

## RECASTING THE MOMENT OF DECISION: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1 IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

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The question of the literary integrity of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians remains a topic of ongoing debate.<sup>1</sup> Because the conclusions drawn from literary analysis affect our understanding of the historical situation (and vice versa), and both influence our reflection on the issues involved and their implications, the discussion is important. This study concerns itself with the question of the relationship of 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 to the first full seven chapters of the letter. Many commentators agree that this passage is an interpolation of some kind.<sup>2</sup> However, important considerations may be cited for reading it as native to the letter, and even as climactic to the first seven chapters.

Foremost among the arguments in favor of regarding the passage as an interpolation are the observations that the passage interrupts the appeal begun in 6:11-13 and concluded in 7:2-3, that the passage contains a strikingly concentrated incidence of non-Pauline vocabulary or non-Pauline usage of Pauline vocabulary, and that the dualistic antitheses in these verses are non-Pauline. Other reasons for considering this passage non-Pauline are the use of scripture quotations and the insistence on defilement/purity. In this article I will consider these observations and then explore the implications of affirming the passage as an integral part of the letter.

### *The Passage as an Interruption*

The argument that 6:14-7:1 interrupts Paul's appeal that the Corinthians open up their hearts to him and return to friendly

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, the discussion in N. H. Taylor, "The Composition and Chronology of Second Corinthians," *Journal for the Study of the NT* 44 (1991): 67-69.

<sup>2</sup>See V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 32-33, for an overview of such scholars and their arguments.

relations will stand if it can be shown that Paul had no cause to appeal to the Corinthians to dissociate themselves from those whose influence Paul considered unhealthy for the Corinthians' spiritual condition. While Paul makes much more abundant use of associative language to build up his ailing relationship with the congregation, there are important incidences of dissociative language in 2:14-7:3, by means of which he distances himself from other parties and urges the Corinthians to do the same.

Paul first dissociates himself from "the many who peddle the word of God" (οἱ πολλοὶ κοπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:17) and from those who make use of "letters of commendation" (συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν, 3:1). Paul mentions these groups in connection with the issue of sufficiency (ικανότης, 3:5). With regard to apostolic legitimation, Paul reckons his competence as coming from God, not from any ephemeral credentials. He therefore dissociates himself from those whom he regards as profiteers in the garb of preachers, who rely on the limited credentials of the sphere of human strengths. This group from which Paul dissociates himself receives only passing mention, but the attention given them here near the proposition (2:15-16) is important.<sup>3</sup> Much of the argumentation of 3:7-5:10 appears to be devoted to developing a case for not regarding the things which pertain to this body and the life of this world (which is fading away) as reliable norms and guides. Paul would regard as a great danger to his churches preachers whose self-presentation and understanding of their own legitimation obscured this fact.

Similarly, in 5:12 Paul identifies a group with regard to whom he takes certain precautions in this letter. These are those who "place their ground for confidence in appearances and not in the heart" (τοὺς ἐν προσώπῳ κοινωμένους καὶ μὴ ἐν καρδίᾳ). Paul claims that the arguments which have preceded this verse do not constitute a letter of commendation written on his own behalf, but rather comprise an arsenal of arguments with which to answer those people who have not grasped this essential point of the gospel: that appearances count for nothing, as all appearances belong to the world which is passing away (cf. 4:16, 18). If Paul's

<sup>3</sup>2 Cor 2:15-16 may be described as the proposition of the letter because it contains the topics developed throughout the remainder of 2:17-7:3, namely the issue of what constitutes competence before God and in light of the gospel of Christ, and the motif of apocalyptic dualism.

precautions, specifically the fortification of the Corinthians against the lies of this "present, evil age," are real, then so are the spokespersons for this age,<sup>4</sup> whose influence Paul has been seeking to undermine (5:12) throughout the letter, even while they are scarcely mentioned.

Paul does indeed identify a group from which he dissociates himself and from which he assists the Corinthians to dissociate themselves by means of these arguments, fortifying them against "those boasting in appearances." That his concluding appeal should contain, then, both the exhortation to cleave to Paul and to cut off relations with the "unfaithful ones" should not seem out of place. This exhortation towards dissociation falls between two appeals for association.<sup>5</sup>

### *Non-Pauline Vocabulary and Usage*

The matter of the high concentration of *hapax legomena* (nine in our passage) has been dealt with at some length by Hughes and Allo, among others. Three of these words appear in the citations from the Hebrew Scriptures in 6:16b-18, and so ought not to be "used in a stylistic argument against Pauline authorship."<sup>6</sup> Hughes comments that the highly rhetorical and repetitive character of the passage necessitates a "rich diversity of vocabulary,"<sup>7</sup> while Allo surmises that the parallel development of the rhetorical questions in 6:14b-16a has led Paul to use synonyms to avoid redundancy.

<sup>4</sup>Exactly how great a part rival preachers played in Corinth at the time of Paul's writing 2 Cor 1-7 is a matter of strong debate. Clearly, Paul does not address the issue as directly and strongly as he will in 2 Cor 10-13. Nevertheless, scholars such as Barrett, Collange, and—to a more cautious degree—Thrall, read 2 Cor 1-7 as addressing a situation in which rival preachers have gained a hearing in Corinth (see M. E. Thrall, "The Problem of II Cor. VI.14-VII.1 in Some Recent Discussion," *NTS* 24 [1978]: 142-144).

<sup>5</sup>Some scholars argue that these two appeals for association originally stood together and that the exhortation towards dissociation is an interruption. J. D. M. Derrett, "2 Corinthians 6,14ff. a Midrash on Dt 22,10," *Biblica* 59 (1978): 231; and J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Relating 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1 to its Context," *NTS* 33 (1987): 273, have argued that 7:2 possesses a resumptive quality, such as would accommodate if not necessitate an intermediate appeal.

<sup>6</sup>Thrall, 133.

<sup>7</sup>P. E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 242.

He also points out that Paul elsewhere uses words closely related to those in 6:14-7:1, with the single exception of βελιάρ as a designation for Satan.<sup>8</sup> Such arguments have led scholars to consider the *hapax legomena* as indecisive in solving the enigma.

The argument thus shifts from the question of non-Pauline vocabulary to non-Pauline use of Pauline vocabulary. Many scholars have singled out the term ἄπιστοι (6:14) as signaling the incongruence of this pericope in the argument. Does Paul use this term to refer to the unbelieving population of the Greco-Roman world?<sup>9</sup> Such an identification has led some scholars, including most recently Taylor, to posit 6:14-7:1 as a fragment of the letter Paul wrote prior to 1 Corinthians. Canonical 1 Corinthians seeks to clarify in several places misunderstandings occasioned by the previous letter with regard to how believers were to relate to non-Christians.<sup>10</sup> In 1 Cor 5:9-11, however, Paul relates the content of that letter to immoral people, πόρνοι, and not to ἄπιστοι.

G. K. Beale suggests that Paul might use the term in 2 Corinthians, despite the misunderstandings occasioned by the previous letter and corrected in 1 Corinthians, to refer to non-Christians, who belong to the company of "those who are being destroyed" (2:15). He writes:

The rejection of Paul as God's true apostle of reconciliation by some of the Corinthians was an expression of worldly impurity and demonstrated that they had begun to evaluate in the same manner as the unbelieving world (cf. 5.16). Insofar as some among the readership were identifying with an unbelieving world which needed reconciliation, they also needed reconciliation both to Paul and the God represented by Paul.<sup>11</sup>

Beale clearly grasps what is at issue for Paul in terms of his diagnosis of the Corinthians' misapprehension of the gospel, yet he fails to connect this insight with Paul's references to the third

<sup>8</sup>Ernest Bernard Allo, *Saint Paul: Seconde épître aux Corinthiens*, 2d ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1956), 190.

<sup>9</sup>H. D. Betz, "2 Cor 6:14-7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?" *JBL* 92 (1973): 89.

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, 75-78.

<sup>11</sup>G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1," *NTS* 35 (1989): 569.

parties who come with letters of commendation and with "confidence in appearances and not in the heart" (5:12). Paul's somewhat veiled references to these figures indicate not their absence, but Paul's conviction that the Corinthians have not been completely won over by them, a conviction which is overturned by the time he writes 2 Corinthians 10 through 13.

Many scholars, however, contend that Paul would not have spoken of rival apostles in this way.<sup>12</sup> Furnish disallows that Paul would have used for errant Christians a term he elsewhere reserves for non-Christians.<sup>13</sup> If Paul speaks thus of his opponents,<sup>14</sup> perhaps he does mean to indict them as non-Christians or unbelievers who follow a different gospel. In the letter to the Galatians we find a striking precedent: in Gal 1:6-9, Paul speaks of a "different gospel, which is no gospel at all," being preached among the churches. Upon those who "pervert the gospel of Christ" and preach this false gospel Paul calls down the anathema of 1:8-9. Following this perverted gospel leads, in turn, to the Galatian Christians' being described as "severed from Christ" and "fallen from grace" (5:4), and thus, understood in terms of apocalyptic dualism, no longer in the sphere of grace which defines "the age which is coming." They have rejoined "this present evil age" (1:4) and the fate of all who are not *ἐκ πίστεως*.

Paul may address what he perceives to be a comparable situation in canonical 2 Corinthians. Paul has already been shown to dissociate himself from other preachers active in the Corinthian sphere and urge the Corinthians to do the same. For Paul, the gospel is at stake here, just as in Galatia. In 2 Corinthians 10 through 13, which appears to address a later development, Paul makes this explicit. "If someone comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, . . . or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough" (11:4). What the opponents offer in Corinth is, in fact, another gospel, "which is no gospel at all." These opponents are described as "superlative apostles" (11:5) on the one hand, but also as servants of Satan in 11:14-15. Those preaching a "different gospel" do not

<sup>12</sup>Furnish, 382; see also Thrall, 143-4.

<sup>13</sup>Furnish, 382.

<sup>14</sup>Jean-Francois Collange, *Enigmes de la deuxième épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, SNTSMS 18 (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 305.

receive Paul's gospel unaltered, and show themselves to come under the indictment of 4:3-4. Paul's gospel, "the gospel of Christ," is "veiled to those who are perishing." Here again Paul uses the word **ἄπιστοι** to refer to those who remain outside the sphere of grace, as defined by Paul's gospel. This condemnation would include those who preach any different gospel, as in such matters for Paul there is not error or perversion without alienation from Christ and anathema.

From the level of semantics Furnish argues that Paul uses **πιστός** frequently to indicate one who is faithful and trustworthy, and rarely one who simply believes. Thus, the use of **ἄπιστος**, "unbeliever," would not be consistent with Paul's usage.<sup>15</sup> The limits placed here on the semantic range of these two terms is, however, far too narrow. There is more overlap than Furnish's argument allows. Much depends also on the translation of **ἄπιστος** as a person, as opposed to corresponding qualities which would form a dyad with Paul's use of **πιστός**. In the context of 2 Corinthians, **ἄπιστοι** might simply be translated as "unfaithful to the gospel," or "displaying an absence of faith in the gospel." This narrows the chasm lexically and preserves the sense of the dependence of a word marked by an alpha-privative upon the main word from which it is formed. **ἄπιστοι**, as a substantive, may thus include those who are unfaithful to the gospel of Christ by virtue of their subscription to "a different gospel."<sup>16</sup>

### *The Dualistic Antitheses of 6:14-16*

Fitzmyer has found such striking parallels in Qumran texts to these verses that he has concluded in favor of non-Pauline authorship.<sup>17</sup> The stark dualism, the opposition to idolatry, the

<sup>15</sup>Furnish, 362-363.

<sup>16</sup>Derrett, who reads the whole of 6:11-7:3 as a call for open and honest partnership between Paul and the Corinthians, has drawn attention to the use of **ἄπιστοι** in Luke 16:10-12, where the word refers to a lack of trustworthiness in business matters. He further explores 6:11-7:3 in terms of the language of business partnerships and concludes that **ἄπιστοι** may refer to people with whom the Corinthians should not form partnerships, e.g., preachers of a perversion of the gospel or preachers tainted by subservience to the values and standards of the world which is passing away (241).

<sup>17</sup>J. A. Fitzmyer, "Qumrân and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1," CBQ 23 (1961): 271-280, summarized in Thrall, 136-137.

designation of the community of believers as the Temple of God, and the sectarian mentality evident in the command to separate oneself from the unredeemed world all point, he says, to an Essenic origin for these verses. Thrall cites the counterclaims of Bruce and Barrett, namely that all these features have parallels in Pauline literature as well and belong to the wider milieu of first-century Judaism.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, one can find parallel expressions in Paul, as in 1 Cor 3:19 and 6:18-20, where Paul refers to the community of Christians as the "Temple of God" and derives from this a mandate (similar to the one found in 2 Cor 6:16-7:1) to avoid fornication and other sorts of uncleanness.

The rationales appended to the exhortation, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" (6:14a), in the form of questions express a dualism which is very much at home in 2 Corinthians. A believer should not become a partner with an unbeliever, for "what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship (κοινωνία) has light with darkness? What harmony exists between Christ and Beliar, or what portion does the faithful hold with the unfaithful? What agreement has the Temple of God with idols?" (6:14b-16a). These rationales, in the form of analogies or examples, expressed as rhetorical questions, create a dualistic environment which provides the framework for ordering the cosmos. On one side there is righteousness, light, Christ, the believer, and the Temple of God; on the other, lawlessness, darkness, Beliar, the unbeliever, and idols. The two sides constitute two associations between which there can be no association.

While it is extrinsic to 2 Corinthians, one cannot help but recall Paul's insistence with regard to participation in the idolatries of the Greco-Roman world: "I do not want you to become partners (κοινωνοὺς) with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot have a share at the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Cor 10:20b-21). The distinction between the ages is particularly Pauline, undergirding much of his thought. As a Pharisee, well acquainted with and frequently using the concept of the two ages, Paul recognizes that these two ages divide the universe and that there is no room for dual citizenship or cross-communion.

<sup>18</sup>Thrall, 137. Derrett produces a pattern for the antitheses in 2 Cor 6:14b-16a and their interpretation in Sirach 13:17-18: "What does a wolf have in common with a lamb? No more has a sinner with the devout. What accord is there between a hyena and a dog? And what accord between the rich and the poor?" (249).

For this reason, one may question how Furnish can find the discussion of dining in a pagan temple in 1 Cor 10:14-22 unhelpful here.<sup>19</sup> While it is true that the specific concern of dining is not explicitly (and most likely not implicitly) present in 2 Corinthians, the same theological concern may well undergird Paul's exhortations in both places.<sup>20</sup> In 1 Corinthians, the demand that Christians abstain from idol feasts rests on the fact of their *κοινωνία*, their participation, fellowship, or common holdings, in the body and blood or the life of Christ. This fact is incompatible with the possibility of retaining or reinitiating other such *κοινωνία*, as with demons in 1 Corinthians, or with those who represent another gospel (Beliar), or simply with the wisdom of the world, in 2 Corinthians. Participation in the eschatological reality of one age precludes participation in its opposing age.

Such a dualistic view dominates 2 Corinthians. Paul opens the argument proper by describing his party as a fragrance of Christ to God "among those who are being saved and those who are perishing" (*ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*, 2:15), a division of humanity clearly illustrative of apocalyptic dualism. A similar division appears in the distinction between those who, "with unveiled faces gaze at the glory of the Lord" (3:18) and those whose minds "the god of this age has darkened" (4:4), who are in fact referred to as "unbelievers," *ἄπιστοι*. Paul distinguishes the "things which are seen" from "the things which are not seen" (*τὰ βλεπόμενα* and *τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα*, 4:18), declaring that the former belong to this temporary reality (*πρόσκαιρα*) while the latter are eternal (*αἰώνια*). Finally, there is the anthropological dualism created when Paul differentiates between this mortal body, the "earthy tent" which will be destroyed, and the "dwelling from God," an eternal body, for which the believer longs.

The dualistic antitheses found in 6:14b-16a, then, are well prepared for by Paul. As the Corinthians' standing "in grace" appears to be in jeopardy—whence the exhortations to "be reconciled to God" (5:20) and "not to receive the grace of God in vain" (6:1)—an appeal to them to make their eschatological standing secure among *οἱ σωζόμενοι* seems not out of place at 6:14. The

<sup>19</sup>Furnish, 382.

<sup>20</sup>In applying the pericope to the situation in 1 Corinthians, Fee may be reading too literally ("2 Cor 6.14-7.1 and Food Offered to Idols," *NTS* 23 [1977]: 143).

passage, then, supplements 5:20-6:2, which sets up, as it were, a new moment of decision for the Corinthians, a new "acceptable time" and "day of salvation" in which to separate themselves from the world which is passing away and those who are perishing through unbelief. This reconciliation with God is accomplished concurrently with their reconciliation with the apostle whose work it was, as the founder of the congregation, to call them together to be a people for God (cf. 6:16c). If the Corinthians will be persuaded that the present form of the world is passing away and that no visible thing can be held onto as grounds for confidence, but that the only ground for confidence and hope is the "God who raises the dead," they will have received God's grace in a salvific way and also have no cause for stumbling in Paul.

### *Scripture Quotations*

Scholars have argued that the choice of Scriptural citations also casts suspicion upon the Pauline origin of 2 Cor 6:14-7:1. Betz argues that these *testimonia* reflect an understanding of the Torah as divine promise which stands opposed to Paul's view of Torah as a covenant of bondage or guardianship which, in Gal 4:21-31, he sets over and against the covenant made by promise with Abraham.<sup>21</sup> Betz further identifies the point of view in 6:14-7:1 with that of Paul's opponents in Galatia.<sup>22</sup> He identifies the "yoke" to which 6:14a refers as the yoke of Torah:

First, it is assumed that there are two "yokes," one to be attributed to the "believers" and the other to the "non-believers". . . . It seems clear from the following that the "yoke" of the  $\mu\sigma\tau\omicron\iota$  must be identical with the Torah.<sup>23</sup>

The issue is not, however, which of two yokes one puts on, but with whom one is yoked together. In this regard, the yoke might be better understood as a figure for partnership or even discipleship, as in Sir 51:26 and Mt 11:29.

Several scholars have painstakingly sought out the Old Testament background for 2 Corinthians 6. Beale contends that the

<sup>21</sup>H. D. Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 329-333.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Betz, "An Anti-Pauline Fragment," 89. Derrett also links "yoke" with the "yoke of Torah" (245).

citations from the Hebrew Scriptures concatenated in 6:16b-18 express, not a covenantal nomism in their original context, but rather the promise made by God to restore Israel to its land after Israel falls away and is punished in exile.<sup>24</sup> The death and resurrection of Christ, the servant who brings "reconciliation," inaugurates the fulfillment of these promises.<sup>25</sup> If Beale is correct, the passage does not speak for Judaizing Christians for whom Torah is the center, but instead in a manner at home in Pauline Christianity.

The use of Scripture serves to give added weight to the moment, casting it as soteriologically significant, as here, or as a call to fulfill what is inherent in God's salvation history from the beginning, as in Gal 4:30. This prophetic reapplication of Scripture appears, for example, in Hebrews 3 and 4, where the author cites Ps 95:7-11, referring to the κρίσις, the fateful moment of decision, recorded in Numbers 13 and 14. Just as that historical moment was understood by the psalmist as a decisive juncture in the people's salvation history, so the author of Hebrews understands the contemporary situation of his congregation. Using the citation, the author recasts their situation in an antitypical and eschatological mode calling for a similar decision, which he hopes will be affirmative this time, in favor of faithful obedience to and perseverance in God's promise of salvation in Christ.

In 2 Cor 6:2, Paul uses the same technique to call the attention of the readers/hearers to the salvific importance of the moment and to inform them what is expected of them—nothing less than *μετάνοια* from the path they are pursuing in fellowship with the "superlative apostles." Just as the author of Hebrews uses the psalm text to emphasize the presentness of the "today" in which God's voice is to be heard and met with an obedient response, so Paul declares, in full *peshet* style, that the day of which Isaiah spoke is present now for the Corinthians. "Behold, now is the 'acceptable time'; behold, now is 'the day of salvation.'"

<sup>24</sup>Beale has sought to locate the background of 2 Corinthians 5 through 7 in OT promises for Israel's restoration (569). Derrett has explored the possibility that 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 was composed as a midrash on Deut 22:10, "You shall not yoke an ox and an ass together," leading him to consider the whole of 2 Cor 6:11-7:3 in the context of forming open relationships with trustworthy apostles of God and eschewing partnerships with unreliable partners (234-247). Murphy-O'Connor, building upon the insight of Thrall (146), suggests that free association with Deut 11:13-16 in Paul's mind is at work in linking the topics in 6:11-7:1 (273-275).

<sup>25</sup>Beale, 557.

Such a usage is followed in 2 Cor 6:16-18, and the promises which were originally linked to the covenant of Sinai (and more precisely, to God's promise to restore Israel after its failure to keep its covenant) are chosen here specifically as the promises which accompany the acceptance of the gospel, the sphere of grace.<sup>26</sup> These involve the promise of God's dwelling near and among the people and the adoption of the people as sons and daughters of the living God. The first of these is expressed elsewhere as fulfilled in the indwelling of the Spirit of God (Rom 8:11, 14, 23; 1 Cor 3:16; 12:7; Gal 4:6) and participation in, or being made part of, the Body of Christ (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 12:12-13). The second appears as fulfilled in Christ (Rom 8:14; Gal 4:5-6; Phil 2:15).<sup>27</sup> As these promises are experienced only through the gospel of Christ, one must separate from any different gospel.

The citations from the Hebrew Scriptures support the theory that the double appeal of 6:11-7:2a stood originally as a whole in this letter. Woven together from Lev 26:11-12; Ezek 37:27; Isa 52:11; Exod 25:8; 2 Sam 7:14; and 2 Sam 7:8, this *catena* appears to include very intentionally both the necessity of separation from the wrong fellowship and the promises which manifest themselves through the right fellowship. The content of the *catena* supports the appeal of 6:11-13 and 7:2a as well as the injunction of 6:14, suggesting that Paul has woven these scriptures together to elevate the soteriological importance of both sides of the appeal. Restoration with Paul and the authentically Pauline gospel is only possible if a break is made with the principles on which the intruders build their mission, and so with the intruders themselves.

### *Purity of Body and Spirit*

There remains the difficulty of the "defilement of body and spirit" (7:1), which appears to lead away from the point of the appeal. Rather, it is possible that this is Paul's way of returning

<sup>26</sup>With regard to 2 Cor 6:18, Derrett suggests that this is most closely based on 2 Sam 7:14 and that the expansion of the quotation to include both sons and daughters indicates that the believers are addressed as coheirs with Christ of the promise to David (246).

<sup>27</sup>We see from this that Paul expresses the fulfillment of the promises (for those who are in Christ) encountered in 2 Cor 6:16b-18 throughout his letters. For Paul, these are the promises which have received their "Yes" in Christ for all people (cf. 2 Cor 1:20), and which he now adduces as authoritative to support and extend his appeal.

from the *catena* to the appeal for association, for openness and reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians, as the breach in their relationship may be interpreted by Paul in the context of the *catena* as a "defilement of body and spirit."<sup>28</sup>

The verse contains terms which flow easily from the Hebrew Scripture citation. The promise is a composite of Exod 29:45; Lev 26:12; and Ezek 37:27. It affirms God's design to be present among His people and to establish a particular relationship with them. This experience, however, requires a response of fidelity from the people, that they join with God and not form conflicting alliances with other powers. Paul cites Isa 52:11, which introduces also the idea of cleanness. The concept of ἀκαθαρσία, "uncleanness," stands in contrast to ἁγιωσύνη, "holiness." While the first refers to what is set apart from coming into contact with the divine, the latter refers to what is set apart specifically for the purpose of being brought into contact with the divine.

The language of cleanness is not regarded as characteristically Pauline,<sup>29</sup> but this view needs to be challenged in light of some passages in 1 Corinthians. Very fundamentally, an important term by which Paul characterizes the believer is ἅγιος or ἡγιασμένος (1 Cor 1:2). This concept rests on Jewish notions of being set apart for God and thus connects with purity codes as well. Being set apart for God is precisely the motive for the exhortation in 7:1. Other passages point even more specifically to Paul's use of the language of purity and cleanness. When Paul speaks of not joining one's self to a prostitute (6:15-16), the concept of pollution appears to stand behind his argument. When he speaks in 7:14 about the status of the children of an unbelieving partner as ἀκαθαρτός, Paul still speaks of one's status before God in terms of clean and unclean. These concepts stand close behind his understanding of God's purposes in salvation history to form a people for that peculiar relationship with God.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>N. A. Dahl offers such an interpretation (*Studies in Paul* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977], 67).

<sup>29</sup>Furnish, 377; Betz, *Galatians*, 329.

<sup>30</sup>Dahl demonstrates that 2 Cor 10-13 contains several terms which belong to the domain of purity and impurity (69). The lexical map of purity and defilement found in J. H. Neyrey ("The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: 'They Turn the World Upside Down,'" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. H. Neyrey [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991], 275-76) also demonstrates how the language of purity and impurity permeates the Pauline letters together with the rest of the New Testament.

If the paranetic goal of the argument is the separation of the Corinthian Christians from subversive preachers or from the perverting effects of the natural mind's wisdom on the gospel, both the citation and the exhortation make excellent sense. The Jewish concepts of cleansing, defilement, and the perfection of holiness revolve around the central idea of being set apart and keeping one's self set apart for God. This supports the impossibility of participation in the age which is coming and the age which is passing and turns the theological question into an ethical exhortation. Since such double participation is impossible, the hearer must move decisively towards setting himself or herself apart for participation in the age which is coming, in God, in Christ, in light.

A *peroratio* to the whole appeal begins at 7:1. Paul refers to the foregoing promises of God; the emphatic appearance of ἐπαγγελίαι in 1:20 cannot but come to mind. These very promises find their "yes" in Christ, through the message of Christ which Paul brings. In light of these promises, and to secure such benefits as these promises will bring, action is required from the Corinthians. Here the exhortation takes the form of καθάρισωμεν ἑαυτούς, "let us cleanse ourselves," which stands as an appropriate foil to the practice of ἑαυτούς συνιστάνειν (3:1), "commending ourselves." The move is thus away from commending one's self in the sight of the world towards commending one's self in the sight of God, by moving in the direction of the sincerity (ἐλικρίνεια) and holiness (ἀγιότης, 1:12) which mark Paul's presentation of the gospel in his own life.

While "perfecting holiness" is not considered a typical Pauline concept, nothing necessitates reading it as anti-Pauline, as does Betz,<sup>31</sup> for the text does not suggest that one perfects holiness by Torah, but rather as Paul describes in Phil 3:10-14. Paul strives after an end, the attainment of the full experience of the life of Christ, but receives it through the faithfulness of Christ. To this he may be calling the Corinthians in 7:1. The verse ends with a reference to ὁ φόβος τοῦ θεοῦ, forming an *inclusio* with 5:11, which began the *exhortatio*.

<sup>31</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 329-330; "An Anti-Pauline Fragment," 98.

*Implications for Interpretation*

If 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 is regarded as integral to the letter, the climactic plea is an appeal for the gospel of Christ over false gospels, for dissolving ties with Paul's rivals and opening up the heart again to Paul as actions resulting from a spiritual *μετάνοια*. In place, the pericope brings together and elevates the concepts which have guided Paul through his argument. Primarily, the cosmological split between the age that is passing away and the age that is coming, and the way in which a person eschews participation in the one and finds participation in the other, begin the argument explicitly in 2:14 and now reappear in these clusterings of persons and figures in 6:11 through 7:2a. The "acceptable time" and "now" of 6:2 becomes a new moment of decision for the Corinthians. They must choose fellowship with Christ or remain in the communion of this age, untouched by the gospel.

While the arguments for reading 6:14-7:1 as a non-Pauline interruption to the letter have some merit, those for considering the passage as integral to the letter seem stronger. Paul has prepared for the appeal in 6:14-7:1 through several instances where he has employed forceful dissociative language, as well as through placing his arguments consistently against the framework of apocalyptic dualism. Together with 6:11-13 and 7:2-3, 6:14-7:1 constitute the climax of an appeal in which Paul urges the re-establishment of the relationship between apostle and congregation to allow the stream of God's comfort to flow uninterrupted. In order to effect this, they must dissociate themselves from every influence which blinds their minds to the truth of the gospel, namely that "the things which are visible are temporary, but the things which are unseen are eternal."