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# Transformed “from Glory to Glory”: Paul’s Appeal to the Experience of His Readers in 2 Corinthians 3:18

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2 Corinthians 3:18 is about the transformation of the believer. This verse follows a somewhat complicated discussion in which Paul juxtaposes his *διακονία* with that of Moses. It states:

And all of us (*ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες*), with unveiled faces, seeing as though reflected in a mirror (*κατοπτριζόμενοι*) the glory of the Lord (*τὴν δόξαν κυρίου*), are being transformed into the same image (*τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα*) from one degree of glory to another (*ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν*), for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

According to this text, the believer<sup>2</sup> is transformed into *τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα* (“the same image”), usually understood to be the image of the risen Christ.<sup>3</sup> The believer’s transformation is further described by Paul as *ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν* (literally, “from glory to glory”).

The phrase *ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν* typically receives scant attention in the scholarly literature, perhaps because 2 Cor 3:18 is so riddled with other difficul-

I would like to thank Margaret Mitchell, Mark Nanos, Greg Jenks, and Mike Zito for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

<sup>1</sup> NRSV, slightly amended. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from the NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to use the term “believer” throughout this article in order to avoid the anachronism of the term “Christian.”

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 241; Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1994, 2000), 1:285; and Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 56.

ties.<sup>4</sup> The phrase is usually understood to refer to the believers' present glorified transformation—following conversion—with the expectation of a more intense future glorification.<sup>5</sup> Curiously, interpreters seem unconcerned that, understood in this manner, the phrase contributes little or nothing to the apostle's overall argument.<sup>6</sup> To counter this problem, I suggest that—since Paul appeals to the drama of death and resurrection in much of 2:14–7:4—we should attempt to view ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in that light.<sup>7</sup>

In the pages below, I will argue that we should interpret the idea of transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in reference to the believers' past and present glorification (rather than that of their present and future). Viewing the phrase in this way will enable us to see two significant things. First, it will allow us to understand how the notion of transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν advances Paul's argument in 2:14–4:6 (the first major section of 2:14–7:4). Second, it will point the way to comprehending how 2 Cor 3:18 functions to prepare readers for the second major section of 2:14–7:4.

I will begin my study with a brief methodological note concerning the integrity of canonical 2 Corinthians. Following that, I will focus on the situation that gave rise to Paul's *apologia* in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4.<sup>8</sup> I will then turn my attention to 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 (the first major section in 2:14–7:4). In my discussion of 2:14–4:6, I will

<sup>4</sup> The difficulties include (to name a few) the change in subject at the start of the verse (from "us" [first person plural] to "all of us" [ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες]), the proper translation and interpretation of κατοπτριζόμενοι, the question of whether κύριος points to God or Jesus, and the meaning of ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.

<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the beginning of the phrase, ἀπὸ δόξης, is taken to refer to the believer's initial transformation (presumably as a result of one's conversion) while the latter part of the phrase, εἰς δόξαν, points to the believer's future transformation into a more glorified state. From the perspective of some, that more glorified state will be realized at the parousia. Others, though, understand the transformation to a future state of more intense δόξα as a gradual process. There has also been the suggestion that the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης points to the source from which the glory comes (i.e., the deity). This last suggestion, however, has found little support. For a brief summary of the various treatments of ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, see Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:285–86.

<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, the only way to make sense of this passage in its present context (as it is usually interpreted) is to assume that Paul is opposing some kind of Judaizing activities in the community. See, e.g., Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 310–11. However, there is no substantive evidence of such Judaizing in the Corinthian correspondence. See n. 61 below.

<sup>7</sup> For Paul's emphasis on death and resurrection in 2 Corinthians and particularly in 2:14–7:4, see, e.g., Steven J. Kraftchick, "Death in Us, Life in You: The Apostolic Medium," in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 2, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (ed. David M. Hay; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997; repr., SBLSymS 22; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 156–81.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4 seems to fit within the ancient genre of the apologetic letter. For a brief overview of that letter form, see Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 14–15.

review the difficulties of fitting 3:7–18—the so-called midrash on Moses<sup>9</sup>—into its larger context. I will then demonstrate how a reinterpretation of the idea of transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν (3:18) helps us to negotiate those problems. Finally, I will show how Paul uses the notion of the transformation of the believer ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν to set up a transition to the second major section (beginning in 4:7) by preparing his readers for his own bold and daring self-description in 2 Cor 4:7–12.

## I. A UNIFIED OR DIVIDED LETTER?

### 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14–7:4 AND CANONICAL 2 CORINTHIANS

The integrity of 2 Corinthians arguably presents the most difficult problem currently faced by scholars of the Corinthian correspondence. Although a few regard the canonical text as a single letter, most are convinced that it contains fragments from more than one missive. Unfortunately, beyond that there is no consensus. Some divide 2 Corinthians into two letters (chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13);<sup>10</sup> others three (chs. 1–8, ch. 9, and chs. 10–13), while still others postulate five Pauline fragments plus a non-Pauline interpolation (6:14–7:1).<sup>11</sup> Those who hold to the last of these positions understand 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) as an independent letter fragment embedded in the so-called letter of reconciliation (found in 2 Cor 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16). Obviously, the problem of competing hypotheses of division presents a significant challenge to the study of any given passage in 2 Corinthians. While I favor the view that 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) represents an independent letter fragment,<sup>12</sup> my argument does not stand or fall with that supposition, since

<sup>9</sup> Richard B. Hays, however, has persuasively argued that "midrash" is a misnomer for this section (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 132).

<sup>10</sup> Of those who divide 2 Corinthians into two letters, there is a further split between those who see chs. 1–9 as the earlier of the two and those who argue that chs. 10–13 are chronologically prior.

<sup>11</sup> For a brief recent summary of the various positions, see Margaret M. Mitchell, "Korintherbriefe," *RGG* 4:1688–94; and eadem, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; HTS 53; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 312–21. For more detailed summaries, see Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 3–36; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:3–77.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:14–7:4 is either the earliest of the fragments found in 2 Corinthians or perhaps—as has been recently argued by Margaret Mitchell—the next earliest following 2 Corinthians 8. On the latter possibility, see her "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict: Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott; NovTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 33–36; and eadem, "Paul's Letters," 312–35.

there is little doubt that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4—surrounded as it is by Paul’s narrative of his anxiety over Titus’s visit to Corinth—is a discrete unit.<sup>13</sup>

## II. DEFINING THE CONTEXT: PAUL’S APOLOGIA IN 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14–7:4

Throughout 2:14–7:4, Paul’s stance is defensive; his defensiveness appears to have sprung from suspicions that focused on his efforts to collect money “for the saints” in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 16:1–4).<sup>14</sup> Passages throughout 2 Corinthians indicate that some in the Corinthian community suspected that Paul was nothing more than a fraudulent “peddler of God’s word” (2:17) and that his collection of money “for the saints” was simply a pretext for him to line his own pockets.<sup>15</sup> These suspicions, it seems, were reinforced by Paul’s lack of any kind of “official” standing in the early community of Jesus followers. Unlike James and Peter, for instance, he was neither a relative nor a follower of the historical Jesus.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, he was not even a follower of any of Jesus’ original disciples.<sup>17</sup> We can imagine a situation in

<sup>13</sup> For 2:14–7:4 as a discrete unit, see, e.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 35; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:188.

<sup>14</sup> The collection seems to have been part of the deal struck between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church as recounted in Gal 2:1–10. Paul’s effort to “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10) consisted of a collection of money gathered from the Gentile churches to be sent to the (Jewish) church in Jerusalem, most likely to support those in the community who could not support themselves (e.g., widows and orphans). For more on the collection, see Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Besides 2 Cor 2:17, see also 2 Cor 7:2, where Paul uses the verb *πλεονεκτέω*, meaning “to defraud” in this context. On this, see C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 203; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:482. It is possible that the phrase *οὐδένα ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν* in 2 Cor 7:2 reflects a specific charge that had been made against the apostle (as opposed to merely a suspicion). On this possibility, see Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 97; and Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 369. In addition, see 12:17–18, a passage outside 2:14–7:4, which uses this verb in a similar manner. Note also Paul’s insistence on his integrity in 4:2, where he uses the verb *δολόω*, a term cited by Lucian (*Hermot.* 59) in his description of philosophers, whom he compares to wine merchants. According to Lucian, members of both these professions specialize in “cheating (*δολώσαντες*) and giving false measure (*κακομετροῦντες*).”

<sup>16</sup> James and Peter represent two of the three so-called pillars (Gal 2:9), an honorific title for the leaders of the Jerusalem *ἐκκλησία*. The identity of John, the third “pillar,” is unclear although some would identify him with John the son of Zebedee. On the pillars, see Betz, *Galatians*, 101; and J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 204.

<sup>17</sup> Galatians 2:12 indicates the kind of authority that the followers of Jesus’ brother, the “people from James,” possessed.

which people in the community began to ask such questions as: “Who is this man?” “What do we really know about him?”<sup>18</sup> “Is there anyone who can vouch for him?”<sup>19</sup>

Suspicions about the apostle’s legitimacy were reaffirmed by Paul’s poor physical health (ἀσθένεια).<sup>20</sup> Several texts give us a glimpse of Paul’s awareness of how some viewed him. For instance, in 4:8 and 9, Paul describes himself (using the plural) as θλιβόμενοι (“afflicted”) and καταβαλλόμενοι (“struck down”).<sup>21</sup> In 6:9b, he further characterizes himself ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες (“as dying”).<sup>22</sup> As these passages suggest, some—apparently suspicious of Paul’s involvement in the collection—postulated that his physical suffering resulted from the deity’s retribution for Paul’s alleged financial malfeasance. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is 2 Cor 6:9c, where Paul describes his appearance ὡς παιδευόμενοι (“as punished”).<sup>23</sup> In fact, in the very first verse of the unit (2:14), Paul’s depiction of himself as “led in triumph” by God, presents an ambiguous image that could easily correspond to his detractors’ view of him as an enemy of God led to a humiliating death by the victorious deity.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In 2 Cor 6:8b–9, Paul employs the formula ὡς X καὶ Y. According to this formula, X represents the way that he is perceived while Y indicates reality as Paul sees it. Note that in 6:9a, Paul characterizes himself ὡς ἀγνοούμενοι (“as unknown”) and follows this with the corrective ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι (“yet well known”). For a discussion of the antitheses found in 6:8b–9 as reflecting the community’s concerns about Paul, see Paul B. Duff, “Metaphor, Motif, and Meaning: The Rhetorical Strategy Behind the Image ‘Led in Triumph’ in 2 Corinthians 2:14,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 81–82.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:1–3 appears to reflect the Corinthians’ concern that Paul is unable (or perhaps unwilling) to produce letters of recommendation. Typically, scholars argue that Paul’s opponents possess those letters of recommendation while Paul does not. Mitchell, however, has recently described another possibility. According to her, the Corinthians’ questioning of Paul’s credentials, and specifically his lack of letters of recommendation, was the result of an “arrogant overreaching of authority by Paul” (“Paul’s Letters,” 331–33).

<sup>20</sup> Although this term does not appear in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4, it and its cognates appear a number of times in 2 Corinthians 10–13 (10:10; 11:30; 12:5, 9, 10; 13:4). It seems reasonable to assume that the issues are, for the most part, the same in both of these sections/letter fragments and so I feel justified in using the term here.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of 4:9 and specifically καταβαλλόμενοι, see below.

<sup>22</sup> Note Paul’s use of ἰδοῦ here (and only here) to emphasize his survival, presumably against expectations.

<sup>23</sup> He follows this phrase with the correction μὴ θανατούμενοι (“yet not killed”). For other relevant passages, see also 4:8–17; 6:4; and 7:3–4. For more on this, see Duff, “Metaphor,” 80–83; and idem “Apostolic Suffering and the Language of Processions in 2 Cor 4:7–10,” *BTB* 21 (1991): 158–65.

<sup>24</sup> The punitive nature of the humiliating parade of prisoners of war in the triumphal procession is illustrated by the execution of the prisoners at the conclusion of the procession. On this, see Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Cor. 2:14–3:3 within the Context of the Corinthian Correspondence* (WUNT 2/9; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 18–

Paul responds to these concerns throughout 2 Cor 2:14–7:4. In the first section of the unit (2:14–4:6), he insists that he is not a charlatan (2:17; 4:3) but rather the bearer of God’s γνῶσις (2:14; 4:6),<sup>25</sup> a legitimate δῖάκονος, commissioned by the deity (2:17; 4:6). But, in the midst of this first section—between passages where Paul explicitly defends his ministry (2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6)—a unit appears that seems out of place (3:7–18). This unit has caused significant problems for interpreters, and the magnitude of the problems is apparent in the various twentieth-century attempts to explain 3:7–18 as some kind of interpolation.<sup>26</sup> A closer look at 3:7–18 in the context of 2:14–4:6 will more fully illustrate the issue.

39. While earlier commentators had claimed alternative meanings for the word θριαμβεύω (most notably “to lead in triumph—as a victorious general leading his troops”), most scholars writing in the latter part of the twentieth century understood the term to mean “to be led in triumph” as a captured prisoner of war. See, e.g., Lamar Williamson, Jr., “Led in Triumph: Paul’s Use of *Thriambeuō*,” *Int* 22 (1968): 317–32; Peter Marshall, “A Metaphor of Social Shame: θριαμβεύειν in 2 Cor. 2:14,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 302–17; Hafemann, *Suffering*; Duff, “Metaphor,” 79; Recently, however, Roger David Aus has proposed that Paul meant the phrase τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς to suggest that he was a participant in a triumphal procession as one of the deity’s conquering generals (*Imagery of Triumph and Rebellion in 2 Corinthians 2:14–17 and Elsewhere in the Epistle: An Example of the Combination of Greco-Roman and Judaic Traditions in the Apostle Paul* [Studies in Judaism; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005], esp. 40–41). Aus’s thesis, however, is unpersuasive for two reasons. First, although he cites examples of the use of θριαμβεύω (or its Latin equivalent, *thriambo*) with the meaning that he advocates, he gives no examples that have the grammatical construction that appears in 2 Cor 2:14 (some form of θριαμβεύω followed by the accusative). Second, there are other passages in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 that support the meaning “led in triumph as a prisoner of war” (i.e., to his death) as the appropriate understanding. In these passages (e.g., 2 Cor 4:7–11 and 6:9), it seems clear that some in Corinth had made the claim that Paul was on his way to his death. Consequently, the image of Paul as a prisoner of war on the way to his death would be appropriate. For more on this, see Duff, “Metaphor.”

<sup>25</sup> Although αὐτοῦ here could point to either God or Christ, the former seems more likely. See Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:199.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Windisch suggested in his 1924 commentary that, on the one hand, the apologetic motif is missing from this section and, on the other hand, 3:7–18 could be removed from the letter without affecting the flow of thought (*Der zweite Korintherbrief* [KEK; repr. of the 9th ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970], 112). Since then, a number of theories have been proposed to explain the presence of 3:7–18. Sigfried Schulz suggested that these verses represent a “Jewish-Christian midrash” that Paul emended and inserted here (“Die Decke des Moses: Untersuchungen zu einer vorpaulinischen Überlieferung in II Cor 3:7–8,” *ZNW* 49 [1958]: 1–30). Others speculated that Paul wrote this text for another occasion and inserted it here (Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I–II* [HNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969], 111; and C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* [3rd ed.; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981], 70 n. 1). Probably the most influential theory was put forth by Dieter Georgi in *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korintherbrief*, a work that first made its appearance in 1964 (WMANT 11; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag) and later appeared in translation as *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). Georgi proposed that 2 Cor 3:7–18 ultimately owed its existence to Paul’s

## III. CONTEXT

*2 Corinthians 3:7–18 in the Context of 2:14–4:6*

2 Corinthians 3:7–18 can be broken down into two subsections, 3:7–11 and 3:12–18. These two subsections, in turn, fit between 2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6. Together these four subsections constitute the first major section of 2 Cor 2:14–7:4.<sup>27</sup> As we will see, however, understanding the way that the inner subsections (3:7–11 and 12–18) fit into the apostle’s larger argument proves challenging.<sup>28</sup>

In the first of the four subsections (2:14–3:6), Paul addresses the issue of his *ἱκανότης* (“worthiness”) to be a *διάκονος* of the deity.<sup>29</sup> He implicitly raises the question of his *ἱκανότης* in the very first verse (2:14), where he depicts himself as a prisoner of war, led in triumph by the deity.<sup>30</sup> In 2:16b he again brings up the issue of his *ἱκανότης*, this time explicitly (*καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός;*). Significantly, between the implicit and explicit focus on his *ἱκανότης* lies a statement that suggests that those who do not properly perceive the gospel—and hence the legitimacy of his ministry—are “those that are perishing” (*οἱ ἀπολλυμένοι*).<sup>31</sup> In 2:17, Paul refutes suspicions about his honesty, and in 3:1 he addresses his lack of

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opponents and that Paul emended their text in an effort to undermine their authority. For the most part, however, the various theories of interpolation have fallen out of favor, as recent commentaries attest.

<sup>27</sup> For the breakdown of 2:14–4:6 into these four subsections, see Jan Lambrecht, “Structure and Line of Thought in 2 Cor 2,14–4,6,” *Bib* 64 (1983): 344–80; reprinted in *Studies on 2 Corinthians* by R. Beiringer and J. Lambrecht (BETL 112; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 257–94. Lambrecht argues that the four subsections are laid out in a chiasmic pattern, A (2:14–3:6), B (3:7–11), B’ (3:12–18), A’ (4:1–6). See also Thrall (*Second Corinthians*, 1:189–90), who follows Lambrecht.

<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that there are no clear connections between the outer (2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6) and the inner subsections (3:7–11 and 3:12–18). Throughout, Paul is focused on his ministry. Additionally, both the outer and inner subsections share the juxtaposition of two covenants (3:6 and 3:14), the theme of perception, openness versus hiddenness—or that which is veiled (2:15–16; 3:7, 13–16, 18; 4:3–4)—and an emphasis on the Spirit (3:6, 8, 17, 18). See Thomas E. Provence, “‘Who Is Sufficient for These Things?’ An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians ii 15–iii 18,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 54–81, esp. 57; and Lambrecht, “Structure,” 260–63.

<sup>29</sup> While *ἱκανότης* is usually translated “sufficiency” or “competence,” a better translation in this context would be “qualification” or “worthiness.” This is in the same sense that John the Baptist uses the related term *ἱκανός* in Mark 1:7 where John points out that he is not worthy (*ἱκανός*) to loose the thong of the sandal of “the coming one.”

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned above, one could easily interpret this image in a manner compatible with the image of Paul that his detractors have promoted. Consequently, on its surface the metaphor mirrors the view of those in Corinth who are suspicious of Paul. See Duff, “Metaphor,” 79–92.

<sup>31</sup> Paul ties the gospel closely to his *διακονία* throughout 2:14–7:4. Consequently, in Paul’s eyes, to misperceive his *ἱκανότης* is to misperceive the gospel and hence to perish.

written credentials. In 3:2–3, Paul insists that the Corinthians themselves represent his letter of recommendation and in 3:4–5, he articulates his self-confidence and appeals to his divine commission.<sup>32</sup> Finally, he concludes the subsection (3:6) with a claim that the deity has commissioned him (ἐκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς) as a “[minister] of a new covenant, not of letter (οὐ γράμματος) but of spirit (ἀλλὰ πνεύματος).”<sup>33</sup>

Paul addresses many of the same issues in the fourth subsection (4:1–6) of 2:14–4:6. There, he again expresses confidence in his divine commission (4:1 and 4:6; cf. 2:17b; 3:4–6) and again refutes suspicions about any wrongdoing (4:2; cf. 2:17a). In 4:3, harking back to 2:15–16, he insists that those who do not recognize his gospel (and hence the legitimacy of his διακονία) are those who are perishing (οἱ ἀπολλυμένοι). He concludes the subsection—as well as the larger section of 2:14–4:6—with a description of himself as the bearer of the γνῶσις of God’s δόξα (4:6), a description that calls to mind the self-portrait he had already drawn in 2:14.<sup>34</sup> But, while the connections between the first and fourth subsections are obvious, it is not entirely clear how the second and third subsections (3:7–18) fit into this picture.

In the second subsection, 3:7–11, Paul argues for the superiority of the ministry of the Spirit (i.e., his διακονία) over Moses’ transitory ministry of death and condemnation.<sup>35</sup> Using an argument from the lesser to the greater (*a minore ad maius*), he describes his διακονία as more glorious (i.e., having more δόξα) than that of Moses.<sup>36</sup> His argument centers on an interpretation of Exod 34:29–35—a text to which he will return in the following subsection—that makes the point that the Israelites were incapable of viewing Moses’ face διὰ τὴν δόξαν . . . τὴν καταργουμένην (“because of the glory . . . now set aside”).

In the third subsection (3:12–18), Paul continues to speak of himself in relation to Moses, but at the beginning of this subsection he contrasts himself to the lawgiver rather than drawing a comparison. As in the second subsection, Paul alludes to Exodus 34, but here he points to the story of Moses’ veil to illustrate his own παρρησία (“openness,” “boldness”).<sup>37</sup> According to the apostle, Moses’ lack

<sup>32</sup> This appeal to his divine commission is his second in this subsection. We first encounter it in 2:17b.

<sup>33</sup> His appeal to the Spirit in 3:6 emphasizes the point he had made in 3:2–3: the Corinthians’ experience of the Spirit is the only recommendation that he needs.

<sup>34</sup> In 2:14, Paul claims that the deity has manifested through him τὴν ὁσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ.

<sup>35</sup> Paul labels the Mosaic διακονία transitory in 3:11. He refers to it as a ministry of death in 3:7 and a ministry of condemnation in 3:9.

<sup>36</sup> Significant for the present study is the concentration of the terms δόξα and δοξάζω in this section (3:7–11); they make up ten of the eighty-three words that constitute these five verses.

<sup>37</sup> As Linda Belleville has demonstrated, Paul’s appeal to Exod 34:28–35 must be read in the context of an interpretive tradition (“Tradition or Creation? Paul’s Use of the Exodus Tradition

of *παρρησία* was evidenced by the fact that he veiled his face so that the Israelites could not see τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου (a phrase meaning something like "the end of what was being set aside").<sup>38</sup> Paul continues his argument in vv. 14b–15 by focusing on the veiled perception of Israel.<sup>39</sup> In 3:16, Paul returns to the subject of Moses (and his unveiling) by pointing to Exod 34:34.<sup>40</sup> From this point on, the contrast between Paul and Moses recedes and, at the end of the subsection, the unveiled lawgiver emerges as a type for all believers.<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of v. 17, the apostle connects "the Lord" of the previous verse (v. 16) to the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> He ends 3:17 with the statement "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (ἐλευθερία)." Since "freedom" in the Hellenistic world was closely related to *παρρησία*, "freedom" here functions as a virtual equivalent of *παρρησία* (cf. 3:12).<sup>43</sup> This prepares the reader for the concluding verse of the subsection (3:18), where Paul again returns to motif of the veil, this time, though, in connection with the members of the ἐκκλησία.<sup>44</sup> Surprisingly, however, while the "unveiled" per-

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in 2 Corinthians 3:7–18," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* [ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 165–86). Nevertheless, as she herself points out, "the contemporizing of the Mosaic veiling in the present veiling of the old covenant, and the corollary of the dulled perceptions and veiled heart of the Jew, are . . . uniquely [Paul's], although a similar interpretive move can be found in the Qumran Scrolls" (p. 185).

<sup>38</sup> The translation of this phrase is an emended version of the NRSV because the NRSV adds "glory" to the translation, a word that has no counterpart in the Greek.

<sup>39</sup> Israel's perception was and is "veiled" (i.e., deficient), specifically regarding the Scriptures. Israel's veiled perception here corresponds to its inability to look at Moses' face in 3:7.

<sup>40</sup> The REB translates this verse, "But (as scripture says) 'Whenever [Moses] turns to the Lord the veil is removed.'" I cite this translation because, in contrast to the NRSV, the REB clearly indicates—by means of its parenthetical statement—that the verse is meant as a quotation of Exod 34:34.

<sup>41</sup> The focus of the later part of the section seems to be on the primary comparison between the unveiled *face* of Moses and the unveiled *faces* of ἡμεῖς πάντες rather than the secondary contrast between the veiled *minds* and *reading* of Israel and the unveiled *faces* of ἡμεῖς πάντες. See Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:282–83.

<sup>42</sup> This will allow him—in the final verse of the subsection, 3:18—to demonstrate how ἡμεῖς πάντες ("all of us") are like Moses. In short, Moses' veil was lifted when he turned to the Lord (3:16). Believers' experience of the Spirit results in their faces being "unveiled" (3:18). As can be seen, the parallel is strengthened with the identification of "the Lord" and "the Spirit."

<sup>43</sup> Specifically, Paul's ability to speak openly to the Corinthians as well as the Corinthians' ability to perceive unhindered. As a number of commentators have pointed out, Philo connects *παρρησία* and freedom in *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 148–55. On this, see esp. Stanley B. Marrow, "Parrhēsia and the New Testament," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 431–44. In the context of 3:17, "freedom" really means freedom from the veil. As such, it looks back to 3:13, but, perhaps more important, it looks forward to the beginning of 3:18.

<sup>44</sup> Although some witnesses, most notably p46, omit πάντες (which would make the subject Paul himself), the term is well-attested, and consequently ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες represents the preferred reading.

ception of believers plays an important role in 3:18 (as we might expect), it is not the focus of the verse. Rather, the sentence that constitutes 3:18 centers on transformation, specifically transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν.<sup>45</sup>

While there are some clear links between the outer (2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6) and inner subsections (3:7–11 and 12–18) that comprise 2:14–4:6,<sup>46</sup> there are, nevertheless, significant issues in need of explanation. Particularly puzzling are three: first, the reason for Paul's appeal to Moses and Israel in the inner subsections (3:7–11 and 12–18); second, the role that perception (both hindered/veiled and unhindered/unveiled) is meant to play in both the inner subsections and the larger argument (2:14–4:6); and, third, the reason why Paul introduces the issue of believers' transformation at the conclusion of the third subsection. All of these issues come together (implicitly or explicitly) in 3:18.<sup>47</sup> It is to that verse that we now turn.

## 2 Corinthians 3:18 in the Context of 3:7–18

A quick glance at 2 Cor 3:18 clearly demonstrates that the notion of δόξα (the key term in the phrase under discussion: ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν), looms large there. It is curious that, although Paul had used the term δόξα extensively in the second subsection (3:7–11), he does not use it at all in the third until the final verse (3:18). This fact alone suggests that there must be something particularly significant about Paul's use of that term in 3:18. Consequently, we will now turn to Paul's use of δόξα in the different contexts in which it appears in that verse. As a result of that investigation, I will propose a new way of understanding the notion of the transformation of the believers ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν as well as the verse as a whole. I will then conclude this part of this article with a paraphrase of 3:18. This paraphrase will enable us better to appreciate the connections between the inner and outer subsections of 2:14–4:6.

## IV. Δόξα IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Besides its appearance in the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, the term δόξα also appears toward the beginning of v. 18, where Paul states, ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες

<sup>45</sup> As Furnish points out, the sentence, despite its complexity, can be broken down into its subject ("all of us"), the predicate ("are being transformed"), and two phrases that describe the subject ("with unveiled face" and "seeing as in a mirror the glory of God") (*II Corinthians*, 238–39).

<sup>46</sup> See n. 28 above.

<sup>47</sup> First, Moses and Israel stand in the background of the phrase ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακαλυμένῳ προσώπῳ. Second, perception clearly plays an important role in this verse (in that perception is described as "unveiled" but, at the same time, vision takes place "as in a mirror"). Third, the focus of the verse is, as mentioned above, transformation.

ἀνακεκαλυμμένω προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι . . . μεταμορφούμεθα (“and all of us with unveiled faces, seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord . . . are being transformed”). In this phrase, Paul ties the believers’ perception of ἡ δόξα κυρίου with their transformation (specifically, their transformation “into the same image”).

Before we investigate the meaning of ἡ δόξα κυρίου, though, a few words about the participle κατοπτριζόμενοι are in order. There has been a great deal of discussion centering on the proper translation of κατοπτριζόμενοι, but linguistic evidence suggests that the rendering cited throughout this paper, “seeing as though reflected in a mirror,” is the best option.<sup>48</sup> We will return later to the question of why Paul appeals to vision here “as in a mirror.” For now, though, it is sufficient to note that the phrase τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι indicates that believers (i.e., “all of us”) perceive (in some way) τὴν δόξαν κυρίου (“the glory of the Lord”).

### *The Meaning of ἡ δόξα κυρίου in 2 Corinthians 3:18*

The phrase ἡ δόξα κυρίου appears frequently in the LXX, often in reference to the ministry of Moses.<sup>49</sup> Because of the frequency of its use in the LXX and its rarity in Paul (only here and in 2 Cor 4:6 and 8:19), it is conceivable that the apostle’s employment of the phrase in 3:18 reflects its use in the LXX.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> While the verb κατοπτρίζω typically means “to show as in a mirror,” the participial form of the verb that appears in 3:18 is in the middle voice. In that voice the verb means “to look into a mirror,” “to behold oneself in a mirror,” or “to behold (something) as in a mirror” (LSJ, s.v.). Other translations that have been proposed include “to reflect as a mirror,” or “to see (without reference to a mirror).” It has also been suggested that Paul meant the term ambiguously so that it could mean either “to see as in a mirror” or “to reflect as a mirror” (J.-F. Collange, *Énigmes de la Deuxième Épître de Paul Aux Corinthiens: Étude Exégétique de 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4* [SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 116). These possibilities, however, are unlikely. For a detailed discussion of the various options, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214; and particularly Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:290–92.

<sup>49</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214. See Exod 16:7; 40:34–35; Lev 9:23; and esp. Exod 24:17, a passage that refers to Moses ascending Sinai. David Balch has suggested that Paul had in mind also Num 12:8 when he penned 2 Cor 3:18 (“Backgrounds of I Cor VII: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an Ascetic ΘΕΙΟΣ ANHP in II Cor. III,” *NTS* 18 [1972]: 363). In the Numbers text, Ἰηὴν says, “Mouth to mouth I will speak to [Moses], I speak face to face—openly (ἐν εἴδει) and not indistinctly (δι’ ἀνιγιμάτων), and he has seen the glory of the Lord (ἡ δόξα κυρίου)” (my translation).

<sup>50</sup> This would mean, among other things, that the word κύριος points to God and not to Jesus. In Paul’s letters, κύριος typically refers to the latter. In 3:18, however, Paul seems to be using κύριος in reference to God. Note that each of the last three verses of 2 Corinthians 3 contains the word κύριος and in each case the word appears to point back to God and not Christ. In

In the LXX, the phrase ἡ δόξα κυρίου (“the glory of the Lord”) usually emphasizes the power of the deity. In the words of one interpreter, the expression “implies that which makes God impressive to [humans], the *force* of his self-manifestation.”<sup>51</sup> While the LXX’s connection of δόξα with force or power seems consistent with Paul’s use of δόξα (“glory”) in his earlier reference to Moses in 2 Cor 3:7 (where the apostle relates that the δόξα was so powerful that the Israelites “could not gaze at Moses’ face”), it is not clear that we should understand the phrase in 3:18 in that way, since Paul simply claims that believers (meaning the Corinthians) have seen ἡ δόξα κυρίου. Is the notion of power present here? In order to answer that question, we will look at the same phrase a few verses later, in 4:6, in the hope that Paul’s use of ἡ δόξα κυρίου there will help us understand its meaning in 3:18.

In 2 Cor 4:6, Paul talks about the knowledge (γνώσις) of ἡ δόξα κυρίου ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ (“the glory of the Lord in the face of [Jesus] Christ”). As many have pointed out, Paul almost certainly refers here to his life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus (Gal 1:15–16).<sup>52</sup> So, Paul seems to be saying that, at the time of his “conversion,”<sup>53</sup> he experienced ἡ δόξα κυρίου (“God’s powerful presence”) in a Christophany. The notion of power certainly comes through here. Consequently, it seems that we should understand ἡ δόξα κυρίου in 3:18 in a similar way, with an emphasis on the power of the deity.

But reading ἡ δόξα κυρίου in reference to the power of the deity raises a significant problem. How could Paul have suggested in 3:18 that the Corinthians had perceived “the glory of the Lord” in a way comparable to his christophanic experi-

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the first of these, 3:16, there is virtual certainty that κύριος refers to God rather than Christ because this verse, if not an actual quotation, certainly alludes to Exod 34:34. See, e.g., Thrall (*Second Corinthians*, 1:272), who calls it a virtual quotation. The following verse (3:17) identifies κύριος with the Spirit. The definite article is anaphoric in this verse and so refers back to κύριος in 3:16, as many commentators have pointed out (see, e.g., Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 212; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:274). It is also clear that 3:17 provides a bridge between the previous verse (3:16) and 3:18. The context of 3:18, therefore, indicates that κύριος here refers to God and not Jesus. See Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 124–25; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:283.

<sup>51</sup> Gerhard von Rad, “δόξα, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2:238 (emphasis mine). In the quotation cited, von Rad is speaking about the phrase יהוה בבדוד, the Hebrew equivalent to LXX’s ἡ δόξα κυρίου.

<sup>52</sup> Thrall suggests three reasons that support the idea that Paul refers here to his christophanic experience: (1) the use of the aorist tense of ἔλαμψεν suggests a specific past event, (2) the reference to light corresponds to the various descriptions in Acts of Paul’s life-changing experience (9:31; 22:6; and 26:13), and (3) the fact that the δόξα mentioned in 2 Cor 4:6 appears ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ (*Second Corinthians*, 1:316–18). See also Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 134.

<sup>53</sup> I have used quotation marks to indicate the problematic nature of the term, since Paul did not technically convert from one religion to another. On this, see Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7–23.

ence? One simple answer to this question might be that the believers experienced ἡ δόξα κυρίου (God’s powerful presence) in their hearing of the gospel.<sup>54</sup> Margaret Thrall, however, has pointed to a problem with this seemingly simple solution. In her words, “Perhaps [Paul] did expect his readers . . . to be content with the ‘representative’ function of the preached gospel. And yet, in 3:18 . . . he seems to be trying to persuade them that they did themselves, in some way, *behold* God’s glory.”<sup>55</sup>

As Thrall points out, Paul appears to be saying that there is more to his readers’ beholding God’s glory than simply hearing the gospel. But what more could be involved? I contend that Paul indeed refers here to a more immediate experience in the lives of his readers than their hearing of the gospel. He, in fact, reminds the Corinthians that they have perceived the “glory of the Lord” (i.e., the life-giving power of God as it has been manifested in the resurrection of Christ) and that they have perceived it in their own lived experience, specifically through their experience of the Spirit.<sup>56</sup> I will return to this below. In the meantime, let us turn to Paul’s use of δόξα in the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν.

### *Transformed ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν*

A quick glance at the literature indicates that scholars typically have difficulty with this phrase. Most suggest that it does not describe a sudden transformation from one glorious state of being to another but rather a progressive or gradual glorification.<sup>57</sup> This glorification presumably begins upon conversion and continues into the indefinite future. While the notion that the phrase “from glory to glory” points to a gradual transformation of the believer is possible, there is nothing in the text that specifically recommends this reading and, in fact, the phrasing of the verse

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 125; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 61–62.

<sup>55</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:319. Thrall puts “representative” within quotation marks because she is responding to Furnish’s suggestion that “the gospel is introduced as the fundamental re-presentative agency for the splendor of God” (*II Corinthians*, 248).

<sup>56</sup> I understand the Corinthians’ experience of the Spirit somewhat along the lines described in Acts 10:44–45. In other words, the Corinthians’ experience of the Spirit was more than a “warm, fuzzy feeling.” It was instead something that would have been obvious to any bystander. In this vein, Christopher Mount has described the Corinthian community as a “spirit-possession cult” (“1 Corinthians 11:3–16: Spirit Possession and Authority in a Non-Pauline Interpolation,” *JBL* 124 [2005]: 316). For a description of spirit-possession in relation to the New Testament, see Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 22–42.

<sup>57</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 242; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1986), 72; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 56; Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:286.

does not easily lend itself to such an interpretation.<sup>58</sup> In addition, as mentioned above, the future orientation of this interpretation makes it difficult to see how it contributes to Paul's argument. Understanding ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in this way, in fact, makes the phrase—and, indeed, the verse—seem inconsequential.

How, then, do we make better sense of it? It seems clear that ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is meant to draw the reader's attention to the previous subsection (3:7–11), where the notion of δόξα looms large and where one manifestation of δόξα is compared to another (something that the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν might naturally suggest). In that second subsection (3:7–11), the glory of the ministry of death and condemnation (3:7, 9)—that is, the δόξα of the διακονία of Moses—is compared to the even greater glory of the ministry of Spirit and righteousness (3:8–9)—that is, the δόξα of the διακονία of Paul. The problem with reading the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in connection with the glory attached to the two ministries is that the former (i.e., the ministry of death and condemnation) points to the διακονία of Moses, which is usually interpreted as the διακονία that brought death and condemnation to Israel (including the Jews of the apostle's time) while the latter ministry points to Paul's διακονία to the Gentiles. In short, the glorious ministry of death and the glorious ministry of Spirit apply to two different populations. The former refers to the condemnation of the *Jews*, and so it can hardly apply to the *Gentile* church at Corinth. Because of this, then, the only people who could be transformed from the glory of the Mosaic διακονία to the glory of the Pauline διακονία would be those Jews who became followers of Jesus. But there seem to have been few Jews in the Corinthian community in Paul's time<sup>59</sup> and, more important, Paul himself speaks of the Corinthian ἐκκλησία as a Gentile community (1 Cor 12:2). There is, however, a way out of this difficulty.

I have recently argued that the death and condemnation tied to Moses' ministry in 3:7–11 points not to the condemnation and death sentence pronounced on Israel but rather to the condemnation and death sentence that the Torah pronounced on the Gentiles.<sup>60</sup> Since there seems to be no suitable explanation as to why the apostle would refer to the "glorious" ministry of Moses that brought death

<sup>58</sup> As Thrall points out, the idea that the phrase εἰς δόξαν refers to a future transformation does not seem to take into account the present tense of μεταμορφούμεθα (*Second Corinthians*, 1:286).

<sup>59</sup> In his letters, Paul mentions the following individuals who likely were Jews: Crispus (1 Cor 1:14), Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater (Paul calls them συγγενεῖς in Rom 16:21). See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 216 n. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Paul B. Duff, "'Glory in the Ministry of Death': Gentile Condemnation and Letters of Recommendation in 2 Cor 3:6–18," *NovT* 46 (2004): 313–37. Of course, condemnation would also apply to Jews who did not keep the Torah. But since the Corinthian church was viewed by Paul primarily as a Gentile community (1 Cor 12:2), Paul would point primarily to the condemnation of the Gentiles here.

and condemnation to the Jewish people in a letter to a Gentile church (in which there is no good evidence of "Judaizing"),<sup>61</sup> the idea that Paul here points to *Gentiles* who were condemned and sentenced to death makes good sense of an otherwise difficult passage.

If we accept this hypothesis, then we can see a clear connection between the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in 3:18 and the earlier passage referring to the glory of the two ministries in the second subsection (3:7–11). The reference to the transformation "from glory to glory" in 3:18 should then be understood to refer to the (Gentile) Corinthians' own experience of transformation from their previous status, condemned before God (by ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου [3:7]) and under the sentence of death (by ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως [3:9]), to their new status as reconciled to God. This transformation would have been signaled by the experience of the Spirit, an experience directly comparable to Paul's Christophany, alluded to in 2 Cor 4:6.<sup>62</sup>

With this information in mind, we can now return to the issue of the Corinthians' perception of ἡ δόξα κυρίου. The interpretive difficulty that was identified by Thrall above focused on the believers' (i.e., the Corinthians') perception of ἡ δόξα κυρίου as something more than simply the hearing of the gospel. If, however, we understand the transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν to refer to the believers' transformation from death to life (i.e., from the διακονία of Moses to that of Paul), then the difficulty is solved. Consequently, when Paul, in 3:18, claims that believers perceive "the glory of the Lord," he means that they perceive the gospel (i.e., God's life-giving power) manifested in their own flesh as evidenced by their experience of the Spirit.

This understanding of the notion of transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, in turn, suggests the reason for Paul's reference to a mirror in the term κατοπτριζόμενοι. If we recognize that the participial structure of the phrase τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι ties the vision of God's power manifested in Christ's resurrection to the believers' transformation, then the mirror imagery functions to emphasize what is already implicit in the verse, that is, that the vision of ἡ δόξα κυρίου represents the believers' vision of *their own* transformation.<sup>63</sup> In other

<sup>61</sup> Those who see Judaizing as an issue in Corinth typically appeal to this section (e.g., Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 310–11). Although Paul dealt with at least some Jewish opponents in Corinth, as 2 Cor 11:22 indicates, the issue underlying 11:22 was not Judaizing. Rather, in 11:22, Paul responds to opponents who have boasted about their Jewish "credentials." Lambrecht clearly feels the problem in 3:7–11 and tentatively suggests the presence of Jewish opposition from the synagogue (*Second Corinthians*, 62).

<sup>62</sup> Note the phrase καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος ("for this [i.e., the transformation of the community ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν] comes from the Lord, the Spirit") at the conclusion of 3:18. On the Corinthians' experience of the Spirit, see n. 56 above.

<sup>63</sup> Typically, the mirror imagery is understood to be from the wisdom tradition and perhaps specifically tied to Wis 7:26. See, Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 239; Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:293.

words, the believers see in themselves (i.e., “as in a mirror”) “the glory of the Lord” as they are transformed into “the same image,” that is, into the image of the risen Christ.<sup>64</sup>

*The Perception of ἡ δόξα κυρίου and the Transformation  
ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν: A Paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 3:18*

Based on our discussion of Paul’s use of δόξα in each of the two contexts in which it appears in 3:18, we can now venture a paraphrase of that verse.

So all believers<sup>65</sup> can clearly see (i.e., “with unveiled faces”) God’s power (i.e., “the glory of the Lord”) in the resurrection of the executed Christ. We believers can see this in *ourselves* (i.e., “as in a mirror”) because we are being transformed into the same image, the image of the resurrected Christ. Like Christ, we are being transformed from (the ministry of) death to (the ministry of) life (i.e., “from glory to glory”) because Moses’ glorious ministry brought condemnation and the sentence of death upon us but my ministry (i.e., the ministry of the Spirit and righteousness) brings reconciliation with God which is tantamount to life. All of this has come about because the Lord (i.e., God who raised Christ) is also the Spirit who is present in my ministry.

When viewed in this manner, 2 Cor 3:18, focused as it is on the motif of death-resurrection, fits quite well into Paul’s argument in 3:7–18. But how does this argument fit into the larger context of 2:14–4:6?

**V. PERCEPTION AND THE INTEGRATION OF  
2 CORINTHIANS 3: 7–18 INTO 2:14–4:6**

While 2 Cor 3:18 focuses on transformation, it is clear that the notion of perception also plays a significant role in this verse. And the attention paid to percep-

<sup>64</sup> In some ways, my solution resembles that of N. T. Wright (*The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 185–89), who argues that Paul uses the mirror image to suggest to the Corinthians that they see the glory of the Lord reflected in each other. My explanation, however, avoids the necessity of postulating an indirect reflection as suggested by Wright (p. 186).

<sup>65</sup> I suggest that the change in subject at the beginning of 3:18 (to the more inclusive first person plural with the description πάντες ἡμεῖς) represents a shift from the earlier focus on Paul, the διάκονος to a focus on him *and* his audience, the members of the Corinthian ἐκκλησία. In other words, Paul’s shift from “we” to “all of us” is really a subtle way for the apostle to talk about the experience of the Gentile Corinthians without resorting to the use of the second person. This is a good example of Paul speaking to the Gentiles as though he were a Gentile, a strategy he claims in 1 Cor 9:21.

tion in 3:18 (κατοπτριζόμενοι) demonstrates how 2 Cor 3:7–18 fits into its larger context (in 2:14–4:6, the first major section of 2:14–7:4).

As we have already seen, the first and the fourth subsections of 2:14–4:6 (i.e., the external subsections 2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6) each contain references, both implicit and explicit, to the theme of perception and, more specifically, the proper perception of both Paul and the gospel.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, in the problematic internal subsections (i.e., 3:7–11 and 3:12–18), the importance of perception—specifically “veiled” (or hindered) perception versus “unveiled” or unhindered perception—is also apparent.<sup>67</sup>

Paul’s attention to accurate and faulty perception throughout 2 Cor 2:14–4:6—and particularly his claim that the clarity of one’s perception is tied to one’s status vis-à-vis salvation—recommends that this entire section is concerned with the distinction between appearance and reality.<sup>68</sup> We see this from the very beginning of the section (2:14) where Paul describes himself using the unusual term θριαμβεύω. As the metaphor suggests, Paul *appears* as “one led in triumph” by a vengeful deity (2:14).<sup>69</sup> Death *appears* to dominate both his message and his person (2:15–16). According to 3:1, Paul *appears* to have no suitable recommendation, and so suspicions about his motivation and honesty have grown (2:17; 4:2).

To the contrary, Paul insists that this way of looking at his gospel and ministry does not represent reality and so it befits only those who are perishing (2:15–16; 4:3). In the second and third subsections (3:7–11 and 12–18), Paul brings in Moses and the Israelites to make the point that the Corinthians are not like the Israelites.<sup>70</sup> To paraphrase his argument roughly, the *perception* of “those who are perishing” (i.e., those who misapprehend Paul’s gospel and misinterpret his poor health) is like that of the Israelites in the wilderness (and in his own day) who were (and are) unable to see that the Mosaic ministry of death (a ministry condemning those who do not follow the Torah—meaning here primarily the Gentiles) was to be overturned.

<sup>66</sup> Most notably, as already mentioned, in 2 Cor 2:15–16a (in the first subsection) and 2 Cor 4:3–4 (in the fourth), Paul ties the improper perception of the gospel (and hence his own ministry) to condemnation. Conversely, proper perception belongs to those who are on their way to salvation. See also n. 31 above.

<sup>67</sup> In 3:7, Paul alludes to Exodus 34 to depict Israel’s inability to see the passing of the glorious “διακονία of death” (which brought condemnation to the Gentiles). In 3:12–13, Paul appeals to perception—both open and hindered perception—in the juxtaposition of his own *παρηγορία* to Moses’ act of veiling his face. In 3:14–15, he indicates that Israel’s perception is “veiled” when the Israelites read the Scriptures. In 3:16, Moses functions as a type for believers who, as 3:18 tells us, perceive clearly (“with unveiled face”) “the glory of the Lord” in themselves in their transformation from the sentence of death to life.

<sup>68</sup> In fact, this theme resounds throughout 2:14–7:4. Outside 2:14–4:6, see, among other places, 2 Cor 4:7–9; 4:18; 5:7, 16; and 6:8b–10.

<sup>69</sup> Duff, “Metaphor.”

<sup>70</sup> Paul, however, also muddies the water by suggesting in 3:16–18 that the Corinthians are, in fact, like Moses.

Paul also implicitly suggests, however, that Moses contributed to Israel's perceptual problems, for the lawgiver veiled his face (i.e., was not totally open with Israel) when he came down from Sinai.<sup>71</sup> Paul, on the other hand (unlike Moses, as he points out in 3:12–13), has been completely open (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα) with the Corinthians and has hidden nothing from them (i.e., has not hindered their perception in any way; cf. 4:3–4). In fact, his openness before the Gentile Corinthians has demonstrated to them that their death sentence—inaugurated by Moses' ministry—has been commuted.

In turn, their reception of his message (and the consequent formation of the ἐκκλησία) proves beyond the shadow of a doubt the legitimacy of his gospel and hence his διακονία. What more commendation could they (or anyone else) possibly need (3:2–3)? As Paul points out in 3:18, the Corinthians are (*or should be*) able to see God's power—as manifested in the resurrection of Christ. They can (*or should be able to*) see it most dramatically in their own transformation from death to life (i.e., in their transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν) as evidenced by their experience of the Spirit. They are (*or should be*) reconciled with God and have (*or should have*) received life from the ministry of Spirit. All of this, of course, came to them by way of Paul's ministry (3:6).

While a much fuller explication of the flow of Paul's argument throughout 2:14–4:6 is not possible due to limitations of space, nevertheless, the contours of it as laid out above should suffice for the purpose of this article. We now need to turn to the relationship between 3:18 (and specifically the idea of transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν), and Paul's remarkable self-description in the section that follows 2:14–4:6.

## VI. "CARRYING AROUND THE DYING OF JESUS"

The second major section of 2:14–7:4 begins in 4:7 with Paul's famous image of "treasure in clay jars" (Ἔχομεν δὲ τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἐν ὀστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν).<sup>72</sup> He illustrates the metaphor in the next two verses (4:8–9),<sup>73</sup> where he presents four antitheses, each one following the formula X ἀλλ' οὐκ Y:

<sup>71</sup> I suggest that what is veiled is not the nullification of Israel's covenant but rather that Moses has prevented Israel (past and present) from recognizing the deity's plan for the justification of all humanity, including the Gentiles. In other words, it is the Torah's condemnation of those who do not keep the law that is transitory, not Israel's covenant. See Duff, "Glory," 327–28.

<sup>72</sup> The extent of the second section is disputed. For instance, Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, 71) and Thrall (*Second Corinthians*, 1:320) conclude the section at 4:15; Barrett (*Second Epistle*, 36) and Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 81) count 4:7–18 as a unit; Furnish (*II Corinthians*, 252) ends the unit at 5:10.

<sup>73</sup> As Lambrecht points out, in these antitheses Paul illustrates the distinction drawn in 4:7 between what is fragile and what is powerful (*Second Corinthians*, 76).

We are  
 afflicted in every way, but not (ἀλλ’ οὐκ) crushed;  
 perplexed but not driven to despair;  
 persecuted, but not forsaken;  
 struck down, but not destroyed.<sup>74</sup>

The list builds to the final and most significant antithesis, which seems to be a direct response to his detractors’ view of his bodily weakness.<sup>75</sup> In that final antithesis, he describes himself as “struck down (καταβαλλόμενοι) but not destroyed (ἀπολλόμενοι).”<sup>76</sup> Paul’s intention here is to point out that his bodily weakness has *not* resulted in his death. He wants his readers to understand that his weakness and suffering should not be seen as divine retribution, as some in the community have apparently suggested;<sup>77</sup> instead, his physical suffering is to be understood in a much more positive light.

The next two verses (4:10–11) make that positive interpretation explicit. In those verses Paul makes the remarkable claim that:

4:10 in our bodies [we are] always carrying around—as in procession (περιφέροντες)<sup>78</sup>—the dying (νέκρωσις)<sup>79</sup> of Jesus so that the life (ζωή) of

<sup>74</sup> These verses present a list of trials, common in Hellenistic moral literature. On these *peristasis* catalogues,” see John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBLDS 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

<sup>75</sup> It has sometimes been assumed (notably by Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 141) that this section (beginning with 4:7) has little or no polemical or apologetic aim. Instead, it is focused on all believers and is intended to edify. To the contrary, I contend that this section, like virtually all of 2:14–7:4, is part of Paul’s defense of his ministry and should be read that way. Note the comment by Furnish that “4:7–15 [is] an acknowledgment and interpretation of the hardships and apparent defeats with which the Pauline apostolate has been beset” (*II Corinthians*, 277).

<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that the verb καταβάλλω can be understood in connection with death, in the sense that one can be “stuck down” dead. See LSJ, s.v.

<sup>77</sup> Note the antithesis in 6:9, ὡς παιδεύόμενοι καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι, as mentioned above.

<sup>78</sup> I have amended the NRSV here because περιφέρω is a term that suggests the ritual of procession. See, e.g., Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 17 (357F), 36 (365B); Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 4.59.2; Pausanias 9.22.1–2. The use of the root -φέρω is particularly common in reference to epiphany processions, processions in which a god or a particular divine action was presented to spectators (see n. 81 below). There is a somewhat comparable use of processional language in Ignatius, *Eph.* 9:2, where the bishop depicts the Ephesian Christians as “God-bearers” (θεοφόροι), “temple-bearers (ναοφόροι), “Christ-bearers” (χριστοφόροι), and “bearers of sacred objects” (ἅγιοφόροι). See Philip A. Harland, “Christ-Bearers and Fellow-Initiates: Local Cultural Life and Christian Identity in Ignatius’ Letters,” *J ECS* 11 (2003): 487–97.

<sup>79</sup> In the Pauline corpus, the term νέκρωσις is found only here and in Rom 4:19 (where it refers to the barrenness of Sarah). According to Rudolf Bultmann (“νεκρός, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 4:895), its function is to indicate that the death of Jesus is “continuously actualized in the concrete life of the apostle.”

Jesus may also be visible in our bodies. 11 For while we live, we are always being given up to death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.<sup>80</sup>

In the first part of 4:10, Paul rather brashly likens his suffering to the public display of the “dying of Jesus.”<sup>81</sup> While he retreats a bit in the early part of 4:11, perhaps sensing the audacity of his claim in 4:10,<sup>82</sup> nevertheless, in 4:11, he still claims that his physical weakness is “because of Jesus.”<sup>83</sup> In the second phrase of each verse,<sup>84</sup> he makes the remarkable claim that his mere survival—seemingly against all odds—is the visible manifestation of God’s resurrection of Jesus (ζωή). Because of our familiarity with the Pauline letters, it is hard for us twenty-first-century readers to appreciate fully the audacity of these verses. Given the kind of doubts that the community had about Paul, as is apparent throughout 2 Corinthians, how could he have expected his audience to accept this incredible claim?

Paul all too clearly understood the apparent arrogance of the claim that he was both “carrying around the dying of Jesus” and manifesting the resurrection of Jesus “in his body,” and so he prepared his readers for it in a number of ways. First, he reminded them in several places that he was commissioned by the deity (e.g., 2:17; 3:6; 4:1; 4:6) and, as a result of that commission, he had great self-confidence (3:4) and acted very boldly (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα [3:12]).<sup>85</sup> Second, he

<sup>80</sup> I have amended the NRSV translation of v. 11. Particularly noteworthy is the substitution of “because of Jesus” (as suggested by Lambrecht [*Second Corinthians*, 73]) for the phrase “for Jesus’ sake.” This is because the phrase διὰ Ἰησοῦν in 4:11 has causative force. Although Paul employs the first person plural here, the reference is clearly to himself rather than to all διάκονοι. On Paul’s use of the first person plural to refer to himself, see Hans-Josef Klauck, 2. *Korintherbrief* (2nd ed.; NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter, 1988), 12–13.

<sup>81</sup> Ancient epiphany processions often displayed objects that would remind spectators of some significant action of a deity. For instance, Diodorus Siculus describes a procession in which stalks of grain were carried to remind people of “what the goddess so ingeniously discovered at the beginning” (1.14.3), and Athenues describes the display of grapes being transformed into wine in the remarkable procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus (*Deipn.* 199A–B). See Paul Duff, “The Transformation of the Spectator: Power, Perception, and the Day of Salvation,” in *SBL 1987 Seminar Papers* (ed. Kent Harold Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 236.

<sup>82</sup> While in the early part of 4:10 Paul directly identifies his sufferings with those of Jesus, in 4:11 he drops the direct identification, merely stating: ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν.

<sup>83</sup> Paul’s use of παραδιδόμεθα in 4:11 is likely meant to call to mind Jesus’ arrest—since that term had already been associated with Jesus’ passion at Paul’s time (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 256–57; and Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 1:236). For Paul’s use of παραδιδόμεθα in a similar context in other letters, see Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 11:23; and Gal 2:20.

<sup>84</sup> While there is some variation in the earlier part of each verse, the conclusions of vv. 10 and 11 are almost identical.

<sup>85</sup> Although Paul uses παρρησία to describe his openness, the word also connotes “boldness.” See BAGD, s.v.

compared himself to Moses and insisted that what he brought to them in his *διακονία* was even greater than that which the revered lawgiver brought (3:7–11). Third, he insisted on his sincerity (2:17; 4:2) and claimed that his proclamation was not about himself but about “the Lord Jesus Christ” (4:5).

Most important, though, he set the stage for the extraordinary description of his ministry in 4:10–11 with his earlier appeal to the experience of the Corinthians themselves. In 2 Cor 3:18 (as we have seen), he likened the Corinthians’ transformation from death to life (*ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν*) to the death and resurrection of Jesus by suggesting that they had seen in their own flesh *ἡ δόξα κυρίου*.<sup>86</sup> If Paul could convince the majority of the Corinthians that the divine drama of death and resurrection could be seen in their own lives—a claim that the Corinthians would, no doubt, have been eager to embrace—he would have made it extremely difficult (and, indeed, somewhat embarrassing) for his detractors to then turn around and try to deny the role that Paul played in that same drama.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In 2 Cor 3:18, Paul refers to the believers’ transformation *ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν*. By so doing, the apostle appeals to the Corinthians’ experience (and perception) of their own transformation from death to life. As Paul had previously indicated (2 Cor 3:7–11), the Corinthians, like virtually all Gentiles,<sup>87</sup> were under the sentence of death according to the Torah (brought by Moses). Paul points out though that through his ministry (*ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης*), they have received the possibility of reconciliation with God and the commutation of that death sentence. The community’s acceptance of the offer of *δικαιοσύνη*, which resulted in their experience of the Spirit, was—Paul argues—visible evidence that they had passed from death to life in a manner comparable to (or, more likely, as participants in) Jesus’ transformation from death to life by his resurrection from the dead.<sup>88</sup> Thus, Paul claims that the community’s experience of the Spirit (which brought about the formation of their *ἐκκλησία*) validates the legitimacy

<sup>86</sup> Paul reiterates that claim in 4:12 with the statement to the Corinthians that “life [is at work] in you.” Of course, he attributes that (with biting sarcasm) to the “death [that is] at work in [him].”

<sup>87</sup> Paul allows, however, for the possibility of a pre-Christ righteous Gentile in Rom 2:14–15. On this, see esp. Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 138–42.

<sup>88</sup> Although Paul is not absolutely clear about whether this transformation is tantamount to participation in the death and resurrection of Christ or merely analogous, the fact that he uses the phrase *ἡ δόξα κυρίου* suggests to me that he views their experience as participatory. This idea is further supported by Rom 6:2–3, where Paul describes the believers’ baptism into Jesus’ death.

(*ἰκανότης*) of his ministry (cf. 3:5–6). The community, Paul contends, has in effect become his letter of recommendation (2 Cor 3:2–3).

However, Paul not only employs the idea of the Corinthians' perception (*κατοπτριζόμενοι*) of their transformation *ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν* to argue for the legitimacy of his ministry in 2:14–4:6; he also appeals to their experience of *ἡ δόξα κυρίου* to prepare them for a more explicit and audacious description of his own *διακονία* in the second section of 2:14–7:4.<sup>89</sup> In that second section (esp. in 4:7–12), Paul focuses on his bodily weakness in an attempt to put a positive spin on it. He is not, he argues, “dying” for his sins as some seem to have suggested (6:9b–c). Rather he carries and manifests to all “the dying of Jesus” (4:10) in order that his survival—against overwhelming odds— might present (at least to those capable of seeing it) Jesus' resurrection.

<sup>89</sup> The boldness of the self-description is anticipated also by his phrase *πολλῆ παρρησία χρώμεθα* in 3:12.