation of "hinder" or "block" best accounts for Paul's understanding of the Exodus situation within his own purposes. Further, it is suggested that the use of τέλος by Paul in 2 Cor 3:13 may be connected to his use of τέλειος in 1 Cor 13:8-12.

Key Words: 2 Cor 3:7-18, καταργέω, fade, Exod 34:19-34

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, Richard Hayes, in a recent article, captures the frustrations of those who seek to unlock the mysteries of 2 Corinthians 3, saying:

Unfortunately, 2 Corinthians 3, though squeezed and prodded by generations of interpreters, has remained one of the more inscrutable reflections of a man who had already gained the reputation among his near-contemporaries for writing letters that were "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). It is hard to escape the impression that, to this day, when 2 Corinthians 3 is read a veil lies over our minds.¹

Though certainly Hayes as well as others provide analysis and research which helps lift the veil over this passage,² this study contends that

1. Richard Hayes, "A Letter from Christ," in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989) 123.

2. A selection of helpful studies include: Thomas Provence, "'Who Is Sufficient for These Things?' An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians ii 15-iii 18," *NovT* 24 (1982) 54-81; W. C. van Unik, "'With Unveiled Face': An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians iii 12-18," *NovT* 6 (1964) 153-69; Scott Hafemann, "The Glory and Veil of Moses in 2 Cor 3:7-14: An Example

something." There is a huge difference here that impacts the sense of the word in 2 Corinthians and Paul in general.

Such passages as Gal 5:22; Eph 2:15; 2 Thess 2:8; and 2 Tim 1:10, occasionally rendering *καταργέω* "destroy" or "abolish" in English translations, do not demand such drastic meanings. In each case, the translation "render ineffective" is perfectly satisfactory. Christ has not extinguished the law; he has buffered in his very flesh its effect of condemning us (Eph 2:15). Paul is not saying the offense of the cross has been eliminated, only that it has been shielded from view if he preaches circumcision (Gal 5:11). Likewise, Paul is not saying specifically that the lawless one will be annihilated but that the splendor of Christ's coming will completely overwhelm his impact (2 Thess 2:8). Has Christ destroyed death, or hasn't he actually blocked its effect on behalf of believers (2 Tim 1:10)?

The majority of Paul's 21 uses of *καταργέω* outside of 2 Corinthians come in Romans (6 times) and 1 Corinthians (9 times). The general meaning of "render ineffective" holds up in these passages as well. In Romans, the lack of faith for some does not render ineffective God's faithfulness with respect to others (3:3); nor does faith in believers render law ineffective (3:31). On the contrary, the death of a woman's husband does render the law of adultery ineffective should she choose to remarry (7:2); just so have the effects of the law and sin been buffered by a believer's own death through identification with Christ in baptism (6:6; 7:6). Faith is rendered ineffective, valueless, if those who live by law can be heirs of God (4:14).

In 1 Corinthians, God has chosen the "things that are not" to render ineffective "the things that are" (1:28), his own wisdom to stop the wisdom of the world in its tracks (2:6). Food and stomach no longer control believers; food's domination over choices is rendered ineffective (6:13). Prophecies, knowledge, the imperfect, and childish ways are rendered ineffective when believers are overwhelmed by the perfect, the full, face-to-face knowledge of God and of themselves (13:8, 10, 11). All dominion, authority, power, and even death are ultimately rendered harmless under Christ's feet even as Christ subjugates himself under God's authority (15:24, 26).¹¹ What is present in all these passages involving *καταργέω* is a reality or a situation that, apart from the interference or introduction of a new reality or situation, would persist in its effects. However, something else comes into the picture that in some fashion blocks out, buffers, or overwhelms the former force or reality. For Paul, this overpowering new

11. These passages certainly are the closest to speaking about annihilation, but even these do not demand the sense of such utter destruction, especially when one recognizes that Christ is also spoken of as being subjugated to God in these contexts.

force usually relates to Christ: his flesh, the cross, his splendor, his feet, and perhaps even the perfect, as well as the believer's faith and identification with Christ. Outside of Paul, this force can be anything, unfruitful tree or enemies.

The lexical evidence for καταργέω as "render ineffective," as a general meaning, is solid, fitting well into all Pauline and NT contexts. The lexical evidence for "fade" is nonexistent. The idea of a gradual diminishing of the former reality is never suggested by any context.

THE CONTEXT OF EXODUS 34:29-34

Although other OT passages may be informing Paul's thoughts in 2 Cor 3:7-18,¹² no one disputes that Paul's use of καταργέω comments on what happened to Moses when he came down the mountain the second time with the Ten Commandments. Since a translation of "fade" for καταργέω does not come from lexical inquiry, it must be investigated whether such a translation is suggested by the narration of this curious event in Exod 34:29-34. The word itself is not in the LXX on this passage nor is any Hebrew word that might suggest it. Rather, καταργέω is Paul's interpretation of the events.

Sometime following Moses' discovering the Israelites' creation of the golden calf, his smashing of the original tablets containing the Ten Commandments, and God's slaying 3,000 of the people in punishment (Exodus 33), Exodus 34 narrates that Moses ventured up to the mountain once again to receive freshly chiselled tablets from God. This time when he returned, it indicates that he read out the Ten Commandments with little incident. However, such incidence as it was, attracts Paul's attention. The text of Exod 34:29-32 says that upon approaching the people from the mountain, though Moses himself was unaware of it, his face "shone" or "radiated" so brilliantly that people "were afraid" to come too close to him and ran away. After Moses coaxed back Aaron and other leaders and spoke with them, all the Israelites came close enough to hear the commandments read out.

Following this focal incident, Exod 34:33-34, says that Moses put on "a veil" to cover his radiating face. It goes on to relate Moses' regular routine with the veil.¹³ He would take it off when consulting with the Lord in his tent and leave it off until he delivered God's

12. Particularly suggested are Jer 31:31-34; 38:32 and Ezek 11:20; 36:26, which contain the theme of new covenant so important to Paul in this context. See Hayes, *Echoes*, 128-29; Stockhausen, *Veil*, 117; Hafemann, *Moses*, 119-48; Fitzmyer, "Glory," 635.

13. J. P. Hyatt, *Exodus* (New Century Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 327; U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1951) 450.

further commands to the people. After delivering the commands, just as the first time, he would don the veil until such time as the Lord would again visit him in his tent.

The mystery of what lay behind Moses' mask has spurred the imagination and the investigation of scholars incessantly. Triggered by the fact that the verb in the text, *qrn*, "shine," is a denominative of the noun for "horn" (*qeren*) and in its Hiphil form is rendered "bring forth horns" in Ps 69:32,¹⁴ it has been suggested that Moses actually had horns coming out of his forehead.¹⁵ Mistranslation of this passage in the Latin Vulgate led to Michelangelo's portrayal of Moses with horns.¹⁶ Another suggestion is that Moses had developed a skin condition called keratosis which creates a rough layer of skin or that he had developed blisters or callouses from his overexposure to God.¹⁷ The idea of horns has also suggested to some that behind the text description lies the more common reality in the ancient world of a horned mask which Moses wore when he performed his priestly function of reading out the law on God's behalf.¹⁸ The last of these suggestions can be readily dismissed because the text does not say anything about a mask. This winds up with Moses donning his face covering precisely at the opposite times described in the text.¹⁹ It is in fact when he is doing his priestly duty of meeting with God and reading out the law to the people that he does not wear the covering. The other suggestions involving Moses' horned face run counter to the insistence in the text that Moses was not aware of his condition.

That Moses' face "shone" or "radiated" in some fashion seems most conducive to the word used and the context. However, the fact that the most common word for shine (*'wr*) was not used has led to further speculation. One suggestion is that the language, at least at the level of the text, though meaning "shine" but implicating "horned," would trigger a connection to the calf of Exodus 32,

14. R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God* (JSOTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983) 107, 210; Hyatt, *Exodus*, 326-27; *NIDOTTE* 4:957.

15. *NIDOTTE* 4.957.

16. Hyatt, *Exodus*, 326-27.

17. William Propp, "The Skin of Moses' Face: Transfigured or Disfigured?" *CBQ* 49 (1987) 375-86.

18. Martin Noth, *Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 267; H. Gressmann, *Mose und seine Zeit* (FRLANT 18; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913) 246-47; Gerhard von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch* (BWANT 13; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1934).

19. Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 609-10; Moberly, *Mountain*, 107; Menahem Haran, "The Shining of Moses' Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography," in *The Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature* (Fest. G. W. Ahlström; ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer; JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) 159-79, esp. 162-64.

symbol of Israelites' most dastardly sin.²⁰ Yet, it must be noted that nowhere in that passage is it ever said or implied that the calf they built was horned.²¹ Another fairly common suggestion is that the actual radiation coming from Moses' glow was spiked or at least perceived as spiked in some way.²² This would seem the most likely suggestion for the use of *qrn* in this text. Even at that, one wonders how the veil would prevent the rays of light from his face from being seen unless his veil was more like a hood covering his entire head. This is possible since the meaning of *masweh* ("veil") is left fairly open-ended.

It seems right to observe that whatever occurred to Moses' face it had nothing to do with Moses himself but with his regular, personal contact with God. Exod 33:11 actually says that even between the two receptions of the Ten Commandments they met "face to face." Of course, this cannot be taken literally, and the whole section this is in seems out of place with its context.²³ However, the very next section, Exod 33:12-23, narrates the episode in which Moses requests to see God's glory but is only allowed to see his "goodness" because no one can see God's face and live. The idea that Moses will carry in his person the effect of being in God's presence which the people of Israel will be able to observe as a legitimation of Moses' credentials is very much on the surface of this incident. Could it not be that what the people observed in Moses' face when he comes down the mountain in Exodus 34 is this very effect?

What is God like that might cause such an effect on someone who is exposed to him in the way Moses was? Besides Exod 33:12-23, other OT passages depict God in association with brilliant light. Hab 3:4 compares his "splendor" to "sunrise," "rays" flashing from his hand. Ezek 1:27-28 describes the glory of the Lord as "radiance," "brilliant light," "rainbow," "full of fire," "glowing metal," and his throne as "sapphire." Ps 104:2 pictures him as wrapped up in a garment of light.²⁴ Given this, it is not so surprising that Moses' over-exposure to God's brilliance in Exodus 33 as well as his regular communion with him described in Exodus 34 would leave a kind of glowing imprint that distinguished him forever from all others.²⁵ Neither should it be surprising that just as Moses could not look

20. Moberly, *Mountain*, 108.

21. J. I. Durham, *Exodus* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1987) 467.

22. *Ibid.*; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 449.

23. Childs, *Exodus*, 590; Julius Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," *HUCA* 2 (1925) 10.

24. Haran, "Shining," 159.

25. *Ibid.*; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 449; C. E. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eardmans, 1971) 2:245.

directly upon the face of God without harm, so, in turn, Moses, who bears in his countenance to a lesser extent that same quality, cannot be looked upon by the Israelites for extended amounts of time without damage.²⁶

The abiding presence of God in his countenance no doubt provides Moses the kind of authority to speak for God that he needs to maintain the people's respect, obedience, and attention, especially after the incident of the golden calf.²⁷ From now on, in order to avoid blindness the people would be physically forced to lower their eyes and perhaps bend their heads as they submissively receive God's laws, both the Ten Commandments for the second time and also the other laws that God gradually imparted to them through Moses. Unlike messengers for other gods, Moses not only speaks for God but in his countenance people are brought into a measure of God's presence.²⁸

The uniqueness of Moses in this respect understandably fuels a connection between Moses and Messianic expectations. Jews as well as Samaritans viewed the prophecy of Deut 18:15-18 messianically.²⁹ Jews continued in extrabiblical literature to treat Moses as God-like.³⁰ In putting on the veil for his day-to-day activity, Moses also presents a particularly conducive Christ-like figure for Christian typology since Christ himself dons the veil of humanity over the glory of his divinity.³¹ It is going too far, however, to say, as one interpreter does, that behind Moses' veil lay the very face of Christ, which God did not want the Israelites to see prematurely.³²

What is behind the mask for Paul is no mystery. It is the glory of the Lord on the face of Moses. While this same glory can be seen in the face of Christ, as he says in 2 Cor 4:6, in 2 Cor 3:7-18 Paul consistently and repeatedly uses the word "glory" (δόξα) to encompass what he believes Moses' hooded face blocks with the word καταργέω. Like all Jewish scholars of his day, he believed this glory of God on Moses' face remained with him into death and beyond.³³ How, indeed,

26. Moberly, *Mountain*, 108.

27. Durham, *Exodus*, 468; Childs, *Exodus*, 623; Dumbrell, "Exodus," 181; Moberly, *Mountain*, 108; *NIDOTTE* 4.957; W. H. Gispen, *Exodus* (Bible Student's Commentary; trans. Ed van der Maas; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 317.

28. Moberly, *Mountain*, 108; Terence Freitheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1991) 311.

29. J. Jeremias, "Moses," *TDNT* 4.859-61.

30. Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 193-94; Morgenstern, "Moses," 24-27.

31. Childs, *Exodus*, 623.

32. Anthony Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1968) 25-34.

33. Hafemann, "Veil," 31-32; Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 227; Thrall, *II Corinthians*, 243-44; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 64.

could he or any Jew conceive of such a thing as the glory of God "fading"? As is so typical of Romans, he would have to say "μή γένοιτο!" It would be totally inconsistent with his understanding of God.

Despite assumptions by many who have been influenced by the poor translation of 2 Corinthians 3, nothing in the Exodus context even hints at the diminishing of the condition on Moses' face that required covering.³⁴ Nothing suggests that his face somehow renews itself upon regular meetings with the Lord in his tent. Nothing suggests that he was sinisterly keeping a secret from them.³⁵ Rather, the mask protected them from overexposure to the presence of the glory of God, which was on his face continuously from his personal contact with the presence of God in Exodus 33.

THE CONTEXT OF 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-18

Despite our necessary preoccupation with the significance of Moses' uncovered face in the previous section, it is important to recognize that Paul spends no time whatever pondering that aspect of Exodus 34 in 2 Corinthians 3. His attention is drawn to the fact that Moses' face was covered. That it was sometimes uncovered and that this might be significant doesn't occupy his mind at all. In fact, if one didn't know the Exodus passage well, he or she would likely conclude from Paul's exegesis that Moses' face was covered all the time.

It is the veil, nothing else, that he believes shows the inferiority of the ministry of Moses to his own, which is what he is trying to defend. In his ministry of the new covenant, the glory of God is no longer blocked off by something like a veil. Complete and utter exposure to God is possible through the person of Jesus Christ.

In the context of 2 Cor 3:7-18, Paul wrestles with a seismic paradox, whether brought on by those who champion Moses over Paul or by Paul's own quandary regarding the old and new covenant.³⁶ How can what he represents in his ministry originate from the same God as what devout Jews represent as coming from God through Moses? How can God's giving of the "letter," the law, through Moses be reconciled with his giving of the Spirit through Paul's ministry

34. Grispen, *Exodus*, 317.

35. Van Unnik, "Unveiled Face," 162; William J. Dalton, "Covenant" 91; and Hickling ("Sequence," 390) deny the point as well.

36. Those who consider Paul's argument polemical include: Jerome Murphy - O'Connor, "PNEUMATIKOI and Judaizers in 2 Cor 2:14-4:6," *AusBR* 34 (1986) 42-58; Linda Belleville, "Paul's Polemic and Theology of the Spirit in Second Corinthians," *CBQ* 58 (1996) 281-304; D. Georgi, "The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians" (trans. H. Attridge; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 258-82. Among those who question the validity of drawing too much polemic from passages such as this is Hickling, "Sequence," 380-95.

in Christ? How can Moses be an administrator of death while Paul is a administrator of life (3:6) and freedom (3:17)? Moreover, how can Paul reconcile the true quality of Moses' ministry shown by God's apparent approval of it with God's greater approval of his own? How can he defend the superiority of his ministry for God without defacing and in effect destroying the high quality of Moses' ministry, thereby undercutting his own?

Without much argumentation, he believes the veil over Moses' face and its ultimate significance resolve this paradox. The mention of the veil in Exod 34:29-34 allows Paul at one and the same time to declare that nothing was or is defective about Moses himself or what he represented in his relationship with God and also to declare his own ministry—and thereby true Christian ministry in general—to represent God properly yet be superior to Moses. When he introduces the word καταργέω into his discussion, the only significance he draws on is that it covers over the evidence of Moses' intimate relationship with God himself ("glory"- δόξα). Paul consistently in his first three uses of καταργέω constructs it in the passive voice (actually as a participle). This indicates his recognition that, although it was the veil that blocked the Israelites from viewing this reality, this was God's doing. It evidenced 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.

Hafemann has done more than anyone to remove the viability of "fade" for καταργέω in 2 Cor 3:7-18 and to substantiate "render ineffective" as superior. Within his research, he provides strong argumentation for the fact that Paul believed God did not just block God's glory from Israel with the veil. He did more. He shielded Israel from the intended result of God's glory, their judgment.³⁷ Because of Israel's sin, especially evidenced in the making of the golden calf, being exposed to God's glory, even in its diminished residue on Moses' face, would result in the annihilation of Israelites as they stood. This inference is drawn from the apparent connection between Paul's use of ἀτενίζω ("fixate," "stare") in 2 Cor 3:7 and the reference to the people's fear in Exod 34:30. The people could not fix their gaze on Moses' face for fear of being destroyed. There is much to commend this view. Moses does call them "stiff-necked" in Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5, just as Paul describes them as "dense" (πωρόω) in 2 Cor 3:14. Yet, Exod 33:27-30 and 33:34-35 seem to indicate that the Israelites had already

37. Hafemann, "Glory," 40; idem, *Paul*, 280.

been punished for their sin with the calf by the judgment sword of Moses and by a plague by the time the narration gets to Exodus 34. Added to this is the fact that Exod 34:29-34 narrates that they did look on Moses' face initially and regularly without condemnation and without mention of condemnation.

If Hafemann's interpretation is correct, why are the Israelites not destroyed at these times? In the explanation presented here, the Israelites can look at Moses but they cannot gain intimate, personal access to God in their looking because it is so brief and submissive in its nature. They cannot see God face to face, as Christians in the new covenant now can in Christ. There is not the freedom to enjoy God's presence. True, the law that Moses brings does condemn mankind for sin. However, that is not what Paul talks about in relationship to Moses' face being covered. Rather, it is God's glory, repeatedly mentioned in 3:7 and 3:11.

In one of the most novel approaches to the dilemma posed by καταργέω in 2 Cor 3:7-18, Stockhausen, depending on the work of others,³⁸ asserts that Paul indeed uses it in the sense of "abolish" or "come to an end." However, she believes that because Paul consistently uses καταργέω in the present tense, he is thinking of his own day when the old covenant as represented in the person of Moses has ceased to exist. However, to take this word in its 2 Corinthians context as hermeneutically intended, as she says, rather than rooted in the historical narration of Exodus 34, is to turn 3:7-18 inside out with grammatically twisted justification.

To insist that the first participial use of καταργέω in 2 Cor 3:7 is adjectival in relation to τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου ("the glory of his face") hardly bucks the tide of exegesis as she seems to imply; it is basic Greek grammar. However, to suggest that a present tense participle (which she insists is not adverbial in the first place) in relationship to an aorist verb such as ἐντετυπωμένη ("brought death") in 3:7 implies a "future reality" according to standard grammatical authorities (citing Blass, Debrunner, Funk), is totally groundless.³⁹ A present tense participle only implies action coterminus with the time period of the main verb, in this case aorist, or past.⁴⁰ Grammatically, despite her insistence, Paul must be using the present participles of καταργέω to refer to the period of Moses.

Stockhausen's recommendation of "come to an end" for καταργέω is also at odds with evidence presented earlier which questions

38. Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, 87, 119.

39. Hafemann (*Paul*, 299-300) does a thorough job of taking Stockhausen to task for this grammatical error, upon which her entire exegesis rests.

40. Furnish (*II Corinthians*, 203) makes the same point.

whether καταργέω can be justifiably associated with extinction or annihilation of something. Her quick dismissal of Paul's use of τέλος in 2 Cor 3:13 as "ambiguous" and therefore pointless to pursue also leads to suspicion regarding her view.⁴¹ Nearly all other interpreters, on the contrary, recognize τέλος as the key on which all else hinges in understanding the significance of καταργέω and what Paul is trying to get at in the passage as a whole.

While Belleville stands as one of the few scholars left who go out on the limb to defend "fade" as the best translation for καταργέω in 2 Cor 3:7-18, at least she recognizes the significance of τέλος in 3:13 for defending her point of view.⁴² From her perspective, the word τέλος, "end," which Paul can mean in terms of either termination or goal, must be taken literally as "end." This implies that Moses' mask was to prevent the Israelites from watching the glory on Moses' face gradually fade out. She asserts that the εἰς τὸ τέλος phrase of 3:13 is matched by the ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν phrase in 3:18, the first declaring a decrease in glory and the second an increase in glory. She also argues that a translation of "abolish" for καταργέω in 3:13 pushes the meaning of the word beyond its boundaries and that the passive form of the participle in 3:13 unnecessarily introduces an outside agent that does not fit with light as well as the idea of fading.

While not necessarily disagreeing that τέλος means "end" in 3:13, Belleville's case for καταργέω meaning "fade" in connection with this does not necessarily follow. First, "from glory to glory" in 3:18 need not at all dictate a gradual increase in glory. It could just as easily refer to a lesser glory or a "reflected glory," instantaneously becoming a greater glory, or even the same glory being transferred from one situation to another. Second, I agree about the inappropriateness of "abolish" for καταργέω in 3:13, but the passive form simply maintains consistency with Paul's two previous uses of the word in 3:7 and 3:10. As in those cases, the passive conveys the result of Moses' placing the mask over his face, obscuring what was on the other side. The mask is hardly an "outside agent" to this context, as she says. It is central to Paul's entire discussion. Introducing "light" into the picture, as she does, seems more of an intrusion, since Paul does not introduce this element into his discussion until 4:6 and then he does not talk about Moses' face but human hearts.

Those who argue for τέλος as indicating "goal" in 2 Cor 3:13 do so for some understandable reasons.⁴³ First and foremost involves consistency with Rom 10:4 in which Paul, using τέλος, states that Christ

41. Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, 127.

42. Belleville, *Reflections*, 200. Nearly all others focus their attention on this word as well.

43. Hayes, *Echoes*, 137; Provence, "Sufficient," 75; Dumbrell, "Exodus," 187.

is the "goal" of the law, which is commonly understood to mean that Christ does not terminate the law but rather fulfills its design. Second, the face of Moses then stands for the old covenant, the letters carved in stone, which God intends to be superceded by the new covenant from its very beginning.

However, Furnish is right when he criticizes those who hold this view of τέλος for not being able to explain adequately why God would want the purpose of the old covenant kept from the Israelites or, for that matter, why he would have desired to stop them from seeing in some fashion Christ in the face of Moses.⁴⁴ And Belleville is right when she suggests that ἀτενίζω does not lend itself well to the idea of understanding or comprehending a goal. Rather, it relates to fixing one's stare on someone or something.⁴⁵ Finally, Hafemann is right when he insists that in 3:13 Paul's focus is still on Moses, his face, and the veil and not on its significance for Paul and his Corinthian audience.⁴⁶ That shift does not occur until 3:14 when he replaces the past tenses of his verbs with the present tense beginning with μένει ("remains"). It is signalled also when he uses καταργέω as an indicative verb after having used it as a participle all three other times.

In essence, Hafemann seems to strike at a more satisfactory reading of τέλος when he first observes that it is intended to sum up "in one word" what Paul described at length in 3:7, that it essentially stands in for τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ("his face").⁴⁷ He also perceives correctly that neither of the two extremes for interpreting τέλος accurately reflects this text. As he says, "Moses is not keeping Israel from seeing that the glory is fading, nor is he keeping Israel from seeing that the Law really points to Christ as its goal."⁴⁸ However, it does not seem best to go along with Hafemann when he says that τέλος refers to "'the outcome or result' of that which was being rendered inoperative, i.e., the death-dealing judgment of the glory of God upon his 'stiff-necked' people as manifested in the old covenant."⁴⁹ This seems to put an enormous amount of interpretive baggage on one word. It also does not avoid the pitfalls of those who take τέλος as "aim" which he criticized as moving prematurely into the old covenant issues which do not begin until 3:14.

It seems to me that by introducing τέλος where previously he had "the glory of Moses' face," Paul simply intends to give a slightly different twist to what he had said earlier. His reference point is the glory of God that was radiating from Moses' face. The "end" simply

44. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207.

45. Belleville, *Reflections*, 202.

46. Hafemann, "Glory," 41.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, 42.

refers to what was on the other side of the mask, no more, no less. It is the glory of God that remains on Moses' face as a result of his direct contact with him. To this the Israelites and all others are denied access until Christ appears.

Why Paul chooses this particular word τέλος to augment his interpretation may not be easily explained, but perhaps some benefit can come from looking at 1 Corinthians 13. The highest concentrated incidence of καταργέω other than 2 Corinthians 3 occurs in 1 Cor 13:8-12, where it appears four times. Also in that context is the key use of a word related to τέλος, this being τέλειος, meaning "perfect" or "complete." There, Paul tells the Corinthians the radical differences for Christians between being in the state of perfection, most likely referring to abiding in a complete relationship to God in eternity, and being in their current, finite situation. Now, there is only partial knowledge demonstrated in activities like speaking in tongues and prophecies.⁵⁰ This imperfect situation will one day be "rendered ineffective" and believers will no longer see only a poor reflection but rather "face to face."

In terms of 2 Corinthians 3, could it be that Paul believes what believers will see is God and what they will reflect is his glory, even as Moses did? Indeed, in 3:18 he speaks directly of the effect of the removed veil for Christians being to "reflect the Lord's glory." This is possible, as he says in 3:16-17, because in knowing Christ, the veil of Moses symbolically blocking the Lord's glory from humanity has been set aside. That which had rendered the glow of Moses' face ineffective has now been rendered ineffective itself (3:14). Christ is the Spirit and the Spirit is the Lord. Therefore, knowing Christ means basking in the unhindered, full glory of God and to be in transition from exposure to his glory in this life and in eternity, "from glory to glory," as he says in 3:18.⁵¹ He will go on in 4:6 to speak of "the knowledge of the glory of God" which believers have direct access to "in the face of Christ."

Paul also speaks of "freedom" (ἐλευθερία) which results from receiving the Spirit of the Lord in 3:17. Couldn't he be viewing this freedom, not in the political or moral sense, so common in Greek literature, but in the spiritual sense, freedom to come close to God, to live in his

50. Paul uses τέλος in the sense of "full" knowledge as opposed to partial knowledge also in 2 Cor 1:14, albeit not in an eschatological sense but in terms of his hopes for this letter.

51. A brush with eschatological implications, although clearer for τέλειος, is not far-fetched for τέλος. Paul uses it eschatologically in 1 Cor 15:24 and 1 Thess 2:16. It is also used eschatologically in Luke 21:4; Heb 6:8. It refers eschatologically to Christ in Rev 21:6 and 22:13. An eschatological sense for τέλος is explored in Ekkehard Stegemann, "Der Neue Bund im Alten: Zum Schriftvertandnis des Paulus in II Kor 3," *ThZ* 42 (1986) 112.

glory without harm?⁵² Even Jews, Paul says, who have been shut off from the full glory of the Lord since Moses donned the veil, will find the freedom to gain full access to God when they come to belief in Christ.

This, Paul says in 3:12, is the message he preaches "freely," or "boldly" (παρρησία), since he is not encumbered by a veil as was Moses. He preaches this message across the board which makes his ministry, though based on the same glory of God as Moses', superior to his. What was denied Israel by Moses' veil in Christ has been opened wide to all people. A personal relationship with God himself is now available to all. This is Paul's gospel.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the current English translation of "fade" for καταργέω should be abandoned. It is not supported by lexical or contextual evidence nor is it substantiated by argument. This study has also shown that a general translation of "render ineffective" bears weighty, lexical, and contextual support. In these two conclusions, this article casts its vote with Hafemann. For the particular context of 2 Cor 3:7-18, a translation of "block" best fits the context of describing what Moses' veil does. It renders ineffective the effect of God's glory that remained on Moses' face following his close, personal contact with him, by blocking the Israelites from seeing it, except while they submissively receive God's laws from Moses.

This study further suggests that when Paul introduces the word τέλος into his third mention of Moses' face being blocked in 3:13 that he does so under the influence of thoughts he has that are related to his use of καταργέω and τέλειος in 1 Cor 13:8-12. The word τέλος refers still to Moses face but now particularly representative of the kind of intimate, complete, personal relationship with God that all believers have in Jesus Christ, anticipating their future, eternal relationship with God. This was closed off to all but Moses until Christ came and the gospel was made known.

Finally, these conclusions fit in with Paul's overall purpose in 2 Corinthians 3–4, to establish his ministry and Moses' as being founded on the same base, the revelation of God's glory, but his as superior, the only one offering the intimate, personal knowledge of God that all people, Jew and Greek, desire to find.

52. Dumbrell, "Exodus 34," 187; Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924) 118; Noting especially Philo (*Her.* 14-21), Murphy-O'Connor (*Theology*, 36) remarks regarding παρρησία, 'As the fruit of wisdom, it implies friendship with God.'