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Spirit and Covenant Renewal: A Theologoumenon of Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians

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The reconstruction of the position of the missionary rivals whose legitimacy Paul attempts to undermine in 2 Corinthians has proven to be a difficult task. Since the time of Ferdinand Christian Baur, scholars have proposed various, often conflicting reconstructions. In 1990, Jerry L. Sumney proposed some salutary methodological guidelines for this project and offered his own minimalist reconstruction.[1] The material that Sumney used in his reconstruction of the position of Paul's missionary rivals was gleaned solely from the text of 2 Corinthians. There remain, however, substantial comparative data from early Jewish and Christian texts that have not yet been examined in connection with this problem. These comparative data, I argue, suggest an alternative to Sumney's view of the role played by the spirit in the preaching of Paul's missionary rivals in 2 Corinthians. To contextualize this argument, let us briefly examine Jerry Sumney's methodological dicta, the reasons that he had for proposing them, and the minimalist sketch of Paul's Corinthian missionary opponents that he proposed.

Sumney's delineation of a methodology for establishing the characteristics of the preaching of Paul's missionary opponents in 2 Corinthians was formulated in response to what he perceived as an undue variety in the types of characteristics that previous scholars had imputed to those missionaries. In the interest of time, I men-

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[1] Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTSup 40; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

tion only three of the more influential theories here.[2] In the late 1800s, Baur saw Paul's missionary rivals in 2 Corinthians as representatives of a single, unified movement that opposed Paul's law-free mission: that of Petrine Christianity.[3] In 1964, Dieter Georgi proposed a novel solution to the problem of Paul's opposition in Corinth.[4] Georgi argued that Paul's missionary rivals presented themselves as θεῖοι ἄνθρωποι, Greco-Roman divine men such as Apollonius of Tyana, who possessed superhuman traits including preternatural wisdom and the ability to work miracles. C. K. Barrett presented Paul's rivals as Christian Jews who received their authority from the Jerusalem church, although they misrepresented the principals James and Cephas there by "adopting . . . the ecstatic accompaniments of pagan religion" such as visionary experience and glossolalia.[5]

It was in response to this variety of reconstructions that Sumney proposed methodological principles that should be followed when approaching the subject of Paul's Corinthian rivals.[6] In brief, Sumney creates a taxonomy of the kinds of statements that allow us to extract information about Paul's rivals, including explicit statements, allusions, and major themes addressed in 2 Corinthians. Against the influential thesis of Baur, Sumney is keen to point out the methodological flaw in assuming that the opponents in one letter (e.g., Galatians) must be identified with Paul's opponents in another.

Sumney recognizes the potential value of comparative sources to provide background data within which to contextualize discussions of Paul's opponents. He rejects the use of sources that postdate Paul's letters and states that contempo-

[2] For a more complete review of the positions, see Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986; trans. of *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief; Studien zur religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike* (WMANT 11; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964), 1–9; Reimund Bieringer, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," in idem and Jan Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (BETL 112; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 181–221; Margaret Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 2000) 2:926–45; Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 67–87; Thomas R. Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant: Discursive Strategies in the Damascus Document and Paul's Second Corinthians* (WUNT 2/233; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 109–21.

[3] Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings. A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity* (2 vols.; Theological Translation Fund Library 2, 6; London/Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1875; trans. of *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben, sein Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre. Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristenthums* [Leipzig: Fues, 1866]).

[4] Georgi, *Opponents of Paul.*

[5] Barrett, "Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians," in idem, *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1992), 60–86, here 82.

[6] See also his more recent work, *'Servants of Satan,' 'False Brothers' and Other Opponents of Paul* (JSNTSup 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

rary sources should be used to provide comparative data.[7] He does not address the issue of whether earlier sources, which might have influenced later developments, may be used. He does, however, indicate the potential value of tracing the historical trajectory of a particular theme for understanding Paul's opponents: "If we know about the beginning and some later point [of a historical or thematic trajectory], we may be able to speak of intervening developments."[8] Contextualization is necessary for historical reconstruction: "We can evaluate the information that we have about a particular situation only when we know something about its historical context, that is, we must know something about the broad context to understand a particular episode."[9] Sumney, however, does little in *Identifying Paul's Opponents* to provide such contextualizing information.[10]

After outlining his methodological criteria, Sumney develops a reconstruction that is in some respects in agreement with the earlier positions of Victor Paul Furnish, Georgi,[11] and others who view Paul's missionary rivals as pneumatics who

> contend that the spirit enables apostles to lead powerful and obviously successful lives.... They also assert that the Spirit grants visions and revelations to apostles. Finally, they say that the spirit manifests itself in apostles by enabling them to perform miraculous deeds ("signs, wonders, and mighty deeds").[12]

Although the position that Paul's missionary rivals in 2 Corinthians viewed the spirit as a source of visions, revelations, and miraculous deeds that could be called upon to legitimate their ministry is one that is widely held in NT scholarship, there is in fact good reason to doubt it.[13] The reason arises from Sumney's own method-

[7] Sumney, *Identifying*, 77–80.

[8] Ibid., 80.

[9] Ibid., 83.

[10] In his later book, *'Servants of Satan,'* he devotes three paragraphs to an attempt to locate within their "broader religio-philosophical environment" two issues discussed in 2 Corinthians—"the proper way of life" and the means of economic support for philosophers and propagandists in antiquity (p. 132).

[11] Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 324, 532, 543; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 242–44, 258–59, 280–83, 318.

[12] Sumney, *Identifying*, 177. Interestingly, in his most recent statement on the topic, Sumney does not make mention of visions, revelations, and miraculous deeds in his characterization of Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians. He does not, however, indicate that he has changed his position on the issue ("Studying Paul's Opponents: Advances and Challenges" in *Paul and His Opponents* [ed. Stanley E. Porter; Pauline Studies 2; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005], 7–58, esp. 14–17, 49).

[13] In addition to Furnish, Sumney, and Georgi, other scholars who have held the view include Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (trans. Roy A. Harrisville; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985; German original ed. Erich Dinkler, 1976), 149–50, 219; Ernst Käsemann, "Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13," *ZNW* 41 (1942): 58, 61–71; Hans-Josef Klauck, *2. Korintherbrief* (NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1986), 91; Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 396–97; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (New Testament Theol-

ology. He rejects the use of the "mirror technique," which involves deriving information about Paul's rivals based on the assumption that their position must have been diametrically opposed to the positions that Paul espouses in 2 Corinthians, unless—and this is an important qualification—there exist prior data that could corroborate the results of this technique.[14] One instance in which Sumney abandons his usual methodological rigor and allows himself to engage in "mirror exegesis" in the absence of prior corroborating data is the point at which, on the basis of Paul's own claims in 12:1–4, he attributes revelatory and charismatic experiences to Paul's rivals. He argues as follows:

> Paul apparently agrees to match his opponents' claims to "visions and revelations of the Lord" in 12.1. . . . We may infer, since we are in a polemical context, that they claim to receive visions and revelations. We may further conclude that they use these visionary experiences as evidence of apostolic status.[15]

According to Sumney's methodological proposal, allusions in polemical contexts, as he classifies Paul's statements in 12:1–2, may yield information about the position of Paul's opponents through the application of the mirror technique if and only if there exist prior data that could corroborate the results of this technique. However, the existence of prior data is in this instance precluded by Sumney's acknowledgment that 12:1 constitutes "the *first clear evidence* that spiritual experiences are important for the opponents."[16] In the absence of corroborating information, the use of the mirror technique in 12:1–4 is, according to the strict application of Sumney's method, illegitimate.

Sumney offers a second argument from 12:1 to the effect that Paul's opponents adduce visions and revelations. He follows Georgi, Furnish, and Ralph Martin in arguing that Paul's phrase in 12:1, οὐ συμφέρον, "it is not beneficial," indicates that "Paul is being forced to deal with the subject of visions and revelations."[17] Margaret Thrall concurs, framing the issue succinctly: "[T]he very fact that Paul acknowledges that his boasting is inexpedient goes to show that it is evoked by external pressures."[18] The fact that Paul indicates that boasting is inexpedient does not, however, offer sufficient grounds for the assumption that Paul's visionary experience is adduced in response to a similar claim by his opponents. This assumption involves an invalid use of the mirror technique. In the absence of

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ogy; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 115; Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (trans. M. Eugene Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 259–61; Calvin Roetzel, *2 Corinthians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 111.

[14] Sumney, *Identifying*, 111.

[15] Ibid., 168; *'Servants of Satan,'* 121. On this point, Sumney follows Furnish, his Doktorvater, (citing his *II Corinthians*, 532).

[16] Sumney, *Identifying*, 168; repeated in *'Servants of Satan,'* 121 (italics mine).

[17] Sumney, *Identifying*, 168.

[18] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:773 n. 10.

any prior evidence to indicate that Paul's opponents had claimed visionary experiences to legitimate their ministry, this procedure must be rejected. The phrase οὐ συμφέρον indicates only that Paul's boasting in the fool's speech was "evoked by external pressures" (i.e., the boasting of Paul's opponents); it does not indicate the specific content of the opponents' boasting.

The two other passages that are often cited in support of the view that Paul's missionary rivals adduced visionary and revelatory experience to legitimate their ministry, 5:12–13 and 12:12, suffer from a similar problem. In 5:12, Paul implies that his opponents "boast in appearances" (καυχᾶσθαι ἐν προσώπῳ). In the following verse, Paul makes the curious statement εἴτε γὰρ ἐξέστημεν, θεῷ· εἴτε γὰρ σωφρονοῦμεν, ὑμῖν ("If we were out of our senses, it was for God's benefit; if we are in our right mind, it is for your benefit"). Noting that Derk William Oostendorp, Walter Schmithals, and Georgi identify the verse as an allusion to practices in which Paul's opponents engaged, Sumney correctly states, "If 5.13 is an allusion, it is the only reference to problems with spiritual gifts in chs. 1–9. Therefore, we cannot be certain that it is an allusion and we cannot claim that the opponents make an issue of spiritual gifts or the display of spiritual gifts."[19] The first person plural verb forms indicate that the reference is to Paul's practices, not those of his opponents.[20] There is no evidence that his opponents make an issue of spiritual gifts; Paul, on the other hand, does (cf. 1 Cor 14:18). It is probably his own practice of glossolalia that is being referred to here.[21] Barring the invalid use of the mirror technique, this verse provides no evidence in favor of the thesis that Paul's opponents adduced ecstatic experiences to legitimate their ministry.

Sumney notes that many scholars identify the phrase "the signs of an apostle" (τὰ σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου) in 12:12 as a slogan of Paul's missionary opponents in Corinth.[22] Sumney cites Georgi to the effect that the σημεῖα τοῦ ἀποστόλου are viewed as manifestations of the spirit. Georgi, for his part, had argued that "[the

[19] Sumney, *Identifying*, 144–45. Sumney holds the partition theory that finds two letters in 2 Corinthians, chs. 1–9 and chs. 10–13 (pp. 115–26).

[20] Paul often uses first person plural verb forms when referring only to himself. On the "schriftstellerische Wir," see Klauck, *2. Korintherbrief*, 12–13.

[21] So rightly Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 80. Other commentators prefer to see in the verse a reference to Paul's heavenly journey (so Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997], 285) or to leave open the possibility that Paul refers either to ecstatic speech or to heavenly journeys (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:406; Eric Gräßer, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* [2 vols., ÖTK 8; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2002], 1:212).

[22] Käsemann viewed the phrase as a slogan of Paul's missionary rivals ("Die Legitimität," 35). Barrett ("Paul's Opponents," 73), Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 435), and Murphy-O'Connor (*Theology of the Second Letter*, 122), on the other hand, see the Corinthian congregation, not Paul's missionary rivals, as originating the phrase, which was connected with their demand for proof that Christ speaks in Paul (13:3). Harris raises the possibility that Paul himself may have introduced the phrase into the discussion (*Second Epistle*, 874).

opponents'] signs and wonders must have resembled those of the Hellenistic-Jewish and Hellenistic θεῖοι ἄνδρες. . . . It was the pride of the opponents that they could prove the pneuma as active" through their miraculous deeds.[23] However, the fact that Paul's immediately following statement in 12:13 refers to the issue of financial support for apostles indicates that the "signs" with which Paul is concerned are not miraculous deeds in the mode of the Hellenistic divine man, but rather the more mundane concern that his failure to accept financial support from the Corinthians could be interpreted as indicating his lack of apostolic status (cf. Matt 10:9–10; Luke 10:7; 1 Cor 9:3–14).[24] The σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν that were performed among the Corinthians "with all endurance" are more likely to refer to Paul's preaching and church-building activities in Corinth than to miracles per se.[25] Since there is no evidence elsewhere in 2 Corinthians that Paul's missionary rivals adduced miraculous deeds to legitimate their ministry, the suggestion that 12:12 indicates their performance of such deeds involves an invalid use of the mirror technique and must therefore be rejected.

Following Sumney's methodological principle that the mirror technique may be used only when there is prior information to substantiate a point, neither Paul's references to visions and revelations in 12:1–4, nor his statement in 12:1 that boasting about such experiences "is of no benefit," nor his reference to the "signs of an apostle" in 12:12, nor the apparent reference to glossolalia in 5:13 can be used as evidence for practices or experiences adduced by Paul's missionary rivals. If there is no evidence to support the view that Paul's missionary opponents in 2 Corinthians used spirit-inspired visions and revelations to legitimate their ministry, an alternative view of the role that the spirit may have played in their preaching is suggested by early Jewish discussions of covenant renewal, to which we now turn our attention.

II. Covenant Renewal, Spirit, and Torah Observance: A Theologoumenon of Second Temple Judaism

The central phrase that Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 3, the "new covenant" (ἡ διαθήκη καίνη), echoes a phrase that appeared for the first time in an exilic section of the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah relied on a covenantal theology similar to

[23] Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 236–37.

[24] Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2:703, 842; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 238–40; Sumney, *Identifying*, 132, 146; Blanton, *Constructing*, 137–38, 177, 184–86.

[25] As argued cogently by Gräßer, *Der zweite Brief*, 2:222: "Den absoluten Primat hatte für sein apostolisches Wirken die Verkündigung (1 Kor 1,14–17). Und die Ausbreitung des Evangeliums ist für ihn das Wunder schlechthin. . . ." Harris, on the other hand, has recently taken 12:12 at face value, indicating that the verse provides evidence for miracle-working activity on Paul's part (*Second Epistle*, 875).

that of Deuteronomy.[26] The covenant (ברית) between YHWH and the Judean people constituted a pact in which both parties were expected to adhere to the covenant's stipulations. YHWH's part was to guarantee the Judeans' rights to utilize the land of Judea. The Judeans for their part were to adhere to the stipulations of the Torah (e.g., Deut 7:1; 8:1, 11; 11:8–9). Failure to adhere to the stipulations of the covenant would result in the enactment of the "curses of the covenant," including famine, military defeat, and exile (Deut 28:15–68), whereas adherence would result in "blessings," including agricultural productivity, reproductive increase in humans and livestock, and most important, unconstrained usage rights to the land of Judea (Deut 28:1–14). Given this theological understanding, the Babylonian invasion, defeat, and subsequent mass deportation of Judeans in 586 B.C.E. were viewed as a result of the people's failure to follow the stipulations of the covenant. In the period of exile that followed 586 B.C.E., editors of the Jeremianic corpus envisioned a time in which Judeans would internalize the stipulations of the covenant, thus reversing the exile that breaking the covenant had entailed. The people would return to their homeland, their intentionality transformed by God so that further rejection of the terms of the covenant would become impossible. Jeremiah 31:31–34 reads as follows:

> Behold! Days are coming (oracle of YHWH), when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (one) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers when I strengthened their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I ruled over them (oracle of YHWH). For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after these days (oracle of YHWH) I will set my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they will be my people. And no one will teach his companion or his brother any longer, saying, "Know YHWH"; for all of them will know me, from the least to the greatest of them, for I will forgive their transgression, and their sin I will remember no longer.[27]

This passage constitutes the earliest usage of the phrase "new covenant" (ברית חדשה), which takes a central place in Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 2–3. In the Jeremianic passage, Israel and Judah broke the covenant by failing to adhere to the stipulations of the Torah. According to the oracle, YHWH will forgive the sin of the people—and it important to note that "sin" here has a specific connotation, that of rebellion against the stipulations of a treaty or covenant[28]—and "set [his] law within

[26] For discussions of the covenantal aspect of Deuteronomy's theology, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 59–157; idem, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites* (Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies 3; Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 222–64.

[27] All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

[28] Weinfeld compares the language of Deuteronomy with that of ancient treaties in "Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West," *JAOS* 93 (1973): 190–

them" by "writing it on their hearts." The law will become inscribed within the intentionality of the humans so transformed. The effectiveness of this transformation is complete: the people no longer need to study the Torah, as it has become a constitutive part of their psyche. We see here a cluster of motifs—new covenant, perfect obedience to the Torah, and the transformation of human intentionality—that are shared by each of the texts that we will now briefly survey.

Like the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel utilizes a covenantal theology when it construes the period of exile following the Babylonian deportation of citizens of Jerusalem after that city was sacked in 586 B.C.E. as the result of Judeans' failure to adhere to the stipulations of the covenant. Ezekiel envisions a remedy to this situation which is similar to that proposed in Jeremiah:[29]

> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the lands and bring you to your land. And I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will be clean from all your uncleannesses, and I will purify you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart and set a new spirit [רוח חדשה] within your inward parts, and remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will set my spirit within your inward parts and cause you to walk in my statutes[30] and observe and perform my ordinances. And you will dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and you will be my people and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:24–28)

In this passage, Israel's God is depicted as providing a remedy for covenantal transgression by replacing the people's rebellious, or "stony," heart and spirit with new, compliant versions of the same: a "fleshly heart" and spirit. By effecting this replacement, YHWH ensures the people's obedience to the stipulations of the covenant.

The Jeremianic theme of the transformation of human intentionality is here nuanced by the delineation of a specific mechanism for effecting this change: God puts his spirit within those transformed, with the result that they are "caused to

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99; see also idem, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 184–203. George Mendenhall is credited with first pointing out the relationship between Deuteronomy and ancient treaties ("Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law," *BA* 17 [1954]: 26–46; "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* 17 [1954]: 50–76).

[29] Noting that the concerns of the passage reflect those of the late exilic or early postexilic period, Walther Zimmerli infers that "it is possible that here . . . [it] is no longer Ezekiel himself who is speaking, but the school which continues his line of thinking" (*Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* [2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979, 1983; German original, 1969], 2:246). Greenberg (*Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1997], 738–40), on the other hand, argues against the suggestion of Johan Lust that Ezek 36:23bβ–38 was added by redactors of Ezekiel's oracles. For the purposes of the argument presented here, it makes little difference whether Ezekiel or an editor penned the oracle.

[30] ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו. On the substantival object clause construction, see Joüon §157c; cf. also GKC §157c.

walk in"[31] YHWH's statutes and ordinances (ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו). Apart from the absence of an explicit reference to the new covenant and the notable addition of the designation of the spirit as the active agent responsible for the transformation of human intentionality, the cluster of motifs corresponds with that identified in Jeremiah 31.

A similar cluster of motifs appears in the book of *Jubilees,* which states (1:22–25a):

> The Lord said to Moses: "I know their contrary nature, their way of thinking, and their stubbornness. They will not listen until they acknowledge their sins and the sins of their ancestors. After this they will return to me in a fully upright manner and with all (their) minds and all (their) souls. I will cut away the foreskins of their minds and the foreskins of their descendants' minds. I will create a holy spirit for them [*wa ʾefaṭṭer lomu manfasa qeddusa*] and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever. Their souls will adhere to me and to all my commandments. They will perform my commandments. I will become their father and they will become my children. All of them will be called children of the living God."[32]

In this passage we encounter a schema that includes corporate confession and repentance, the transformation of human intentionality through the agency of the holy spirit, absolute obedience to the stipulations of the Torah, and renewed covenantal relationship with God. The theme of covenant renewal appears in *Jubilees,* where it is prescribed as a ritual to be performed annually on the fifteenth day of the third month, during the Feast of Shavuot (cf. *Jub.* 14:1, 10, 18, 20; 15:1–14; 16:13–14; 22:15, 30).[33] According to *Jub.* 6:17, "[I]t has been ordained and written on the heavenly tablets that they should celebrate the Festival of Weeks during this [i.e., the third] month—once a year—to renew the covenant [*laḥaddis kidān*] each and every year."[34] The point at which God "will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from [God] from that time forever" is, however, deferred until the eschatological future.

In the Qumran *Community Rule* (1QS) a similar constellation of motifs appears. This text, like Ezekiel and *Jubilees,* links the spirit with the capacity of humans to adhere perfectly to the Torah. The *Community Rule* predicts that a purification of humans will be effected at the time of the פקודה, or "visitation,"

[31] Compare NRSV: "made to follow."

[32] Translation of James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (CSCO 510, 511; Scriptores Aethiopici 87, 88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 2:5.

[33] The covenant made in the time of Noah breaks the pattern; it was on the first instead of the fifteenth of the third month (cf. *Jub.* 6:1, 10).

[34] Translation of VanderKam, cited in his article "Covenant," *EDSS* 1:152. I have added to VanderKam's translation the transliteration of the Ethiopic text (in square brackets).

when God is envisioned as judging the wicked and rewarding the righteous (4:18b–23a).[35]

> But God, in the mysteries of his understanding and in his glorious wisdom, has established an end for the existence of injustice, and at the appointed time of visitation he will destroy it forever.[36] And then truth will come forth forever (to the) world, for it [the world] has been soiled by wicked ways during the dominion of injustice, until the appointed time of fixed judgment.[37] And then God will purge[38] all the deeds of man by his truth; he will purify for himself some of the sons of man,[39] to bring to an end every spirit of injustice from the inward parts of his flesh[40] and to purify him by a holy spirit from all wicked deeds. And he will sprinkle upon him a spirit of truth like purifying water[41] (to cleanse him) from all the abominations of falsehood and (from) being soiled by a spirit of uncleanness, to instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High and the wisdom of the sons of heaven, to make wise those whose way is perfect, because God has chosen them for an eternal covenant, and all the glory of Adam will be theirs.

As was the case in the other texts that we have surveyed, the *Community Rule* speaks of a transformation of human intentionality. According to this text, the

[35] Cf. CD 5:15; 7:19; Wis 3:7; 1 Pet 2:12 (Gk. ἐπισκοπή).

[36] This section echoes the Zoroastrian motif of truth's final victory over falsehood at the time of cosmic restoration (Greater Bundahishn 34.20–27; trans. in Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984], 52–53). For possible Persian influences in the scrolls, see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 29–33; Klaus Koch, "Zoroastrianism," *EDSS* 2:1010–12.

[37] מועד משפט נחרצה. The modifying *niphal* participle does not agree in gender with either of the preceding nouns, but appears to modify משפט. For the fixed nature of the eschatological judgment (i.e., the judgment has already been determined by the time the final tribunal is called), see Dan 9:26–27; 11:36. In the face of eschatological judgment, neither defense nor plea is permitted; sentence is rendered summarily.

[38] Cf. Dan 11:35.

[39] מִבְּנֵי איש, taking the מ as partitive. Jacob Licht, Yigael Yadin, Geza Vermes, and others have vocalized מִבְנֵי, understanding the construct as a phonetic variant of מִבְנָה ("building"), interpreted as a reference to the human frame (A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [NTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966], 157–58; Eduard Lohse, *Die Texte aus Qumran: Hebräisch und Deutsch mit masoretischer Punktation* [Munich: Kösel, 1986], 14 and 284 n. 29).

[40] מתכמי בשׂרו. The noun תכם is translated variously as "veins" (James H. Charlesworth, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, vol. 1, *Rule of the Community and Related Documents* [ed. James H. Charlesworth et al.; Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 19), "tissues" (Licht, cited in Leaney, *Rule of Qumran*, 158), "inward parts" (Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 131), or "innermost parts" (Florentino García Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [2 vols.; Leiden/New York: Brill, 1997, 2000], 1:79).

[41] כמי נדה, lit., "like water for uncleanness."

transformation is to take place at the time of the "visitation." At that time, humans will be either destroyed or purified "from all ungodly acts . . . [and] from all the abominations of falsehood." The Jeremianic theme of forgiveness of sins does not appear; instead the priestly theme of purification introduced by Ezekiel is mentioned. The "holy spirit" appears as the instrument of this purification. The "purification" that is envisioned entails an adherence to the precepts of the Torah. According to 1QS 3:9–10, "It is by humbling his soul to all God's statutes, that his flesh can be cleansed, by sprinkling with waters of purification." The purification described in this passage is made possible only because God has chosen the members of the Dead Sea sect to inherit the promise established in an "eternal covenant." This text has a salient eschatological dimension: at the time of God's visitation, injustice will be destroyed forever, some humans will be purified by the spirit in order to follow the Torah, and they will receive the "glory" (i.e., luminosity) that Adam was thought to have possessed in Eden.[42]

The Letter to the Hebrews exhibits the same cluster of motifs as the other texts that we have surveyed. The most significant discussion of the new covenant occurs in Hebrews 8 (esp. vv. 7–13). This section contains an extended citation of Jer 31:31–34, a major scriptural locus for the derivation of the covenant renewal theologoumenon. The section reads:

> But now he [Jesus] has attained a more excellent cultic service, to the degree that he is also a mediator of a superior covenant which is legally enacted on the basis of superior promises.
>
> Now if that first one [covenant] had been faultless, occasion for a second would not have been sought. Indeed,[43] because he finds fault with them, he says: *"Look! Days are coming, says the Lord, when*[44] *I will accomplish for the house of Israel and for the house of Judah a new covenant, not like the covenant which I made with their forefathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, for they themselves did not remain in my covenant and I ceased to care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: when I put my laws into their minds, I will inscribe them even in their hearts and then*[45] *I will be their God and they will be my people. And they will certainly not teach, each one his compatriot nor each his*

[42] Compare *History of the Rechabites* 12:3, which states that Adam and Eve were "robed in garments of glory (i.e., luminous garments) . . . before they sinned." A Syriac text edited by F. Nau appeared in *RSém* 7 (1899): 54–75. A Greek version was published by M. R. James in *Apocrypha Anecdota: A Collection of Thirteen Apocryphal Books and Fragments Now First Edited from Manuscripts* (TS 2/3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 86–108.

[43] The conjunction γάρ functions to introduce background material that "strengthens some aspect of a previous assertion" (Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* [2nd ed.; Dallas: SIL International 2000] §5.4.2); cf. *BDAG*, s.v. γάρ 2.

[44] Καί. For the temporal significance, see *BDF* §442.4; *BDAG*, s.v. καί 1bγ.

[45] Resultative καί. See *BDAG*, s.v. καί 1bζ.

> *brother, saying, 'Know the Lord!' for all will know me, from the smallest to the greatest*[46] *of them, for I will be merciful toward their misdeeds and their sins I will remember no longer.*" By making mention of a "new" [covenant], he treats the first as obsolete, and that which is becoming obsolete and growing old is close to disappearing. (Heb 8:7–13)

Hebrews quotes in full the Jeremianic oracle that posits a period of covenant renewal, forgiveness of former sins, transformation of intentionality, and a strengthened capacity to follow the Torah. Hebrews, however, goes beyond the material in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, *Jubilees,* and the Qumran *Community Rule* in positing that the renewed covenant is "superior" to the "obsolete" covenant, which is "old and near obliteration." As Heb 7:26–28; 9:23–26; and 10:8–14 make clear, what is "old and near obliteration" is not the Torah *in toto,* but the priestly regulations that stipulate periodic sacrifice. These are rendered superfluous by Christ's "once for all" sacrifice (ἐφάπαξ [10:10]). Laws not pertaining to sacrifice are assumed to remain in full force (see 10:26–30; 12:18–29). To underscore the continuing efficacy of the (nonsacrificial aspects of the) Mosaic Torah, Hebrews quotes Jer 31:33 ("when I put my laws into their minds, I will inscribe them even in their hearts") not once, but twice (8:10; 10:16). Under the conditions of the new covenant, Christ's sacrificial blood purifies the human conscience so that sin—violation of the stipulations of the Torah—is no longer committed (9:9–10, 13–14, 26; 10:2, 10, 14). In these passages, it is Christ's sacrifice itself that effects the transformation of human intentionality, rather than the holy spirit, as was the case in Ezekiel.[47] The motifs of new covenant and the transformation of human intentionality to enable it to follow the Torah, however, constitute regular parts of the covenant renewal theologoumenon.

Although not every one of the following motifs is expressed in each of the comparative texts surveyed here, there is a degree of stability in the motifs involved. The main points of the covenant renewal theologoumenon may be summarized as follows:

1. It is stated or implied that YHWH's people failed to obey the stipulations of the covenant, bringing upon them the curses attendant on breaking the covenant, including exile (see Deut 28:47–68; Jer 31:32; Ezek 36:24, 28; *Jub.* 1:22–23; Heb 8:7–9).
2. In response to the failure of the people to keep the terms of the covenant, a renewal of the covenant, or "new covenant," is envisioned (Jer 31:31; cf. 1QS 4:22; Heb 8:8).

[46] ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου, positive substituted for superlative. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 298.

[47] The holy spirit plays a role in Heb 6:4, but it is not directly connected with the new covenant motif. This modifies my argument in *Constructing,* 147, 204.

3. The ratification of the new covenant entails the forgiveness of prior transgressions of the covenant's terms (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17–18) or, alternatively, the removal of impurity contracted as the result of violating covenantal stipulations (Ezek 36:25; *Jub.* 1:23; 1QS 4:20–21).
4. In order to forestall the possibility that the renewed covenant might, like the former one, be broken, YHWH is described as providing the spirit to his people so as to endow them with the capacity to follow the law perfectly (Ezek 36:27; *Jub.* 1:23–24; 1QS 4:22–23; Heb 8:10–11; 10:16).
5. Because the spirit transforms the people's minds so that they become perfectly obedient to the Torah, the new covenant remains in effect in perpetuity (*Jub.* 1:23b; 1QS 4:23–24; Heb 9:15; 13:20).

The delineation of the role of the spirit in covenant renewal offers an attractive alternative to the view of Sumney and Furnish that Paul's missionary rivals used spirit-inspired ecstatic utterances, visions, and revelatory experiences to legitimate their preaching. The role of the spirit in the covenant renewal theologoumenon is quite different: it inspired individuals to perfect obedience to the Torah in connection with an eschatological time at which the covenant is renewed.

III. The Covenant Renewal Theologoumenon in 2 Corinthians 3–4

The *loci classici* for deriving information regarding the missionaries whom Paul opposes in 2 Corinthians are found in chs. 3–4 and 10–13.[48] Since it is in chs. 3–4 that the new covenant theologoumenon comes into view, this section constitutes the appropriate starting point for further discussion.

There is substantial evidence in 2 Corinthians to support the thesis that the covenant renewal theologoumenon looms in the background of chs. 3–4. The most

[48] Various partition theories have been proposed to account for tensions between different sections of 2 Corinthians. For overviews of the theories, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:1–49; Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 3–36; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 29–48; Reimund Bieringer, "Teilungshypothesen zum 2. Korintherbrief: Ein Forschungsüberblick" in Bieringer and Lambrecht, *Studies*, 67–105; Margaret Mitchell, "Corinthian Epistles," *Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al.; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007–), 3:489–92; L. Joseph Kreitzer, *2 Corinthians* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 19–37; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 1–51; Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 4–35. The reconstruction of Paul's missionary rivals sketched in this article assumes that 2 Corinthians 3–4 originally constituted part of a letter that was written either before or after the letter now contained in chs. 10–13, and that both letters pertain to the same group of missionaries in Corinth. Neither the specifics of the partition theories nor the relative order in which the letters were written materially affects the argument advanced here.

obvious evidence comes from Paul's allusions to Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 in this section. In 2 Cor 3:2–4, Paul juxtaposes a reference to the "stone tablets" on which the law was written with an apologetic reference to an issue that had arisen in Corinth involving letters of reference. Whereas Paul's missionary opponents had been able to produce letters of recommendation written on their behalf (2 Cor 3:1), Paul carried no such credentials. In an effort to forestall the questions that this might raise for his own apostolic legitimacy, Paul adduced the members of the Corinthian house-churches themselves as his recommendation letter (ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε . . .).[49] In the course of this juxtaposition, Paul alludes to the new covenant theologoumenon (3:2–3):

> ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν . . . ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίναις ἀλλ' ἐν πλαξὶν καρδίαις σαρκίναις.
>
> You are our letter, written in your hearts . . . written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on tablets of fleshly hearts.

The letter that is described as "written in your hearts" is generally recognized as an allusion to Jer 31:33 ("I will set my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts").[50] The reference to the "spirit of the living God," which writes "not on stone tablets but on tablets of fleshly hearts," is less frequently, although no less rightly, seen as alluding to Ezek 36:26–27, in which God's spirit is identified as the agent through which God will "remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (or, 'fleshly heart')."[51] Although Paul has introduced his own creative modifications, the covenant renewal theologoumenon clearly lies in the background of this passage.

More evidence that the covenant renewal theologoumenon looms in the background of chs. 3–4 is provided in 3:6, when Paul includes himself among the "agents of the new covenant" (διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης). Annie Jaubert, Mathias Rissi, and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor have argued that the phrase "new covenant" here was borrowed from Paul's missionary rivals.[52] On the other hand, Furnish

[49] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:217–22; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 242–46; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (trans. Daniel P. Bailey; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006; German original, 1998), 72–77, 258–61, 449.

[50] So Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:222; Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 161, 169; Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP 8; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 41; Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 78–79; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 271.

[51] So Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 168–69; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 78; Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, 60.

[52] Jaubert, *La notion d'alliance dans le judaïsme aux abords de l'ère chrétienne* (Patristica Sorboniensia 6; Paris: Seuil, 1963), 447–48. Jaubert, however, is tentative: "Cependant, dans l'état actuel de notre information, nous ne pouvons formuler qu'une simple suggestion." See also

states that Paul's citation of the eucharistic formula in 1 Cor 11:25 ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood") proves that "the concept of a 'new' covenant established in and with the redemptive work of Christ is part of Paul's Christian heritage. . . . The present verse [2 Cor 3:6], as well as Paul's discussion of the two covenants in Gal 4, shows that it is a fully compatible part of his theology."[53] Although one would scarcely wish to argue that Paul's mention of the new covenant in 2 Cor 3:6 was not a "fully compatible part of his theology"—he has certainly made it so—the question is rather whether Paul might have taken the term from the preaching of his opponents. In answer to Furnish, we may note that Paul's use of the phrase "new covenant" (διαθήκη καινή) in 2 Cor 3:4 has quite different connotations than it does in 1 Cor 11:25, which connects the phrase with the eucharistic meal. There is no trace of this connection in 2 Cor 3:6. The fact that "new covenant" (διαθήκη καινή) appears without reference to the eucharistic tradition indicates that in chs. 3–4, Paul draws on a strand of tradition distinct from that which underlies 1 Cor 11:25. In 2 Cor 3:6, the "new covenant" (διαθήκη καινή) is associated with "letter" [of the law] and "spirit" (γράμμα and πνεῦμα). The juxtaposition of the terms "spirit," "letter [of the law]" and "new covenant" does not occur in the eucharistic tradition that Paul had inherited, but it is a defining feature of the covenant renewal theologoumenon. The associations that Paul makes with the phrase "new covenant" therefore underwent a significant shift between the writing of 1 Corinthians 11 and 2 Corinthians 3–4.

To what can we attribute Paul's shift in perspective? In view of the short time span that separates the two writings (perhaps only one year),[54] time alone is not a sufficient explanation. The literary context in which this shift is first evidenced is one in which Paul responds to issues that had been raised by the newly arrived group of missionaries in Corinth. This observation supports the contention of Jaubert, Rissi, and Murphy-O'Connor that Paul's discussion of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3–4 took its cues from these missionary rivals. Other data in 2 Corinthians, while not directly supporting this view, are nonetheless consistent with it. These data include a discussion of the Torah and a discussion of the spirit in relation to the Torah.

Rissi, *Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief: Der alte Bund–Der Prediger–Der Tod* (ATANT 56; Zurich: Zwingli, 1969), 23–24; Murphy-O'Connor, "A Ministry beyond the Letter (2 Cor 3:1–6)," in *Paolo Ministro del nuovo Testamento (2 Co 2,14–4,6)* (ed. Lorenzo De Lorenzi; Serie Monographica di "Benedictina": Sezione Biblico Ecumenica 9; Rome: Benedictina, 1987), 105–57, esp. 116–17.

[53] Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 197.

[54] Murphy-O'Connor dates the writing of 1 Corinthians to 54 C.E. and 2 Corinthians 1–9 to 55 C.E. (*Paul: A Critical Life* [Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 30–31, 308). Pauline chronology, however, is an area in which it is notoriously difficult to be precise.

IV. Moses and the Law in 2 Corinthians 3–4

A discussion of the Torah in 2 Corinthians is consistent with the view that Paul's rivals preached a version of the covenant renewal theologoumenon. The majority viewpoint on this matter, however, is that the Torah was not at issue in Corinth. Wilhelm Lütgert pointed out that the term περιτομή, which was central in Galatians, in which Torah observance was at issue, does not play a role in 2 Corinthians.[55] Martin extends the argument, noting that "in 2 Corinthians there is a remarkable absence of key 'Judaizing' terms such as circumcision, Sabbath, [and] law."[56] Such arguments from silence, however, are not as convincing as they might first appear. The term νόμος is indeed absent from 2 Corinthians, but in 3:15 the name "Moses" stands as a metonym for the Torah (= νόμος): "Whenever *Moses* is read, a veil lies over their hearts." "Moses" is not, however, read, although the *books of Moses*, that is, the Torah, are. Martin's argument overlooks this metonym. Furthermore, the absence of the terms "circumcision" and "Sabbath" indicates only that the topics of the debate in Corinth were not the same as those in Galatia. The absence of these terms in 2 Corinthians cannot be used to prove that the "law," which *is* mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3 under the metonym "Moses," was not part of the discussion in Corinth.

A couple of analogies may serve to illustrate the weakness of Lütgert's and Martin's arguments from silence. The terms περιτομή and ἀκροβυστία, absent from 2 Corinthians, are also absent from the Gospel of Matthew, but one could hardly argue that Torah observance was not an issue in that document (see Matt 5:17–20; 28:19–20). Similarly, the Hebrew equivalent שבת (Sabbath) is absent from the Qumran *Community Rule*, while the terms מול ("circumcision") and ערלה (lit., "foreskin," rendered ἀκροβυστία in the LXX)[57] are used only metaphorically (1QS 5:5, 26), yet one would hardly wish to argue that observance of the Torah—according to its sectarian interpretation—was not an issue in that text (see 1QS 1:1–17; 3:8–11; 5:1, 8–9). Lütgert's and Martin's arguments from silence are unconvincing.

Thrall presents a different argument against seeing the preaching of Paul's missionary rivals in Corinth as connected to the Torah. Thrall repeats an argument of Michael Theobald to the effect that the *a minore ad maius* argument in 2 Cor 3:7–11 assumes agreement between Paul and his readers that the protases in vv. 7 and 9 are true. Paul and his readers agree that Moses' ministry was glorious and that it brought condemnation. Thrall reasons that since agreement on the "negative characteristics" of the law is assumed, "Paul is not . . . controverting Judaizers of any

[55] Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth: Ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik der Christuspartei* (BFCT 12.3; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1908), 47–62.

[56] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 336.

[57] HRCS, 2nd ed., s.v. ἀκροβυστία.

kind."[58] However, the "negative characteristics" of the law (i.e., that failure to adhere to it results in judgment) are a basic tenet of the law itself (cf. the "curses of the covenant") and are presupposed by the covenant renewal theologoumenon. It was the "negative characteristics" of the law that first led editors of the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to envision the formation of a new covenant. Since it was the people's failure to adhere to the stipulations of the law that had precipitated the Babylonian exile (cf. Deut 28:47–68), those editors reasoned, a return to the law would bring about a reversal of the exile and a concomitant return of exiles to Judea (Jer 31:23–34; Ezek 11:14–21; 36:22–32; cf. Deut 30:1–10). The formation of a new covenant in which the stipulations of the law were "written on the hearts" of individuals would ensure that the covenant could not again be broken, since the law would then be followed perfectly. Rather than pointing away from the Torah's centrality to the discussion between Paul and his rivals, as Thrall would have it, the *a minore ad maius* argument in 2 Corinthians 3 points unmistakably toward it.

Despite arguments to the contrary by Lütgert, Martin, and Thrall, the evidence of 2 Corinthians favors the view that Paul's missionary rivals included some discussion of Torah observance in their preaching. Three considerations render this likely. First, these missionaries' self-designation as "agents of righteousness" (διάκονοι δικαιοσύνης [11:15]) points in this direction. In contexts in which a covenantal theology is assumed, "righteousness" (צדקה/δικαιοσύνη) characterizes one who adheres to the stipulations of the law (1QS 1:5; Wis 2:11; *Pss. Sol.* 8:6–10; Matt 5:17–20). Second, evidence that points in the same direction appears in 11:20, where Paul implies that his rivals had attempted to "enslave" the Corinthians. The term καταδουλοῦν ("to enslave") occurs in the Pauline corpus only here and in Gal 2:4, where it refers to attempts to convince Gentile converts in Antioch to adhere to stipulations of the Torah. Third, Paul's discussion in 3:7–18 interprets the story of the shining face of Moses as he descended from Sinai after receiving the law a second time (Exod 34:29–35). According to the Exodus narrative, the first instance in which YHWH gave the law to Moses (Exod 19:16–20:26) was followed by an act of disobedience on the part of the Hebrew people: the production of an object of worship in the form of a golden calf (31:18–32:24). Since the production of this image violated the first commandment (20:4–6), the first covenant was both figuratively and literally broken (32:19). The second giving of the law, narrated in Exodus 34, thus constitutes a prototype for covenant renewal. Paul's discussion of Moses' shining face in 2 Cor 3:12–18 suggests that law, and more specifically covenant renewal, was under discussion in Corinth. The relationship of 2 Cor 3:7–18 to the situation in Corinth, however, has been the subject of debate.

Baur, Georgi, Oostendorp, Gerhard Friedrich, and more recently Barnett have identified 3:7–18 as a polemical and/or apologetic section in which Paul responds to criticisms by his missionary rivals in Corinth.[59] Sumney argues that this section

[58] Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:240.

[59] Baur, *Paul, the Apostle*, 281–85; Georgi, *Opponents of Paul*, 246–50, 254, 258–83;

should be considered not polemical but didactic, and that therefore it contains no data about Paul's missionary rivals.[60] (According to Sumney's methodological guidelines, polemical and apologetic material is likely to contain information about Paul's opponents, whereas didactic material is not likely to contain such information.[61]) Similarly, Martin characterizes Paul's thought in the section as "soaring to embrace this far-reaching disquisition [on the new covenant] before returning to the local scene at Corinth" again in v. 19.[62] In Martin's view, 3:7–18 has little to do with Paul's rivalry with other missionaries in Corinth.

Two arguments render the view of Sumney and Martin untenable. First, as Sumney acknowledges, 3:7–16 is bracketed by apologetic material.[63] In 3:1–6, Paul refutes the charge that he lacks sufficiency (ἱκανότης) to be an apostle of Christ, in part because he could not, like his missionary rivals, produce letters of recommendation written on his behalf (cf. 3:1). Bracketing the end of 3:7–16 is 4:1–4, in which Paul admits that he preaches a "veiled gospel," a charge that reflects "some talk in Corinth that Paul's message has not been clear enough."[64] Sumney notes that "4:1–6 resumes the points discussed in 3:1–6."[65] In terms of rhetorical structure, such resumption constitutes an *inclusio*, which can be used to mark either a digression[66] or a "self-contained unit."[67] Is it likely that in the midst of an *apologia* in which his apostolic authority was at stake, Paul would have allowed himself the luxury of a digression? If not, then 3:7–16 must, like the bracketing material, refer to Paul's argument with missionary rivals in Corinth.

A second, stronger argument linking 3:7–16 with Paul's dispute with the "agents of righteousness" is provided by Paul's use of the demonstrative pronoun in 4:1 in the phrase ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην, "since we have *this* ministry." The demonstrative pronoun is used here to indicate "back reference":[68] it refers to

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Oostendorp, *Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish-Christian Superiority in II Corinthians* (Kampen: Kok, 1967), 31; Gerhard Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," in *Abraham Unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel. Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. Otto Betz et al.; AGSU 5; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 184–85; Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 179 n. 4.

[60] Sumney, *Identifying*, 141; idem, *'Servants of Satan,'* 96.

[61] Sumney ranks allusions in polemical and apologetic contexts second only to explicit statements, both in terms of the "level of certainty" that they refer to Paul's opponents and in terms of the factual reliability of such statements (*Identifying*, 95–113).

[62] Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 61.

[63] On the apologetic function of 3:5–6a and 4:2–3, see Sumney, *Identifying*, 133–34.

[64] So Sumney, *Identifying*, 134.

[65] Ibid.

[66] *The Westminster Dictionary of Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (ed. David E. Aune; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), s.v. "*Inclusio*," 229, and "Digression," 133–34.

[67] Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, §17.2.5.

[68] On back reference, see Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 280; for the anaphoric force of the demonstrative pronoun, see Herbert Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), §1245; cf. BDAG, s.v. οὗτος 2b.

the διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος already mentioned in 3:8.[69] It is Paul's ministry that is referred to as the "ministry of spirit" (cf. 4:13; 5:5). This grammatical consideration falsifies arguments that seek to dissociate 3:7–18 from the apologetic *inclusio* that brackets it.[70]

When 3:7–16 is viewed in the context of the *inclusio* of 3:1–6 and 4:1–6, a clear progression may be discerned. In 3:6, Paul asserts that God has made him sufficient to serve as an agent of the new covenant (διάκονος καινῆς διαθήκης), based not on the letter but on the spirit. In 3:8, Paul suggests that the "ministry of spirit" (ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος) is superior to Moses' ministry. That the "ministry of spirit" refers to Paul's own ministry is made clear not only by the association of διάκονος and διακονία in these passages, but by Paul's association of his own ministry with spirit in 3:14 ("since we have the same spirit of faith . . .") and 5:5 ("God . . . who has given us the down payment of the spirit"). Paul's own ministry, which he associates with spirit and the new covenant, is contrasted with Moses' ministry (cf. 3:7, 13, 15), which is associated with the "letter" and "stone tablets" of the Decalogue (3:6–7), with death (v. 7), and with "the ancient covenant" (ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη [3:14]). The fact that Paul defends himself against rival missionaries' criticisms only by contrasting his ministry with that of Moses suggests that Mosaic law played a role in this criticism.

Lütgert's and Martin's arguments from silence to the effect that the Torah was not a topic of discussion in Corinth as Paul penned the various parts of 2 Corinthians, as well as Thrall's argument in favor of the same thesis, are, as we have pointed out, untenable. Considerable evidence can be adduced, however, in favor of the position that Mosaic law did play a role in the discussion between Paul and rival missionaries in Corinth. This evidence includes the rival missionaries' self-designation as "agents of righteousness," Paul's notice that they attempted to "enslave" (καταδουλοῦν) the Corinthians, Paul's discussion of Moses' shining face after his second reception of the law at Sinai (Exodus 34), Paul's mention of the "letter" and the "stone tablets" of the law and the "ancient covenant," as well as his juxtaposition of his own ministry with that of Moses (3:7–18).

V. Spirit and Covenant Renewal in 2 Corinthians

A discussion of the spirit in relation to the Torah is consistent with the thesis that Paul's missionary rivals advocated a version of the covenant renewal theolo-

[69] Thrall states, "'this ministry' refers to what has gone before. Paul is speaking about the διακονία he has described in 2.14–3.13" (*Second Epistle,* 1:298).

[70] Matera has recently argued for a strong connection between 3:7–18 and 2:14–3:6/4:1–6 on the basis of "hook words" linking these sections (*II Corinthians,* 84–85). These words include "death," "life," "tablets of stone," and "spirit," among others. Matera relies on Albert Vanhoye, "L'interpretation d'Ex 34 en 2 Co 3,7–14," in De Lorenzi, *Paolo Ministro,* 159–96.

goumenon. We do indeed find a discussion of the relation between law and spirit in 2 Corinthians, albeit from a thoroughly Pauline viewpoint. Whereas in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other comparative texts, under the conditions of the new covenant, the law is internalized, or "written on the hearts" of individuals, Paul resists this connection. Instead of associating the new covenant with the fulfillment of the law, Paul dissociates it from law: Paul describes himself as an "agent of the new covenant, not of the letter but of spirit" (3:6). Spirit and the letter of the law are, for Paul, antithetical: "The letter kills, but the spirit makes alive" (3:6b). Paul's rhetoric here is best seen as a reversal of the terms of the covenant renewal theologoumenon, according to which the spirit "makes alive" precisely because it enables the fulfillment of the law, which in covenantal terms is the way in which life is achieved. In an address to the people in Deut 30:15–20, Moses says, "I have set before you today life and death, good and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . you will live and be many. . . . I have set life and death before you, blessing and curse. Choose life, that you might live" (LXX). Such an association between law and life, however, ran counter to Paul's law-free gospel to the Gentiles and was for that reason unacceptable to him. When he posited "spirit" and "letter" as antithetical terms, Paul sundered what belonged together in the covenant renewal theologoumenon.

The delineation of the role of the spirit in covenant renewal offers an attractive alternative to the view of Sumney, Furnish, Georgi, and others who argue that Paul's missionary rivals adduced ecstatic utterances, visions, and revelatory experiences to legitimate their preaching. We have already seen that this view relies on an invalid application of the "mirror technique" and therefore must be rejected. In my opinion, this view mistakes Paul's own characteristic mode of self-legitimation for that of his rivals in Corinth.[71] In each of Paul's letters save Philemon and perhaps Philippians, Paul adduces manifestations of the spirit as a means of legitimating his ministry (Rom 15:18–19a; 1 Cor 2:6–13; 9:1; 14:18; 15:8; 2 Cor 12:1–7; Gal 1:11–12, 16; 2:2; Phil 3:8[?]; 1 Thess 1:5). The spirit that was associated with Paul's ministry was credited with inspiring both ecstatic speech[72] and prophecy within the Corinthian house-churches, and purportedly imparted healing capabilities as well (1 Cor 12:4–11; 14:13–40). Paul himself boasted of the frequency with which he produced ecstatic utterances (1 Cor 14:18). Far from engaging in such

[71] This and the two following paragraphs summarize an argument I made in greater detail in *Constructing*, 157–73.

[72] On glossolalia at Corinth, see Hans-Josef Klauck, "Mit Engelszungen? Von Charisma der verständlichen Rede in 1 Kor 14"; he provides an overview of the phenomenon of glossolalia in Greek religion in "Von Kassandra bis zur Gnosis: Im Umfeld der frühchristlichen Glossolalie." Both essays appear in Klauck, *Religion und Gesellschaft im frühen Christentum: Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT 152; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 145–67 and 119–44, respectively.

practices themselves, the missionary "agents of righteousness" apparently criticized these manifestations of spirit in Paul's ministry, charging that Paul was "out of his mind" (ἐξιστάναι), perhaps as the result of speaking in tongues (2 Cor 5:13).[73] Paul's own positive evaluation of visionary and revelatory experiences is guaranteed by 2 Cor 12:6–7, in which he reports that a divinely inflicted handicap was necessary to prevent him from becoming "self-aggrandized" (ὑπεραίρωμαι) by the "exceptional nature" of the revelations that he had received.

The structure of Paul's rhetoric in 2 Cor 11:21b–12:5 supports the view that the "agents of righteousness" did not seek to legitimate themselves by adducing ecstatic or revelatory experiences. In this section, Paul employs two models of comparison: direct analogy and implied antithesis. With regard to those points concerning which Paul knows that he and his rivals share similar credentials, he analogizes himself to them: Ἑβραῖοί εἰσιν; κἀγώ. Ἰσραηλῖταί εἰσιν; κἀγώ, κτλ. ("Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I . . ."). The only points at which Paul analogizes himself to his rivals—and thus the only points about which we can be certain that they shared common traits—occur in 2 Cor 11:22–23a. Like his rivals, Paul claims to be a Hebrew, an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and an agent of Christ.[74] Outside of 2 Cor 11:22–23a, Paul does not analogize himself to his opponents. Concerning issues on which Paul does not regard his missionary rivals to exhibit traits parallel to his own, he switches his rhetorical tactic from analogy to implied antithesis.

The lists of experiences cited in 11:23b–12:6 imply an antithesis: Paul's opponents either did not display similar traits, or they displayed them to a lesser degree. This is true of the hardship list (11:23: "with far greater labors, jailed many more times, at death's door many times . . .") as well as Paul's recounting of his own visionary experience (12:2–3: "I know a man in Christ . . . who was snatched into the third heaven . . ."). The structure of Paul's rhetoric indicates that he viewed his revelatory experiences in the same category as his list of hardships: in neither case did he expect that his missionary rivals would be able to make comparable claims.

As we have already seen, one instance in which Sumney abandons his usual methodological rigor and allows himself to engage in "mirror exegesis" is the point at which, on the basis of Paul's own claims in 12:1–4, he attributes revelatory and charismatic experiences to Paul's rivals.[75] Barring the—for Sumney methodologi-

[73] Alfred Plummer suggested that 2 Cor 5:13 may represent a charge leveled by Paul's opposition (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* [ICC; 1915; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960], 171–73). It is highly unlikely that the criticism arose from within the Corinthian congregation, since the Corinthians highly valued ecstatic experiences (see 1 Corinthians 12–14).

[74] So Sumney, *Identifying*, 152–55; idem, *'Servants of Satan,'* 106–7.

[75] Sumney, *Identifying*, 168; idem, *'Servants of Satan,'* 121.

cally illegitimate—use of "mirror exegesis," there is no evidence that Paul's rivals adduced such experiences.

The hypothesis that Paul's rivals espoused a theologoumenon of covenant renewal suggests an alternative to the view that they adduced charismatic and visionary experiences to legitimate their ministry. The role played by the spirit in the covenant renewal theologoumenon was that of empowering individuals to live lives that perfectly embodied the stipulations of the Torah. Recall Ezekiel's "I will set my spirit within your inward parts and cause you to walk in my statutes and observe and perform my ordinances" (36:27) and *Jubilees*' "I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them. . . . They will perform my commandments" (1:23–24), or again the *Community Rule*'s notice that God will "purify [some human beings] by a holy spirit from all wicked deeds. . . . And he will sprinkle upon him a spirit of truth like purifying water . . . to instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High" (1QS 4:21–23). Such a stance runs counter to Paul's insistence that Gentile converts did not need to follow the Torah, and explains why Paul took such pains in 2 Corinthians 3–4 to dissociate "spirit" from the "letter" of the law (3:6, 8–9, 17). In Paul's classic formulation: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, is freedom": freedom, that is, from the law.[76] The covenant renewal theologoumenon flatly contradicted Paul's law-free gospel (cf. 2 Cor 11:4).

VI. Conclusion

The hypothesis that Paul's missionary rivals espoused a standard covenant renewal theologoumenon explains Paul's reference to himself as an "agent of a new covenant" and his allusions to Jer 31:33 and Ezek 36:26–27. It provides a backdrop for the formulation of his famous antithesis between letter and spirit and explains the shift in Paul's understanding of the new covenant that occurred between 1 and 2 Corinthians. It is consistent with the self-designation of Paul's missionary rivals as "agents of righteousness," inasmuch as the term "righteousness" has covenantal connotations. It explains Paul's statement that these rivals wished to "enslave" the

[76] Commentators interpret the "freedom" referred to in 3:13 as a reference to (1) freedom from the law (so Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 202–3; Christian Wolf, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* [THKNT 8; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989], 76–77), (2) freedom from the noetic effects of the "veil" referred to in vv. 14–15 (so Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 55), (3) a reference to or synonym for the παρρησία of 3:12 (so Klauck, *2. Korintherbrief*, 41; F. Stanley Jones, *"Freiheit" in den Briefen des Apostel Paulus: Eine historische, exegetische und religionsgeschichtliche Studie* [GTA 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987], 61–67), or (4) a combination of these: a combination of 1 and 3 (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 236–38; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 71); a combination of 1, 2, and 3 (Gräßer, *Der zweite Brief*, 1:140–42; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 312–13).

Corinthians (through association with the law), as well as his development of the theme of Moses' shining face from Exodus 34—itself a text describing a renewed covenant.

This hypothesis allows us to advance beyond recent reconstructions of the role played by the spirit in the preaching of Paul's rivals. The "agents of righteousness" were not "pneumatics" in the sense in which Sumney, Furnish, and Georgi use the term (i.e., those to whom the spirit imparts visions, revelations, and perhaps the ability to perform miracles). They were rather something a little less spectacular: individuals striving to mediate the renewed covenant between God and humans. Adherence to this new covenant, they held, was facilitated by God's gracious gift of the spirit, a spirit that transformed human intentionality so that perfect obedience to the stipulations of the Torah could be construed as an attractive possibility.

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