

WHO IS THE “GOD OF THIS AGE” IN 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4?

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Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible are from the English Standard Version.

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Ivor Poobalan
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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D N Freedman (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ATLAS	American Theological Library Association Serials
BAGD	W Bauer, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , eds. W F Arndt, F W Gingrich, and F W Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979)
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCOTP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament and Psalms
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BMS	Bibal Monograph Series
BST	Bible Speaks Today
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CRBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
CTR	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>
FS	Festschrift
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

JSNTSS	<i>JSNT</i> Supplement Series
JSPSS	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , ed. Colin Brown (3 vols.; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975-1978)
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. Willem A VanGemeren (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	<i>NovT</i> Supplements
NT	New Testament
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RestQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>ScEs</i>	<i>Science et esprit</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SRI	Socio-rhetorical Interpretation
Studia	Studia. Travaux de recherch
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WSNT	Wuppertaler Studienbibel Neues Testament
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

ABSTRACT

Who is the “God of this Age” in 2 Corinthians 4:4?

Ivor Gerard Poobalan

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The Pauline phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, “the god of this age”, that occurs in 2 Cor 4:4 is unique in that it is not found in Greek literature preceding the writings of Paul. The majority of English versions of the Bible render the noun ὁ θεός using the lower case ‘g’ (“god”), but some are explicit, translating as “devil” and “Satan”. Most modern commentaries on 2 Corinthians explain that the phrase is a clear reference to Satan, and argue that Paul’s conceptualization of the devil and his views of “this age” grew out of categories used in Second Temple Judaism, especially apocalyptic literature. They also assert that the act of blinding people from seeing the light of the gospel can only be attributed to the enemy of God.

This thesis is based on a socio-rhetorical interpretation of 2 Cor 4:1-6 and concludes that the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου refers to the supreme God of Judeo-Christian thought, in keeping with the referential value of ὁ θεός as frequently used in the Pauline corpus. It maintains that in this context Paul is responding to the peculiar problem of *Jewish unbelief*, and that he argues that in the same way that the “minds” of unbelieving Jews had been divinely “hardened” to the old covenant (3:14), so their “minds” had now been “blinded” to the gospel by the God of this age (4:4). The thesis is supported by a survey of the history of interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4, which shows that the modern preferred interpretation is relatively recent, predominating only over the past six centuries. Prior to the period of the Renaissance, most expositors of Paul preferred to interpret this phrase as a reference to God. The thesis is also based on a reconstruction of Paul’s conceptualization of Satan in the light of Jewish speculations on evil, and furthermore undertakes a critical enquiry on the extent to which Paul was dependent on Jewish apocalypticism when he formulated the epithet “the God of *this age*”.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The phrase, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου “the God of this age” (2 Cor 4:4), is unique in the New Testament and, during the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era, was considered to be a reference to the God of Judeo-Christian faith. Over the past few centuries, it has been established, almost beyond dispute, as a classic reference to Satan. The literal reading is ambivalent, and thus the preferred interpretation has been based on certain assumptions including the Jewish apocalyptic understanding of historical dualism, with its allegedly characteristic schema of “this age” (an age in which Satan and evil were expected to dominate the affairs of this world) to be followed by a “coming age” when, with the in-breaking of God’s rule, the fortunes of God’s people would be reversed.¹ Another key assumption has been based on what Paul’s conceptualizations of Satan might have been. Commentators suggest that Paul, as a Jew who lived during the last few decades of the Second Temple period, must have been strongly influenced by the elaborate speculations about Satan that manifest themselves in that corpus of literature, including the Qumran writings.² In addition, by taking the verbal similarity of references such as “the Prince of this world” (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, Jn 12:31), “the ruler of the power of the air” (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, Eph. 2:2), and “the rulers of this age” (τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, 1 Cor 2:8) as evidence of synonymous parallels, scholars have argued that in 2 Cor 4:4 the enemy of God was also in Paul’s view.³ Another major reason for this ambivalent phrase to be interpreted as a reference to the devil has been the long and almost-undisputed tradition of interpretation which goes back to the period of the writings of Erasmus and

¹ See C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A C Black, 1971), 130; V P Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 220; D E Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 211.

² See P Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 126: “Satan holds a certain sway over the world during this present age”; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 211: “Satan has a dominion however limited by the one true God”.

³ See Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 126; G Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 240.

Calvin and to the beginnings of Reformation hermeneutics.⁴ Both averred that the phrase must refer to Satan, and biblical scholars after Calvin essentially sought to provide more underpinnings to the reformer's position, rather than critique the thesis he had advanced. Consequently, it has now been popularly established that Paul could not have referred to God as "the God of *this age*";⁵ and, therefore, the only viable alternative that exists is to read it as a description of Satan together with the implications that follow from this identification.

The meaning that we attach to this brief and isolated phrase has significant theological and missiological implications. Theologically, we first note that whereas most English translations render ὁ θεός as "god",⁶ some take the view to its logical conclusion and speak explicitly of "the devil".⁷ Second, it is common practice for some Bible translations to depend uncritically on the scholarship of the English-reading world, and to be accordingly influenced. Third, if Satan is indeed "the God of this age", this certainly would be the loftiest title accorded to the enemy of God in scripture. Nowhere else is ὁ θεός used for Satan, although he is called "prince of this world" (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, John 12:31). It is also possible that "ruler of the kingdom of the air" (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, Eph 2:2) also refers to Satan. D G Reid reflects on the title in 2 Cor 4:4 and arrives at the following conclusion: "The underlying point is that

⁴ A Reeve and M A Screech, eds., *Erasmus' Annotations On the New Testament: Acts–Romans–I and II Corinthians* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 532-534; J Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, trans. T A Smail (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964).

⁵ See P W Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); L L Belleville, *2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996); F F Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971); R Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1976); Calvin, *Second Epistle*; R F Collins, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013); Furnish, *II Corinthians*; C Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, Tyndale (Leicester: IVP, 1987); S Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); R P Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986); M E Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I–VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994).

⁶ F Young and D F Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1987), 115: "The majority leap to the conclusion that the phrase must refer to Satan not God and texts and translations forbear to use an initial capital".

⁷ *Youth Bible*: "devil"; *J B Phillips*: "the spirit of this age"; *TEV*: "the evil god of this age"; *Living Bible*: "Satan".

*Satan is vested with a sovereignty, however limited it might ultimately be, that is powerful, compelling and clearly opposed to the work of God” (emphasis added).*⁸ While this suggestion of the “limited sovereignty” of Satan may resonate with the growing interest in the satanic, and in modern concepts of “spiritual warfare”, the fact that such a loaded theological concept as the “sovereignty” of Satan has been based on a single phrase in Paul at least warrants a careful re-examination of the text and the history of its interpretation.

From a missiological perspective, if the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in the context of 2 Cor 4:3-4 is interpreted as Satan, it suggests that whenever missionaries encounter people that appear unreceptive to the gospel, it would be legitimate to conclude that such audiences may have been so completely “blinded” by Satan that they have no opportunity to even “see the light of the gospel of Christ”.⁹ Yet, would this understanding ring true within the writings of Paul? Does he not envisage rather that everyone in the audiences who heard his preaching had an equal opportunity to believe or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of having received an illumination of its essence?

In what follows, we shall argue that a careful exegesis of 2 Cor 4:1-6 shows that Paul uses ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου to refer to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he arrives at such a title because he is forced to engage theologically with the obduracy of contemporary ethnic Israel when confronted with the message about the messiah. Israel, which expected to participate in the messianic celebration of the *age to come*, has been incapable of comprehending the good news proclaimed in *this age*. What has caused such blindness?

⁸ D Reid, “Devil,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G Hawthorne, R Martin and D Reid, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 864.

⁹ This is assumed, for instance, in S Garrett, “The God of This World and the Affliction of Paul (2 Cor 4:1-12),” in *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. D Balch, E. Ferguson, and W Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 104: “As ‘god of this age’ Satan blinds the minds of some of Paul’s hearers lest they perceive that Christ died to rescue them from the age’s dominion”; see also Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 177: “People are not blinded because they choose to renounce the gospel, they choose to renounce the gospel because they are blind. And they are not blind because they choose to be so, but because Satan has made them so”.

Scholars have too easily assumed a Jewish apocalyptic background with its alleged concept of “temporal dualism” for Paul’s thought here. They have also been too quick to assume that Paul’s views of Satan were uncritically imbibed from notions about evil and the devil reflected in the literature of Second Temple Judaism. As a result of such assumptions, the unique Pauline phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου has been alienated from its context, and its meaning thereby obscured.¹⁰ In what follows, I shall aim to show that by means of a careful exegesis of 4:4 in the context of the pericope to which it belongs (4:1-6) we may be in a better position to appreciate the full force of this unique phrase as the climax to an argument that Paul begins at least as early as 2 Cor 2:14, and concludes at 4:6.

1. Defining Moments in the History of the Interpretation of “The God of This Age”

1.1 Marcion and the Making of a Controversy

The description “the god of this age” has been contentious from the time it was first brought into the limelight by Marcion in the second century CE. He quoted the verse as evidence for his controversial teachings about the creator god in distinction to the Father of the Lord Jesus.¹¹ Very soon, 2 Cor 4:4 became the ground for a battle that would span over one hundred years, with Church Fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian responding with strident criticisms of Marcion’s views. In his enthusiasm to dismantle his opponent’s argument, however, Irenaeus introduced an emendation to the text by transposing τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου from its position in the middle to the end of the sentence. This meant that the text was made to read, in effect: “God has blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age/world”. Irenaeus was convinced of the logic of effecting such an emendation, and made much of the flexibility the text allowed for the

¹⁰ For a relatively recent attempt at explaining Paul’s thought in terms of Jewish apocalypticism see, M Uddin, “Paul, the Devil and ‘Unbelief’ in Israel (With Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3-4 and Romans 9-11),” *TynB* 50 (1999): 265-280: “The presence of the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in 2 Corinthians 4:4, referring to the ‘satan’ figure as ‘the god of this age’, alerts us to the significance of Jewish apocalypticism for interpreting a Pauline text that is intriguing in its own right and relevant for this discussion: 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6” (267).

¹¹ See M M Mitchell, “Second Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, ed. H-J Klauck, D C Allison, and D Apostolos-Cappadonna (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2009), 787.

“transposition of words”.¹² Following this line of reasoning, later writers such as Chrysostom and Augustine referred to 2 Cor 4:4 in their polemic against the Manicheans and the Arians, since both of these groups dabbled in teachings about the revelation of more than one divine being. The one arguing that “the god of this age” referred to Hyle, and the other contending that since a text existed to testify that beings other than, and inferior to, the One God may be called ὁ θεός, there was warrant to believe in the Son as divine and yet inferior to God. In retrospect, it is possible to argue that this one factor, the “transposition of words” in the Greek text, became the Achilles’ heel in the tradition of interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. Several scholars who would later argue vehemently that the verse referred to Satan, would pause to justify such a position on the basis that the patristic preference for the referent “God” was based on an erroneous manipulation of the Greek.¹³

Although nearly all post-Reformation writers interpret the phrase as a reference to Satan, such a view is relatively recent. Most early Christian exegetes commonly understood the phrase to be a reference to God. In this regard Pelagius sounds a lone voice, conceding the possibility that it is Satan, but even he remained ambivalent:

The god of this world may be understood to be the devil, on the ground that he has claimed to rule unbelievers or, on account of the heretics it may be understood to mean that God has blinded the minds of the unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief.¹⁴

Chrysostom holds the more definite position that “the god of this world” is in fact “the God of the universe”.¹⁵

¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter VII, accessed February 21, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>.

¹³ The classic example in this regard is Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 54; also see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306-307.

¹⁴ T Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999) 2:228.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

What is of intriguing significance is that this exegesis of “the god of this age” is found in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, Theodoret and Augustine.¹⁶ In his writings, Augustine further confirms that this was the view of most of his contemporaries. Thus, we might surmise that such was the more acceptable Christian position in the early fifth century CE era.¹⁷ Hughes, while subscribing entirely to the Satan-interpretation of 4:4, also mentions that the alternative patristic view persisted into the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE, as evidenced in the writings of Theophylact and Herveius, respectively.¹⁸ The same conclusion had been reached by Sedulius (5th century CE), Primasius (d. 560 CE), Peter Lombard (1100–1160 CE), and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE).¹⁹

From the evidence thus far, we note that the interpretation of 4:4 as a reference to God rather than Satan was the *preferred* position for at least the first twelve centuries of Christian history. In that light, our present insistence that this is a reference to Satan begs the question: When did the pendulum of orthodox Christianity swing across? And why? In addition, we must enquire after the most compelling arguments that have persuaded scholars to dismiss, as untenable, the prior interpretive tradition.

1.2 Erasmus and Calvin and the Diversion of an Interpretive Tradition

The evidence suggests that our present common interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 owes a great deal to the influence of John Calvin. The writings of this great reformer have undoubtedly had a major impact in the field of biblical studies, and biblical studies has been the forte of the Protestant tradition. The fact that he makes specific reference to the best-known commentators of the early centuries and then summarily dismisses them could account for the considerable reluctance of post-Calvin scholars to adopt a

¹⁶ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 128.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ F Zorell, “Deus huius saeculi (2 Cor 4:4),” *Verbum Domini* 8 (Rome: Pontificio Institutio Biblico, 1928), 56.

more critical approach.²⁰ Calvin argued most vehemently that “the god of this age” was Satan.

It is somewhat ironic that the fountainhead of reformed theology, with his typically uncompromising views on the sovereignty of God, the Creator, should ascribe such a unique status of power to Satan, the creature. One possibility is that he was reacting too strongly to the contextual reasons (the teachings of the heresiarchs) that too often seemed to drive the exegesis of Hilary, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine.²¹ In their urgency to remove any grounds for the “heresiarchs” to argue that Paul acknowledged a “malevolent creator-demiurge” in 4:4, they rearranged the syntax of 4:4.

Calvin does, however, explain how his view of Satan here does not contradict his characteristic views on the sovereignty of God. He does this by arguing that Satan has such power “only in so far as the Lord allows it to him” and that “Satan blinds men not only with God’s permission but at his command to inflict his vengeance”.²²

Was this radical hermeneutic the creation of Calvin alone? What we do know is that Calvin first published his commentary on 2 Corinthians in 1547,²³ but not before Erasmus published his final Latin version of the *Annotationes* to the New Testament in 1535 (a project that he had been working on from as early as 1516). Screech calls it the

²⁰ Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 54: “This is an example of what can happen in the heat of controversy for if *all these men had read Paul’s words with a calm mind* it would never have occurred to them to twist them into a forced meaning in this way” (emphasis added).

²¹ Hughes, *Second Epistle*, 127-128: “In the early centuries of the Church those heresiarchs who propounded a dualistic view of the universe seized upon Paul’s mention of ‘the god of this age’ as a confirmation of their doctrine, as though the Apostle supported their distinction between a malevolent creator-demiurge and the benevolent God of the New Testament. The Church Fathers, of course, rebutted this teaching; but it is an admonitory fact that in doing so it became customary to force upon this verse a meaning which could not be judged by the natural sequence of the words. Instead of linking the phrase, ‘of this world’ with the noun ‘god,’ which it immediately followed, many sought to link it with the noun, ‘unbelievers,’ thereby achieving the following sense: ‘in whom God (that is, the true and only God) has blinded the unbelievers of this world’”.

²² Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 55.

²³ See, A S Lane, “Calvin,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. S Westerholm (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 392-394.

“most audacious sixteenth-century biblical project, which dared to question the established foundation of the Christian faith”.²⁴ Erasmus did, in fact, comment extensively on 2 Cor 4:4 and, significantly, had much to say about the hermeneutics of the commentators prior to him, mentioning the work of Theophylactus, Augustine, Ambrose, Cyril and Chrysostom.²⁵ Erasmus, however, disagreed with the view of the majority,²⁶ and felt convinced that the contrary was true: *Simplicius est ac uerius, ut intelligamus deum huius seculi satanam* (“It is simpler and truer to understand the god of this world as Satan”).²⁷ In this light, we can surmise that the initial impulse for Calvin’s views may have come from Erasmus, but that they were accentuated and developed by his theological convictions. In any case, even by the inadvertent collaboration of the two great biblical scholars of the Reformation period, Erasmus and Calvin, the tradition of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 was redirected towards a radically different conclusion than had been the case historically.

1.3 Voices of Dissent and the Ideological Power of the Reformation

The period from Calvin to the present is not without its voices of dissent, but it is striking that they are not permitted a reasonable hearing despite the strength of their arguments. One such voice is that of Adam Clarke.²⁸ In 1824, he asserted that by this phrase Paul could only have been referring to God, and listed multiple reasons for his stance, and yet, other than for a passing and dismissive comment by a contemporary, Clarke is never mentioned in any literature on the subject thereafter.²⁹ Again in the

²⁴ Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus’ Annotations*, xi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 532-534.

²⁶ Although he does mention that Cyril held to a contrary opinion: “It is simpler and truer to understand the god of this world as Satan, *in the way Cyril felt*, citing Greek commentaries” (emphasis added).

²⁷ Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus’ Annotations*, 533.

²⁸ A Clarke, *The New Testament: Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York, NY: Bangs and Emory, 1826).

²⁹ Clarke is mentioned again only in A Barnes, *Notes on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Gall & Inglis, 1844), 77-78.

twentieth and twenty-first centuries, at least four scholars, Young and Ford,³⁰ Scott,³¹ and Hartley,³² have sounded their disagreement with the preferred view, but thus far no serious reexamination of the case has been thought necessary by the scholarly community.

The tendency to ignore scholarly critique is surprising, especially given the ready openness of the fraternity to engage in the fine dissection of obscure biblical passages for the purpose of elucidating their true “meanings”. How, then, has 2 Cor 4:4 been spared such scholarly critique? Is it possible that Calvin’s strong polemic, disputing as he did with the entire tradition of the Fathers, has become the basis for a subliminal ideological shield that makes exegetes suppose Calvin’s particular interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 to be inviolable within the tradition of post-Reformation hermeneutics? Is this the reason most discussions on 2 Cor 4:4 since Calvin begin with the belief that Satan is the referent of the phrase, and then deductively adduce more “proofs” for a foregone conclusion?

2. The Research Problem and Thesis Statement

The fundamental question is the exegetical one: what *did* Paul mean when he said ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου? Are there clues within the broader literary context of 2 Cor 4:4 that indicate what he meant? Does the *corpus paulinum* assist us in explicating the phrase? How can we determine the most likely answer in a manner that demonstrates an adequate consideration of all the available data, using necessary tools and a credible approach to exegesis?

I shall state my thesis as follows, and thereafter propose the approach that I shall follow to establish the argument:

³⁰ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 115-118.

³¹ J M Scott, *2 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 85-86.

³² D E Hartley, “2 Corinthians 4:4: A Case for Yahweh as the ‘God of This Age’” (paper presented at the 57th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Valley Forge, PA, November 16-18, 2005), accessed January 7, 2014, <http://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/2cor-44.pdf>.

Thesis Statement

The unique Pauline phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου has had an ambivalent interpretive history. For much of its existence, exegetes and commentators saw in it a reference to God, but in the last six hundred years scholars have, with near-unanimity, argued that it is a clear reference to Satan. The strongest arguments for the latter position are both the difficulty of associating God with the apocalyptic notion of the “present age”, and the attribution to God of the act of “blinding” human beings from seeing the light of the gospel. Both of these characteristics, it has been argued, may be attributed to Satan more easily.

These objections, however, are not sufficient to resist the need to re-examine how 2 Cor 4:4 is to be interpreted. For one thing, Paul extensively uses ὁ θεός in his writings, and in every instance intends the “God” of his Judeo-Christian faith as the referent. In addition, the literary context of the phrase, 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, shows that Paul is dealing with the highly specialized problem of Jewish unbelief towards his proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since Paul is presenting an apologetic to defend himself and his preaching in a polemical manner, his expression has to be understood within such a context and within the context of his thinking about the fate of unbelieving Israel. In fact, the theme of divine “hardening” and “blinding” of the majority of the Jewish people of Paul’s day is a pervasive theme in early Christianity.³³ In addition to the indications in 2 Corinthians, Paul presents his most explicit argument in support of such a hardening and blinding of the Jews in Romans 9–11.

I will also argue that for a number of reasons, it would not have been strange for Paul to use an epithet such as ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου for God, for: 1) similar precursors are found in earlier Jewish writings such as Daniel, Tobit, and 1 Enoch; 2) the description in 4:4 is part of a clause that is a clear parallel to the clause in 4:6 which also has ὁ θεός as the subject and unambiguously refers to God; and 3) the phrase τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου could very easily be translated as “this world” and so be freed from the necessity to bear the limiting connotations of Jewish apocalypticism.

³³ On this see, C A Evans, ed., *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 84-89.

My arguments are further advanced by considering the particular situation that Paul addresses in 2 Corinthians. The church in Corinth was being drawn away from loyalty to Paul by certain “opponents”, who contended that Paul lacked the credentials of a true apostle (3:1; 5:11; 10:12, 18; 11:5). They charged that Paul was neither impressive in presence, nor in the power of his message to convince his hearers (4:3; 10:10). The latter was most clearly seen by the fact that most orthodox Jews found Paul’s gospel unpersuasive and even offensive. Paul was forced to defend his apostleship, and to assert the superiority of his gospel in comparison to the Mosaic covenant, which he does, especially in 2:14–4:6. However, he still has to counter the charge that the very people of God do not find enlightenment through his “gospel”. In fact, the “light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ” is “veiled” to them. In 4:3-4, Paul drives home his startling apologetic: most Jews are unable to see this “surpassing glory” because they *cannot*; they have been “blinded” (4:4); and, this “blinding”, like the “hardening” in 3:14, is the culmination of the specific threat of judgement that *God* had issued through the preaching of Isaiah (see Isa. 6:9-10).

3. Approach to the Task

In this thesis I shall begin with a chapter dedicated to a historical survey of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4, beginning with its very first mention by Marcion in 140 CE. I shall then trace the most significant commentaries within six broad periods: the patristic era; the sixth to eighth century CE; the Carolingian period to the thirteenth century CE; the Renaissance to the eighteenth century CE; the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century CE; and, the latter half of the twentieth century CE to the present. Through the survey, I will show that the particular contextual factors of individual exegetes influenced their reading of the text. In socio-rhetorical interpretation (the approach I adopt for my reading), the analysis as suggested above belongs within the category of “ideological texture”. Similarly, I will also note how interpreters, in the past six hundred years, though united in their view that “Satan” is the referent for ὁ θεός in 4:4, arrive at their conclusion by way of diverse reasoning. This historical tour will also introduce us to the few scholars who disagree with the present preferred interpretation, and summarize their reasons for so doing. It is my hope that the present thesis, together

with these historic voices of dissent, will persuade the scholarly community to reconsider the plausibility of an alternative reading of 2 Cor 4:4.

Before we launch into a closer reading of the text, two predominant assumptions must be examined which essentially explore the “social and cultural intertexture” of 2 Cor 4:4. The first is the nature of Jewish apocalypticism and the extent to which it influenced Paul, especially its alleged *sine qua non* of “temporal dualism”. In chapter three, therefore, I will investigate the roots of the apocalyptic movement, its distinctive characteristics, and how such a thought-world impinges on Paul’s writing of 2 Corinthians. I will especially examine whether the expression τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is a direct carryover from notions of apocalypticism, or if it is likely to have been a typical Pauline expression influenced by the two-age schema of the prophets and the “this age” language in the Jesus-sayings. In chapter four, I will take up the question of Jewish conceptualizations of Satan that constituted the presupposition pool of Paul’s day. I will arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the subject by tracing the development of the Satan doctrine from Jewish antiquity (as reflected in the Hebrew Bible) through the Second Temple period (referring to all significant “Satan” texts in the Second Temple literature), before considering the surprisingly few verses in the Pauline corpus that make reference to Satan. Recognizing Paul’s position as a well informed Jew of the first century CE, I will enquire what his statements about Satan tell us about the extent to which he subscribed to the popular notions of the period and whether he freely embraced the diverse views that Second Temple Judaism allowed, or if, in fact, his profound grasp of the sovereignty of God and the power of the gospel made him hold to a radically “low view” of Satan.

Chapters five and six lead to the closer study of the text. In chapter five, I outline the historical and literary context of 2 Corinthians in order to understand the specific allusions Paul may make to the culture and ideology of his audience. Such a background study will be necessary to appreciate how the city of Corinth developed, and what characteristics distinguished Corinthian society. In addition, since Paul was writing to a church that already existed in Corinth I will look briefly at the history of the Corinthian

congregation, its connections with Paul, and the quality of the relationship between the author of the letter and his recipients.

Chapter six constitutes the very heart of the thesis. Here, I undertake a detailed examination of the meaning of the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου by studying how it functions within 2 Cor 4:1-6. In order to unpack the meaning of Paul's expression, I will adopt a socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI) approach to the text. SRI was first developed by V K Robbins in response to what he perceived to be the limitations of existing approaches to the study of the biblical text.³⁴ The existing approaches included literary criticism, social-scientific criticism, rhetorical criticism, postmodern criticism, and theological criticism. Although each individual mode of reading has important strengths, they are inadequate on their own. In SRI, Robbins has sought to integrate all available disciplines of study into a holistic interpretive analytic, and since his first major publications on the subject in 1996,³⁵ an increasing number of exegetes have found this approach to yield richer insights and better results. Robbins argues that a text is "a thickly textured tapestry" that must be approached from multiple angles to appropriate its multiple layers of meaning.³⁶ In his later work, Robbins introduced the concepts of 'rhetography,' 'rhetorolects,' and 'conceptual blending' to complete the infrastructure of SRI.³⁷

As in any other interpretative approach, it is not likely that an interpreter will exhaust every angle of enquiry, but SRI certainly has potential for the most thoroughgoing examination of a biblical text.³⁸ For our purposes, we will be focusing on two textures of

³⁴ V K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 2: "Each method has great strengths, but when interpreters use only one of them, the result is too limited".

³⁵ Two books, covering similar material, were published simultaneously: *Exploring the Texture of Texts* and *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁶ Robbins, *Exploring*, 2.

³⁷ V K Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse* (Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2009), 1:1-20, 77-120.

³⁸ D A deSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation of Revelation 14:6-13: A Call to Act Justly toward the Just and Judging God," *BBR* 9 (1999): 65-117, makes the observation that SRI is "perhaps the richest and most fully inter-disciplinary strategy for the exegesis of an ancient text".

2 Cor 4:1-6, inner texture and intertexture, and through the detailed study of features within the text (inner), in comparison with related texts (inter), I hope to demonstrate that when Paul wrote of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου he intended to speak about the sovereign God whose messenger he was.

In the final chapter, I will summarize the highlights of the research and the lessons that have been learned, before submitting a concluding word.

CHAPTER 2

The History of the Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 4:4

Ideology resides not only in biblical texts; it also resides in interpretive traditions that have been granted positions of authority.¹

1. Introduction

To research the validity of the common interpretation of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in 2 Cor 4:4 raises the question about how this phrase has been explained in the history of biblical interpretation. Has there been a contradictory opinion at any point in history? If so, on what grounds has this been advanced? In what ways have these interpretations been affected by the social or ideological particularities of the interpreters' own contexts? And, are we in a position to arrive at a more objective appropriation of the meaning of the phrase by distinguishing between the text in its original context and the text within the historical contexts of its interpretation?

The first hopeful indication that our quest is not without merit is the fact that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου has been explained in radically contradictory terms in the history of its interpretation. Some have understood the referent of the phrase to be the devil, while others have read the very phrase as a description of the God of the Bible. For reasons we may consider below, while the latter position predominated from earliest Christianity (almost certainly as far forward as the period of the Renaissance), the former position, beginning in the period of the Reformation, has almost completely replaced its alternative effectively up to the present time.

This astonishing ambivalence towards 2 Cor 4:4 is not without some plausible historical explanations. First, Marcion, the second-century heretic, had used the phrase to justify his argument for *two gods*: the inferior, vindictive, and partisan god of the Hebrew Bible, and the superior, loving, and universal Father-God revealed in the gospel of Jesus

¹ V K Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996), 200.

Christ.² As a result, when the early interpreters commented on this verse, they were partly, and sometimes wholly, constrained to react to Marcion and, in later years, to Manichaeian teachings that had also appropriated 2 Cor 4:4 to serve its ends.³ Second, 2 Cor 4:4 received its definitive repositioning in the sixteenth century through the hugely influential writings of J Calvin. He had, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians, asserted that no one who reads Paul “with a clear mind” could fail to conclude that in 4:4 Paul was certainly referring to the devil and not to God.⁴ Could Calvin’s stature in post-Reformation hermeneutics, and the severity of his censure of early Christian writers, be reasons for commentators since to have felt disinclined to question the status quo? Are there ideological reasons behind what appears to be active neglect of the alternative position whenever it has been argued during this later era? One outstanding example of the latter is the work of A Clarke in 1826 (which we shall look at below), who cogently argued that “God” is the referent in 2 Cor 4:4; but his proposals have not even been dignified as a footnote in subsequent discussions on the subject.⁵

Robbins explains that “the spectrum of ideology for socio-rhetorical criticism occurs in four special locations”, of which one is “authoritative traditions of interpretation”.⁶ In this chapter, we will have ample opportunity to test this claim both because the survey covers a long-enough period (twenty centuries) of interpretation, and because the verse has been contentious, and has resulted in polar-opposite interpretations: “[Discourse] creates a world of pluriform meanings and a pluralism of symbolic universes, and this

² See M M Mitchell, “Second Epistle to the Corinthians,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, ed. H-J Klauck, D C Allison, and D Apostolos-Cappadonna (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2009), 787. For an extremely helpful summary of Marcion’s thirty *Antitheses*, see A von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, trans. J E Steely and L D Bierma (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990), 60-63.

³ See the section below entitled “2 Corinthians 4:4 in the Patristic Writers”.

⁴ See J Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, trans. T A Smail (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:53-54.

⁵ A Clarke, *The New Testament: Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York, NY: Bangs and Emory, 1826), 314-316.

⁶ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 193.

means that discourse is always implicated in power. . . . The discourse of historical interpretation, therefore, has ideological texture”.⁷

To consider the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 we shall examine the views of exegetes and commentators within six successive periods of church history, covering a broad sweep of extant literature from the second century to the twenty-first century: 1) the period of the patristic writers; 2) the sixth to eighth centuries; 3) the Carolingian period to the thirteenth century; 4) the Renaissance to the eighteenth century; 5) the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century; and, 6) the latter half of the twentieth century to the present day.

2. The Earliest Reception of 2 Corinthians

Most scholars hold to the position that 2 Corinthians is indisputably Pauline.⁸ Given this consensus, it is perplexing that the epistle does not feature in the early writings of the post-apostolic period. For certain, not all of Paul’s epistles are referred to in this period, but the fact that 1 Corinthians is so thoroughly attested makes the silence about 2 Corinthians remarkable.⁹ This fact can play well into the interests of those who argue for the composite nature of the letter: the suggestion that disparate units of Pauline correspondence with the Corinthians circulated for a period, until a redactor collated them into a unified whole, canonical 2 Corinthians, presumably sometime in the first half of the second century.¹⁰

⁷ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 200.

⁸ M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 1: “One of the areas in which there is a consensus among NT scholars is that Paul was the author of 2 Corinthians”; M E Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I—VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 3: “Whatever the earliest date at which 2 Corinthians was generally known in the church, it is certain that it is genuinely Pauline”.

⁹ Clement of Rome (96 CE) and Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd century) refer extensively to 1 Corinthians in their writings, and seem to know only *one* letter to the Corinthians: “Take up the letter (την ἐπιστολήν) of the blessed Paul the Apostle”. See Harris, *Second Epistle*, 2-3.

¹⁰ R F Collins, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 11-12 summarizes: “One proposal that has emerged is that extant 2 Corinthians is not a text that Paul dictated in one prolonged session. Rather, they opine, the text of 2 Corinthians that has been handed down through the centuries

However, in a 2002 essay entitled, “‘Take up the Epistle of the Blessed Paul the Apostle’: The Contrasting Fates of Paul’s Letters to Corinth in the Patristic Period”,¹¹ L L Welborn presents a novel argument. He asserts that 2 Corinthians suffered neglect in the early post-apostolic period due to the enormous emphasis given to 1 Corinthians by Clement of Rome, and the specific interpretation of its essence. Clement, the secretary of the Roman church, wrote a lengthy letter to the Corinthians in response to a revolt that had aimed to oust the presbyters there. Clement’s purpose was to restore peace and order in the community, and to this end, he “marshals arguments from a variety of sources”: the Jewish scriptures, Greek and Roman history, and the emerging Christian scriptures. He makes several allusions to Paul’s epistles. In particular, Clement finds Paul’s rhetoric against faction in 1 Corinthians well-suited to his cause, and proceeds to employ it with rigour in the service of his agenda. Welborn argues that although “[taken] to its logical conclusion, Paul’s ‘word of the cross’ leads to a radical democratization of power”, by lifting Paul’s Corinthian appeal out of context, Clement made it an argument for hierarchical church politics: “Clement’s ideal of ‘peace and concord’ by contrast, is oligarchic in character: it consists in submission to recognized authorities”.¹² Thus, although 2 Corinthians makes Paul’s politics of power more explicit – that “only powerlessness is power” – the firm establishment of 1 Corinthians by the Roman church overshadowed and forestalled the serious reading of 2 Corinthians even when it became available to the churches of the early second century.¹³ Following Wellborn’s argument to its logical conclusion we may surmise that the impetus for the publication of 2 Corinthians may have come from a segment of the Corinthian church that wished to

was not originally a single text but is a composite text compiled from as many as six different letter fragments. Some anonymous editor would have put them all together, using just one opening salutation and one letter closing, rather than incorporating a number of presumably similar opening salutations and letter closings”.

¹¹ L L Welborn, “‘Take up the Epistle of the Blessed Paul the Apostle’: The Contrasting Fates of Paul’s Letters to Corinth in the Patristic Period,” in *Reading Communities Reading Scripture*, ed. G A Phillips and N W Duran (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 345-357.

¹² *Ibid.*, 350.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 352. On the dominating influence of 1 Corinthians, see p 350: “It was in the Roman church that 1 Corinthians came to be so highly prized, and it was this church that gave to 1 Corinthians the position of special honor which it came to occupy in churches elsewhere (Antioch, Smyrna)”.

underscore Paul's point that power was to be found in weakness and not in oligarchic and hierarchical domination.¹⁴

Ironically, the earliest certain references to 2 Corinthians come from the pen of Marcion, whose view of the radical discontinuity between Jewish religion of the Old Testament and the revelation of Jesus Christ was buttressed by an appeal to a "canon" of writings that included an edited version of Luke and several letters of Paul.¹⁵ What is even more significant is that in the course of arguing the finer points of his theology contrasting the God and Father of the Lord Jesus with the Creator God known to Judaism, Marcion made specific use of 2 Cor 4:4, and thus invested the earliest reception history of the text under review with an element of notoriety.¹⁶

It is rather unfortunate, therefore, that the exegesis of 2 Cor 4:4 in the ensuing period was somewhat muddled by the polemical environment of anti-Marcionism that continued for over two centuries.¹⁷ Although preceded by Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 120-195), in the main it was Tertullian (160–225) who levelled the most systematic counter-attack on Marcion's assertions in his *Adversus Marcionem*. One consequence of this specialized interest led to an emendation of the text.¹⁸ We are, therefore, fortunate to have a number of extant polemics and commentaries on biblical texts dating from the late second to the fifth centuries, especially where they include comments on 2 Corinthians 2–4.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Professor C A Wanamaker for proposing this latter point.

¹⁵ See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 3: "Marcion created his own version of the New Testament in Rome between 139 and 144 C.E., and it is clear from later writers that it included 2 Corinthians". For arguably the most influential treatment on Marcion see, von Harnack, *Marcion*.

¹⁶ Mitchell, "Second Epistle," 787: "Second Corinthians was clearly known at Rome by ca. 140 CE, as it is found in the canon of Marcion; indeed, 2 Cor 4:4 ("the god of this age") was pivotal for his doctrine of two gods" (emphasis added).

¹⁷ von Harnack, *Marcion*, 99-101; H Räisänen, "Marcion," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. S Westerholm (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 301: "The dissenter did not give in but founded a church of his own. For a long time this was a success – a formidable rival to the emerging Catholic church. It was only suppressed through a lengthy process after the Constantinian turn when the mainstream church joined forces with the state to destroy the 'heretics'".

¹⁸ See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306-307

3. Second Corinthians 4:4 in the Patristic Writers (150–500 CE)

The period of the Early Church Fathers (100 to the Council of Chalcedon, 451), was marked by a ferment of theological enquiry and controversies that fortuitously resulted in a slew of writings that speculated and commented on the written records of the apostolic period, some of which would, in the latter stages of this era, be recognized as canonical. Several of these influential figures commented on 2 Cor 4:4, and we are in a position to examine in detail the views of seven extant works below.

3.1 Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus was Bishop of Lyons in the second century, and during the years 175–185, he wrote several treatises termed *Against Heresies*. With the passing away of the apostolic era, and the absence of an authoritative code for Christian beliefs, this period saw the proliferation of diverse and contradictory ideas about the faith that had been handed down by the apostles. Marcion was just one of many teachers and philosophers who espoused views about Christianity that would, in time, be classified as heretical. Irenaeus refers to Marcion's argument from 2 Cor 4:4 and was probably the first to articulate an apologetic based on a particular reading of the grammar:

As to their affirming that Paul said plainly in the Second [Epistle] to the Corinthians: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not," and maintaining that there is indeed one god of this world, but another who is beyond all principality, and beginning, and power, we are not to blame if they, who give out that they do themselves know mysteries beyond God, know not how to read Paul. For if any one read the passage thus (i.e. according to Paul's custom), as I show elsewhere, and by many examples, that he uses transposition of words ("In whom God"), then pointing it off, and making a slight interval, and at the same time read also the rest [of the sentence] in one [clause] "hath blinded the minds of them of this world that believe not," he shall find out the true [sense]; that it is contained in the expression "God hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world". And this is shown by means of the little interval [between the clause]. For Paul does not say, "the God of this world" as if recognising any other beyond Him; but he confessed God as indeed God. And he says "the unbelievers of this world," because they shall not inherit the future age of incorruption. I shall show from Paul himself, how it is that God has blinded the minds of them that believe not, in the course of this work, that we may not just at present distract our mind from the matter in hand, [by wandering] at large.¹⁹

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter VII, accessed February 21, 2014, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>.

Given that this is the earliest post-Marcion interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4, it will be important to pay attention to Irenaeus' exegetical methodology. First, his charge that the opponents "know not how to read Paul" suggests that the context in which he writes must have been one of vigorous hermeneutical debate. Certainly, we know that the trend of rigorous textual study had already begun in the work of Marcion, and through superior organization of his movement, he mounted the greatest threat to catholic Christianity, and this most intensely in the period 150-190.²⁰ Second, Irenaeus introduces a methodology of exegesis called "transposition of words" and which, he claims, brings the reader closer to Paul's intention in the text. Further, by observing a specified vocalization of the text ("then pointing it off and making a slight interval") Irenaeus argues that one may read the text to mean that "God hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world". He presses this argument through additional examples to do with texts from Galatians and 2 Thessalonians. Third, his hermeneutic exclusively focuses on syntax and reading-strategies – the transposition of words and knowing how to read Paul – giving no attention to context, whether historical or literary; nor does he show the slightest concern about the theological implication of his interpretation, that the God of this text is reputed to blind people to the light of the gospel.

3.2 Tertullian of Carthage

A vigorous polemicist, Tertullian wrote a specific treatise against Marcion entitled *Against Marcion*. Staying within the Pauline corpus that Marcion had recognized as authoritative, Tertullian constructed a more thoroughgoing refutation of Marcion's beliefs. His comments on 2 Cor 4:4 show a development beyond Irenaeus:

I am aware that certain expressions can be made of doubtful meaning through accent in pronunciation and manner of punctuation, where there is room for a double possibility in such respects. Marcion was catching at this when he read, *In whom the god of this age*, so that by pointing to the Creator as the god of this age he might suggest the idea of a different god of a different age. I however affirm that it must be punctuated like this: *In whom God*; and then, *Hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age: In whom*, meaning the unbelieving Jews, in whom was covered up – the gospel beneath Moses' veil. For against

²⁰ von Harnack, *Marcion*, 100: "The danger that this church presented to Christianity was greatest in the generation between 150 and 190. *In this period it, and it alone, was actually a counterchurch*: this observation is evident from the abundance of opposing writings, and it can be read from the nature of the opposition offered by Justin and from the work of Celsus as well".

them, for loving him with their lips but in their heart removing far off from him, God had uttered threats: *With the ear ye shall hear, and not hear; with eyes ye shall see, and not see, and, Unless ye believe ye shall not understand: and, I will take away the wisdom of the wise, and will make of none effect the prudence of the prudent.* But it was not concerning the hiding away of the gospel of an unknown god that he made these threats. And so, even though it were, *The god this world*, yet it is of the unbelievers of this world that he blinds the heart, because they have not of their own selves recognized his Christ, whom they ought to have known of from the scriptures.²¹

Tertullian, we see, maintains Irenaeus' earlier argument for a transposition of words to render the text: "In whom God . . . hath blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age". However, unlike Irenaeus, he reads 4:4 in the light of its immediate context, and concludes that the "unbelievers" (ἄπίστοι) are continuous with the Jews of chapter 3: "In whom, meaning the unbelieving Jews in whom was covered up – the gospel beneath Moses' veil". To further advance his argument, he makes recourse to prophecies in the Hebrew Bible that threaten the Jews with a divine judgement that will completely incapacitate their spiritual faculties. While he specifically cites Isa. 29:13, he also quotes Isa. 6:9 and 29:14. We find that these references play no small part in early Christian texts that advanced a polemic against the unbelief of Jewish audiences when confronted with the message of Jesus (see Mk 7:6-7; Rom 11:8; 9:20-21).²²

3.3 Ambrosiaster

"The figure known to us as Ambrosiaster may well be the greatest enigma in the history of Pauline exegesis".²³ The name is used for an anonymous Latin writer of the late fourth century, who nevertheless bequeathed to posterity the earliest extant complete commentary on the Pauline corpus in Western Christianity. He can with certainty be dated to the Pontificate of Damascus (366–384), and he directly influenced both

²¹ E Evans, ed. and trans., *Tertullian Adversus Marcionem*, Books 4 and 5, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 581 and 583.

²² On this see C A Evans, ed., *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 147-162.

²³ J Papsdorf, "'Ambrosiaster' in Paul in the Middle Ages," in *A Companion to St Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. S Cartwright (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 51.

Augustine and Pelagius in the fifth century.²⁴ The extent to which his influence was felt may be noted by the fact that “there are roughly seventy manuscripts of the commentaries dating back to the sixth century”:²⁵

Paul is saying that God dims the sight of worldly people because they are hostile to the faith of Christ, and he does not want them to see the truth of the gospel of Christ’s majesty. He is giving them what they want, since it is because people are hostile and tell lies that they are helped toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe. They claim that Christ is a mere man, although he is the image of God, and leaving aside his claims, they talk only about his flesh. Isaiah said of such people: *He has blinded their eyes, so that right until now they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears.*²⁶

Ambrosiaster takes *Deus saeculi* (God of the world) in 4:4 as an indisputable reference to God. In his understanding, God is entirely capable of blinding people who are predisposed to be hostile to the faith of Christ; God is simply helping them “toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe”. It is noteworthy that he does not require the emendation of the text, as seen in Irenaeus and Tertullian, to argue such a position; neither does he seem to be bearing the burden of dealing with heretical movements as the latter Church Fathers did. His critique is levelled against people who denied the divinity of Christ. These may have been Jewish polemicists or pagans. Given that Ambrosiaster wrote some rebuttals against the latter in his *Quaestiones*, it is not impossible that he was referring to pagan unbelievers.²⁷ At the same time he, too, finds a scriptural warrant for his position in Isa. 6:10: “He has blinded their eyes, so that right until now they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears”.

²⁴ See Papsdorf, “Ambrosiaster,” 51-77; also see Alexander Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), 39-95.

²⁵ Papsdorf, “Ambrosiaster,” 74.

²⁶ G L Bray, trans., *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians: Ambrosiaster* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 220.

²⁷ Papsdorf, “Ambrosiaster,” 57-58: “He also devotes two of his longest *quaestiones* to rebutting pagan practices and beliefs, which was likely prompted by an on-going engagement with the remnants of pagan nobility that are known to have been active in late fourth-century Rome”.

3.4 John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (the “Golden Mouth”) (349-407 CE) was appointed the Archbishop of Constantinople in 397. He has a reputation for being one of the greatest expositors of Paul in the early centuries of Christianity.²⁸ With respect to 2 Cor 4:4 he wrote:

The “god of this world” may refer neither to the devil nor to another creator, as the Manichaeans say, but to the God of the universe, who has blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world. In the world to come there are no unbelievers, only in this one.²⁹

The church of Chrysostom’s time found itself under serious threat from Manichaeism, perhaps the greatest of all the gnostic movements to challenge early Christianity.³⁰ Manichaeism was a syncretistic, gnostic movement that spread rapidly from the east in the third and fourth century. It incorporated elements of Zoroastrianism from Persia and Christianity into its complex system of thought that was characterised by cosmic dualism, that is, the struggle of light against darkness, and the principle of good against evil. In the Manichaean system Darkness, or matter, tries to hold on to the particles of light emitted by the realm of light where the King of the Paradise of Light or God dwells. In an attempt to hold on to light particles he has gained, Darkness creates the world and Adam and Eve through two demons who procreate them. However, the plan of Darkness is thwarted ultimately because the realm of light sends an envoy, the “Jesus Splendour”, to enlighten humankind with saving esoteric knowledge.³¹ In the statement above from Chrysostom, it would seem that he denies any possible connection of “the god of this world” with Satan, the adversary of God in the Christian system, as well as any possible connection to the Manichaean notion of the Darkness as creator of the world and humankind. Instead, Chrysostom is quite explicit that “the god of this world”

²⁸ For a careful treatment of Chrysostom’s reading of Paul, see C A Hall, “Chrysostom,” in S Westerholm, *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 330-344.

²⁹ Bray, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 228.

³⁰ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: the Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. and ed. R M Wilson, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), 326-327 describes Manichaeism as one of only “four world religions known to the history of religions” (the others are Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam). At one time Manichaeism was found from Spain in the West to China in the East, and survived for nearly a thousand years before falling prey to empires, and particularly to aggressive Islam.

³¹ See Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 336-339.

can only have one referent: “the God of the universe”. Again, Chrysostom finds no discomfort (as many modern interpreters experience) in asserting that God “has blinded the minds of the unbelievers”, although unlike Tertullian he is silent about who exactly he thinks these “unbelievers” are. Together with all exegetes preceding him, Chrysostom interprets αἰων as “world” and not “age”. This fact is most important, because it seems clear that to the patristic writers the noun most naturally connoted the world of nature or κοσμος, rather than a technical expression for an “age” within the framework of apocalypticism and its purported temporal dualism. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the early Latin translations rendered the phrase as *Deus huius saeculi* (God of this world) and not *Deus aevi huius* (God of this age).

3.5 Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo (354–430), a passionate reader of Paul, has had the greatest influence on Western Christianity’s interpretations of Paul’s theology and hermeneutics. In fact, the present assumption of the Christian doctrine of grace was most carefully formulated in the writings of Augustine, which in turn was disseminated throughout the Middle Ages, and eventually influenced the Reformation from the sixteenth century on, and the Great Awakenings on either side of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century.³²

Through his writings on Paul, Augustine is careful to refute the heresies of both the Arians and the Manicheans. Of these, the latter group received his sharpest critiques as he had himself been a full-blown Manichean for the nine years preceding his conversion to Catholic Christianity in 386. His most vigorous polemic is recorded against one Faustus, whom the Manicheans of the time regarded as the most authoritative teacher of their beliefs.

³² A Canty, “Saint Paul in Augustine,” in *A Companion to St Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. S Cartwright (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 142: “Particularly important in this regard is Augustine’s doctrine of grace, which shaped Latin theology long after the Pelagian controversy ended. Aside from its formative influence in the fifth and sixth centuries on numerous ecclesiastical councils (e.g., those of Arles and Orange) and on several notable theologians, such as Prosper of Aquitaine, Faustus of Riez, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Caesarius of Arles, and Gregory the Great, Augustine’s doctrine of grace found a legacy in the theological and spiritual heritage of the entire Middle Ages”.

Although Augustine was one of those that Calvin charged for not reading Paul with a calm mind, he was a trained grammarian and rhetorician.³³

Augustine's comments on 2 Cor 4:4 are found in chapter XXI in his *Against Faustus*:

Most of us punctuate this sentence differently, and explain it as meaning that the true God has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They put a stop after the word God, and read the following words together. Or without this punctuation you may, for the sake of exposition, change the order of the words, and read, "In whom God has blinded the minds of unbelievers of this world," which gives the same sense. The act of blinding the minds of unbelievers may in one sense be ascribed to God, as the effect not of malice, but of justice. Thus Paul himself says elsewhere, "Is God unjust, who taketh vengeance?" And again, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For Moses saith, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. . . . Here we see how the true and just God blinds the minds of unbelievers. For in all these words quoted from the apostle no other God is understood than He whose Son, sent by Him, came saying, "For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind. Here, again, it is plain to the minds of believers how God blinds the minds of unbelievers. For among the secret things, which contain the righteous principles of God's judgment, there is a secret which determines that the minds of some shall be blinded, and the minds of some enlightened."³⁴

We can see Augustine's dependence on the original representation of 2 Cor 4:4 by Irenaeus, in that he, too, perpetuates the notion of the 'transposition of words' first introduced by Irenaeus. At the same time, it is remarkable that well over two hundred years after Irenaeus, orthodox Catholic theologians were in no doubt about the subject of the act of blinding in 4:4. Here, again, Augustine is careful to identify that it is the work of the "true God" and proceeds to assert that looking at the wider context of Paul's language, no other inference may be drawn. He introduces into the discussion a Johannine reference (Jn 9:39), which hints at the divine prerogative to both blind and to

³³ Lewis Ayres, "Augustine," in Westerholm, *Blackwell Companion*, 346-347, notes: "Most importantly, Augustine reads Paul "grammatically"; that is, he reads Paul using the grammatical and rhetorical analysis that were the possession of all educated Romans of his time. . . . These skills were taught initially by a figure called a *grammaticus*. The *grammaticus* taught Augustine such basic moves as identifying the overall plot of a given text in order to interpret particular passages, the importance of interpreting words and phrases by analysing their use throughout the text being interpreted, and how to explore the meanings of terms by making use of resonant philosophical and scientific resources. As with most of the more highly educated ancient exegetes, Augustine also reads Paul in the light of that discipline which was in many ways grammar's fulfilment: rhetoric".

³⁴ R Strothert, trans. *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy*, in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine Bishop of Hippo*, ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872), 5:383, 384.

enlighten human beings at will; an attribute Augustine assigns to the “secret things” of “God’s judgement”.³⁵

3.6 Pelagius

Born in Britain in 354, Pelagius’ most important contribution to Pauline studies was his *Commentary on Romans*, completed sometime in 410.³⁶ New studies on Pelagius have only confirmed the controversy associated with him. Initially, Augustine viewed him as a “distinguished Christian gentleman” and a “highly advanced Christian”. Later, however, on account of his disagreement with Pelagius’ interpretation of Romans 5:12, Augustine called him “the enemy of God’s grace”.³⁷ So, despite modern reappraisals of Pelagius’ theological traditionalism, it is Augustine’s labelling of him that has most impacted his reception in history.³⁸ Pelagius departs from his predecessors and adopts a truly ambivalent stance:

The god of this world may be understood to be the devil, on the ground that he has claimed to rule over unbelievers. Or, on account of the attacks of the heretics it may be understood to mean that God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief.³⁹

Pelagius is the first exegete, to whom we have access, who takes up a position of total ambivalence with regard to 4:4. He equivocates between the possibility that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος has as its referent “the devil” or “God”. It is also difficult to know to what exactly Pelagius is referring when he says that the devil “has claimed to rule over unbelievers”. Is this an extrapolation from a text in scripture, or was Pelagius appealing to some established doctrines of the time, or even popular religious belief? The possibility that God has sovereignly caused the blinding is sufficiently tempered by Pelagius’ characteristic safeguarding of human culpability: “. . . it may be understood to mean that God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief”.

³⁵ Strothert, *Writings*, 384.

³⁶ T P Scheck, “Pelagius’s Interpretation of Romans,” in Cartwright, *A Companion to St Paul*, 79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 79-82.

³⁹ Bray, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 228.

3.7 Theodoret of Cyrus

Theodoret was Bishop of Cyrus from 423–458. Although his diocese may have been a “little backwater” in the context of the more established centres of Christianity in the fifth century, yet he had responsibility for over 800 parishes and “was credited with many social and civic improvements”.⁴⁰

Theodoret was from the Antiochene School and had as his great predecessors Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, and Diodore of Tarsus, all of whom had written on Paul’s letters. R Hill comments: “His indebtedness to their work, if not specifically acknowledged, is discernible in his Commentary”.⁴¹ Theodoret states:

To them God (a break must be observed here) blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this world lest they be enlightened by the illumination of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God’s image (v.4). He brought out that unbelief is confined to this world; in the next life truth is clearly revealed to everyone. God blinded them, not imparting unbelief to them, but perceiving their unbelief and not allowing them to see the hidden mysteries. “Do not give holy things to dogs,” he says, “nor cast your pearls before swine,” and again, “the reason I speak to them in parables is this, that looking they do not see, and listening they do not understand”. Knowledge and belief are necessary, after all, for sharing in the light; the sun, remember, is inimical to weak eyes.⁴²

Theodoret persists with Irenaeus’ transposition of words in the text by attaching “this world” to “the unbelievers” rather than to the immediate antecedent articular noun “God”. This one tradition would cast a long shadow of doubt over the patristic interpretive history of 2 Cor 4:4 in the minds of later exegetes. From Erasmus and Calvin on to the present time, commentators on 2 Corinthians would go no further in examining the arguments of the patristic writers than to highlight this apparent mishandling of the text, and thereby nullifying and dismissing their conclusions about who Paul was referring to, when he uses “God” in this context.

⁴⁰ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St Paul*, vol 1, trans. R C Hill (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 268.

Theodoret's agreement with his predecessors is seen in a number of ways. First, the argument that "unbelief is confined to this world" echoes Chrysostom's point: "In the world to come there are no unbelievers, only in this one". Second, his apologetic that God's judicial act of blinding need not imply that God also was the author of their unbelief but that God merely allowed them to remain in their self-chosen unbelief ("not allowing them to see the hidden mysteries") resonates both with Ambrosiaster ("it is because people are hostile and tell lies that they are helped toward not being able to believe what they do not want to believe") and Pelagius ("God has blinded the minds of unbelievers precisely because of their unbelief").

Theodoret, too, makes reference to other early Christian texts to explain his view of the divine prerogative of blinding: a) the harsh teaching of Jesus (preserved in the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 7:6) that those in Israel who reject his words may rightfully earn the derogatory epithets "dog" and "swine"; and, b) the later comment preserved in Mt 13:13 (in the context of the Parable of the Soils), where Jesus explains that he used parables paradoxically to hide the message of the Kingdom of God from Israel rather than to illustrate it. Jesus had himself on occasion appealed to texts such as Deut. 29:4 and Isa. 6:9 for biblical justification. Significantly, the Isaiah reference had also been used by Tertullian and Ambrosiaster and, as we shall later see, appears to have been the cornerstone of an early Christian apologetic for explaining Jewish unbelief in Jesus as the messiah.

One last observation may be made about Theodoret's hermeneutic. His comment "the sun, remember, is inimical to weak eyes" refers the reader back to his comments on 2 Cor 2:15-16:

To those with bad eyes the light is treacherous and unkind, but it is not the sun that causes the harm. It is also said that vultures shun the fragrance of perfume, yet perfume is still sweet-smelling, even if the vultures give it a wide berth. Likewise, too, the saving message brings about salvation for those who believe, but inflicts ruin on the unbelieving.⁴³

⁴³ Theodoret, *Commentary*, 262.

The point Theodoret makes is an important one (often neglected by modern exegetes): that the phenomenon of blindness in some and sight for others does not in any way compromise the biblical notion of the sovereignty of God nor does it question the veracity of the gospel. The divergent reception and appreciation of the gospel message only points to human culpability. We also find interesting Theodoret's strategy of reading 4:4 in the light of its literary context by going back to 2:14. We shall later argue that the literary unit to which 4:4 belongs is indeed 2 Cor 2:14–4:6.

4. Pauline Exegesis from the Sixth to Eighth Centuries CE

In comparison to the patristic period, the period between 500 and 750 shows a marked drop in manuscript evidence for Pauline exegesis. And, with regard to discussion on 2 Corinthians 4, there is almost no extant commentary. There is, however, one piece of evidence for the reception of 4:4, which obliquely suggests that the dominant interpretation of the patristic writers still prevailed; and now, more importantly, was being disseminated further afield in Western Europe. This evidence comes from records of the Venerable Bede, the Anglo-Saxon monk who lived in England from 672–735. Bede was the first person to write works of scholarship in the English language, and among his many works is preserved one entitled *Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*.⁴⁴

Bede's compilation of Augustine's works on Paul is remarkable, both because it provides evidence for the expanding influence of Augustine on the strongly Christian communities of the British Isles, and because, by virtue of being "excerpts" they show *selectivity* on the part of Bede. So we may presume that he chose certain comments of Augustine because he felt that they were particularly important for the church in the context of England. Consequently, Bede's selection of Augustine's comments on 2 Cor 4:4 point to his agreement with the latter about "the God of this world": "Quite a few people of our time interpret this statement as saying that the true God has blinded the

⁴⁴ D Hurst, trans., *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine of the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1999).

minds of unbelievers”.⁴⁵ Yet, what might have been the motivation to highlight this interpretation of Augustine? We recall that the only patristic writer to equivocate that “the god of this world” could either be the devil or God was Pelagius, the English-born theologian (354–420). It is possible, therefore, that Pelagius’ views on 4:4 were well-known in Bede’s day, and, therefore, Bede felt the need to confirm more definitively the position that had his sympathy.

5. From the Carolingian Period to the Thirteenth Century CE

5.1 The Carolingian Commentators

The Carolingian era marks the period from about 750 until the late tenth century. Although there was significant interest with regard to the New Testament text, especially the epistles of Paul, it was not a period known for original writings. The Carolingian commentators were, rather, preservers of the traditions and texts of the patristic writers:

Reverence for the great learning and the sanctity of the Church Fathers may have inhibited the desire to venture an opinion of one’s own but that is not to say that these new commentaries were thereby devoid of significance. Truth be told, there were no mediaeval commentators of any period who detached themselves from patristic authority and influence.⁴⁶

The boldness to break away from the traditions passed on from the Fathers would have to await a period much later — that is, the flowering of the Renaissance from the fourteenth century. In any event, no commentary on 2 Corinthians survives from the Carolingian period, but in the light of the above statement, no great loss may thereby be accounted to our pursuit.

5.2 Theophylact of Ohrid

Theophylact was Archbishop of Ohrid (1078-1107), in modern Bulgaria. He wrote extensive commentaries on both the Gospels and the epistles. He was dependent on the

⁴⁵ Hurst, *Bede*, 181.

⁴⁶ See I C Levy, “Commentaries on the Pauline Epistles in the Carolingian Era,” in Cartwright, *A Companion to St Paul*, 145.

works of Chrysostom, and in turn he provided much material to Erasmus in the writing of his *New Testament and Annotations*.

Theophylact's commentary on Paul's epistles is extant in a publication dated 1636, and provides us with a vital clue to the trajectory of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 between its last occurrence in Bede's compilation of Augustine's commentaries (8th century) and its later arrival within the doorways of the Renaissance and the Reformation.⁴⁷ Theophylact takes the plain reading, and has no doubt that the apostle is referring to God: "The God of this world has blinded their minds".⁴⁸

He is aware of the various arguments that had been presented by Marcion, and later the Manichaeans, but accepts no merit in their treatment of this phrase:

But in fact neither of these should be said; further, it was said about our God. And even if He is shown to be God of this world, there is nothing new, since He is also said to be God of heaven. Nor is He only God of this. So too He is called God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: but He is not only their God, but also of all. What is therefore new if Paul quite fittingly calls Him God of this world?⁴⁹

Theophylact sees the blinding as a judicial act of God on account of the obdurate character of those who refused to believe "the brightness", that is, that Christ was "crucified, that he was received into heaven, and that he would give us the things to come". He sees a parallel to this in the way God had dealt with the ancient Israelites:

Just as if someone would prevent a conjunctivitis patient from seeing the sun-rays, lest he gets hurt by them, in this case, they became unbelievers on their own [so that] after they had become such, God screened them from the rays of the Gospel's glory just as in the case of the Israelites, He covered the face of Moses.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Theophylacti Archiepiscopi Bulgariae, in *D. Pauli Epistolas commentarii* (London: 1636), 343-357.

⁴⁸ The relevant section in Latin, with accompanying translation, is provided in Appendix 1 (see pp264-269).

⁴⁹ Theophylacti, *Pauli*, 355 (translation in Appendix 1, p 269).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

6. The Fate of 2 Corinthians 4:4 from the Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century

The period of the Renaissance becomes definitive for the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. Following this era, exegetes and Bible translators display little doubt about how our phrase must be rendered. As we have seen this was not the case before, with several Greek commentators favouring God as the referent, although a small minority and the heresiarchs suggested the devil, the demiurge, or Hyle as candidates for the title. What changed the complexion of the debate with such near-absolute finality?

The evidence points to the inadvertent collaboration of two men, whose individual comments on 2 Cor 4:4, backed by their stature as formative influences of the novel Bible tradition of the Reformation, combined to render to their particular interpretation of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου the status akin to canonicity. The first was Desiderius Erasmus whose revision of the Greek New Testament, together with the annotations that accompanied it, was decisive for all the reformers, including Luther and Calvin. The other was Calvin, whose commentaries on the letters of Paul, have remained standard works for Pauline exegesis within the Protestant tradition. Their contributions to the discourse are examined below.

6.1 Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536)⁵¹

Erasmus is synonymous with the Renaissance. He was one of the greatest humanist scholars, and was the first editor of the Greek New Testament. In keeping with the slogan of the Renaissance, *ad fontes* (“back to the beginning”), Erasmus was inspired to reach beyond scholasticism and read the early Christian texts essentially as products of a world when rhetoric was still being studied and practised. He was a critic of ecclesiastical practices and found philological study as a means to appropriate original readings of texts, and thereby to challenge the assumptions about ancient religious texts, such as the New Testament, which had been used to legitimize false religious beliefs. It did mean, therefore, that Erasmus adopted a critical approach to traditional readings of the

⁵¹ For a helpful summary of the life and work of Erasmus see, J D Tracy, “Desiderius Erasmus: Dutch Humanist and Scholar,” accessed July 29, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Desiderius-Erasmus>.

New Testament, and was particularly enthusiastic to identify invalid readings of the Christian scriptures.

Our text, 2 Cor 4:4, with its contentious history and the controversial emendation of the text from the time of Irenaeus, naturally became a candidate for Erasmus' particular attention.⁵² The factors pertaining to the tradition-history of interpretation became a key consideration as Erasmus grappled with the meaning of *Deus huius Seculi* in 4:4. His annotations on the phrase present several important insights into his understanding of the subject.⁵³

We first note that Erasmus is the first to explicitly recommend an alternative rendering of the phrase; substituting “this age” for “this world”. He begins the commentary on 4:4 with the words: *Deus huius seculi. ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. id est, Deus aevi huius, “that is god of this age”*.

Second, he mentions “Theophylactus and the Greek commentaries” but also Augustine, Ambrose, Cyril, and Chrysostom. While in the main, the Greek commentaries opted for “God” as the referent, Erasmus alleges that Augustine equivocated: he first adopted the interpretation of his predecessors and claimed that reading “God” to be the subject was Paul’s intention, but that he “later denied that it would seem absurd if the devil were to be called the god of this world, as it was also said by Paul: ‘. . . whose god is their belly’”. Chrysostom, however, posed a greater challenge to Erasmus because he demonstrated a more robust hermeneutic. For instance, Chrysostom had argued that God could be called “God of this world” in the same way the scriptures called God “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”. Then, with regard to the difficulty of understanding, (“in what sense he is said to blind the hearts of unbelievers”) Chrysostom had argued:

⁵² The Latin original is accessible in A Reeve and M A Screech, eds., *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts–Romans–I and II Corinthians* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

⁵³ The relevant section in Latin, with accompanying translation, is provided in Appendix 2 (see pp 270-272).

It is expedient in the manner of mystical discourse, that God be declared to do what God allows to happen, as it is said in the letter to the Romans that God handed over the philosophers to evil inclinations; and in the Exodus it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.⁵⁴

Erasmus did find Chrysostom's arguments impressive and says: "Piously indeed has Chrysostom written thus," but is not himself convinced ("I judge the other opinion to be right"). We detect his discomfort in disagreeing with Chrysostom because of the parenthetical comment he throws in later: "Let me add this that the commentaries which are brought under the name of Chrysostom are not his, but of someone similar".

Third, Erasmus makes his own position clear though: "Hence as to what we said earlier quoting Greek commentaries, it seems farfetched and forced. It is simpler and truer to understand the god of this world as Satan".

Fourth, having come down on the side of Satan as *deus huius seculi*, Erasmus feels the need to mitigate the force of his assertion by way of clarification: "The devil certainly is not simply a 'god' but is a 'god' to those who put him against Christ. Just as money (or mammon) is god for the avaricious, appetite is god for the gluttonous, and man is god for man".

Finally, another argument Erasmus provides in support of his view about ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is that the term "God" has three meanings within the Bible ("divine writings"): 1) according to "nature and truth" only God may be called "God and Lord"; 2) the scriptures sometimes says, "I said you are gods" where the noun is utilized for some other creature; and 3) the example in 1 Cor 8:5: "as there are many gods and many lords" where it acknowledges several entities other than God who may be called "god".

6.2 John Calvin (1509–1564)⁵⁵

Calvin's work on biblical exegesis began with the writings of Paul, and in the years 1538–1541, he conducted lectures on the Corinthian letters in Strasbourg. His commentary on

⁵⁴ Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus' Annotations*, 533 (translation in Appendix 2, p 271).

2 Corinthians was finally published in 1547; unusually, though, first in French after which the Latin edition appeared in 1548. His achievement is monumental because by 1551 he had completed commentaries on the entire Pauline corpus, and included Hebrews as well.⁵⁶ Lane comments on his method: “Calvin expounded the Greek text, giving his own Latin translation. He made use of existing translations, *especially the Vulgate and Erasmus*, but was not bound to either (emphasis added)”.⁵⁷ The influence of Erasmus on Calvin is important to note in our enquiry into the factors that went into Calvin’s particular interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4.

As we shall see, Calvin vehemently disagreed with patristic exegetes on the identity of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, and this is significant because he is thought to have had “a deep respect for tradition” and “did not lightly depart from established interpretations”. He was cognizant of his predecessors’ ideas, and seemed to particularly favour Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose.⁵⁸ Three of these writers feature in his comments on 4:4.

Calvin is in no doubt whatsoever that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul is speaking of Satan: “Nobody of sound judgement can have any doubt that here the apostle is speaking about Satan”.⁵⁹ He realizes that his latter statement immediately puts him in direct confrontation with the best established exegetes in Christian history, and proceeds to explain the circumstances that prevented Hilary, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine from exercising a “sound mind”:

Hilary, who had to deal with Arians who misused this passage in support of their view that Christ was a god, though they had denied His true divinity, twists the text to mean that it is God who has blinded the understanding of this world. Chrysostom later followed this rendering in order to avoid conceding to the Manichaeans their dualistic view of two first principles. Why Ambrose also

⁵⁵ Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 53-56.

⁵⁶ Lane, “Calvin,” 391-405.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 393.

⁵⁸ Lane, “Calvin,” 396-397.

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 53.

accepted it is not clear but Augustine's reason was the same as Chrysostom's for he also was involved in the dispute with the Manichaeans. *This is an example of what can happen in the heat of controversy for if all these men had read Paul's words with a calm mind it would never have occurred to them to twist them into a forced meaning in this way* (emphasis added).⁶⁰

In the patristic exegetes' controversies with the heresiarchs, Calvin finds an exclusive explanation for their interpretation of 4:4. He charges that a view that had prevailed for hundreds of years was the product of "the heat of controversy" and simplifies its chief proponents to be men who lacked the capacity to "read Paul with a calm mind". Thereby, Calvin concluded that his predecessors had "twisted [the scripture] into a forced meaning in this way".

The interpretation that Calvin gave to 4:4 was supported exegetically by his reference to 1 Cor 8:5 ("there are many gods and many lords"); and, here it is possible that he is dependent on an argument first ventured by Erasmus.⁶¹ However, his strongest reasons for insisting that the phrase is a description for the devil are his beliefs concerning the devil. First, he asserts that "the devil is called a god because he has dominion over men and is worshipped by them [T]here is attributed to Satan a power of blinding and a dominion over unbelievers".⁶² This notion of Satan's "dominion over unbelievers" is a theological imposition on the text – that is, ὁ θεός in 4:4, who has such dominion as to blind 'the unbelievers', must be the devil because it is the devil who has dominion over unbelievers.

Second, like Erasmus, Calvin proceeds to mitigate the implications of his attribution of ὁ θεός τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου to the devil. To be given this lofty title does not imply that Satan exercises a dominion independent of God: "In the same way Satan is the prince of this world, not because he has conferred that princely power upon himself or obtained it

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

by his own right or is able to exercise it as his own will, but he has it only so far as the Lord allows it to him".⁶³

With his third emphatic doctrinal point about Satan, Calvin almost completely rescues his characteristic teaching on the sovereignty of God, although he indulges in some circular reasoning to get there. He concedes that the scriptures speak of God as an agent of blinding (though he shows no interest to explore such passages as Isaiah 6:6-10, which buttressed the patristic scholars' opinion about divine, judicial blinding), but also asserts that the scriptures attribute the same power to the devil (he cites the story of Ahab and the lying prophets, 1 Kgs 22:21-22). Satan is therefore an *agent of God* who works to execute God's will in the world: "Scripture teaches that Satan blinds men not only with God's permission but at his command to inflict His vengeance".⁶⁴ By the very end of his argument, Calvin is able to attribute the blinding of minds to God, but only with the devil performing the role of an obedient servant of God:

*God is thus said to blind men because, having deprived us of the right use of our minds, and of the light of His Spirit, He hands us over to the devil to be reduced to a reprobate mind and gives him the power of deceiving us and thus inflicts just vengeance upon us by the minister of His wrath (emphasis added).*⁶⁵

6.3 Erasmus and Calvin in Collaboration?

Erasmus and Calvin, then, set the trend for Pauline exegesis of 2 Cor 4:4 for the ensuing centuries. Although there is no evidence that Calvin was merely representing ideas he had picked up from Erasmus, there are several features they share in common. These features fall into two broad categories: 1) the ways in which Erasmus and Calvin disregard the exegetical grounds of their predecessors; and, 2) the exegetical grounds that they successfully introduce into the discourse.

⁶³ Calvin, *Second Epistle*, 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

First, in what ways do Erasmus and Calvin disregard some of the key exegetical grounds of the patristic authors? Writers such as Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, and Augustine, translated ὁ θεός by the most natural meaning that Paul commonly gives to it – and that is ‘God’. Some of them make special note that the context demanded that the “unbelievers” be understood to be unbelieving Jews, but this idea is not picked up by either Erasmus or Calvin. The Church Fathers also ventured to explore texts such as Is 6:9-10; Dt 29:4; and Jn 9:39, which supported their idea that God was often an agent of judicial blinding and hardening of Israel. This again is not considered by the scholars of the Renaissance.

Second, in what ways do Erasmus and Calvin ‘collaborate’ in setting the trend for the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4? They both mount arguments to invalidate the exegetical foundation of their predecessors. They both appeal to the rather flimsy evidence of 1 Cor 8:5 to argue that Paul’s use of ὁ θεός in 4:4 could refer to one of the θεοὶ πολλοὶ of 1 Cor 8:5. They both attempt to retrieve with one hand the threat to divine sovereignty they had conceded with the other. This is to say that they recognized that assigning 4:4 to Satan was to open a serious threat to the orthodox position on God’s sovereignty, and consequently they explicitly disavowed such a conclusion. Erasmus alone can be credited with having successfully introduced “this age” over “this world” into the rendering of the phrase, and Calvin alone offered the more elaborate doctrine of Satan as the grid by which scholars may interpret the meaning of the phrase. In what follows we shall see how these initial impulses dominate the hermeneutical discourse and lead the understanding of 2 Cor 4:4 in its new direction.

From the perspective of ideological texture Calvin has been previously charged with similar offences. In his comments on Acts 14, Calvin “stereotypes the Lycaonians as ‘barbarous men’, ‘superstitious’, ‘infidels’, ‘unbelievers’, and an ‘unlearned multitude’”. His virulent description is a launching pad for a wholesale attack on Catholicism in France”.⁶⁶ In the playing out of such ideological interests, then, the text eventually becomes subservient to the interests of its readers and serves their ends: “Thus, the

⁶⁶ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 202.

stereotyping of the Lycaonians does not keep its focus on the people of Lystra; rather, this language is a medium for Calvin to describe the religious opponents against whom he sets himself as a reformer".⁶⁷ Is it possible that with 2 Cor 4:4 we find a similar ideological texture?

6.4 Nicholas Hemmingio (1513–1600)⁶⁸

Also known as Niels Hemmingsen, Hemmingio was a professor of divinity in Copenhagen. His commentary on 2 Corinthians in Latin is undated, but since his commentaries on Galatians and Hebrews were known to have been published in 1570, we may surmise that the former too was published around the same period.⁶⁹ In any case, Hemmingio writes after Erasmus and after the publication of Calvin's commentary on 2 Corinthians in 1547. His work, therefore, provides us an insight into the direction of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 following Calvin's ruling on the matter.⁷⁰

First, he has no doubt that Paul refers to the devil: "Undoubtedly the god of this world provided the cause for the hardening of the unbelievers, that is, Satan blinded the faculties of the unbelievers".

Second, in keeping with the established narrative he mentions how the "Arians and the Manichaeans have misused this Pauline text" and how in order to "refute their proposition, Hilary, Irenaeus, Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose and many others spoke of a *hyperbaton* [rearrangement of words] . . . and *in the heat of the controversy interpreted this passage to be about the true God* so that in this way they could deflect the objection of the heretics" (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 202.

⁶⁸ Nicolao Hemmingio, *Commentarius In Vtram Qve Epistolam Pavli Apostoli AD Corinthios Scriptus* (n.d., accessed from the archives of Pitt Theology Library, Emory University, Atlanta, March 2014; relevant Latin text with accompanying translation is provided in Appendix 3).

⁶⁹ See <http://www.mocavo.com/Centenary-Memorial-of-the-Erection-of-the-County-of-Dauphin-and-the-Founding-of-the-City-of-Harrisburg-1885/950138/317>, accessed August 3, 2015.

⁷⁰ See the translation to the relevant section of Nicolao Hemmingio, *Commentarius In Vtram* in Appendix 3, p. 276.

Third, Hemmingio offers other biblical texts in support of the view that this is Satan: “The devil in John 12 is said to be the Prince of this world; and in Philippians 3 the belly is said to be the god of greedy pursuers”. In subsequent discussions of the verse, these references would play a significant role.

Hemmingio’s commentary confirms our suspicions that the sixteenth century marks the decisive moment when the interpretive tradition was diverted in an entirely new direction; when an expression that at one time conveyed to the church a description about God Almighty was attached to Satan.

6.5 Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752)⁷¹

Bengel is well known for his edition of the Greek New Testament and annotations. Of the brief comments he gave on 2 Cor 4:4, Bengel moved forward the new interpretive tradition, and his most lasting contribution was the colourful phrase he coined for Satan based on this verse: *Grandis sed horribilis descriptio Satanae*.⁷² It has become almost a signature for those commenting on the verse in question.

7. The Text of 2 Corinthians 4:4 among Commentators of the Nineteenth Century until the First Half of the Twentieth Century

This specific periodization has been proposed for more than one reason. Paul’s formulation of 2 Cor 4:4 provokes three pragmatic concerns through its subtext: 1) Are there limitations that prevail on the power of the gospel to bring people to a saving faith? 2) Who ultimately has power over the affairs of the present world? 3) Is Paul’s strongly negative “unbelievers” a reference to pagans, or might it be highly specific to the unbelieving Jews of the first century? Each of these concerns has been of great import to the modern period, and I consider them below.

First, the nineteenth century is rightfully called the Century of Protestant Missions because of the unprecedented emphasis given to converting the hitherto unreached

⁷¹ J A Bengelii, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* Tomus II (Tübingen: Sumtibus Ludov. Frid. Fues, 1836).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 191-192.

“pagans” of the numerous territories and regions in Africa and Asia that had come under the control of European colonial powers. However, although the missionary enterprise was undertaken with great zeal and confidence and thousands of dedicated missionaries fanned out to the countries remotest to Europe, the conversion of the natives, though significant, had no resemblance to the sweeping influence Christianity had had over formerly pagan Europe in the preceding millennium. Why was this so? What prevented Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and animistic peoples from “seeing the light of the gospel”? Had they been blinded? If so, who had blinded them?

Second, this period marks both the height of optimism of the Modern period, as well as its greatest sense of disillusionment with the cataclysmic events of the two great wars. In the context of the former mood of optimism, Christian theologians would presumably have adopted a worldview that focussed on the sovereignty of God. Christianity was ascendant; “Christian nations” were prospering in every way; and it seemed that the world could well be fully evangelized within a generation or two. However, the growing philosophical pessimism of the late nineteenth century and the World Wars of the first half of the twentieth century shattered this utopian dream, and begged the question about who really was in charge of the affairs of the world. In such a dramatic context one would expect a text such as 2 Cor 4:4 to open itself to fresh readings.

Third, although anti-Judaism had been simmering within Western consciousness for centuries, it reached its horrendous climax with the Nazi holocaust of 1933–1945. The awful reality of the annihilation of millions of Jews, followed by the almost incredible reality of the establishment of a state of Israel in 1948 (nearly 2000 years after the fall of Jerusalem), may well have combined to exert a certain pressure on exegetes of 2 Corinthians 3–4 in the period after 1950 that would find no parallel in any period before. How easy would it have been for scholars writing in such a context to argue that Paul seemed to believe that *God* had blinded the majority of the Jewish peoples?

7.1 Adam Clarke (1826)⁷³

The earliest commentary we will consider for this period shows the most radical departure from the broad consensus held by Bible scholars from 1516 onward – that is, when Erasmus first produced his edition of *the Greek New Testament and Annotations*.

Clarke notes that by the time of his commentary (1826), reading “god of this age” to mean Satan, was undisputed. And yet, he was not convinced:

I must own I feel considerable reluctance to assign the epithet, ὁ θεός, The God, to Satan; and were there not a rooted prejudice in favour of the common opinion, the contrary might be well vindicated, viz. that by the *God of this world*, the Supreme Being is meant.⁷⁴

What accounts for Clarke’s “considerable reluctance”? It turns out that his arguments were indeed considerable, because they were cumulative. History may testify to the accuracy of Clarke’s charges of “a rooted prejudice in favour of a common opinion”, because, in spite of his careful assessment of 4:4, it was never taken up for reasonable consideration during his time and no literature since (except his contemporary Albert Barnes, who rejected it as we shall see) has afforded it even the significance of a footnote. What then were the points he garnered to argue that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου referred to the “Supreme Being” – the God of this world? We discern four:

1. The theological argument – God’s sovereignty and justice allow for God the prerogative to blind people:

By the *God of this world*, the Supreme Being is meant, who in his judgment gave over the minds of the unbelieving Jews to spiritual darkness, so that destruction came upon them to the uttermost . . . We are not willing to attribute the blinding of men’s minds to God, because we sometimes forget that he is the God of justice, and may in judgment remove mercies from those that abuse them: but this is repeatedly attributed to him in the Bible.⁷⁵

2. The scriptural argument – He saw his theological argument supported by Is 6:9, which in turn becomes a theme within the NT:

⁷³ Clarke, *New Testament*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

And the expression before us is quite a parallel to the following, Isa vi.9 – *Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. MAKE the HEART of this PEOPLE FAT, and MAKE their EARS HEAVY, and SHUT their EYES, LEST they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.* And see the parallel places, Matt xiii.14, 15. Mark iv.12. John xii.40, and particularly Rom xi.8 – 10: GOD HATH GIVEN THEM THE SPIRIT OF SLUMBER, EYES that they SHOULD not SEE, and EARS that they SHOULD not HEAR: let their EYES be DARKENED.⁷⁶

For Clarke this recurrent theme leads the exegete to one obvious conclusion:

Now all this is spoken of the same people, in the same circumstances of wilful rebellion, and obstinate unbelief; and the great God of heaven and earth, is he who judicially blinds their eyes; makes their hearts fat, i.e. stupid; gives them the spirit of slumber, and bows down their back. On these very grounds it is exceedingly likely, that the Apostle means the true God, by the words the God of this age.⁷⁷

3. The linguistic and cognitive-frame argument – For Clarke, αἰών need not carry any greater meaning than this world of time and space: “It is frequently used to explain the whole mundane system, and all that is called time”. He cites Mt 12:32; Lk 20:34, and 1 Tm 1:17 as clear evidence that the noun need not bear the highly technical sense of Jewish apocalypticism. Furthermore, it is quite interesting that in that early period, he was able and willing to consider the cognitive environment of a text in his hermeneutical strategy:

This character among the Asiatics is considered essential to God; and therefore in the very first surat of the Koran he is called *Rubbi alalameen* “the Lord of both worlds” an expression perfectly similar to that above.⁷⁸

4. The historical argument – He gives the Church Fathers more credit for their reading, even though they rearranged the text, and takes confidence from the fact that in the fifth century the alternate reading was, in fact, the dominant interpretation:

Iraeneus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Photius, Theophylact, and Augustine, all plead for the above meaning; and St. Augustine says that it was the opinion of almost all the ancients.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Clarke, *New Testament*, 315. [Note: The capitalization is original to the text].

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

7.2 Albert Barnes (1844)⁸⁰

There can be no doubt that Satan is here designated by this appellation; though some of the Fathers supposed that it meant the true God – and Clarke inclines to this opinion . . . The dominion of Satan over this world has been, and is still, almost universal and absolute; nor has the lapse of eighteen hundred years rendered the appellation improper as descriptive of his influence, that he is the god of this age.⁸¹

The doubtlessness expressed by Barnes about Satan being “designated by this appellation” harks back to the sentiments we first encountered in Calvin, but now is seemingly reconfirmed because of the way Barnes sees and experiences the world of his day. Looking at contemporary circumstances, he finds no other explanation than that “the dominion of Satan over the world” was “almost universal and absolute”. Significantly, though, he notes, that his near contemporary, A Clarke, had no insuperable difficulty in affirming the sovereignty of God expressed in the phrase “God of this age”.

With his views about Satan, Barnes parts company with Calvin who had been careful to argue that although Satan may be called “god of this world,” he still was in status merely a servant of God. Barnes, however, takes the Christian view of Satan to a new and critical plane which will, in time, be presented as a “sovereignty” that could be attributed to Satan.⁸²

7.3 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1865)⁸³

In connection with this dark view he introduces the singular expression, ‘the God of this world’ (for Satan) so as to express in the strongest manner the contrast between Satan as the author of all darkness, and Christ and God as the authors of all light. . . These very words are applied to Satan by the Rabbis, “The

⁷⁹ Clarke, *New Testament*, 315-316.

⁸⁰ A Barnes, *Notes on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Gall & Inglis, 1844)

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁸² So, D G Reid, “Devil” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G Hawthorne, R Martin and D Reid (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 864: “The underlying point is that Satan is vested with a *sovereignty*, however limited it might ultimately be, that is powerful, compelling and clearly opposed to the work of God” (emphasis added).

⁸³ A P Stanley, *The Epistles of St Paul to the Corinthians* (London: John Murray, 1865).

true God is the *first* God, but Samael is the *second God*” . . . Irenaeus, in order to avoid a Gnostic inference from the passage, and after him Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Ecumenius, Theodoret, and Theophylact, by a violent inversion of the words connect τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου with τὰ νοήματα, so as to make the sense, “in whom God blinded the thoughts of this world in the unbelieving.”⁸⁴

It is with Stanley that we first get introduced to Second Temple ideas as the possible background to 4:4. He proposes that Paul is dependent on “the rabbis”, who spoke of the Satan-figure Samael as a “second god”.⁸⁵ Again, as was the trend set by Erasmus and Calvin, Stanley, too, sweepingly surveys a host of Pauline interpreters from Irenaeus to Theophylact to discount their alternate conclusion about the “God of this age” because he disagrees with their “violent inversion of the words”.⁸⁶

7.4 James Denney (1894)⁸⁷

To St. Paul the Gospel was a very great thing. A light issued from it so dazzling, so overwhelming, in its illuminative power, that it might well be incredible that men should see it. The powers counteracting it, “the world rulers of this darkness”, must surely, to judge by their success, have an immense influence. *Even more than an immense influence, they must have an immense malignity. . . Paul’s whole sense of the might and the malignity of the powers of darkness is condensed in the title which he here gives to their head – “the god of this world”* It is literally “of this age,” the period of time which extends to Christ’s coming again. The dominion of evil is not unlimited in duration; but while it lasts it is awful in its intensity and range. . . *What St. Paul saw, and what becomes apparent to everyone in proportion as his interest in evangelism becomes intense, is that evil has a power and dominion in the world, which are betrayed by their counteracting of the Gospel, to be purely malignant – in other words, Satanic – and the dimensions of which, no description can exaggerate. Call such powers Satan, or what you please, but do not imagine that they are*

⁸⁴ Stanley, *The Epistles*, 400-401. For another scholar who finds it “historically curious” that so many patristic writers emended the text “in their zeal against the Marcionites and Manichaeans” see, H Alford, *The Greek Testament Volume 2: The Acts of the Apostles, The Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians* (London: Rivingtons, 1865).

⁸⁵ Later, A Plummer, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, ICC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), would pass this idea on: “The first God is the true God, but the second God is Samael”.

⁸⁶ Erasmus was the first to charge the patristic writers with doing violence to the text; see, Reeve and Screech, *Erasmus’ Annotations*, 533: “Proinde quod priore loco diximus ex Graecis scholes id uidetur affectatum ac uiolentum”.

⁸⁷ J Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Armstrong & Son, 1894).

inconsiderable. *During this age they reign; they have taken over what should be God's place in the world.* (italics added)⁸⁸

The implications of 2 Cor 4:4 for evangelism takes a special place in Denney's commentary: those who are interested in evangelism will see from the text how "evil has a power and dominion in the world, which are betrayed by their counteracting of the Gospel". Thus, according to Denney, Paul gives the title "God" to Satan to capture the 'immensity' and the 'malignity' of this being that dominates the world.

7.5 Philipp Bachmann (1909)⁸⁹

Bachmann's comments at the beginning of the twentieth century help demonstrate that the Erasmus–Calvin diverted tradition had hardened itself. He rehearses the error that arose when the Early Fathers attempted to refute "the Gnostics and the Arians" but "luckily not without some sense of the impossibility of such a breaking [of the text]". Quoting Bengel's "*Grandis sed horribilis descriptio Satanae*", which would later become a signature of 2 Corinthians commentators, Bachmann proceeds to explain why Satan should be called *der Gott dieser Welt*:

He bears this title as someone who caused, and still causes the 'anti-Godness' and the resulting ruin. Through this he realizes his will in and through the world and operates as her highest and most dominating power . . . In this case he is specifically considered as such because of the effects of his work, by which it is explained here, why the gospel remains hidden under so many layers. Satan affects the mind, which results in blindness or in opposition to [the gospel].⁹⁰

7.6 Alfred Plummer (1912)⁹¹

Following what was by his time the dominant interpretation, Plummer widens the cross-references to buttress the argument for positioning Satan as the "god of this age". These include: Eph 2:2; Mk 3:22 (Mt 12:24); Lk 11:15 (Mt 9:34); and 1 Jn 5:19. He hastens, though, to add that such a view does not mean that "God abdicates or surrenders any

⁸⁸ Denney, *Second Epistle* 149-150.

⁸⁹ P Bachmann, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, KNT 3, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: A Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁹¹ Plummer, *The Second Epistle*.

portion of His dominion to Satan, but that those to whom he has granted free will place themselves under the power of darkness”.⁹² Plummer is, however, not unaffected by the uniqueness of this instance:

It is startling to find one who had all his life held idolatry in abomination, and been zealous for the glory of the one true God, using this *grandis et horribilis descriptio Satanae* (Beng.) and electing to apply the term *θεός* to the arch-enemy of God and of mankind.⁹³

7.7 F Zorell (1928)⁹⁴

These specific exegetical comments on “the God of this age” by Zorell, although referred to in some modern commentaries, have not been included in the discussion. It is noticeable that as a Roman Catholic scholar Zorell shows impartiality towards the alternative views on the debate on the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. In his initial summaries of the two positions he introduces fresh insights.⁹⁵ First, he increases the number who were reputed to have supported the Satan-view: “it is proposed and held by many (cf. Cornely, Belser, Loch-Rischl, Allioli-Arndt) . . . taught by several Greeks (Cyril of Alexandria, John Damascene) . . . and by several Latins”. Second, he adds to the list of those known to have supported the God-view, the early exegetes Primasius and Sedilius, and also adds the later scholars Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard as proponents of the view. Third, Zorell draws attention to some earlier versions of the New Testament, which adopted the God-view. The Coptic versions called the *Boheirica* and *Sahidica* translated the verse as, “Among whom God hardened the minds of the unbelievers of this world”. The Georgian version similarly read: “God has blinded the minds of those unbelievers of this world”. However, the Ethiopian version that Zorell presents is unique: “among unbelievers, whose heart the Lord, the Eternal God has obscured”.

⁹² Plummer, *The Second Epistle*, 114.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁹⁴ F Zorell, “Deus huius saeculi,” *Verbum Domini* 8 (Rome: Pontificio Institutio Biblico, 1928), 54-57.

⁹⁵ The article in *Verbum Domini* is provided with translation in Appendix 4, pp. 277-281.

Zorell is not convinced by either of the positions, and asks if there is a third alternative. He suggests that an alternative would be to see τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as an “explicative genitive,” so that the clause would mean that the unbelievers had been blinded by the world of sensual and material enticements. He cites Epiphanius as an ancient supporter of this view, and also sees Phil 3:19 as a cross reference.

8. The Text of 2 Corinthians 4:4 in Commentaries from 1945 to the Present

8.1 Commentary from 1945 to 1979

This period offered little novelty to the discussion on 4:4, but we may discern some important nuances. In his 1962 commentary, P Hughes noted that Paul was provoked to write 4:3-4 due to a criticism of his ministry.⁹⁶ Paul’s critics had objected that Paul’s gospel had been “ineffective in the case of so many, no doubt the majority”, and Paul concedes this, but not without placing the full responsibility of this veiled-ness on two factors: the wills of those to whom the gospel had been preached, together with the activity of Satan.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it is rarely pointed out that this generalized interpretation that assumes the blinding to be an act of Satan leads to a form of circular reasoning: people are unable to believe because they have been blinded, but they are blind because they don’t believe.

J Thompson adopts a qualified view of “the perishing”, and suggests that they “are *Paul’s opponents, who continue to over-emphasize Moses and the law*” (emphasis added).⁹⁸ This introduces the possibility that Paul is speaking within the context of Jewish unbelief. Although he subscribes to the interpretation that “the god of this age” is a reference to Satan, he is mindful that “only here in the New Testament is Satan referred to as a god”. Although he draws parallels between the “Jews blinded by the veil” (3:15) and the “unbeliever” in 4:4, he does not explore the implications of these

⁹⁶ P Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 125.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹⁸ J Thompson, *The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin, TX: R B Sweet, 1970), 58-59.

apparent linguistic and conceptual links.⁹⁹ In one other way, Thompson comes close to radically challenging ways of reading the text but stops short. He recognizes the theological challenges concerning “free will” posed by the “plain reading” of 4:3-4, but sees no resolution from Paul: “Paul does not concern himself here with the question of the free will of these unbelievers who are blinded”.¹⁰⁰

W de Boer comments that “the god of this age” is “a terrible (spooky) enemy agitating (on the scene)”.¹⁰¹ A significant contribution that de Boer makes is to suggest that the Satanic claim about “the world” in Lk 4:6 may be read into 2 Cor 4:4 – “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please”.¹⁰²

It was C K Barrett who first made explicit the notion of Jewish apocalypticism as the basis for Paul’s construal of “the god of this age”. This would gradually pick up to become one of the most common assumptions when interpreting the text in its most recent history:

The god of this age is a bold expression for the devil (cf. I Cor. ii.8), based on the commonplace apocalyptic presupposition that in the present age the devil has usurped God’s authority, and is accepted as god by his fellow rebels; only when in the age to come God establishes his kingdom will the devil be driven out.¹⁰³

Yet, although he proposed an apocalyptic background, Barrett was not prepared to concede that Paul operated out of any notions of ethical dualism: “His language is superficially dualistic, but only superficially so. Against his own will the prince of evil is made to serve God, so that true dualism is excluded”.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Thompson, *The Second Letter*, 58-59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁰¹ W de Boer. *Der zweite brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, ed. W de Boer and A Pool. WSNT (Wuppertal: R Brockhaus, 1981), 97.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 97-99.

¹⁰³ C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973), 130.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

R Bultmann's distinct contribution to the interpretation of 4:4 was the unapologetic assertion that "the god of this age" has been borrowed by Paul from *Gnosticism*: "Paul can take up the Gnostic concept of the θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, since for him the seductive and ruinous power of this aeon or 'world' is a positively active power in opposition to God, not something relatively inferior or basically harmless".¹⁰⁵ In the period post Bultmann, it has become clearer that full-blown Gnosticism was a phenomenon of the second century CE, and hence too late to have had any influence on Paul.

8.2 Commentary from 1980–1989

During this decade, two major commentaries on 2 Corinthians were published, both of which extensively analysed the Greek text, and exemplified thorough inter-textual research of the literature in the same milieu as 2 Corinthians; the first was by V P Furnish,¹⁰⁶ and the next by R P Martin.¹⁰⁷

Furnish interprets ὁ θεός primarily by means of the qualifying adjective, τοῦ αἰῶνος: "This age . . . a concept which has both spatial and temporal dimensions and which is not essentially different from his references to 'this world'".¹⁰⁸ However, he considers the possibility that Paul is subscribing to a kind of *Jewish apocalypticism* as evidenced in Qumran: "The dualism apparent here is characteristic of Jewish apocalypticism – e.g., that of the Qumran sectarians; see 1 QS iii.15-21, which describes "the spirits of truth and falsehood".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ R Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 104. [Note: The first edition of the commentary appeared in German in 1976]

¹⁰⁶ V P Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

¹⁰⁷ R P Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986). [Note: a revised edition featuring additional articles was published by Zondervan in 2014]

¹⁰⁸ Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 220. Interestingly the patristic writers concur that αἰῶνος and κοσμος are merely synonymous in this context, for which reason they routinely exchange the latter for the former!

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

One possible key to avoid the illogicality of suggesting that unbelieving people in general cannot see the light that comes from the gospel because they have all been blinded is the grammatical construction that begins 4:4; ἐν οἷς, “among whom”. Furnish recognizes that this construction, if taken seriously, would significantly limit the reference to “unbelievers” to “a subgroup within the more general category of ‘those who are perishing’”.¹¹⁰ Satisfied, however, that τῶν ἀπίστων is synonymous with τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, he rejects the possibility but we shall later explore the potential of Furnish’s insight more fruitfully. Unlike some previous scholars, Furnish does not allow his interpretation of “the god of this age” to draw him into speculating about the moral condition of “this age” nor even the extent of Satan’s power exercised in it. The only point Paul is making is that whoever is blinded has been blinded by Satan.¹¹¹

Martin’s comments on the phrase are brief, and add little to the discourse. He asserts that “the god of this age” must refer to Satan within Paul’s demonology, and reflects Paul’s “Jewish doctrine of the two ages . . . so Satan controls this age under God’s decree”.¹¹² Unlike Hughes and Furnish (see above), Martin avoids conceding that unbelievers in general are blinded beyond grasping the gospel. He views οἱ ἄπιστοι as a specific group: “those who were false brothers intent on doing Satan’s work by undermining Paul’s”.¹¹³

8.2.1 Frances Young and David F Ford (1987)¹¹⁴

Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians has the distinction of being the first academic publication in the century-and-a-half since Adam Clarke (1826) to unequivocally argue that ὁ θεός in 4:4 is a reference to God. The authors revisit the arguments of

¹¹⁰ Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 220.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 247: “The point is not that the present age is ‘evil’ or even that Satan’s rule is exercised over it. The single point is that Satan, *the god of this age*, is the one who is responsible for the blindness of the *unbelievers*”.

¹¹² Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ F Young and D F Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1987).

Chrysostom, and agree that his first argument – that “of this aeon” should be attached to the “unbelievers” – is admittedly “an idea that does seem to strain the language given the word order”.¹¹⁵ Chrysostom’s second argument, though, is on firmer grounds:

God is the God of this world – he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not just the God of heaven”. Although it is difficult for us to accept that he could blind people, “Scripture often speaks this way when it means he allows these things to happen”.¹¹⁶

Considering the cumulative argument: that Paul does not elsewhere use θεος to designate the devil; that there was merit at least to Chrysostom’s second argument that God is the God of this world; and that it is in fact a pervasive biblical theme that God blinds and hardens some people, the authors hold that “there are good grounds for believing that Paul meant God when he said God”. Their additional comment is most significant: “It is *both anachronistic, and inappropriate* both to the text and to Paul’s views expressed elsewhere to read *theos* as meaning anything other than God (emphasis added)”.¹¹⁷

8.3 Commentary from 1990 to 2000

This decade began and ended with the publication of two articles with immediate import to our subject of discussion: S R Garrett’s “The God of this World and the Affliction of Paul: 2 Cor 4:1-12”,¹¹⁸ and M Uddin’s “Paul, the Devil and ‘Unbelief’ in Israel (with Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3–4 and Romans 9–11)”.¹¹⁹

Sandwiched between these were the publications of a number of commentaries, not least of which were the major works of M E Thrall,¹²⁰ P W Barnett,¹²¹ and J M Scott.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 116.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115-117.

¹¹⁸ S Garrett, “The God of This World and the Affliction of Paul (2 Cor 4:1-12),” in *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. D Balch, E Ferguson and W Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 99-117.

¹¹⁹ M Uddin, “Paul, the Devil and ‘Unbelief’ in Israel (with Particular Reference to 2 Corinthians 3–4 and Romans 9–11),” *TynB* 50 (1999): 265-280.

8.3.1 Susan R Garrett (1990) and Mohan Uddin (1999)

Garrett's chief concern is to discuss the nature and source of Paul's afflictions as an apostle, in which context she draws attention to "the god of this age" in 2 Cor 4:4. She avers that Paul sees his opponents being manipulated by the malevolent power of Satan, and that the "unbelievers" in 4:4 are *not* the "unconverted generally"; rather they are *Paul's opponents* in Corinth who are "controlled by the devil", and determined to undermine his ministry.¹²³ Paul can designate Satan as "the god of this age" because he operated out of a "dualistic frame of reference", and she proceeds to explain Paul's view of Satan as follows:

As "god of this age," Satan blinds the minds of some of Paul's hearers, lest they perceive that Christ died to rescue them from the age's dominion (cf. Gal 1:4). Now that the crucifixion and resurrection have occurred, Satan engages in "damage containment". He strives to keep as many as possible from escaping his dominion and seizes every opportunity to capture one of the saved (2 Cor 2:11; cf. *T. Dan* 6:3-4).¹²⁴

While this presents us with an interesting hypothesis of Satan's motives, power, and *modus operandi*, it is at best speculative. The fact remains that contrasting strikingly against the backdrop of Second Temple Judaism – with its elaborate and impressive notions of Satan – Paul subscribes to a surprisingly "low view" of Satan. Although he acknowledges a personal being, Paul will mention "Satan" only seven times in the undisputed letters, and that too to warn Christians about an enemy that obstructs, deceives, and entraps God's unsuspecting people. He certainly gives no indication of post-resurrection "damage containment", and no other Pauline text supports the idea that Satan has a dominion in which human beings are helplessly incarcerated.

The chief objective of Mohan Uddin's essay is to explore the causality of Israelite unbelief in Jesus as Messiah in the thinking of Paul. In his comparative study of Romans

¹²⁰ Thrall, *Second Epistle*.

¹²¹ P W Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

¹²² J M Scott, *2 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998).

¹²³ Garrett, "The God of This World," 101-102.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

9–11 and 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, he argues that both God and the “Satan figure” of 4:4 are attributed with the initiative of making Israel obtuse. He finds a resolution to this apparent contradiction in Paul’s cognitive environment of Jewish apocalypticism: “‘harmonization’ of divine and satanic causal agencies was a possible solution for Jewish thinkers in Paul’s day, who were faced with the problem of how to relate satisfactorily the problem of evil with the divine realm”.¹²⁵

Given that Uddin works with three specific texts (Romans 9–11, and 2 Corinthians 3 and 4) that each deal with the problem of “Jewish unbelief”, and given that he sees the allusion to Isaiah 6:9 as a background echo, and therefore, God as the causal agent in judicial hardening in Romans 11:7 and 2 Cor 3:14, it is curious at the least that he fails to incorporate 2 Cor 4:4 as reiterating the same notion of God as one who causes judicial blinding, especially since the text explicitly states that “the God (ὁ θεός) of this age has blinded”. It could be argued that his *a priori* commitment to interpret ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as Satan pre-empted the potential for integrating these texts to better understand the coherence of Pauline logic.

8.3.2 Margaret Thrall (1994)

Thrall too dedicates an inordinate amount of discussion to explicate 4:4 (305-312), showing how enigmatic its various elements are for the task of the exegete. She recognizes that “ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is unique in the NT,” but concludes that the appellation is appropriate for Satan because “the pejorative connotations of ‘this age’ strongly suggest that Satan is meant, and the idea that Satan possesses control over the present world order would have support elsewhere in the NT”.¹²⁶

She sees three arguments, however, that have been used to avoid the conclusion that it refers to Satan:¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Uddin, “Paul,” 271.

¹²⁶ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 306-307.

1. The patristic argument that it is God, but this was based on a particular emendation of the Greek sentence structure.
2. The fact that “Paul could well describe God himself as ‘the God of this age’. Any other sense for ὁ θεός would be without parallel in the Pauline letters”. The latter assertion, however, is challenged by the articular noun ὁ θεός referring to the belly in Philippians 3:19.
3. By comparison with the similar construction in Phil 3:19 (ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία) the suggestion that our phrase could be interpreted to mean something like “their god is this age”.¹²⁸

Although “the prevention of perception is elsewhere ascribed to *God* (3:14; Rom 11:8),” Thrall argues that here “it is *Satan* who prevents perception of the truth of the gospel”. As to the question of how Satan can have the power to prevent people from becoming cognizant of the gospel, she responds: “It may well be that for Paul the ultimate causes of unbelief remained an unsolved enigma”.¹²⁹

8.3.3 Paul Barnett (1997)

In comparison to most other commentaries of similar extent, Barnett’s comments on 4:4 are disappointing to our interest. He assumes, rather than argues, the interpretation of the title as a reference to Satan, and merely summarizes the views of Thrall and Hughes in a footnote (fn. 45):

Gk. ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, a reference to Satan (so Thrall, 1.306-8), for whom elsewhere in this letter see 2:11; 11:14; 12:7. The striking term ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is not found elsewhere in the NT; but see ὁ ἀρχὼν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (John 12:31). This “god” is the master of this age, the “god” behind every idol, yet subject to the decree of God. “The unregenerate serve Satan as though he were their God” (Hughes, 127). Nonetheless there is no dualism here, as if God and Satan were equals.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ The argument for an explicative genitive as advanced by Zorell in “Deus huius saeculi,” 56-57.

¹²⁹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 308.

¹³⁰ Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 218-219.

8.3.4 James M Scott (1998)

Scott's comments on 4:4 are brief, but offer fresh insight to the background and open up the potential for rethinking the interpretation of the phrase. Among 2 Corinthians commentators from the late twentieth century, Scott is the only one to be convinced that "the god of this age" was more likely a reference to *God* himself.

This uniqueness of the phrase prompts him to search for comparable language in Jewish literature — the literary corpus that would have been most familiar to Paul. He finds *two* texts that are not cited in any previous writings, and refer to τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος ("God of the age/world"): Dn 5:4 (LXX) and Tob 14:6 (Codex Sinaiticus). Both are unambiguous references to God.¹³¹

Why then would commentators so readily incline to see here a reference to Satan? Scott explains along the same suggestions offered by Young and Ford,¹³² and Thrall:¹³³

Hence, our passage apparently refers to God himself as the one who has blinded the minds of unbelievers, an idea supported by other Pauline passages (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; Rom. 11:8). Such a notion, however, is as repugnant to the modern mind as the Markan explanation of Jesus' use of parables (Mark 4:12, citing Isa. 6:9-10). Therefore, commentators usually prefer to interpret the expression as a reference to Satan, even though such a designation seems to have no parallels.¹³⁴

The author does equally consider the merits of the preferred view by reference to the characteristic statements about "this age" in the Pauline corpus, and the teachings

¹³¹ Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

¹³² Young and Ford, *Meaning and Truth*, 116-117: "Furthermore, we cannot discount the theological motivations of modern scholars who take the other view. It eases the difficulty about attributing deliberate blinding to a God conceived of as a good loving Father, something we find as difficult as Marcion ever did".

¹³³ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 307: "The modern attribution of the term to Satan may be due to what is felt to be the difficulty of supposing that a loving God would deliberately blind people's minds".

¹³⁴ Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

about “Belial” in Second Temple literature,¹³⁵ and draws his arguments to an interesting conclusion:

It is not easy to choose between these options, and each has its own plausibility. *We may give a slight preference to interpreting the expression as referring to God, who frequently hardens people’s hearts against him (e.g., Exod. 4:21; 7:3, 13; 9:12, 35; 14:4, 8; Deut. 2:30; Isa. 63:17) (emphasis added).*¹³⁶

9. The Growing Consensus about Jewish Apocalypticism and Temporal Dualism as the Background to “The God of This Age”

We noted that ‘apocalypticism’ was first *explicitly* proposed as the key to Paul’s thought in 2 Cor 4:4 by Barrett in 1973. A cursory glance at the commentaries from the 1990s onwards shows how that idea has rapidly grown in popularity, as the examples below underscore.

In addition, we note that the output of full commentaries on 2 Corinthians following 2000 has been noticeably few,¹³⁷ and none appear to offer any new insight to explicate the verse under consideration. All the surveyed commentaries during the period adopt the majority interpretation, but find no great need to dedicate more than a few paragraphs to a discussion on “the god of this age”.¹³⁸

S Kistemaker argues that “Paul calls Satan the god of this age, not to place the devil on a level with God, but to show that Satan is the ruler of this world . . . Jesus called Satan the

¹³⁵ Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85-86.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁷ Including the following major works: S Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); Harris, *Second Epistle*; C A Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); C J Roetzel, *2 Corinthians*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007); F G Carver, *2 Corinthians*, NBBC (Kansas City, MO: Beacons Hill Press, 2009); T D Stegman, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); R F Collins, *Second Corinthians*.

¹³⁸ The most surprising being M Harris, in whose monumental volume of 989 pages, the discussion of the enigmatic phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου only takes four brief paragraphs (see 327-328); and Roetzel does nothing more than mention “the god of this world!” (see 70).

prince of this world, but Paul designates him 'god'".¹³⁹ Kistemaker seemingly subscribes to a full-blown dualism:

And as the spirit (god) of the age, he has the power to blind the minds of the unbelievers. The contrast is striking: preachers drive away the darkness of the world with Christ's illuminating gospel; Satan strikes the unbelievers with blindness so that their minds are unable to see the light of the gospel.¹⁴⁰

J Lambrecht is in no doubt that Paul is dependent on a dualistic worldview, although he argues about the "unbelievers" (who are most probably "non-Christian Jews"), and that Paul's rhetoric may "contain a connotation of human culpability":¹⁴¹ "Here we have an example of the kind of dualism inherent in Paul's own thought. The present age is under the domination of evil cosmic powers, the devil and his angels, who are in conflict with Christ".¹⁴²

D Garland also opts for Satan: "Paul must be referring to Satan as the god of this age." He classifies Satan as a "god" because he has a dominion, however limited by the one true God, and has subjects whom Paul labels "unbelievers".¹⁴³ He is further convinced that Paul is completely dependent on the imagery of Jewish apocalypticism that "pictured the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness ruling different realms and engaged in a life-and-death struggle".¹⁴⁴

Harris is convinced that "as a Christian Rabbi Paul divided time into two ages or aeons: 'this age'. . . and 'the coming age'". As for the phrase "this age": "the genitive τοῦ

¹³⁹ S J Kistemaker, *II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 140.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁴¹ J Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 65.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, citing G W MacRae, "Anti-Dualist Polemic in 2 Cor 4,6?" *StEv* 1 (TU 102) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), 420-431.

¹⁴³ D E Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 211.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

αἰῶνος τούτου may be taken as an objective genitive: ‘the god who rules over this age’”.¹⁴⁵

Keener argues that the reference ought to be to Satan because “apocalyptic Jewish thought accepted both God’s sovereignty and Satan’s wicked activity. God brings light but Satan, darkness and spiritual blindness”.¹⁴⁶

Carver is again dependent on Jewish apocalypticism: “Paul was aware of the widely held apocalyptic conviction that Satan had usurped God’s rule over “the present evil age” . . . Standing in the background of Paul’s thought is the apocalyptic dualism of Judaism, which in Paul is primarily temporal and ethical”.¹⁴⁷

Stegman maintains the dualism of Jewish apocalyptic: “The ‘god of this age’ is Satan. Admittedly paradoxical, referring to Satan as a “god” coheres with Paul’s worldview and terminology elsewhere. According to him, the world presently stands at the juncture of two ages”.¹⁴⁸

Collins does not wander from the strongest rationale for the majority view, offered by scholars since the 1970s: “The modified dualism of Paul’s apocalyptic thought leads him to affirm that those who are hostile to God are under the control of various cosmic forces, but nowhere is he as blatant as he is here when he affirms that the one whom he calls Satan is ‘the god of this age’”.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Harris, *Second Corinthians*, 328.

¹⁴⁶ Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 173.

¹⁴⁷ Carver, *2 Corinthians*, 146.

¹⁴⁸ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 99-100.

¹⁴⁹ Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 91.

10. Thomas Schmeller (2010)¹⁵⁰

Schmeller represents German scholarship belonging to the latter end of our period of study. He accepts the preferred interpretation but recognizes that using the term “god” for Satan is surprising and unusual. Like most commentators of this period, he goes for an explanation through *apocalypticism*: “In the background is the apocalyptic idea of a contemporary aeon (which is dominated by God-hostile forces), versus a future aeon in which God will rule as Lord”. He notes the parallelism between 4:4 and 4:6 as antithetic in nature, where the antithetical element lies in the meaning we attach to the exact use of ὁ θεός in each clause; in the latter, as meaning “God” and in the former “Satan”.¹⁵¹

Another significant note he makes is the connection between 4:4 and 3:14 by virtue of the common occurrence of “minds” in both verses, and the alternate actions of hardening and blinding, and comments: “There it was God himself who hardened the mind of Israel. Here it is Satan who has blinded the minds of all unbelievers”.¹⁵²

11. Donald Hartley (2005)¹⁵³ and Derek R Brown (2008)¹⁵⁴

It is of the greatest significance that our near-exhaustive survey of the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 comes to a close with two works by most recent scholars that specifically address the identity of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. And, as if seeking to represent the polarity of history, they reach diametrically opposite conclusions: Hartley preferring the view of the patristic writers that this was the God of the universe, and Brown being convinced that “the god of this world” must refer to Satan.

¹⁵⁰ T Schmeller, *Der zweite brief an die Korinther: Teilband 1: 2Kor 1,1–7,4*. EKK. (Neukirchen-Vlyn: Neukirchener Theologie, 2010).

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 241-242.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁵³ D E Hartley, “2 Corinthians 4:4: A Case for Yahweh as the ‘God of This Age’” (paper presented at the 57th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Valley Forge, PA, November 16-18, 2005), accessed January 7, 2014, <http://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/2cor-44.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ D R Brown, “The God of This Age: Satan in the Churches and the Letters of the Apostle Paul” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008).

In what may be perhaps the most impressive exegetical argument in support of the interpretation that predominated in the pre-Renaissance period, Daniel Hartley begins with an appraisal of the views of the Early Fathers from Irenaeus to Theodoret, and their respective implications. He then surveys the modern arguments for the devil as the God of this age, and isolates *five* main grounds:

- i. “This Age” has a pejorative connotation in the New Testament.
- ii. Paul is quite capable of using θεός with a meaning other than “God”.
- iii. It seems to be the “plain sense”.
- iv. The Johannine “Prince of this World” is Satan.
- v. It is analogous to Belial, an apocalyptic “Ruler of this World”.

Hartley counterargues that ὁ θεός never refers to the devil/Satan, and for “five reasons” the Johannine expression is not equivalent with Paul. However, the main thrust of his argument – that the phrase refers directly and unambiguously to Yahweh – is positive; he sees that 2 Cor 4:4 (along with 3:14 within the context) directly alludes to Isaiah 6:9-10¹⁵⁵ (and, in this he stands within a stream of tradition that goes back all the way to Tertullian of Carthage).

For Hartley, “Isaianic fattening/hardening is best understood as divine (rather than Satanic) deprivation of salvific wisdom”.¹⁵⁶

D Brown, on the other hand, sees no difficulty that “the god of this age” must be Satan: because: a) “other early Christian texts deploy similar expressions and titles to express the theological notion of Satan’s role as a powerful rule in the present age”; b) the noun

¹⁵⁵ Hartley, “2 Corinthians 4:4,” 9-20. Also, for a comprehensive exploration of the use of Is 6:9-10 in the NT, see D E Hartley, “The Congenitally Hard Hearted: Key to Understanding the Assertion and Use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the Synoptic Gospels” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005).

¹⁵⁶ Hartley “2 Corinthians 4:4,” 10. Further, he concludes: “If the interpretation above is correct, then Paul explains unbelief in terms of God withholding the *internal* light necessary to embrace the *external* light of the Gospel. . . . That ‘the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers’ is to say that the true God reserves the right to pass over those not destined for salvation by withholding salvific wisdom leading to repentance,” (21).

θεός is applied to figures other than “God”; and, c) “the god of this age” (4:4), as Satan, is reported to *blind* the unbelieving.¹⁵⁷

In the ensuing argument Brown asks: “Why does Paul use the title ὁ θεός τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου here rather than ὁ Σατανᾶς? His two-part solution, however, is unconvincing, not least because it merely continues to beg the question. His explanations in summary and our contentions are: a) Paul used ὁ θεός *because* he could not have used ὁ ἄρχων as he had done in 1 Cor 2:6 and 8 where he had referred to “the rulers of this age”. Since Brown is convinced that “rulers of this age” had meant “earthly political rulers”, and using the same noun could have confused Paul’s readership of 2 Corinthians, so that in 4:4 too Paul was talking about an earthly figure.¹⁵⁸ Yet, we ask, why then would he not have simply used ὁ Σατανᾶς in the first place? b) the striking, contrasting, parallel clauses in 4:4 and 4:6, both of whose subjects are ὁ θεός, suggest to Brown that the first (4:4) must mean Satan and the other (4:6) must refer to God.¹⁵⁹ Again, this begs the question why then couldn’t Paul have simply used ὁ Σατανᾶς in the first instance and made his contrasting statements explicit?

12. Conclusion

Although not exhaustive, our survey of the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 has been extensive, beginning with the very first extant reference to it (in the writings of Marcion) and tracing its mention in the majority of significant, extant texts up to the period of Calvin. Thereafter, we have referred a sufficient volume of literature to determine that post-Calvinian biblical scholarship reached a near-consensus that the phrase referred to Satan, though deductively arriving at the same conclusion via varied means. All known minority voices – those that argued that 2 Cor 4:4 is about the *true God* – in the post-Calvin period have been identified and cited, and they add no small

¹⁵⁷ Brown, “The God of This Age,” 151-153.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 155: “In this case, if in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul were to refer to Satan as ὁ ἄρχων of this age then he would be implying some sort of relationship between Satan and human (political) rulers, a notion not found elsewhere in Paul”.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: “Paul’s use of the term θεός seems motivated by his comparison of the antithetical roles of Satan and God in the passage”.

support to our proposal that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is rightly understood to be the God of the biblical faith.

However, if our assumption is to accomplish plausibility, we will have to deal with a number of issues that arise from the above survey of the history. First, what conceptualizations of Satan informed the thought-world of Paul, and to what extent did he adopt or depart from them? Second, what really constituted the influence of Jewish apocalypticism on the cognitive environment of the early Christian writers, and is the apparent temporal dualism of “*this age*” a sufficient basis to argue that Paul’s entire logic underlying the context of 2 Cor 4:1-6 is imbued with apocalyptic notions? Third, how do we deal with one of the linchpins of patristic explanations beginning with Irenaeus – the “transposition of words” – and can their conclusion (that Paul refers to the true God) be exegetically sustained even without emending the text as they did? Fourth, and positively, do the literary and historical contexts of 2 Cor 4:4 adequately argue in favour of the idea that when Paul uses ὁ θεός here he was not radically departing from the only way he employs the noun in all his writings, as a reference to the true God as understood by a first century Jew?

CHAPTER 3

Apocalypticism and Temporal Dualism in Pauline Thought

1. Introduction

Following on from Calvin's strong assertion that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul is referring to Satan when he speaks of "the god of this age", scholars have thereafter sought to buttress this argument with textual and historical evidence. Over the years, attention has focused on at least three supportive features *within* the text that could be used to confirm this majority view: the reference to "this age"; the fact that this entity ὁ θεός has actively "blinded the minds" of a segment of people; and, the explicit identification of the latter as "the unbelievers" in this sorry state of affairs.¹

Of these, the first – the reference to "this age" – is thought to allude to Jewish apocalypticism and its supposed view of the division of time into two epochs: a present age that is dominated by evil and the rule of pagans, and a future age that is devoid of evil and is exclusively the domain of God and his messiah. This discussion has become most animated in the last two hundred years, following the publication in the first half of the nineteenth century of a set of writings that would later be classified as apocalyptic literature.² The significance of this rather diverse corpus that investigators began to unfold in those early decades of the nineteenth century was that in addition to its shared characteristic features, the literature in this corpus also closely resembled the form of both Daniel and Revelation among the canonical writings. This fact, in turn, established the existence of the genre of apocalyptic literature in the ancient world, and spurred on the study of this fascinating new field.³ In addition, the process received a fresh impetus with the discovery and study of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the latter half of

¹ "The God of *this age* has *blinded the minds of the unbelievers* so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).

² F J Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 5: "In the first half of the nineteenth century, scholars began to attend closely to a collection of literary works from the ancient world, both Jewish and Christian, that resembled each other in form and content".

³ *Ibid.*, 5: "The works that caught scholarly notice all bore some resemblance to the canonical texts of Daniel and Revelation. . . . Scholars began to call such texts 'apocalypses' because they resembled Revelation, whose first words are 'the revelation [*apocalypsis*] of Jesus Christ'".

the twentieth century, because it has become apparent that the Qumran community, presupposed by the scrolls, also subscribed to pronounced views of an apocalyptic nature, especially to do with temporal and ethical dualism, and with regard to its eschatology.⁴ In order to avoid a confusion of terminology, we shall distinguish briefly between apocalypses as a type of literature, apocalypticism as an ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology.

2. Apocalypses, Apocalypticism, and Apocalyptic Eschatology

'Apocalyptic' is easily one of the most slippery terms in academic discussion. On the one hand, it is employed quite liberally in modern scholarly discourse,⁵ but on the other, scholars have found little agreement on its nuances, historical background, and definition.⁶ J J Collins speaks of "a prejudice against the apocalyptic literature which is deeply ingrained in biblical scholarship" and explains how such an attitude persisted from the nineteenth century and consequently relegated the study of apocalypticism to a state of gross neglect.⁷ In the interim, confusion with regard to the connotation of the word grew.⁸

The designation "apocalyptic" originates from the Book of Revelation, which begins with the words Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός. The earlier Jewish

⁴ J J Collins and D C Harlow, eds., *Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 224.

⁵ R B Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism*, JSNTSS 127 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 249-250, makes this point more forceful with a tongue-in-cheek comment at the end: "Indeed, bidding well to be considered this century's most valuable bequest to biblical criticism is the interpretative concept of 'apocalyptic'. Introductions, monographs, collections, colloquia, conference groups, articles galore, and casual references innumerable testify to the interpretative energies expended. (Rumours persist of 'Apocalyptic: The Musical')".

⁶ *Ibid.*, 278. See also, Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 4-5; L Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 21.

⁷ J J Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 1-2: "The great authorities of the nineteenth century, Julius Wellhausen and Emille Schürer, slighted its value, considering it to be a product of 'Late Judaism' which was greatly inferior to the prophets, and this attitude is still widespread today".

⁸ Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 5: "Another issue in defining apocalypticism is that it has assumed many different forms and has played a variety of functions. It was once common to include all sorts of phenomena under the term 'apocalyptic', including literary genres, social movements, religious ideas, and eschatological expectations".

writings within the “genre” did not have such a self-designation.⁹ The noun ἀποκάλυψις may mean “uncovering” or “revelation” and it is the former connotation that became so apt as a broad categorization of this literary phenomenon because a common characteristic of this literature, both Jewish and Christian, is the claim to “uncover” a secret or mystery that had been kept hidden, either for an extremely long period of time, or from the “ordinary” public.¹⁰ Vanderkam notes how the term now refers to *three* very different categories: “the word ‘apocalyptic’ actually comprehended three distinct, but overlapping, categories: apocalypse as a literary form, apocalyptic eschatology as a theological perspective, and apocalypticism as the ideology of a socio-religious movement”.¹¹

More recently it has been proposed that one has to abandon the use of “apocalyptic” as a noun, and speak instead of “apocalypses” and “apocalypticism”.¹² Of these, the former refers to what has come to be recognized over the past two centuries as a *literary genre*, one which incorporates both ancient Jewish and Christian writings. The significance of this body of literature for biblical studies has primarily arisen from the fact that it corresponds so closely with whole books in the Bible (Daniel and Revelation), as it also does with other discrete biblical passages that share similar traits.¹³ Clarity on the matter received a great advance through the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project

⁹ M Smith, “On the History of ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΠΤΩ and ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. D Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 14: “Remarkable is the rarity of words in works now commonly called ‘apocalypses’. I do not know any such text prior to the New Testament Apocalypse which either describes itself or the proceedings in it as ἀποκάλυψις or even uses the word ἀποκαλύπτω for the whole of the revelation”.

¹⁰ Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 20: “Literature bearing this name may thus be expected to be largely taken up with revealing what has been hidden”. For a philological survey see Smith, “On the History of ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΠΤΩ and ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ,” 9-20.

¹¹ J C Vanderkam and W Adler, eds., *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 5.

¹² So Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 4ff., although “apocalyptic” is also thought to generate a third distinctive category “Apocalyptic Eschatology”. See, Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 2; D E Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 1-12.

¹³ Murphy recognizes such texts in the Hebrew Bible as “Proto-Apocalyptic biblical texts”. See *Apocalypticism*, 27-66.

in 1979, which published a definition of “apocalypse” after careful analysis of all the available texts classified as “apocalyptic”:

A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.¹⁴

Following a fresh season of consultations that began with the 1981 Consultation on Early Christian Apocalypticism, and seminars that succeeded until 1987,¹⁵ scholars agreed that the above definition was inadequate, and recommended the following addition to it: “. . . intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behaviour of the audience by means of divine authority”.¹⁶

The extant corpus of apocalyptic literature, dating to the period up to the end of the first century, is now quite extensive. Alongside Daniel, the oldest text is thought to be 1 Enoch (a composite work of five parts). In 1964, D S Russell identified seventeen Jewish apocalypses, and in addition recognized several (approximately twenty) apocalyptic texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁷ J H Charlesworth lists approximately fourteen Jewish apocalyptic texts that may be dated no later than the first century.¹⁸ The most important Christian apocalypses during the comparable period are the *Book of Revelation* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*.¹⁹

¹⁴ Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 4-5.

¹⁵ A Y Collins, ed., *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, *Semeia* 36 (Decatur, GA: SBL, 1986), 1-11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷ See Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 22-23.

¹⁸ These include: *Ethiopian Apocalypse of Enoch*, *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*, *Sibylline Oracles*, *Treatise of Shem*, *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, *Fourth Book of Ezra*, *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *Apocalypse of Adam*, *Apocalypse of Elijah*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Testament of Job*, *Testament of Moses*, *Testament of Solomon*; J H Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), vi-vii.

¹⁹ Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 22.

W Schmithals, however, critically evaluates the extant literature and concludes that only eight writings in the period under consideration may be counted as genuine Jewish apocalyptic works. These are: *Daniel*, *Sybilline Oracles*, *Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, *Slavonic Enoch*, *Assumption of Moses*, *4 Ezra*, *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, and *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*.²⁰

As for the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Schmithals argues that while one may detect “the influence of the apocalyptic thought-world, which of course was always virulent throughout Judaism, to make itself evident,” a careful reading of their literature may at best show that the Qumran community was not an “apocalyptic sect” but one which “inclined toward apocalyptic conceptions”.²¹

Apocalypticism, on the other hand, is about a worldview of various Jewish and Christian groups that looked for the imminent end of the world with a new age of salvation for the elect. Though discernible as a distinctive ideology within the ancient world, the specifics of this ideology are not, however, so easily apprehended. Murphy helpfully provides the most comprehensive list of “Elements of an Apocalyptic Worldview”:²²

Elements of an Apocalyptic Worldview
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An unseen world affects or even determines this.• The unseen world is accessible only through revelation.• After death, humans are judged and rewarded or punished.• There is often a future world that entails a renewal of the present one or its replacement with a better one.
<i>continued...</i>

²⁰ See W Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1975), 188-212.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 204-205. For more recent discussion of the “apocalypticism” of the DSS (perhaps less dismissive and even contra Schmithals) see, J J Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997); F G Martinez, “Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. B J McGinn, J J Collins, and S J Stein (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003).

²² Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 14 (for complete discussion see, 8-13).

Elements of an Apocalyptic Worldview (continued)

- God's sovereignty is at issue. Humans and/or angels have rebelled against God's rule, but divine rule will soon be reasserted. Resistance to the coming of God's rule is common. God sometimes accomplishes the reestablishment of divine rule alone, sometimes with angelic aid, and sometimes with human aid. God's sovereignty is contrary to earth's empires, especially those that oppress Israel or Christians.
- Dualism pervades apocalypses – humanity is divided into the righteous and the unrighteous; time is divided into the present world and the one to come; cosmic powers are seen to be either for or against God.
- There is dissatisfaction with the present world.
- The coming of the eschaton is often accompanied by cosmic disturbances, as well as by social upheaval.
- The coming of a messiah is not present in every apocalypse but is not uncommon.
- The apocalyptic worldview is deterministic. At least on the macro level, things happen according to God's plans, regardless of human action. Individuals and groups can affect their own fate by aligning with or against God.
- The apocalyptic worldview has a developed angelology and demonology.
- Apocalyptic language is used to communicate the apocalyptic worldview.

Apocalyptic eschatology grew out of the prophetic eschatological tradition, and so they share the basic idea that “in accordance with the divine plan, the adverse conditions of the present world would end in judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous, thereby ushering in a new era of prosperity and peace”.²³ The way apocalyptic eschatology distinguished itself from prophetic eschatology was that, whereas the latter saw its reward in a this-worldly future, apocalyptic eschatology evinced a strong sense of pessimism about present existence and projected its aspirations to a future that would dawn after a cataclysmic finish to the present order of existence.²⁴

Our reasons for examining the phenomenon of Jewish apocalypticism is to investigate the claim that when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, especially 4:4, he was dependent on the

²³ P D Hanson, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” *ABD* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1:281.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

categories found in the literature and worldview of this movement and hence his phrase “the god of this age” can only make sense when viewed through such a grid. At the outset we will need to ask whether historical realities justify an assumption about well-defined, fixed, apocalyptic beliefs in the first century milieu, or whether apocalypticism was always a more fluid and dynamic phenomenon.

How, then, may we construe Jewish apocalypticism as an ideological phenomenon in the first century CE, and to what extent did it influence Paul’s theological formulations? In particular what exactly was Paul meaning when he used the phrase “this age”, and how closely can it be said to correspond to any notion of *temporal* dualism that prevailed at the time?

3. The Historical and Sociological Roots of Apocalypticism

Having established that apocalyptic writings were a peculiar form of literature that flourished within a Jewish milieu between 200 BCE and 100 CE, we are now constrained to ask how such a genre emerged; what were the particular historical and sociological roots of this novel phenomenon that would later become naturalized within Christianity?

First, it is pertinent to point out that full-blown apocalypses did not emerge until two to three centuries into the post-exilic period. Thus, while proto-apocalyptic elements are discernible throughout much of the Hebrew canon,²⁵ the earliest apocalyptic works – such as *1 Enoch*²⁶ – emerged during the Hellenistic period (332 BCE onwards). What then were the sociological factors of this period that may have called forth this innovative literature?

The first scholar to attempt to locate apocalyptic within the stream of biblical studies was A Hilgenfeld, who in his 1857 publication “declared for the first time that

²⁵ For a comprehensive survey of “proto-apocalyptic” biblical texts, see Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 27-66.

²⁶ P Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History*, trans. W J Short, JSPSS 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) argues that *The Book of Watchers* in *1 Enoch* is the oldest apocalypse we have.

apocalyptic was the point of intersection for the two parts of the Bible”.²⁷ What was even more striking was the unique positioning Hilgenfeld wished to give to apocalyptic: “Only apocalyptic conveys the historical connection of Christianity with the prophetic predictions of the Old Testament”.²⁸

German scholarship, following Hilgenfeld, though, did not look too kindly at the connection the latter wished to draw between the prophets and later Judaism, including apocalyptic. B Duhm was representative:

The seed which prophecy sowed fell on no good ground. It bore a double fruit, possessing something of the nature and spirit of prophecy, but owing still more to the ground itself: the *Law* and the *eschatological hope*, the law growing out of the demands made by the prophets, eschatology out of their threats and promises. With the assistance of external history, these two turned their people into the strangest people in the world.²⁹

This dual tendency of post-exilic prophecy gave rise to two distinct and somewhat conflicting movements. Some scholars posited the emergence of the “champions of theocracy” movement (an anti-eschatological tendency supported by the priestly aristocracy, and which viewed the prophetic tradition as passé) versus the apocalyptic movement (those that held the prophetic tradition in high regard, but were also open to Persian influence).³⁰

3.1 Apocalypticism in the Prophetic Tradition

The most explicit assertion of the origin of apocalyptic in the Hebrew prophets came in 1975 with the publication of Paul Hanson’s *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*,³¹ which Richard Bauckham (2008) called “the most important recent investigation of the origins of

²⁷ K Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy* (Naperville, IL: Alec R Allenson, 1970), 36 (referring to A Hilgenfeld, *Die jüdische Apokalypik in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 1857).

²⁸ Koch, *Rediscovery*, 36.

²⁹ B Duhm, *Israels Propheten*, 1922, 460, cited in Koch, *Rediscovery*, 37.

³⁰ See Koch, *Rediscovery*, 39-40.

³¹ P D Hanson, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Escatology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975).

apocalyptic in Old Testament prophecy”.³² Hanson was reacting to the prevailing scholarly tendency to credit “Persian thought” as the critical source of Jewish apocalyptic.³³ This consensus had been reached by a methodology of contrasting “pre-exilic prophecy” with “late apocalyptic” and arriving at features regarding eschatology, future-hope, and judgement, that “seemingly have nothing in common”. Thereafter, since the “new” phenomenon, apocalyptic, needed explanation, influences outside of the Hebrew prophets had to be found:

The most common outside source to which the origins of apocalyptic are traced is Persian dualism, especially as it was mediated by later Hellenistic influences. The reason for this deduction is clear: Since apocalyptic is regarded as a new phenomenon rising in the third to second century B.C., one turns to look for a third-to-second century influence to account for its dualism, determinism, etc.³⁴

Hanson argues that contrary to this prevailing view, apocalyptic was a phenomenon that was firmly rooted in the prophetic traditions of the Hebrew scriptures. He identifies “apocalyptic eschatology” as a golden strand that runs “at the heart of many of the so-called apocalyptic works” and argues that this is by no means a sudden development; on the contrary, apocalyptic eschatology “follows the pattern of unbroken development from pre-exilic and exilic prophecy. Outside influences (e.g., Persian dualism and Hellenism) upon this apocalyptic eschatology appear to be late, coming only after its essential character was fully developed”.³⁵

The schema that Hanson presented proposed that the apocalyptic tradition developed through four historical stages (beginning from the early post-exilic period, that is, late sixth and early fifth centuries): Proto-Apocalyptic, Early-Apocalyptic, Mid-Apocalyptic, and Late-Apocalyptic. Hanson assigns biblical exemplars for each of the stages. He

³² R Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 40.

³³ Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 29: “For much of the twentieth century Jewish apocalypticism was widely assumed to have been heavily influenced by Persian thought”.

³⁴ Hanson, *Dawn*, 5-6. Hanson argues further: “The apocalyptic literature of the second century and after is the result of a long development reaching back to pre-exilic times and beyond, and not the new baby of second-century foreign parents”.

³⁵ Hanson, *Dawn*, 7-8.

suggests the following schema: Second Isaiah (Isa. 40-55) is termed “Proto Apocalyptic” because it points towards later apocalyptic developments; Third Isaiah (Isa. 56-66), Zechariah 9-13, and Isaiah 24-2 are assigned to “Early Apocalyptic”; Zechariah 14 is “Mid Apocalyptic”; and Daniel is “Late Apocalyptic”. Since he placed Zechariah 14 in the mid-fifth century and Daniel in the mid-second century, Hanson was faced with a “chronological gulf” but this posed no insuperable challenge to his thesis, because he “considers apocalyptic eschatology to have already developed in all essentials *before* this gulf”.³⁶

Despite the salutary corrective Hanson offered, there were still features of full-blown apocalyptic that could not simply be traced back to the Hebrew prophets. Most apocalyptic writings are pseudonymous (the Revelation of John is an exception), unlike the prophets. They engage in extensive surveys of history in the form of *vaticinia ex eventu* (prophecy after the fact), display a high interest in angels, assume a dualistic (temporal and spatial) worldview, and present distinct speculations on death, post-mortem rewards and punishments, and heaven and hell.³⁷

Nevertheless, Bauckham nuances the link between the prophets and the apocalyptists by viewing the latter as “interpreters” of the former.³⁸ He avers that despite the many other features of apocalyptic, the interpretation of the Hebrew prophets “was the dominant aspect of the major tradition of eschatological apocalypses. In this tradition, the transcendent eschatology of post-exilic prophecy was taken up and further developed in a conscious process of reinterpreting the prophets for the apocalyptists’ own age”.³⁹

³⁶ See Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 40.

³⁷ See *Ibid.*, 43-44; Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 23-25.

³⁸ Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 54: “The apocalyptists understood themselves not as prophets but as inspired interpreters of prophecy”.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

3.2 Apocalypticism in the Wisdom Tradition

The scholar who outright rejected the theory of apocalyptic origins in the Hebrew prophets was G von Rad, following his 1960 *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, in which he began to look at the roots of apocalypticism. Noticing the compatibility of the apocalyptic literature to biblical *Wisdom* – in terms of the material they cover, the questions raised, and the argumentation – von Rad argued that the theory of prophetic origin is “completely out of the question”. For him, apocalyptic is a derivative of *Wisdom* for the additional reason that the authors identify themselves as *sopherim*, “writers”, just as the scribes of “wisdom” did. Another compelling similarity is their phenomenal interest in encyclopaedic knowledge.⁴⁰

Koch argues that while von Rad makes a major contribution to the discourse, yet his basic thesis suffers from the fact that the apocalyptists show “a burning interest in eschatology”; a matter that did not so much as detain the wisdom writers.⁴¹

The subject of “wisdom” was developed in a different direction by the proposal that the roots of apocalyptic were to be found “not from proverbial wisdom but from mantic wisdom”. The latter refers to a tradition that was prevalent in the ancient Near East, whereby the “wise” men claimed to divine the future through a variety of means, including, dream-interpretation, omens and stars. Bauckham suggests that although mantic wise men are not explicitly found in the Bible, the two prominent Bible characters who served in a foreign royal court – Joseph and Daniel – are both known for their success over their contemporaries, in Egypt and Babylon respectively, with regard to the “mantic arts”!⁴² However, Bauckham makes clear that with its “growing concern with eschatology” apocalyptic distinguishes itself from mere mantic wisdom: “Apocalyptic, like mantic wisdom, is the revelation of the secrets of the future, but in its

⁴⁰ See Koch, *Rediscovery*, 42-44; Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 20.

⁴¹ Koch, *Rediscovery*, 45. Also see, Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 20.

⁴² Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 44-45: “Daniel is the representative of the God of Israel among the magicians and astrologers of the Babylonian court, but he represents him *in the practice of mantic wisdom*” (45).

concern with the eschatological future apocalyptic moves beyond the scope at least of Babylonian mantic wisdom".⁴³

3.3 Apocalypticism in the Earliest Apocalypses

The two extant works that may be classified as the earliest apocalypses are Daniel (7–12) and 1 Enoch.⁴⁴ Collins makes the pertinent point that if we are to trace the origins of apocalypticism, we must give adequate attention to what the earliest complete apocalyptic works reveal:

Postexilic prophecy undoubtedly supplied some of the codes and raw materials utilized by the later apocalypses. However, if we wish to examine the matrix in which the configuration of the genre emerged, we must begin with the earliest actual apocalypses, rather than with their partial antecedents.⁴⁵

Although there is no certainty about the place of composition of either of these works, scholars have long recognized the “prominence of Babylonian lore” in major sections of composite 1 Enoch, and similarly the *Sitz-im-Leben* of Daniel is also coincidentally, Babylonian. This raises the interesting possibility that apocalyptic may have gained some of its distinctive features from an original eastern-Diaspora setting, thus buttressing the arguments of earlier scholars that the phenomenon owes a good deal to Babylon and Persia.

We have already mentioned Babylonian “mantic wisdom” as a possible background. Another feature of apocalyptic is *vaticinia ex eventu*, whereby a legendary or ancient figure (the pseudonymous author) is attributed with having ‘prophesied’ an event that is part of the reader’s present experience (“prophecy after the fact”). This technique bears striking resemblance to the genre of Akkadian prophecies:

⁴³ Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 46.

⁴⁴ Significant portions of their material are reasonably dated well before the Maccabean Revolt; see, Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 92 and 93, n17; Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 25-26. Also Bauckham, *Jewish World*, 46, speaks of: “The probability of a developing Daniel tradition, which has its roots as far back as the exile in Jewish debate with and participation in mantic wisdom, developed in the Eastern diaspora, and finally produced Daniel apocalypses on Palestinian soil in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes”.

⁴⁵ Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 25.

An Akkadian prophecy is a prose composition consisting in the main of a number of 'predictions' of past events. It then concludes either with a "prediction" of phenomena in the writer's day or with a genuine attempt to forecast future events. The author, in other words, uses *vaticinia ex eventu* to establish his credibility and then proceeds to his real purpose.⁴⁶

Another possible Babylonian contribution to the dramatic and visual apocalyptic manner of revelation is the "tradition of Akkadian dream visions" whereby a seer has a vision in the night and is transported by a chaperone to the netherworld (or the heavenlies) and is given an unprecedented revelation. This tradition has several echoes within the apocalyptic genre, especially where they emphasise dreams and heavenly ascents.⁴⁷

Murphy argues that yet another element that the ancient Near East passed on to Jewish apocalyptic is the narrative of the *combat myth*: "It depicts a battle between the gods. At stake is the sovereignty of specific gods as well as the integrity of creation. The combat myth contains much that is central to apocalypticism".⁴⁸ He summarizes the basic plot as follows:

A force (often depicted as a monster) threatens cosmic and political order, instilling fear and confusion in the assembly of the gods; the assembly or its president, unable to find a commander among the older gods, turns to a younger god to battle the hostile force; he successfully defeats the monster, creates the world (including human beings) or simply restores the pre-threat order, builds a palace, or receives acclamation of kingship from the other gods.⁴⁹

What if any were the distinctively Persian elements that found a home in Jewish apocalyptic literature? In the history of apocalyptic studies the influence of Persia has been recognized well above Babylon because of the pronounced parallels between Zoroastrian religion and the categories found in apocalyptic literature, including: "dualism, periodization of history, heaven and hell, post-mortem rewards and

⁴⁶ Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 27, citing A K Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1975), 6; also see Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 17-18.

⁴⁷ Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 27-28.

⁴⁸ Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16. With reference to ancient Near Eastern mythic literature, F M Cross, "New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic," *JTC* 6 (1969): 157-165, has argued that Canaanite influences on apocalyptic were stronger than Babylonian.

punishments, resurrection, angels and demons, the clash of superhuman forces of good and evil, eschatological battles with attendant suffering, and ascent of the soul”.⁵⁰

In the light of this background, it would be foolhardy to deny the confluence of ideas, both external and internal to Jewish religion, which shaped the emergence of apocalypticism. Nevertheless, what did emerge is without parallel in the ancient world; apocalyptic literature and thought is a peculiarly *Jewish* – and later Christian – phenomenon:

Apocalyptic is a stubbornly Jewish and Christian development. This type of literature flourished (the word is not too strong) in a Jewish environment, but we see nothing comparable in any other environment known to us. . . It is hard to see this literature as derived from a source which does not know it. Granted that there have been borrowings from many sources, the main idea is surely Jewish.⁵¹

4. How did Apocalyptic Literature Function?

Morris’ historical assessment that apocalyptic is a peculiarly Judeo-Christian phenomenon then begs the question about its rationale and how it functioned during its relatively extensive period of vitality.

We have clearly established that while there may have been a “proto-apocalyptic” tradition in the early post-exilic period, full-blown apocalypses only emerged as Judaism moved into its late Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Consequently, the accelerated development of apocalyptic thought in this milieu must have had something to do with the social mood that prevailed in that context. In contrast to the pre-exilic and exilic prophets, who saw a this-worldly “future” for Israel following the catastrophic divine judgement of exile to Babylon, the post-exilic generation grew gradually disillusioned by the apparent failure of the prophetic promise of a restored Israel, sovereign and ascendant. What they found instead was a perpetually subjugated Israel that had little control over her destiny; a realization that was shockingly brought home by the rise of Alexander the Great and his Hellenization project that rapidly overcame existing cultures

⁵⁰ Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 15. Also see, Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 29-33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

from Macedonia to North India, and painfully transformed the cities of Judah into thoroughgoing pagan polities.

The shock of a protracted “exile” pushed Judaism to a critical examination of its self-understanding, especially calling for a review of the message of the prophets. It is thought that this reflective stance gave birth to two predominant strands that would run parallel to each other, and define Judaism, over the next few centuries, at least as far as the end of the first century CE. One strand focused on the importance of the covenant with Yahweh, while the other leaned on the prophetic interest in last things. We may argue that by their respective messages, both groups can be classified as only interpreters of the prophets, not claiming the authority to present novel revelations, but claiming to refocus the prophetic message in nuanced ways and characteristic language. One tradition to emerge discerned the prophets’ role as prosecutors of the covenant which included their strident indictments of Israel and Judah for failing to observe Torah. This group developed the strongest commitment to Torah-study and Torah-observance and later transformed into the Hasidim, who themselves eventually led the way in the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism. The other group of interpreters saw the prophetic interest in eschatology, and redirected their attention to how this vision of the future was to be upheld. They conceded that the traditional expectation of a historical future for Israel could no longer be maintained in the face of rapidly-declining prospects of a geopolitical Jewish kingdom. Consequently they understood eschatology in radically new ways; as cosmic in scope and temporally trans-historical. Thus, together with the claim to esoteric experiences, and by the powerful use of vivid symbolism, the apocalyptic tradition “dawned” on the landscape of a despondent Judaism, offering renewed vigour and hope to its continuing relevance in the world.

It was P. Vielhauer who proposed that apocalyptic literature emerged as “conventicle literature”; the writings of groups that saw themselves as marginal and powerless against the status quo, and hence sequestered themselves in order to pursue their thought and praxis more privately. Collins argues that this may hold true only in some instances, such as in the case of the Qumran sectarians, and thus finds this an

“unwarranted generalization”.⁵² The more helpful aspect of Vielhauer’s thesis is that “apocalyptic is written out of actual distress”⁵³ because the single unifying factor of the very diverse samples of extant apocalypses is that they emerge against the backdrop of a disordered world, at least from the perspective of their Jewish authors. Agreeing with the idea of “groups in crisis” Collins suggests the following examples:

The crises were of various kinds. For the authors of the Book of the Watchers, it was a *cultural crisis*, when the world was changed by Hellenism; for the author of 4 Ezra it was a *crisis of theodicy*, the apparent failure of divine justice in the light of the destruction of Jerusalem (emphasis added).⁵⁴

To this we might add the apocalyptic writings of the Qumran sectarians for whom it was a *religious crisis*, whereby they perceived the entire hierarchical establishment of the Jerusalem-cult to have capitulated to worldliness and become apostate; and the Christian Apocalypse of John that presents the church in the *crisis of persecution* as the status quo had become radically hostile to expressions of the Christian faith. How then did apocalypticism come to the aid of groups in these kinds of crises?

D Hellholm has argued that apocalypticism “[was] intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority,”⁵⁵ and this is entirely plausible because the underlying message of apocalyptic literature holds out the vision of a hopeful ending; with the reestablishment of justice, punishment of the wicked, and rewards for the righteous:

The essential ingredients of this worldview were a reliance on supernatural revelation, over and above received tradition and human reasoning; a sense that human affairs are determined to a great degree by supernatural agents; and the belief that human life is subject to divine judgment, culminating in reward or punishment after death.⁵⁶

⁵² Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 38.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ J J Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J J Collins (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing, 1998), 158.

⁵⁵ See Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 41-42.

⁵⁶ Collins, “From Prophecy,” 157.

As for apocalyptic literature's characteristically unusual imagery, visions of the heavenly realm, and fantastic claims about cosmic geography, R J Clifford proposes that once the genre is read and understood against the backdrop of the "combat myths" of the ancient Near East, which he cogently argues to be the "early antecedents to apocalyptic", one realizes that the imagery and the themes of apocalyptic literature are neither as "bizarre nor obscurantist as some claim" because such narratives were a customary form of discourse about worldview.⁵⁷ In other words, combat myths provided apocalyptic literature with the "codes and raw materials" by which to communicate ideas about history and eschatology with little difference to the concerns that occupy social discourse today.⁵⁸

5. Apocalypticism and the New Testament

In a manner of speaking, we have come full circle to be deliberating on apocalypticism and the New Testament, because it was the *Apocalypse of John* that bequeathed the name to this field, and, together with the Old Testament Book of Daniel, piqued the interest of scholars towards tracing the study of this particular genre from antiquity.⁵⁹ The question that confronts us, however, is whether the genre of apocalypticism and the apocalyptic worldview remain confined to the Book of Revelation within the New Testament corpus, or do they present themselves in the other writings. Or, to approach it from another angle, can we assume an apocalyptic worldview also for the apostle Paul even though his writings, unlike Revelation, may not be classified as apocalypses?

That early Christianity gave an inordinate importance to apocalypticism is now without dispute.⁶⁰ In comparison, although the Qumran scrolls included fragmentary apocalyptic.

⁵⁷ R J Clifford, "The Roots of Apocalypticism in Near Eastern Myth," in *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁹ G S Oegema, *Apocalyptic Interpretation of the Bible: Apocalypticism and Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism, the Apostle Paul, the Historical Jesus, and Their Reception History* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2012), 1.

⁶⁰ See Vanderkam and Adler, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 26: "Some of the Jewish apocalypses did in fact receive 'canonical' recognition. 4 Ezra (also known as 2 Esdras) is included in most modern editions of the Vulgate. Canon lists of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church include 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra".

material, the proportion of such material in that Jewish collection is negligible in comparison to the numbers of Jewish apocalypses preserved by Christian groups.⁶¹ In fact, with the emerging dominance of Rabbinic Judaism, following the huge disappointment of the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and the later Bar Kochba Revolt in 132–135, Jewish apocalypses fell out of vogue in their birth communities, and they survived purely because of their preservation in the Christian communities.⁶² Although C C Torrey's highly speculative proposal that following 70 CE the Jewish leaders' passionate devotion to Torah and Tradition caused them "to destroy as undesirable all the Semitic originals of the 'outside books', including the apocalyptic writings, and so effect the sudden and complete abandonment by the Jews of their popular literature" cannot be substantiated in history⁶³, it is quite clear that following the disastrous experience of the Jewish Wars with Rome, and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism, the fortunes of apocalyptic within its original Jewish milieu suffered an irreversible downturn:

In the earlier days of the nation's struggle for survival, when nationalism was a power to be reckoned with, apocalyptic found a natural setting and perfect conditions for growth; the message that the kingdom of God was at hand had an urgency and relevance for all who heard it. In the world of rabbinic Judaism, however, this sense of urgency had passed and the fires of nationalism had for the most part been damped down. The emphasis was now on the Law of God contained in sacred Scripture, on the 'tradition of the elders' and on the life of obedience to the revealed will of God in the light of these sacred writings. Indeed, the very fanaticism of the apocalyptists would in itself be a warning to the rabbis of the dangers inherent in such teachings.⁶⁴

What then was the reason for the inordinate adoption and adaptation of Jewish apocalypticism within the Christian communities of the ancient Mediterranean? Did this interest suddenly originate among the early followers of Jesus simply because the Christian movement felt some affinity with the apocalyptic tradition, as those equally

⁶¹ Vanderkam and Adler, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*: "Like much Jewish literature of the second temple period, the apocalypses owe their survival almost entirely to early Christianity. . . . Theorizing about the social setting and function of the Jewish apocalypses must at some point acknowledge the fact that the context in which these apocalypses survive is a Christian one".

⁶³ See D S Russell, *The Method and Message of Apocalyptic: 200BC–AD100* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1964), 30.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

rejected by the rabbinic establishment? Or, was Jewish apocalypticism a serendipitous “discovery” by the early church because its “messianic and eschatological teachings were eminently suitable for the purpose of Christian propaganda”?⁶⁵ Or, does Christianity’s close associations with apocalyptic thought go all the way back to Jesus?

5.1 An Apocalyptic Jesus?

Albert Schweitzer, in the twentieth century, was the first to assert unambiguously that Jesus was an “apocalyptic preacher” and that “Jesus’ conduct in its entirety was ruled by an eschatological scenario”.⁶⁶ Schweitzer coined the famous phrase *konsequente Eschatologie*, “thoroughgoing eschatology”, and boldly offered his readers only two options: either to find in the gospels an apocalyptic Jesus or concede that the gospels offer no credible representation of a historical Jesus:

Schweitzer indeed went on to contend that we must choose between two alternatives, between thoroughgoing eschatology and thoroughgoing scepticism. By this he meant that either Jesus lived in the same imaginative world as those responsible for the old Jewish apocalypses, or the Gospels are so unreliable that we know next to nothing about him.⁶⁷

Schweitzer’s positioning of Jesus quickly became mainstream, and scholars such as R Bultmann, J Jeremias and E P Sanders have each built on that original foundation, although each provided his unique reading of its implications.⁶⁸ Bultmann, for instance, presses the idea that Jesus expected an imminent, unprecedented in-breaking of God’s rule:

Jesus’ message is connected with the hope . . . primarily documented by the *apocalyptic* literature, a hope which awaits salvation not from a miraculous change in historical (i.e. political and social) conditions, but from a cosmic

⁶⁵ Russell, *Method and Message*, 32.

⁶⁶ D C Allison, “The Eschatology of Jesus,” in *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 268. See also S M Lewis, *What Are They Saying About New Testament Apocalyptic?* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2004), 8-10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 268. See also R E Sturm, “Defining the Word ‘Apocalyptic’: A Problem in Biblical Criticism,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J Louis Martyn*, ed. J Marcus and M L Soards, JSNTSS 24 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 27: “[Schweitzer] forcefully articulates that eschatology must be ‘consistent’ and thoroughgoing, or it is not eschatology at all: ‘Jesus . . . must have thought either eschatologically or uneschatologically, but not both together’”.

⁶⁸ See Allison, “Eschatology,” 268-269.

catastrophe which will do away with all conditions of the present world as it is.⁶⁹

Sanders, on the other hand, while subscribing to the centrality of eschatology in the ministry and message of Jesus, argues that the eschatological hope, rather than involving a Bultmannian “cosmic catastrophe”, was firmly tied to the re-ordering of this world. With regard to the expectation of a Jewish restoration “he sees ‘Jewish eschatology’ and ‘restoration of Israel’ as virtually synonymous”.⁷⁰

The restoration was to be a new order created by God and would include the reconstitution of the twelve tribes of Israel, a new temple, the inclusion of the Gentiles, sinners, and social outcasts. This restoration eschatology is the connecting link between the intentions of Jesus, his death, and the rise of the movement named after him. The disciples continued to expect the occurrence of this restoration.⁷¹

Although Schweitzer’s thesis has been extensively criticized in recent years, it has commended itself by the rather comprehensive support it gains from the evidence within the Gospel records and their implied backgrounds. Allison has collated and enumerates no less than seven arguments in favour of an “apocalyptic” or “eschatological” Jesus over and against a “noneschatological” one:⁷²

1. The eschatology common to the apocalyptic writings was well known in the Judaism within which Jesus was nurtured. In addition to the canonical apocalyptic texts such as Daniel, Is 24–27, and Zechariah, books such as 1 Enoch and the Sybilline Oracles were widely known texts.
2. An apocalyptic worldview was not only found within Judaism; early Christian communities were more deeply attracted by what it offered in consonance with the terms of their new faith. 1 Cor 10:11 shows that first generation Christians

⁶⁹ Allison, “Eschatology,” 268.

⁷⁰ See, Lewis, *What They Are Saying*, 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² See Allison, “Eschatology,” 275-280.

believed that “the ends of the ages have come”, which begs the question where such a way of thinking arose from. The Synoptic gospels show how closely Jesus was associated with John the Baptist whose message rings with apocalyptic themes of an imminent in-breaking of Messiah’s reign, beginning with eschatological judgment by fire.

3. Statements in the synoptic gospels indicate an expectation that Jesus and his followers were living at the temporal borders of the coming Kingdom of God (Mk 9:1; 10:23; 13:30; Lk 12:35-38; Mt 25:1-13). Jesus constantly speaks about the Kingdom of God in the Synoptics.
4. In the established Jewish scheme of things the Kingdom of God was always associated with imminence and eschatology (Lk 2:25).
5. A common apocalyptic conviction was that it was in the “last days” that God would “finally defeat Satan and the forces of evil”. In the ministry of Jesus, we come across the language about the present and immediate defeat of Satan; both in terms of Jesus’ ministry of exorcism, as well as through his explicit teachings about Satan’s “fall” by means of Christ’s ministry (Lk 10:18; 11:20; Mk 3:27).
6. Although Christianity had a strong and distinctive moral focus, its followers seemed to lack any great urgency to change political and social realities; they almost seem to be resigned to allow systemic injustice and disorderliness of the Roman empire run its course without confrontation.⁷³ This is not unlike the apocalyptists who practised a deep-seated pessimism about the world as is, and therefore concentrated their expectations on the miraculous intervention of God at the close of history.
7. The earliest literary witnesses (the NT books) associate eschatological motifs with the death and resurrection of Jesus, such as the occurrence of a “darkness that covered the land”, a “strong earthquake”, and dead people coming to life (Mt 27:51-53).

⁷³ See also, C Rowland, “Apocalyptic, God and the World. Appearance and Reality: Early Christianity’s Debt to the Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition,” in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context*, ed. J Barclay and J Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 238.

Allison drives home his insistence that the Christian interest in apocalypticism ultimately derives from the stance of Jesus, by identifying the “expectations” and “self-conception” of Jesus from within the widely-accepted stream of authentic Jesus-sayings; these, in turn, readily blend into the larger canvas of Jewish apocalypticism. With regard to “Jesus’ expectations”, Allison identifies *eschatological judgement, the resurrection of the dead, the restoration of Israel, and eschatological tribulation*, as constituting prevalent themes. These notions correspond unambiguously with the predominant expectations of Jewish apocalyptic thought.⁷⁴ As for “Jesus’ self-conception” – his presentation of himself as the “anointed prophet” (Mt 21:11, 46; Mk 6:15; 8:27-28; Lk 6:20-23; 7:39, 13:33; 24:19) and his self-designation as the “Son of Man” (Mt 10:23; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 12:40; 18:8), again reinforce the claim that Jesus understood his ministry and message in apocalyptic terms:⁷⁵

The popularity of apocalyptic eschatology in Jesus’ day, Jesus’s close relationship to John the Baptist . . . the selection of a symbolic body of twelve men, the eschatological expectations of so many in the early church, the primitive proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection, and Jesus’ execution as “king of the Jews”, a would-be deliverer, all cohere with the view that Jesus’ words were from the beginning linked with a strong eschatological expectation.⁷⁶

Finally, we may consider stock motifs of apocalyptic discourse that are prominent in the teachings of the Gospels and other early Christian writings. Russell teases out several standard “ideas and beliefs made popular by the apocalyptic books”, which, it will be readily apparent, are equally at home in the literature of early Christianity:

They express belief in such things as the heavenly bliss of the righteous, the resurrection of the dead, the heavenly banquet, the coming judgment, the fires of Gehenna, the angelic destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of the New Jerusalem, the advent of the Messiah, the travails of the messianic age, wonders and portents heralding the last days.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ See Allison, “Eschatology,” 280-289.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 290-293.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 293: the argument is further buttressed by recognizing that the only plausible connection between the *apocalyptic* prophet, John the Baptist, and the clearly *apocalyptic* Christian communities that came about following the death of Jesus (as reflected for example in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians), is the historical person of Jesus; on this see, Lewis, *What Are They Saying*, 31-36.

⁷⁷ Russell, *Method and Message*, 30. To these Allison, “Eschatology,” 293-299, adds the emphasis on *revelation*, the repeated metaphor of *harvesting*, the *periodization of history*, the sharper language of

5.2 Paul as an Apocalyptic Thinker

Chronologically, the letters of Paul predate the writings of the rest of the NT documents, and hence any evidence of apocalyptic thinking within his writings cannot be attributed to literary borrowing from the Gospels and their presentations of Jesus' teachings. Paul is clearly an apocalyptic thinker in his own right, although he neither wrote an apocalypse, nor provided a systematic explanation of his apocalyptic beliefs.⁷⁸ What we have are Paul's letters, occasional writings, from which, scholars are increasingly convinced, emerges sufficient evidence to portray Paul as one steeped in the apocalyptic worldview of first century Judaism:

The text that we call 2 Corinthians is a case in point. Whatever our definition of the weasel word "apocalyptic," this letter is replete with it, engaging in language, imagery, and ideas that are normally associated with both apocalyptic thought and form. "Revelation" and "veiling," "transformation," "light and darkness," and "death and resurrection," run throughout as constant themes, counterpointed by specific references to "mystery," "the Day of the Lord," "the (satanic) god of this world," and "the judgment of God".⁷⁹

Despite our thesis countervailing Humphreys' argument for "the (satanic) god of this world" as evidence of Paul's apocalypticism, there is no disputing the fact that Paul spoke the language of apocalypticism. How did he gain such a worldview?⁸⁰ In the light of our discussion thus far, it is not difficult to imagine that Paul's Pharisaic upbringing, a form that predated the strict discontinuity between rabbinic Judaism and apocalypticism following the Jewish War, is what provided him with the categories of Jewish apocalyptic thought.⁸¹ Although there are no written Pharisaic sources to corroborate the theory

dualism, the Qumran-like insistence on *ethics*, and the demonstration of divine power for *healing*, in the message and ministry of Jesus, as concluding evidence for an apocalyptic Jesus.

⁷⁸ Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 308.

⁷⁹ E M Humphrey, "Ambivalent Apocalypse: Apocalyptic Rhetoric and Intertextuality in 2 Corinthians," in *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. D F Watson (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2002), 113.

⁸⁰ It must be noted that not everyone agrees that Paul is an apocalyptic thinker; see, Lewis, *What Are They Saying*, 38: "There is some disagreement, however, as to the extent that apocalyptic theology and outlook affects Paul's entire theology. Some would still prefer to say that Paul uses apocalyptic language at times, but is not apocalyptic in his worldview".

⁸¹ See J C Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 143-144.

that apocalypticism was natural to them, the author of Luke-Acts provides a telling clue that such a worldview distinguished Pharisees from the Sadducees in the first century: “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three” (Acts 23:8).⁸² As we have seen, these three were stock motifs of Jewish apocalypticism.

Although this worldview appears to undergird the whole of the Pauline corpus, there are three texts that specifically feature some classic elements of apocalyptic thought: 1 Thess 4:13-18; 2 Thess 2:1-12;⁸³ and, 1 Cor 15:20-28, 50-56.⁸⁴ First, they are each prompted by the thought of the *parousia* in the light of the resurrection of Jesus; the latter was a typical theme of apocalyptic discourse. Second, the texts utilize multiple themes from “apocalyptic discourse”, such as the cry of command, archangel, trumpet, dead in Christ rising first, clouds, the notion of first-fruit (or harvesting), and the coming of the lawless one.

Again, it was Schweitzer who most definitively situated Paul within ancient apocalyptic thought. Rejecting “justification by faith” as the putative centre of Paul’s thought, the dominant view since the Reformation, he “momentously claimed that Paul lived ‘in the conceptions of the dogmatic world-view’ of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology”.⁸⁵ In Christian thought, traditionally, eschatology has had to do with doctrines such as “heaven, hell, judgment and life after death”⁸⁶ from the perspective of the individual, but *apocalyptic* eschatology is more nuanced:

⁸² See Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 309; also Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 144.

⁸³ W A Meeks, “Social Functions of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. D Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 689, sees 2 Thessalonians as “the most obviously ‘apocalyptic’ document among the Pauline letters,” but like most scholars is unable to give it much weight in assessing Paul’s apocalypticism, “because the still unresolved question of its authenticity would unduly complicate our discussion”.

⁸⁴ See also Rom 8:18-25; 1 Thess 1:9-10.

⁸⁵ M C de Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. B J McGinn, J Collins, and S Stein (New York, NY: Continuum International, 2003), 167.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

Apocalyptic eschatology, however, concerns visible, objective, and public events that are cosmic in scope and implication, for example, the general resurrection of the dead and the last judgment. Apocalyptic eschatology is fundamentally concerned with God's active and visible rectification (putting right) of the created world (the "cosmos"), which has somehow gone astray and become alienated from God.⁸⁷

Schweitzer was convinced that Paul was trained in the eschatological views reflected in the late-first century apocalypses of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, suggesting some common tradition between them. These latter works are "preoccupied with the *eschaton*, and both make extensive use of the same set of literary genres such as prayer, speech, and the symbolic dream vision that is interpreted by an angelic interpreter".⁸⁸

Although the trend of NT scholarship shifted in the direction of Schweitzer's argument for the apocalyptic framework of Paul's thought,⁸⁹ not all were convinced that apocalyptic constituted the "core".⁹⁰ Bultmann, for instance, argued that "the core of the kerygma must be *freed from its obsolete husk, the mythological-apocalyptic world view of Paul*" (emphasis added).⁹¹ Beker, however, vehemently objects to such a marginalization of apocalyptic in Paul: "what is husk to Bultmann belongs in our construal to the core of Paul's gospel", and argues instead that "Paul locates the coherent centre of the gospel in the apocalyptic interpretation of the Christ event".⁹²

Of course, it is quite evident that Paul does not simply superimpose Jewish apocalyptic categories onto his thoughts as a Christian; the former, rather, are radically modified in the light of Paul's understanding of the Christ-event. Expressions of this modification are

⁸⁷ De Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic," 170.

⁸⁸ On the strong similarity between 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, see M Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 148ff.

⁸⁹ So de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic," 168: "Ever since Schweitzer, students of Paul who have tended to label Paul's eschatology (and even his whole theology) as 'apocalyptic' have done so largely because, following Schweitzer's lead, they have discerned conceptual affinities between Paul's eschatological ideas and first-century Jewish eschatological expectations".

⁹⁰ See Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 16-18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹² *Ibid.*

his reticence with regard to using traditional apocalyptic terminology such as “powers”, “rulers”, “lordships”, “thrones”; and, his jettisoning of common apocalyptic preoccupations such as “apocalyptic timetables, descriptions of the architecture of heaven, or accounts of angels and demons.”⁹³ How then does Paul’s Jewish apocalyptic worldview impact his thought, as evidenced in his letters?

M de Boer asserts, contra Schweitzer, that Jewish apocalypticism was not a monochrome affair; at least two broad strands of apocalyptic “patterns” or “tracks” may be discerned in the extant apocalyptic literature: 1) A *cosmological apocalyptic eschatology* can be found. In this scheme the created world has come under domination by evil, angelic powers (the Watchers of 1 Enoch?) from the time of Noah, and this has usurped God’s authority and sovereignty. God’s own people have apostatized, but because of the preservation of a righteous remnant, God will at some future time invade the world, wage a cosmic war, and bring about a new age in which divine sovereignty is unambiguously asserted. In this schema, humanity is powerless to contribute a whit to its own deliverance; only God has the power to overthrow the diabolical powers; 2) A *forensic or juridical apocalyptic eschatology* exists that downplays the role of evil, cosmological forces. This scheme places an emphasis on human free will in the face of the human option of submitting to or rejecting the will of God. Sin is essentially the rejection of God’s will, and in response to this “danger” God has provided the “law” which remedies sin and determines the individual’s destiny following an eschatological judgement.⁹⁴

De Boer’s argument is that Paul utilized *both* tracks when he wrote his letters. Thus, within the letter to the Romans, one may discern that in “1.1–5.11, the elements of forensic apocalyptic eschatology clearly dominate”; whereas in 6.1–8.38 “the elements of cosmological apocalyptic eschatology are clearly prominent”.⁹⁵ This is to say that in

⁹³ See *Ibid.*, 145.

⁹⁴ See de Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic,” 175-181; de Boer, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament*, 169-190.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 182ff.

the former, Paul emphasizes the categories of law, sin, human culpability, and divine judgement. De Boer suggests that Rom 2:5-8 is a “nearly pure specimen of Jewish forensic apocalyptic eschatology”, with its discussion of the “two ways”.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, contrary to typical Jewish apocalyptic eschatology as found in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, Paul argues that although the Law sets the standard expected of humans, the prospects are hopeless; all humanity is dominated by the power of sin. At this point Paul crosses over to the other available category of apocalypticism, the track of cosmological apocalyptic eschatology, to assert that deliverance from the human predicament is only possible because of God’s triumphant invasion, in Christ, of a universe that had been dominated by sin. Faith is not, as some may mistakenly assume, another “work” like Torah-observance; it is rather “a matter of being initially passive and grateful beneficiaries of God’s gracious, liberating power revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”.⁹⁷ This is why in the latter section of Romans 1–8, Paul speaks of sin as personified evil against which the unregenerate person is powerless (Rom 6:12–7:25), and of the divine salvific invasion of human history with its cosmic repercussions (Romans 8).

Applying this same argument to Galatians, de Boer sees how Paul combats the “circumcising, Law-observant Teachers”, who were in fact ‘apocalyptists’ in terms of “forensic apocalyptic eschatology”; those who viewed the advent of Christ as an impulse to accentuate their religious beliefs rather than to submit to a new Lord. Paul’s answer to their insistence on Law and human freedom, is to speak the language of cosmic warfare and a divine invasion of the human situation (Gal 3:23–26; 4:1–11). Thus:

Paul circumscribes the forensic apocalyptic eschatology of the Galatian Teachers with a cosmological apocalyptic of his own . . . by the end of the epistle the forensic apocalyptic eschatology of the Teachers has been decisively overtaken and neutralized by Paul’s cosmological apocalyptic eschatology.⁹⁸

We may conclude then, that while Paul was in every sense an apocalyptic thinker, he did not uncritically perpetuate classic apocalyptic thought. His encounter with Jesus Christ,

⁹⁶ See de Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic,” 183.

⁹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 184.

⁹⁸ De Boer, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic,” 185.

call to apostleship, and the experience of the divine revelation of the Gospel of the crucified-and-resurrected Jesus, radically impacted and modified his apocalyptic eschatology. No longer could he subscribe to a view that projected all the aspirations of Jewish apocalyptic onto an eschatological future, nor maintain a classic, pessimistic view of history as apocalypticism espoused since the concrete historical fact of the Christ-event, and his apostolic commission, implied that God had redemptively invaded history and expected his people to participate in the ensuing messianic programme. In this way early Christian apocalypticism, as reflected in the NT, has elements of both continuity and discontinuity with classical apocalyptic thought:

One may speak of the “apocalypticism” of the New Testament only with extreme caution accepting the fact of certain literary and theological points of contact between earliest Christianity and Jewish apocalypticism, but on the other hand honouring the fundamental differences between [them] as seen from a historical, sociological, and theological perspective. Over and against a Jewish apocalyptic expectation of a coming Messiah the early church announced a Messiah who had already appeared. Over against a Jewish apocalyptic message of world loss, the early church reaffirmed the meaningfulness of world involvement.⁹⁹

6. Can Apocalyptic Temporal Dualism be Assumed for Paul?

M Harris has said of Paul: “As a Christian rabbi, Paul divided time into two ages or aeons: “this age” (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος, *ha’ôlām hazzeh*) and “the age to come” (ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων/ἐρχόμενος, *ha’ôlām habbā*; cf. Eph 1:21).¹⁰⁰ It is significant that Harris attributes Paul’s alleged temporal dualism to his status as a “*Christian rabbi*”, and not on account of any dependence on an apocalyptic worldview. V P Furnish, on the other hand, is convinced that Paul subscribes to the “dualism of the Qumran sectarians”.¹⁰¹ But do these assertions stand up to scrutiny? If indeed Paul worked within a well-known schema of temporal dualism, how did he arrive at it?

⁹⁹ W G Rollins, “The New Testament and Apocalyptic,” *NTS* 17, no. 4 (1971), 476.

¹⁰⁰ M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 328.

¹⁰¹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 220; also 247: “Paul is reflecting the dualism of apocalyptic Judaism”.

It is standard fare in literature on Jewish apocalyptic to speak of temporal dualism as its *sine qua non*.¹⁰² However, this assumption warrants critical review since much of what is asserted to be established certainties of apocalypticism are found, upon examination, to be merely circular arguments and confusions.¹⁰³

First, it is important to establish the broad scope of the concept of dualism, as it applied to the various cultures and traditions of the biblical world. Like “apocalyptic” the term “dualism” is also slippery, and lends itself to a bewildering array of meanings.¹⁰⁴ John G Gammie identifies *nine* different types of dualism that applied within the diverse cultures of the time,¹⁰⁵ at the least confirming that the vast majority of peoples, and not just the Persians or Jewish apocalyptists, operated out of dualist modes of thought. The earliest philosopher to systematically articulate a dualistic worldview was the Greek Plato (427–347 BCE), who argued for the existence of two world orders. The first, he distinguished as the one “that is always real and has no becoming”, and the second as that which is “always becoming and is never real”.¹⁰⁶ The scope of his speculation was clearly cosmo-metaphysical, but it was hugely influential and led to wide applications in different settings.

¹⁰² See Russell, *Method and Message*, 266: “This dualistic view of the world, which is characteristic of apocalyptic eschatology, finds expression in a doctrine of two ages . . .”; Matlock, *Unveiling*, 252, 282-283; Beker, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel*, 39; De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic”, 168; R E Dallwig, “Temporal Dualism in Jewish Apocalyptic and Its Relation to New Testament Faith” (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL, 1971), 34.

¹⁰³ See Matlock, *Unveiling*, 278.

¹⁰⁴ R M McInerny, cited in “Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature,” J G Gammie, *JBL* vol. 93, no. 3 (Sep, 1974), 356: “Although it is possible to reduce the uses of the term dualism to a finite number of meanings, the term remains vague and of widely varying application. . . . In the final analysis, it seems that dualism is a second-order word; it is not so much a philosophical theory as a term to describe theories”.

¹⁰⁵ Cosmic, temporal, ethical, psychological, spatial, theological (or prophetic), physical, metaphysical, and soteriological; see, Gammie, “Spatial and Ethical,” 356-385.

¹⁰⁶ On this see W D Dennison, *Paul’s Two-Age Construction and Apologetics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 1-12. Dennison argues that the subscription of Christian-thought through the ages, to the eloquent conceptualization of “two existing world orders” by Plato, has been a historical error. Plato and Paul may not be synthesized as is so commonly attempted: “My task is to demonstrate that Plato’s view of two worlds is antithetical to the Christian’s view of two worlds as constructed by the Apostle Paul and that the history of Christian thought should never have synthesized Paul and Plato” (2).

Dallwig identifies five dualisms that people were familiar with: metaphysical, cosmological, ethical, anthropological, and temporal.¹⁰⁷ It is curious that the last of these, temporal (or eschatological) dualism, has been identified as the common denominator of all apocalyptic literature,¹⁰⁸ when in fact such a dual periodization of history is a relatively late construct propounded most in the later rabbinic period.¹⁰⁹ The fact is that the apocalypses are characteristically non-uniform in their individual periodization of history; the only commonality being the fact of periodization rather than the number of periods in the respective schema.

We may consider the following examples: 1 Enoch 1–36 (seventy generations from the Flood to the final judgment); 1 Enoch 83–90 (seventy reigns within four ages); Apocalypse of Weeks (ten weeks of unequal length); Jubilees (forty-nine jubilees); Testament of Abraham (seven ages, one thousand years each); 4 Ezra (age divided into twelve parts, nine-and-a-half are already past).¹¹⁰

How, then, has there arisen such a consensual scholarly chorus that the ancient Jewish apocalypses were defined by their subscription to a strict two-age schema of history? How early is the historical evidence for the language of “this age” and “the age to come”? Ironically, in answering these questions we are redirected to the Hebrew prophets rather than to the Jewish apocalyptists. Although they did not use the Pauline language of “this age” and “the age to come”, the prophets, such as Amos, Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, evince temporal (or historical) dualism in its incipient form. They

¹⁰⁷ Dallwig, “Temporal Dualism,” 104-105: “1) metaphysical or ontological dualism which views the universe in terms of matter and spirit, 2) cosmological dualism, which asserts the concept of two eternal beings, locked in a struggle for control of the universe; 3) ethical dualism which sees a conflict between good and evil, 4) anthropological dualism, which finds expression in the distinction between body and soul, and 5) temporal dualism, which views history in terms of two distinct ages”.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, de Boer, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic,” 173: “Most students of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology will agree with Philipp Vielhauer’s assertion that ‘the essential characteristic of Apocalyptic’ is what he labels ‘the eschatological dualism’ of the two ages, ‘this age’ and ‘the age to come.’”

¹⁰⁹ This assertion will be examined below.

¹¹⁰ See Dallwig, “Temporal Dualism,” 122-124.

introduced the idea that the present world is passing away, and Israel ought to live in the anticipation of a renewed world.

There is no doubt that, within Israelite religion, a well-defined eschatology already existed there, which viewed history pessimistically. The prophets as early as the eighth century BCE had led the way in exposing God's displeasure over the state of Jewish and world affairs, and had pronounced an impending divine judgement by means of the "Day of Yahweh" (Is 2:12; Jl 1:14-15; 2:1, 11, 31; Am 5:18 – 20; Ob 1:15; Zep 1:7, 8; Mal 4:5). In fact, the manner in which the prophets employed this phrase seems to imply that it was not a new concept to their hearers.¹¹¹ It was then the prophets that developed most clearly the contrast between the failed-present and the prosperous-future (see Am 9:11-15), and imagined the possibility of a "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 24:4-6; 65:17). It is they who distinguished between the present history, of apostate Israel and pagan nations, and a future history of a renewed world with Israel as first among the nations, thereby implying an eschatological dualism. As we saw earlier, the early apocalypses such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees did not limit their periodization of history into two stages; they speculated seventy and forty-nine ages respectively. This makes it considerably more difficult to argue that Paul's putative temporal dualism came to him directly from the apocalyptists.

In addition, although it may be somewhat surprising, we discover that the specific, technical expressions "this age" (הַיָּמִים הַזֵּהִים / ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος) and "the age to come" (הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים / ὁ αἰὼν μέλλων) are not found among apocalyptic writings until the late first century CE works, 4 Ezra (81-96 CE) and 2 Baruch (between 90 and 132 CE).¹¹²

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 136: "There can be no question that the Day of the Lord when it is employed by the prophets in this sense, signifies the occurrence of an event that marks *the end of the present order and inaugurates a new era*" (emphasis added).

¹¹² Dallwig, "Temporal Dualism," 121: "In fact the precise terminology of 'this age' and 'the age to come' occurs in the apocalypses only in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, both of which are probably to be dated in the latter half of the first century AD". See 4 Ezra 14:10-14 for the earliest references to 'this age' and the 'age to come' in the apocalypses.

However, such terminology is not uncommon in the NT, in texts that pre-date 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. The noun αἰών, ὠνος, “age, world” occurs in 97 verses, of which it forms the phrase “this age” on eleven occasions. In the Gospels alone “this age” is found in Mt 12:32; Lk 16:8 and 20:34. All other references to “this age” are in the epistles, with seven in the undisputed Paulines (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6-8 (three occurrences); 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 1:21). In the Gospels, there are several more references that merely use the noun with the strongest indication that it is referring to a specified period of present time, contrasted by implication with an anticipated period of time still in the future. Although less in number, the phrase “age(s) to come” (μέλλοντος αἰῶνος or ἐρχόμενος αἰῶνος) occurs in Luke 18:30; Eph 2:7; Heb 6:5. The number of references are increased when we take into account shortened forms of the phrase such as, τῷ ἐρχομένῳ (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), τῷ μέλλοντι (Mt 12:32; Eph 1:21) and alternate expressions such as: τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου, “That Age” (Lk 20:35); ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐρχομένοις, “in the Coming Ages” (Eph 2:7); and τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος (Heb 6:5).

Given that the Pauline epistles are chronologically earlier, we are left then with the startling conclusion that the apostle Paul is the earliest known writer to employ the category “this age” (ὁ αἰῶνος τούτου). Why then is it deemed necessary that we postulate Paul’s dependence on apocalyptic writers for the occurrence of “this age” in 2 Cor 4:4 and elsewhere? Caudhill makes a pertinent point in this regard: “The point of contact between Paul and Jewish apocalypticism has often focused on the two-age doctrine of each. The way one interprets Paul’s two-age doctrine is often the basis for his conclusion regarding the relationship between Paul and apocalypticism”.¹¹³

7. Temporal Dualism as an Emphasis Unique to Early Christian Literature and the Apostle Paul as Its Most Articulate Spokesman

The New Testament shows a fairly broad commitment to the concept of temporal dualism, with the latter defined in terms of two ages of historical time. One period, “this age,” which includes mundane existence, human sin, spiritual darkness, and a world-

¹¹³ E M Caudill, “The Two-Age Doctrine of Paul: A Study of Pauline Apocalyptic” (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, 1972), 10.

system that is actively hostile to God, also includes the incarnation of the Son of God, his passion and resurrection, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the conversion of a minority of people, both Jew and Gentile, to become active followers of the Christ.¹¹⁴ The second period, called “the coming age”, is envisaged to be cosmic in scope, and is to be marked by the return of Jesus as king, the judgment on human wickedness, the vanquishing of God’s enemies, and the restoration of God’s people to a status of eternal glory. We have seen how this eschatological dualism is very much at home in the writings of the NT, forming a somewhat outstanding characteristic of NT eschatology, and raising for scholars the question as to the origins of such a philosophical construction.

It is at this point that confusion appears to have reigned supreme, and no wonder, for the pursuit of a number of different fields of research over the past centuries appeared to harmonize on a single refrain: dualism. So, as we have seen, the study of Classical Greek and Plato’s construction of two-worlds, the periodization of history in apocalyptic works, the ethical dualism of Persian religion and speculation of its influence on Second Temple Judaism, the Qumran writings about the Prince and sons of light versus the Prince and sons of darkness, and the rabbinic assumption of two ages, were all seen as evidential background for the voices in the NT. However, two other more likely possibilities were largely ignored. One was the potential roots of temporal dualism in the Old Testament prophets, and the second was the probability that such a well-developed two-stage view of history, as found in the NT, was grounded in the explicit language and teachings of Jesus, which was in turn championed by Paul through the formation of his distinctive theology.

First, we note that some of the writings of the NT are the earliest sources for the phrase, “this age” (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος). It never occurs in apocalyptic literature that is prior to the composition of early Christian writings. The earliest extra-biblical apocalyptic works to

¹¹⁴ Caudill (*Ibid.*, 72) argues how the connotation of temporality predominates the NT use of “age”: “This word [ὁ αἰὼν] like the Hebrew *’olam* takes on at times a spatial meaning and comes to mean ‘world’, ‘universe’ (κόσμος). In the overwhelming majority of passages, however, we find the original use of the word, that is, as an expression of time”.

carry the phrase “this age” are 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, which post-date the Pauline corpus, and possibly the Synoptic gospels.¹¹⁵ Second, with its eleven occurrences of “this age” the writings in the NT show, by far, the highest concentration of the phrase in first century writings. Third, the language of temporal dualism is originally associated with Jesus (see Mt 12:32; 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Mk 10:30; Lk 16:8; 18:30; 20:34, 35), and this may explain how the Pauline writings and Hebrews (see Rom 12:2; I Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2, 7; 1 Tm 6:17; 2 Tm 4:10; Ti 2:12; Heb 6:5) use the *explicit* language of temporal dualism, while the other books (particularly Revelation) subscribe to such a notion, *implicitly*. Fourth, Paul is arguably the one who most articulately developed the Christian understanding of temporal or eschatological dualism. Based on the incipient two-age eschatology of the prophets, and on the explicit two-age language of Jesus, the Pauline epistles carry this formulation forward and provide several significant clarifications about “this age”. This latter phrase is used seven times by Paul in six verses (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:21; 2:6, 8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 1:21), and together underscore the following:

- a) The expression “this age” refers to a negative reality that is inimical towards the church of Jesus Christ. Christians are to be wary of conforming to its pattern (Rom 12:2). Although Gal 1:3–5 does not use the specific phrase “this age,” it uses the associated idea, “the age of the present evil” (τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ) to argue that in order to save and “rescue” humanity from the grip of such an age, Jesus had to “give himself up for our sins”. It is synonymous with “this world” in 1 Cor 3:18-20 (ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ/ . . . τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), and so the negative connotations associated with the NT use of ὁ κόσμος may attach themselves to Paul’s references to “this age”.
- b) The negative reality termed “this age” is not as much a reference to the material universe, as it is to the ideologies and socio-political powers that exist in alienation to God. In 1 Cor 1:20 Paul speaks of a worldly wisdom, law, and philosophy “of this

¹¹⁵ In fact, by the time 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch came to be written, there appears some form of development of eschatological thought, since they move away from a strictly two-age scheme to: “construct a triple scheme which does not abandon the two-age doctrine but does shatter the concept of the rigid separation of the two ages”. See Caudill, “The Two-Age Doctrine,” who argues that 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch maintain that between *this evil age* and the *final age to come* stands the temporally limited *messianic age*, and because the latter represents the blending of the old and new ages, the strict separation of the ages has been overcome even within apocalyptic literature (5-8).

age”, which God renders foolish. In 1 Cor 2:6-8, “this age” is used three times,¹¹⁶ and here Paul refers to: “the wisdom of this age”, and “the rulers of this age”, that stand in sharp contrast to the “wisdom of God” (v.7) and to the mediating apostles respectively. In 1 Cor 3:18-20 he argues that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God”.

- c) Although Paul associates “this age” with socio-political authorities, he uses guarded language in describing them. Given the latitude provided by the earlier apocalyptic writers, who viewed the world as overcome by: hordes of the Watchers, or Beliar, or Mastema, or Melkiresha, or Satan, it is surprising that Paul only goes so far as to refer to “the rulers of this age” by whom, it is clear from 1 Cor 2:8, Paul meant human authority structures that acted to crucify Jesus, as they now act to oppose his followers.¹¹⁷ It is significant that never once, while addressing the phrase “this age”, did Paul associate its inherent wickedness with the devil or with demonic personalities.¹¹⁸ This then makes it more difficult to sustain the speculation that “the God of this age” in 2 Cor 4:4 is a reference to Satan.
- d) Paul conceives of “this age” as limited in power and transient in duration. Its “wisdom” is “foolishness before God” (1 Cor 3:19), its “rulers” are “fading away” (1 Cor 2:6; καταργουμένων, the passive participle of καταργέω is better translated, “being set aside”).
- e) In the course of his discussion of “this age” Paul is careful to assert explicitly the sovereignty of God. Most importantly, Paul’s formulation of temporal dualism does not issue from, or lead to, an ethical dualism; the belief in forces of good and evil of equal power, as expressed in Persian Zoroastrianism, or as the Qumran

¹¹⁶ This is the highest concentration of the phrase in all extant literature up to the first century CE.

¹¹⁷ R F Collins, *First Corinthians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 130; although see C K Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1971), 71-72, for an opinion that these may be supernatural forces.

¹¹⁸ Even in Eph 1:20-21, Jesus’ post-resurrection exaltation is expressed, not in terms of Satan or any other named demons, but in more ambiguous language: “Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come”.

sectarians felt inclined to believe.¹¹⁹ In other words, evil or Satan does not exercise any kind of dominion or sovereignty in opposition to God. In Paul's theology, God predestines his will (Paul calls this a "mystery") "from before the ages" (1 Cor 2:7), he sovereignly makes "foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 1:20), and "catches the wise in their craftiness" (1 Cor 3:20). In Eph 1:21, Jesus Christ is raised by the power of God to a position of sovereignty that he exercises over both "this age and the age to come".

8. Conclusion

Our search for clues to make sense of Paul's use of "this age" in 2 Cor 4:4 has taken us on a tour of the complex subject of Jewish apocalypticism. This was because scholars frequently advanced apocalypticism as the primary cognitive environment for Paul; and because of the establishment-by-repetition of the belief that temporal dualism was the *sine qua non* of the diverse literature of Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

Our research leads us to agree with the former, that Paul, like Jesus before him, was an "apocalyptic thinker" who, in several discernible ways, expressed the specific worldview and categories of Jewish apocalyptic. Nevertheless, we have not found agreement with the assertion Paul borrowed his view of temporal dualism from Jewish apocalypticism that preceded him. In fact, we have argued that within a world of multiple forms of dualistic thought, the earliest sustained doctrine of temporal, eschatological dualism, including with it the language of "this age" and "the coming age", is to be found within the writings of the New Testament, particularly the synoptic Gospels and the Pauline epistles. The only Jewish apocalypses to use the expression "this age" are the books of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, and these are both dated after the writings of Paul.

Given the clear framework of an eschatological (temporal) dualism in the teaching attributed to Jesus, we propose that these Jesus-traditions, together with the incipient

¹¹⁹ This tendency attaches to modern Christian interpretations of Paul's references to "this age" in 2 Cor 4:4. See, Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78: "The Jewish doctrine of the two-ages is important for the apostle; so *Satan controls this age* under God's decree"; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 210: "Paul must be referring to Satan as the god of this age. He classifies Satan as a 'god' because *he has dominion however limited by the one and true God, and has subjects* Paul labels 'unbelievers'".

eschatological dualism of the Hebrew prophets, became the raw material for Paul to develop his more-pronounced language of “this age” and the “age to come”. As the most articulate spokesperson for early Christianity’s schema of temporal dualism, Paul makes clear that while “the coming age” is as different from “this age” as day is from night, such a view of history does not in any way erode his conviction and confidence in the sovereignty of God, because God alone predestines history from “before the ages” (1 Cor 2:7).

CHAPTER 4

How the Concept of Satan Developed: From Jewish Antiquity to the Apostle Paul

1. Introduction

“Satan” is a full-orbed doctrine of Christianity, sometimes termed *diabology* or *satanology*. Within popular formulations Satan is viewed as a very powerful being that personifies evil and has wide-ranging influence within the known world and the unseen realm of existence. Various views of his origins exist, the most common being that he was once a created angel that rebelled, and with his fall from grace he misled a vast number of fellow angels into divine judgment. He exercises his evil intentions through this horde of spirit beings, now called demons, and unleashes on humanity every imaginable form of wickedness, destruction, and suffering. Some hold that he must have been at one time the “worship leader” in heaven, and so would have enjoyed the closest intimacy with God.

Christians subscribe to varying views on the extent of Satan’s influence, with the more elaborate proposals projecting a being who occupies the apex of a complex chain of command by which he is able to exercise dominion over both the vastness of the celestial and the minutiae of terrestrial existence. The most influential proponent of this image of Satan and the consequent popularization of modern beliefs on spiritual warfare has been Peter Wagner. A survey of the titles of dozens of books he has published from the early seventies reveals an interesting pattern. In the early years (1973–1989), Wagner concentrates on the Holy Spirit and church growth. From 1990, he shifts to write extensively on the demonic and spiritual warfare.¹ The modern notion that Satan’s

¹ All published by Regal Books, Ventura, California: *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Force in Spiritual Warfare* (1990); *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (1991); *How to Seek God’s Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (1992); *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers More Strategic, Effective and Targeted* (1993); *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (1996).

demons are hierarchically organized, much like a military command and control structure, received its most definitive shape through Wagner's writings.²

Over the past several centuries, scholars have argued that the lofty description "the God of this age" in 2 Cor 4:4 indisputably refers to Satan, and this idea has only gained greater currency because of the high view of Satan that is espoused in literature and in the media today.

However, to what extent are our modern views of Satan drawn from the Bible? How much of these are a result of accretions from various cultural beliefs rooted in specific historical experiences? How much has resulted from tenuous extrapolations of disputed biblical texts and from creative imagination?

The specific interest, here, is to find out what ideas about Satan prevailed in the time of Paul; to what extent Paul adopted these ideas; and, if there is evidence to suggest that he rejected certain aspects. Did Paul adopt a "high view" of Satan, or was it a "low view"? In what follows, we shall examine the early development of the Judeo-Christian concept of Satan, limiting the enquiry to the biblical period, and including the views reflected in the Jewish literature of the Intertestamental Era, before moving on to consider Paul's satanology.

2. Speculations about Evil in Jewish Antiquity

The essence of evil is abuse of a sentient being, a being that can feel pain. It is the pain that matters. Evil is grasped by the mind immediately and immediately felt by the emotions; it is sensed as hurt deliberately inflicted. The existence of evil requires no further proof: I am; therefore I suffer evil.³

² C Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: A Biblical, Historical and Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Seven Oaks: Mentor/OMF, 1998), 16-17: "According to leading advocate Peter Wagner, demons fall into three basic categories: ground-level, occult-level and strategic-level. Ground-level spirits are the sort that possess people and must be exorcised. Occult-level spirits empower magicians, witches, warlocks and shaman. Strategic-level spirits (otherwise known as cosmic-level, or territorial, spirits) are the most powerful of the three categories. Their function is to rule over specified domains, preventing the people that reside there from coming to faith. So the proposed differences between the categories involve both power and function: strategic-level spirits are the highest ranking class of demons and they are territorial in jurisdiction".

³ J B Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 17.

The perception of evil is ubiquitous; it is as ancient as human experience, and as pervasive as the air we breathe. No individual is alien to it, and no society or culture has been untouched by it.⁴ Yet, evil can only be perceived; it is the individual pain that is experienced as fact. The particular interpretation of the source and the reason for the pain is what leads to a perception of evil. So whereas a mother's pain in childbirth is perceived as a necessary challenge that she must bravely endure, the hate-speech and jeers of a racist mob are immediately perceived as evil.

J Russell's exhaustive and fascinating study of the perceptions of evil in a variety of ancient cultures, including Hindu, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Mexican, African, Greek, and Persian, confirms that at no point does evil have to be argued. People have always recognized its existence and created a vocabulary of images and speech by which to talk about it.⁵ From perceptions, then, each culture explores the possible origins of evil, and the result is a myriad proposals of who might ultimately be responsible to inflict wanton pain on sentient beings.

The Hebrew people of antiquity would have similarly perceived evil, and speculated on its source and the reasoning behind its manifestation. While their homeland of Canaan was flanked on the one side by Egypt and on the other by Syria-Mesopotamia, it was the latter that most shaped the Canaanite and Hebrew concept of personified evil.⁶ Mesopotamia had a well-developed taxonomy of evil powers, and these ideas could not have escaped the attention of the Hebrew patriarchs and their succeeding tribes of Israel.⁷

⁴ On this, see the chapter titled "The Devil East and West," 55-121, in Russell, *The Devil*.

⁵ See Russell, *The Devil*, 36-173.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 84: "The civilizations of Mesopotamia and Syria helped shape the Western concept of the Devil more directly than did that of Egypt. Sumerian civilization stands directly behind that of Babylonian and Assyria, which directly influenced both the Hebrews and the Canaanites".

⁷ Russell, *The Devil*, 92.

Nevertheless, the strict monotheism of the Hebrews from their founding posed a major obstacle to an uncritical acceptance of Mesopotamia's speculations of evil and its personifications. In almost every other culture, its polytheistic worldview allowed for the assignation of good or benevolence to 'good' deities, and evil or malevolence to similarly powerful, but 'wicked' deities. In Hebrew religion, however, Yahweh alone was God, and while it was plausible that angels and demons existed, the sovereignty of God was inviolable.⁸

E Pagels sees a further twist in this evil tale. Adopting an anthropological reading of Israelite history, she suggests that the patriarchs and their descendants would have initially treated any who were not of Abrahamic descent or the chosen line as 'the other', who would thereafter, in time, be viewed as their 'enemies', and caricatured as monsters such as Leviathan, the serpent, or dragon (see Is 27:1).⁹

However, with the experience of internecine warfare, apostasy, and schisms within the Jewish nation, the 'enemy' took on new meanings. The threat was insidious and, therefore, that much more potent. Pagels thinks this new situation led to fresh speculations on the nature and the fountainhead of 'evil':

Certain writers of the sixth century B.C.E. took a bold step further . . . Instead of Rahab, Leviathan, or "the dragon," most often they identified their Jewish enemies with an exalted, if treacherous, member of the divine court whom they called *satan*. The *satan* is not an animal or monster but one of God's angels, a being of superior intelligence and status; apparently the Israelites saw their intimate enemies not as beasts and monsters but as *superhuman* beings whose superior qualities and insider status could make them more dangerous than the alien enemy.¹⁰

⁸ See P Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 213: "Already in the eighth century Amos insisted that only God could send salvation and misfortune; an anti-polytheistic polemic, but also contrary to the conception of demons as having real power".

⁹ E Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 37: "Many anthropologists have pointed out that the worldview of most peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary opposites: human/not human and we/they. Apart from anthropology we know from experience how people dehumanize enemies, especially at wartime".

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Origin of Satan*, 39.

While it is characteristic of the Hebrew Bible to demythologize the prevalent worldviews of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and polemically dethrone the aspects of creation these cultures venerated as gods, it is significant that the Jewish scriptures maintain a clear belief in the existence of celestial beings with supra-human abilities. It is within the allowance for such entities, that the figure of Satan appears.

3. “Satan” in the Hebrew Bible

The noun שָׂטָן occurs 26 times in the Hebrew Bible. It bears the meaning “to persecute, to be hostile, to accuse”¹¹ or to describe “one who is in opposition”.¹² Although the concept of Satan “has had extensive development theologically in the NT”¹³ its use in the Hebrew Bible for the most part provides little indication of the notion of “a semi-autonomous archfiend who wields the forces of evil against God’s will”¹⁴:

In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character. Although Hebrew storytellers as early as the sixth century B.C.E. occasionally introduced a supernatural character whom they called the *satan*, what they meant was any one of the angels sent by God for the specific purpose of blocking or obstructing human activity. The root שָׂטָן means “one who opposes, obstructs, or acts as adversary”.¹⁵

¹¹ R S Kluger, *Satan in the Old Testament* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 25.

¹² W A VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1231; see also, “Satan,” in *NIDNTT* 3: 468-473.

¹³ *NIDOTTE* 3: 1231.

¹⁴ P L Day, *An Adversary in Heaven* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 63; Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 39: “In the Hebrew Bible, as in mainstream Judaism to this day, Satan never appears as Western Christendom has come to know him, as the leader of an ‘evil empire’, an army of hostile spirits who make war on God and humankind alike. As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God’s obedient servants . . .”.

¹⁵ Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 39; Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 222: “The name ‘satan’ is not a proper name, but a common one, signifying ‘enemy’, a name with a very strong value, but not used to indicate an enemy in war. As a technical term we may think of it as indicating the accuser in a trial. Hence the angel’s name: his function was that of accusing humans before God of their misdeeds”.

Kluger organizes the references to Satan in the Hebrew Bible by first separating the “Concept of Satan in the Profane Realm”¹⁶ from the “Concept of Satan in the Metaphysical Realm”.¹⁷

In the case of the former, several texts are identified where the noun שָׂטָן is used without any connotation of personality: 1 Sm 29:4; 1 Kgs 5:4 (MT 5:18); 11:14, 23; Nm 22:22; 2 Sm 19:22. In each of these occurrences, שָׂטָן refers generally to anyone who opposes or offends another. Whether it was the Philistine commanders’ fear that David could turn against them in the battlefield and become their “adversary” (1 Sm 29:4), or the “adversaries” such as Hadad and Rezon that God raised up against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:14, 23), the term שָׂטָן in these contexts may only bear a general nominal sense.

In exploring the metaphysical sense, Kluger identifies four texts where שָׂטָן refers to a trans-human personage (Nm 22:22; Jb 1:6ff. and 2:1ff.; Zec 3:1ff.; and 1 Chr 21:1). The major contributions of Kluger’s work on these texts were both her proposal of a chronological schema for these four references, and, the accompanying argument that they show evidence of an evolutionary development of the Satan-concept within the Old Testament period.¹⁸

3.1 Numbers 22:22-35¹⁹

In context, the wilderness narrative has the Israelites camped on the plains of Moab, causing grave concern to the Moabite king Balak. To counter the threat of Israelite

¹⁶ Kluger, *Satan*, 34-38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 38-53.

¹⁸ Writing some two decades later, and based on a preferred view of the dating of individual books of the Hebrew Bible, P L Day is not so sure about Kluger’s chronological scheme: “Kluger’s evolutionary model of a developing Satan concept must be viewed with extreme caution if not entirely abandoned, because she dates the ass story significantly earlier than Job 1–2, Zechariah 3 and 1 Chronicles 21” (Day, *Adversary*, 62).

¹⁹ “The story of Balaam and the ass (Nm 22:22-35) marks the first appearance of a nonhuman *satan* in the Hebrew Bible. In later stories, Satan is the grand chameleon and assumes many forms. In this account from the book of Numbers, however, we should still understand the term ‘satan’ in the lower case. In other words, *satan* in the Balaam story does not refer to the Devil, who in pre-Exilic biblical narratives does not yet exist”. T J Wray and G Mobley, *The Birth of Satan* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 57.

presence he decides to send for the Syrian prophet Balaam, to pronounce a curse on Israel. But God opposes Balaam, and the מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה (“angel of the LORD”, a circumlocution for Yahweh) stands blocking the path with a drawn sword in his hand, as an “adversary”, a שָׂטָן:

The divine and the human planes meet for the first time in a most significant way in Num. 22:22. Here it is an angel who stands in the way of Balaam, the human being, as *satan*, as adversary. He is by no means as yet the demonic figure called “Satan”, but the *ma’lak Yahweh*, who blocks Balaam’s path, *le-satan-lo*, “for an adversary to him”. The term *satan* is used here only in apposition to *ma’lak Yahweh*: he stands in Balaam’s way as adversary.²⁰

It is important to note that even here “satan” bears no titular sense; it merely describes the adversarial function of the angel of Yahweh. At the same time it is significant because it introduces the idea of a celestial figure rising up in opposition to a human being.²¹

3.2 Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7

The noun שָׂטָן occurs most in Job; fourteen times within the narrative portions of chapters 1 and 2. The Jobian “Satan” has a distinct personality, and this is indicated by the use of the definite article throughout: הַשָּׂטָן.²²

Jb 1:6 introduces Satan surprisingly as a member of the divine council: “One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and [the] Satan also came”. The concept has moved on from Nm 22:22 where an “angel of the LORD” took up the

²⁰ Kluger, *Satan*, 38.

²¹ See Day, *Adversary*, 62: “Kluger identifies Numbers 22 as the locus in which the profane ‘Satan concept’ was first transposed into the mythical sphere. That Yahweh could act as a satan was for Kluger the first stage. This same concept was later transferred to one of the *bene Elohim* (Job 1–2; Zech. 3) and given the status of a mythological personality. Later still (1 Chron. 21) the term satan was divorced from the divine council context and became the proper name of an independent personality”.

²² For a discussion on difficulties in translating for audiences that have read the NT, see W D Reayburn, *A Handbook of the Book of Job* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1992), 39: “If he is translating for people who are regular readers of the New Testament and merely transliterating the name “Satan,” his readers will be misled, since they will read the New Testament meaning into it”.

position of an “adversary”, against Balaam, to the Job narrative where a particular angel is identified as “the Adversary” or the *satan*.²³

Nevertheless he is still a member of the divine council, a “son of God” (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים), and is free to wander on the earth (1:7) as well as to be entertained in the presence of Yahweh.²⁴ He shows some signs of hostile independence – charging Yahweh with showing favouritism towards Job (1:9-11; 2:4-5) – but clearly cannot act independently of divine approval (1:12; 2:6).²⁵

The Jobian Satan heavily influences the semantics of the term so that it henceforth includes the notion of “an accuser”.²⁶ Accusing Job appears to be his most distinct role alongside that of wreaking destruction on all which that righteous man possessed. Some have suggested that this idea of a professional accuser comes from the Persian period, during which the Persian emperors ran a kind of secret police operation; men in mufti wandering about the vast empire scrutinizing suspicious individuals, picking up any hints of seditious activities, and then presenting a legal brief against them.²⁷ Although this makes for an interesting background explanation, it lacks evidence of fact:

I have searched in vain for evidence to suggest that professional accusers *per se* existed in the early Persian period. While each satrapy had a secretary or secretaries who communicated directly with the central government, and

²³ “*Hassatan*, it appears, has a special function in the divine government: to audit human virtue. *Hassatan* does not seem to be stirring up trouble on earth – at least not yet – but merely reporting in to his supervisor”. Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 60.

²⁴ See Kluger, *Satan*, 39.

²⁵ C L Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 256, suggests that in Job Satan is not personified as yet: “Here, however, he is a hypostasis, an extension of divine personality. More specifically, he is the projection of divine doubt about human integrity that is held in tension about divine trust”. Also see T Longman III, *Job*, BCOTP (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 82–83.

²⁶ “Satan” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. XI (New York, NY: KTAV, 1969), 68: “Both question and answer, as well as the dialogue which follows, characterize Satan as that member of the divine council who watches over human activity, but with the evil purpose of searching out men’s sins and appearing as their accuser”.

²⁷ On this see Kluger, *Satan*, 29-30.

therefore were responsible for reporting seditious activity, I do not think it would be correct to define these people as professional accusers.²⁸

Despite the fact that later Christian doctrine would persist with the transliteration of the Hebrew שָׂטָן as a title for the devil, and although in both cases the term carried the notions of accusation and destruction, the correspondence would seem to end there. The later concept would emerge only after several stages of further development:

Although Job 1:1–2:10 reveals the most complete portrait of Satan in the Hebrew Bible, it is clear that this figure is far from the demonic tempter who would later appear in the desert to test the spiritual mettle of Jesus in the Gospels. *Hassatan's* function in the Prologue of Job seems merely to administer tests, to aid the LORD by finding out if mortal virtue is more than skin deep. *Hassatan* does not act without the LORD's permission, and must play by the Almighty's rules.²⁹

Nevertheless, the Jobian stage marks a very significant point of development in the concept since it involves the emergence of an entity that wills to act entirely on his own.³⁰

3.3 Zechariah 3:1-7

Zechariah is generally thought to have been written around 520 BCE, and may belong to the same milieu as Job. Zec 3:1ff brings the reader to the fourth of eight visions in Zechariah to catch the last stages of what may be termed a celestial courtroom drama. The person being examined is Joshua the High Priest, ostensibly to establish his suitability as a co-regent in Jerusalem in Zechariah's "idealized pictures of a political

²⁸ Day, *Adversary*, 42.

²⁹ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 63.

³⁰ Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 41: "The book of Job too describes the *satan* as a supernatural messenger, a member of God's royal court. But while Balaam's *satan* protects him from harm, Job's *satan* takes a more adversarial role. Here the Lord himself admits that the *satan* incited him to act against Job (2:3). Also, Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 64: "Of course the notion of being 'tested' or 'punished' by God is not an alien concept in the Bible. But what is wholly different in this story of testing and misfortune is that God employs a lieutenant to carry it out. This marks a significant turning point in our exploration of Satan".

reality: a future of shared political-priestly leadership. Israel would be ruled by both a king – from the line of David – and a priest in the LORD’s service”.³¹

Like Job, here Joshua is “accused” or “opposed” by the Satan. God is obviously well-disposed towards Joshua since “he is a brand plucked from the fire”, and speaks to declare Joshua’s acceptability to Yahweh despite the accusations of the Satan.³²

Interestingly, the presentation of שָׂטָן in both books has striking similarities: he is an angelic being called הַשָּׂטָן; the setting is the divine council; a human being favoured by God is the subject of the discussion; the *accuser* is *accusing*; and other servants of God (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה “angel of Yahweh” in Zechariah; cf. בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים in Job) are present.³³

Yet, there is still much that is unclear. Is the Satan the adversary of Joshua or Yahweh? Is his role within the divine council – although adversarial – commissioned by Yahweh, or entirely independent of him?³⁴ Is the fourth vision of Zechariah a pre-Christian version of the law versus grace antithesis: the Satan representing legalistic Judaism, and the angel of the LORD representing grace?³⁵

³¹ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 64.

³² See Kluger, *Satan*, 39: “Differing in content, yet the same in form, we find the concept of Satan in Zech 3:1 ff. Here again Satan stands opposite God. i.e., the *ma’lak Yahweh*. Thus, it is not a personality essentially differentiated from Yahweh who confronts the *ma’lak Yahweh*, but rather two aspects of God who confront each other”.

³³ “Taken together with the description of *hassatan* in the book of Job, the portrait in Zech. 3 confirms the image we had there: *Hassatan* is a member of the divine government with the thankless but essential job of examining the moral integrity of superficially pious mortals,” Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 65.

³⁴ See Kluger’s suggestion (*Satan*, 39) – based on a Jungian interpretation of personality – that “Satan” is, in the early stages, simply a dark side of the divine personality: “Differing in content, yet the same in form, we find the concept of Satan in Zech 3:1 ff. Here again Satan stands opposite God. i.e. the *ma’lak Yahweh*. Thus, it is not a personality essentially differentiated from Yahweh who confronts the *ma’lak Yahweh*, but rather two aspects of God who confront each other”. See also Russell, *The Devil*, 177; and, Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 51, who similarly find the psychoanalytical explanation useful.

³⁵ See Day, *Adversary*, 125: “Unfortunately I suspect that underlying the interpretation that the *satan* of Zechariah 3 represents a strict adherence to law that is opposed to divine grace is an anti-Judaic polemic. I would suggest that the *satan* interpreted as the champion of the law over grace may present us with a vestige of the mediaeval notion that equated the devil and the Jew . . . the widespread belief in mediaeval Christendom that the Jews were in league with the devil – indeed, were themselves devils incarnate”.

The portrait of Satan in Zechariah receives new shades and nuances of personality, while retaining the characteristic ambiguity found in the Old Testament accounts of the Satan-figure. J Russell explores the implications of Satan's appearance in Zechariah:

Here is a supernatural being who not only acts as an obstructor, but whose nature and name are those of an obstructor. Next, this being shows himself in overt hostile opposition to at least one man, for the adversary stands before the God to accuse Joshua. Satan appears here in the specific sense of an *accuser*, a sense broadly accepted in Apocalyptic Judaism and Christianity owing to the connotations of the Greek *diabolos*. There is a hint of Satan's opposition to Yahweh as well as to human beings, for the God reproaches him for his activities. Yet Satan appears merely to be punishing Joshua for his sins; rather than having any malicious intent, he may simply have failed to understand that Yahweh intended to be merciful.³⁶

Wray and Mobley suggest that with his appearance in Zechariah as the accuser, Satan is well on his way to becoming the classic enemy of God:

Or is this more than intramural sparring, more than the inevitable but provisional residue of an adversarial hearing? Indeed, the genesis of a cosmic separation of powers? If the latter is the case, then we have – for the first time in the Hebrew Bible – *hassatan* acting as God's opponent in a forensic setting. And although Satan is not yet a fully developed, independent being in Zechariah 3, we can see the beginnings of what would later become the perennial confrontation between Satan and God.³⁷

3.4 First Chronicles 21:1

This final Old Testament text under consideration may well be the most controversial in terms of our view of the development of the concept of Satan.

The books of Chronicles were, with little dispute, among the latest among the canonical writings.³⁸ In any case it is chronologically the later, compared to Numbers, Job, and Zechariah, whatever their sequence may be. In addition to its chronological position,

³⁶ Russell, *The Devil*, 190-191.

³⁷ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 66.

³⁸ Proposed dates range from the late sixth century to the third century BCE. The Chronicles are thought to be contemporaneous with Ezra-Nehemiah. Some scholars though, would argue that Daniel was written last (between 168 and 164 BCE).

Chronicles is unique in that it is, in fact, a commentary on other canonical books written much earlier, namely, 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.

To make matters, for our subject, wildly more interesting, 1 Chr 21:1 directly parallels a text in 2 Sm 24:1. Both are describing David's punishable offence of commissioning a census, but whereas 1 Sm 24:1 attributes this misjudgement in part to Yahweh ("Again the anger of *the* LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah' ESV), 1 Chr 21:1 offers a different agent provocateur: "Satan rose up against Israel [עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל] וְיָעִמֵּד שָׂטָן and *incited* David to take a census of Israel" ESV)!

Assuming an evolutionary development, Kluger first notes that in this text, the previously regular definite noun הַשָּׂטָן is rendered without an article. Given (as we know) that at the end of the trajectory Satan has become a proper name, she probably reads this back to interpret its use here as the earliest and only canonical use of 'Satan' as a proper noun in the Hebrew Bible: "Here Satan is an independent personality, who in a particular function appears instead of God".³⁹ Her argument is that by 1 Chr 21 we have the most mature notion of the Satan-concept (and, we might add, if so, the closest depiction to his appearance in the New Testament):

Satan is divested of his character as a divine function. He no longer appears, as in the book of Job, as part of the divine court; he is an independent figure, apparently separated from God, who no longer stands in dialectic confrontation with God or his angel, as in Job and Zechariah.⁴⁰

Kluger's assertions, while plausible, are not without inherent exegetical weaknesses. First, while the indefinite noun שָׂטָן allows for it to be rendered as "Satan", a proper

³⁹ Kluger, *Satan*, 39;

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 155. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 222, adopts the same reasoning (as most Bible translators imply when they render the noun "Satan"): "Towards the end of the Persian period this figure appears again in the first book of Chronicles (21:1), where his name has already become a proper name. It has lost the article, and from 'the satan' has turned into 'Satan' with a capital 'S'". Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 67-68, follow the same logic, albeit more dramatically: "It is as if Satan is stepping from the shadowy ranks of the heavenly host at the back of the stage, chanting their 'Holy, Holy, Holies', to emerge front and center as a character in his own right. Satan – no longer God's lackey as in the book of Job – stands alone in Chronicles, acting apart from the divine council".

name, it can equally be read as “a satan” or better still, “an adversary” bearing the “profane” meaning Kluger detects in at least six other texts. If this were the case, then the writer of the Chronicles is merely reassigning the blame for instigating the census away from Yahweh to an unspecified agent (the apparent ambiguity then allows for either a human or celestial adversary-figure). This is the gist of P Day’s counter-argument.⁴¹ She avers that the earliest use of Satan as a proper name may be definitively fixed only from the second century BCE:

To sum up our findings thus far, we have seen that there is no evidence to support reading *satan* as a proper name in Chronicles. Recent research into the composition of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah suggests a redactional history which would date 1 Chr 21:1–22:1 between 520 and 400 B.C.E., yet the earliest clear evidence for understanding satan as a proper name comes from the second century.⁴²

A second weakness in Kluger’s otherwise creative discussion follows from the above. The Chronicler’s only use of the indefinite noun שָׂטָן simply strains under the weight of the meaning Kluger assigns to it. With little substantial evidence, Kluger asserts from 1 Chronicles 21:1 that Satan *is*:

- a. Divested of his character as a divine function
- b. No longer a part of the divine court
- c. An independent figure apparently separated from God
- d. No longer in dialectic confrontation with God⁴³

P Day goes on to note that in 1 Chr 21:15-30 there is another celestial figure, the יְהוָה מְלָאֲכָיִם, holding a drawn sword, much like the “angel of Yahweh” in Nm 22. She, therefore, proposes two different “satans” or adversaries of David and Jerusalem: “In effect 1 Chr 21 speaks of two celestial satans; the first is an unspecified accuser who

⁴¹ See Day, *Adversary*, 144-145; for the same position see A L Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 37-38.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 141-142.

⁴³ See full quote above.

brings a complaint against Israel to the heavenly tribunal, and the second is the messenger dispatched as a consequence of Yahweh's wrath".⁴⁴

We may, however, venture that P Day may be far too sweepingly dismissive (on the basis of her admissible arguments regarding 1 Chr 21:1) to deny the existence of a shadowy Satan figure in the entire Hebrew Bible. She is certainly inaccurate to claim that Satan's "fundamental purpose and nature" has no foundation in any of the biblical *satan* texts.⁴⁵

3.5 Summary on Satan in the Hebrew Bible

The preceding exploration of the relevant texts in the Hebrew Bible at the very least confirms that the etymology of 'Satan' shows its roots in the Hebrew noun שָׂטָן which commonly spoke of any opponent, adversary, or accuser, and at times was descriptive of little-known celestial figures that showed up in crisis situations on earth, or more likely in heavenly council scenes.

It has also served to confirm that the ancient texts do not provide any indication of the well-defined, independent personality, and epitome of evil that we encounter more naturally within the writings of Paul and the later New Testament.

The biblical doctrine as a whole, then, shows a clear development of the Satan-concept from a general noun to the proper name of an imposing figure. The interest of this thesis has been to ascertain if the Hebrew Bible evinces a stage in that development; and, the study above makes it difficult to deny that some of the key characteristics of Satan –

⁴⁴ Day, *Adversary*, 145.

⁴⁵ See Day, *Adversary*, 62-63: "If there is no Satan in 1 Chronicles 21 then there is no Satan in the Hebrew Bible, hence to talk about a profane Satan concept is, within the context of the Hebrew Bible texts that use the term *satan*, anachronistic. In heaven as on earth, the term *satan* has neither a single meaning nor a sole referent. And when Satan as it were materializes as an independent personality the traits attributed to him definitely include reflections of and implications drawn from certain of the texts that employ the noun *satan*, but what we might call Satan's fundamental purpose and nature was not derived from any of the biblical *satan* texts".

adversary of God, accuser of humans, destroyer, and source of misfortune – begin to emerge within the pages of the Hebrew Bible, albeit in sketchy and tenuous forms.

Some scholars, however, deny the Hebrew Bible any substantial part in the formation of the Satan concept, and prefer to view it entirely as a foreign import from cultures that impinged on the Israelites during the Exile.⁴⁶ However, this either/or approach is not necessary; it is plausible that the later doctrine of Satan emerged *both* from its infancy in the Hebrew scriptures, *as well as* from the radical and accelerated shaping it received during the tumultuous and dynamic period of Second Temple Judaism. L Grabbe summarizes the argument as follows:

“Satan” originally was a title of the prosecutor in Yahweh’s heavenly court (e.g., Job 1,6), but in the post-exilic period he also becomes the head of the wicked forces opposing God. He is the same as Mastema in Jubilees 10, 8-11, a name also found in CD 16, 5. The name Satan does not occur in the Qumran scrolls, however, except in three broken contexts in which it may well be simply the common “adversary”, so it is not clear that Satan is identified with Belial at Qumran. On the other hand, the Book of Jubilees seems to identify Satana not only with Mastema (10, 8-11) but also with Belial (1, 20; 15, 33). In the New Testament the figure of Satan is well developed . . . Thus, it is clear that certain strands of the devil tradition continued to circulate separately and did not necessarily coalesce, at least in some circles of Judaism. Nevertheless, there seems to be a unified tradition bringing together many or all the elements by the first century C. E. in some Jewish circles.⁴⁷

4. The Development of the Satan Concept within the Second Temple Period

For the better part of Christian history, the period between the Old and New Testaments was referred to as “the four hundred silent years”. Today, we know that those years were neither four hundred nor silent. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, together with the burgeoning interest in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the vast corpus of related “Greco-Roman writings from the Diaspora” have opened new avenues, over the last five decades or so, to understand more deeply the social, political, and philosophical environment of post-exilic, or Second-Temple, Israelite religion.⁴⁸ This religion is now more commonly termed ‘Early Judaism’.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Day, *Adversary*, 63.

⁴⁷ L L Grabbe, “The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation,” *JSJ* 18, no. 2 (1987): 158, n12.

4.1 The Chronological and Cultural Parameters of Second Temple Judaism

This period gets its name from the events that transpired during the second half of the sixth century BCE, when, following the return from Exile, the Judahites rebuilt the Temple of Solomon under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.⁵⁰ The dedication of the Second Temple, following the prophet Haggai's urgent promptings to complete its reconstruction, took place in 516 BCE.

Nevertheless, when discussing this era, it is better to view it more as a cultural phenomenon than a mere historical timeframe.⁵¹ The irreversible effects of Alexander's Hellenization programme, the independent kingdom of Judah under Hasmonean rule, and the accommodations to Roman hegemony that began in the second half of the first century BCE, all contributed to provide a particular context within which Judaism had to reinvent itself following the cataclysmic events of 586 BCE and the experience of exile. Further, it is the specific reshaping of Judaism during these centuries that gives to the Second Temple Period its most enduring importance, particularly as the threshold across which Christianity emerged. Consequently, for our purposes, the narrower period from the reign of Alexander to the destruction of the Temple (332 BCE–70 CE) will be made the focus of enquiry.

⁴⁸ See J J Collins and D C Harlow, eds., *Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), vii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1: "For German scholars of the nineteenth and early and mid-twentieth century, such as Emil Schürer and Wilhelm Bousset, this was *Spätjudentum*, 'Late Judaism'. The 'lateness' was relative to the teaching of the prophets, and bespoke decline as well as chronological sequence. The decline reached its nadir in rabbinic Judaism, understood as a religion of the Law. After the Holocaust, this way of characterizing ancient Judaism was widely (but not universally) recognized as not only offensive but dangerous. It was also inaccurate. On any reckoning, the history of Judaism since the Roman period is longer than the preceding history. Moreover, it is now increasingly apparent that the religion of ancient Israel and Judah before the Babylonian conquest was significantly different from the 'Judaism' that emerged after the Exile".

⁵⁰ J Anderson, *The Internal Diversification of Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 3: "Typically, scholars of Israelite history assign the dates of 1800 to 450 B.C.E. as the Biblical period, and 520 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. as the overlapping designation for the Second Temple period. In addition, Hellenistic Judaism typically refers to the period between 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E".

⁵¹ The limits of this period are understood variously; extending from as early as 538 BCE to as late as 135 CE. However, see Collins and Harlow *Early Judaism*, 2: "The conquests of Alexander are taken as the *terminus a quo*, on the grounds that they mark a major cultural transition. Several extant postbiblical Jewish writings date from the third or early second century B.C.E., prior to the Maccabean Revolt, which has often served as a marker for a new era. . . . The reign of Hadrian (117–138 C.E.) and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 C.E.) are taken to mark the end of an era". Also see Anderson, *Internal Diversification*, 3.

4.2 The Literary Witness to Beliefs within Early Judaism

Until the twentieth century our understanding of what was believed within early Judaism was somewhat limited to the information available in the canonical writings, some pseudepigraphical works, the writings of early authors such as Philo and Josephus, and the writings of the rabbis. The situation has, of course, changed dramatically over the last hundred years with the discovery and painstaking translations of hundreds of Jewish documents that had originated from the Second Temple period.⁵² Through this new-found window we are able to apprehend with greater certainty the ideas that had most currency between the rise of Alexander the Great and the Fall of Jerusalem.⁵³

In addition to the Hebrew Bible, three other major literary witnesses now exist as helpful guides in the attempt to reconstruct an understanding of Early Judaism: the *Apocrypha*, the corpus classified as *Pseudepigrapha*, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of further relevance to the enquiry of this thesis, all these bodies of literature provide rich insights to Jewish conceptualizations of evil and Satan in the period leading up to the writings of Paul.

4.2.1 *The Apocrypha*

Meaning “the hidden things (books)”, the Apocrypha refers to a collection of Jewish writings that were not found within the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. This collection is understood variously within the different religious traditions today: Jewish, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant.⁵⁴ For the purposes of our study, a particular

⁵² Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 96-97: “If we ignore for the moment the contents of what is called the pseudepigraphical literature (those ancient writings that are not part of the Bible or Apocrypha), the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Jordan Valley, the Nag Hammadi library from the Nile Valley, as well as the myriad documents preserved in translated form in Ethiopic, Old Church Slavonic, Greek, Coptic, Aramaic, and Latin, we must marvel at the sheer *quantity* of religious literature produced between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E.”.

⁵³ See *Ibid.*, 96: “Thanks to the hard work of countless archaeologists who have unearthed great caches of ancient libraries and the painstaking research of contemporary philologists, we have a more complete picture of the fractious, unruly, and creative period that produced Judaism and Christianity”.

⁵⁴ See Collins and Harlow, *Early Judaism*, 179-191. Which books comprise the Apocrypha, their status with regard to canon, and relative merits for religious use and spiritual edification, have been matters of serious debate for much of Christian history, going back at least to Jerome and the Vulgate Bible. In fact Jerome and his contemporaries were ambivalent about their value, with some recognizing them as useful reading and others eschewing them altogether. While the Protestant Reformers did not discard the Apocrypha, there was a great divergence of opinion regarding their status, with some Reformers leveling sharp criticisms against some books. The Roman Catholic Church reacted to the latter

understanding of ‘Apocrypha’ – as referring to the books found in the Septuagint (LXX) but absent from the Hebrew Bible – will be sufficient. Based on the three most important Greek codices (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus), a maximum of fifteen books may be identified as ‘the Apocrypha’.⁵⁵ The LXX emerged during the third to second centuries BCE from within Alexandrian Judaism,⁵⁶ and so the diabolology reflected within the corpus of its “apocryphal books” will be potentially significant to our understanding of how the doctrine of Satan developed.

4.2.2 *The Pseudepigrapha*

This refers to a vast (and expanding) corpus of writings, which are mostly dated to the period between 200 BCE and 200 CE. The term literarily means “books that are falsely ascribed”, and on this basis some scholars assert that even some books in the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Daniel, and some Davidic Psalms) are “arguably pseudepigrapha”.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the general designation today is to books that are outside of canon, but may not necessarily be falsely ascribed. J H Charlesworth, in his monumental two-volume work, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, includes sixty-three such writings.

Since this enquiry is limited to the conceptualizations of Satan within Second Temple Judaism and until the emergence of the Pauline corpus, the pseudepigraphal writings referred to here will only be those that are established to have been composed no later than the early first century CE.⁵⁸

via the first Council of Trent in 1546 and “pronounced a curse against any who were not prepared to recognize all those books contained in the Latin Vulgate Bible” (180). Its preference was to call the Apocrypha by the term “Deuterocanonical Books” and use the former term to designate the books usually called “Pseudepigrapha”.

⁵⁵ Here the Apocrypha consists of: Greek Esther, Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Psalms of Solomon, 1 Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, Psalms and Odes (including the Prayer of Manasseh). See Collins and Harlow, *Early Judaism*, 183.

⁵⁶ See *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵⁷ See *Ibid.*, 191.

⁵⁸ The Pauline corpus may be safely assigned to the period 49-64 CE.

4.2.3 The Dead Sea Scrolls

The chance find by a young Bedouin shepherd, in 1946 (or 1947), of a cave with ancient manuscripts, would lead to the unravelling of the greatest and most fascinating archaeological discovery of epigraphic material of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ By 1956, a total of eleven caves had been discovered in the region of Khirbet Qumran on the north-western shore of the Dead Sea, and together they had yielded complete scrolls or partial representations of over 800 original documents now famously called the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁶⁰ The DSS is without parallel in its importance, and has, in one move, paved the way for a complete reassessment of what had previously been largely assumed about the pre-Christian history of canonical texts, the Apocrypha, and pseudepigraphal writings.⁶¹ G Vermes proposes that “Qumran’s greatest novelty” would likely be the radical undermining of the previously held view that ancient Judaism was a monolithic literary-religious system:

The Dead Sea Scrolls have afforded for the first time direct insight into the creative literary-religious process at work within the variegated Judaism which flourished during the last two centuries of quasi-national independence, before the catastrophe of 70 CE forced the rabbinic successors of the Pharisees to attempt to create an “orthodoxy” by reducing dangerous multiplicity to simple, tidy and easily controllable unity.⁶²

⁵⁹ “The manuscript find has been hailed as the greatest archaeological discovery of the twentieth century,” F J Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 197.

⁶⁰ In Cave 4 alone Emmanuel Tov, in 1992, had catalogued 575 titles (p.10). See Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 2011), 1-12; For an updated figure, however, also see Collins and Harlow, *Early Judaism*, 206: “The present inventory of the Dead Sea Scrolls lists around 930 items. In most cases one item corresponds to one manuscript, but in view of the many unidentified fragments that have not been included in the lists, it is plausible that the material known to us, stem from more than a thousand different manuscripts” (emphasis added).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15: “The uniqueness of the Qumran discovery was due to the fact that with the possible exception of the Nash papyrus . . . no Jewish text in Hebrew or Aramaic written on perishable material could previously be traced to the pre-Christian period”. See also Collins and Harlow, *Early Judaism*, 204.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 23-24.

For our purposes, any allusions, references, or the evidence of a more systemized understanding of evil and its manifestations in the DSS would be invaluable to help piece together conceptualizations of Satan in the ferment of Second Temple Judaism.⁶³

4.2.4 Aliases for Satan and Permutations of Diabology in the Second Temple Literature

If the Hebrew Bible yielded only a shadowy and tenuous apparition of a diabolical archfiend, the writings of the Second Temple period “suddenly shifts into overdrive”⁶⁴ and presents the uninitiated reader with bewildering permutations of the notion of evil, its origin, manifestation, and influence on humankind. Nothing is “fixed” at this stage. Within the overarching monotheism and covenantal theology of adherence to *Torah*, Second Temple Judaism became thoroughly plural.⁶⁵

One contributing factor was the perpetual social and political instability of the Jewish people all the way from the conquest of Alexander the Great to the fall of Jerusalem, and the Bar Kochba Revolt. This era was distinctively marked by the political intrigues of the religious leaders of the Jews, as one faction or the other attempted to manoeuvre its way to gain favour with the powers of the time. The resulting alienation and repeated fracturing of segments of the community intensified the diversity of Jewish identity, along with the diversity of the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures.

Significant diversity of religious outlook had already been thoroughly woven into the matrix of Second Temple Judaism because it emerged through the coming together of three major religio-cultural strands of Judaism that had developed during, and well after, the period of the Exile. The Babylonian Exile had resulted in the formation of large communities of Judahites in three regions: those that had remained in the land

⁶³ Since the bulk of the material pre-dates the era of Christian writings. Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 14: “In sum, the general scholarly view today places the Qumran Scrolls roughly between 200 BCE and 70 CE, with a small portion of the texts possibly stretching back to the third century BCE, and the bulk of the extant material dating to the first century BCE, i.e. Late Hasmonean or Early Herodian in the jargon of the paleographers”.

⁶⁴ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 95.

⁶⁵ There were some uniform markers of Jewish identity of course: monotheism, observance of the Sabbath, unique dietary habits, and circumcision. Nevertheless, “what flourished in the Second Temple Period was not a single, fixed, “normative” Judaism, but a developing, evolving religion”. See Anderson, *Internal Diversification*, 5.

represented Palestinian Judaism; those who had been exiled represented Babylonian (and Persian) Judaism; and those who had fled to Egypt during the turbulent periods of economic deprivation, war and exile, constituted Alexandrian Judaism.⁶⁶

It is inevitable, then, that conceptualizations of Satan and views about evil would be diverse. The first factor that strikes the enquirer in this regard is the lack of uniformity in the designation of Satan. The literature evinces a long list of aliases for the enemy of God and His people. In addition to the sparing use of the Hebrew 'Satan', he is variously called *Diabolos*, *Beliar/Belial*, *Sammael*, *Azazel*, *Mastema*, *Melkiresha*, *Semyaza/Samyaz*, and *Satanael/Satanail*. These names are by no means spread uniformly: specific literatures adopt one or more of these names as the standard designation of Satan. Thus, for example: the LXX (including the deuterocanonical books) favours *Diabolos*; 1 Enoch simultaneously speak of *Semyaza*, *Satanael*, and *Azazel*; the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs use *Beliar/Belial*; Jubilees refers to *Mastema*; and the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Beliar/Belial* and *Melkiresha*.⁶⁷

The Apocrypha, like the Hebrew Bible, shows the least interest in diabolology. With "a satan" appearing just once in Sir (Ecclus) 21:27 ("When an ungodly person curses an adversary, he curses himself"), and *diabolos* ("devil") being used only in 1 Mc 1:36 ("an evil adversary of Israel at all times"), and Ws 2:24 ("but through the devil's envy death entered the world"), the paucity of references to the personification of evil within the ferment of the period is remarkable. What accounts for this disinterest, particularly when the contemporary literature – from 300 BCE to 100 CE – presented such elaborate ideas about Satan? One possibility is that the books that were later recognized as 'apocryphal' belonged to a stream of tradition that eschewed the growing speculations

⁶⁶All three communities claimed some sort of superiority. The Palestinian Jews claimed priority for having lived "in the Land" the Babylonian returnees claimed priority by their genealogy, and the Alexandrian Jews could appeal to sheer numbers, having over 200,000 in that city alone. See Anderson, *Internal Diversification*, 63ff.

⁶⁷"So the Devil goes by many names in this period. . . . Although the names may differ, the Prince of Demons' function remains the same. His role, regardless of the epithet preferred by a particular author, is a subversive one", Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 108.

on the demonic, in contrast to other traditions that followed quite different trajectories.

The comment by A Thompson in this regard is helpful:

The late OT hints of a dualistic solution to the problem of evil were destined neither for an immediate nor total triumph, at least not within Judaism proper. There is evidence of a struggle to maintain a more purely monotheistic solution to the problem. This reaction is evident in Ecclesiasticus 21:27: “When an ungodly man curses his adversary he curses his own soul”. This passage properly belongs to a discussion of the evil *yetzer*, but it definitely represents some sort of polemic against the tendency to posit an external tempter who might diminish man’s personal responsibility.⁶⁸

By and large, the literature of this period has much to say about Satan. In fact, one might argue that the devil, as we know him, really manifests here.⁶⁹ He emerges as an independent individual of some importance, surrounded and supported by a plurality of similar beings, who together function as a “parallel kingdom” whose highest agenda is to frustrate the will of God in the affairs of humanity:

The devil has therefore changed from being the metaphysical principle of evil to the head of a kind of kingdom, parallel to that of God, to whom God actually assigns as subjects the souls of the giants, that is, the evil spirits. The kingdom of evil is unified and made contemporary to humans.⁷⁰

Despite the vast corpus of literature from the period, this investigation is limited in scope both by subject (those that make any significant reference to Satan) and by chronology (those that may, with some confidence, be assigned to pre-date Paul). Given these factors, in addition to the DSS, we can identify the following pseudepigraphal texts as promising for this research.

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil*, 39-40.

⁶⁹ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 96: “This turbulent period also marks the adolescence of Satan”.

⁷⁰ Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 225.

4.2.5 First Enoch

Classified as an apocalyptic writing, 1 Enoch is a composite work of 107 chapters made of five “books” (possibly modelled after the Torah, the Psalms, and the Megilloth)⁷¹: The Book of the Watchers (1–36), the Book of the Similitudes (37–71), the Book of Astronomical Writings (72–82), the Book of Dream Visions (83–90), the Book of the Epistle of Enoch (91–107). The sections were composed in different periods, but some parts of 1 Enoch, such as *The Book of Watchers*, go back to the third century BCE.⁷² The importance of this writing cannot be overstated. In addition to its antiquity, 1 Enoch is also the fountainhead of a completely alternative, but orthodox, Jewish narrative of the origin and nature of evil in the universe.⁷³ The thesis of “the Watchers” – first innovated in 1 Enoch⁷⁴ – becomes the basis for discussions about Satan and evil in other subsequent writings.⁷⁵

4.2.6 Jubilees

Also called “Little Genesis” because Jubilees is a retelling of Genesis 1 – Exodus 12, which, in turn, was believed to have been revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai where he spent the forty days mentioned in Exodus 24:18. The work is dated to as far back as the

⁷¹ See Anderson, *Internal Diversification*, 161-182. Sacchi, *Apocalypticism*, 211-212, makes the interesting suggestion that 1 Enoch in turn is derived from *The Book of Noah*, which is dated back to 500 BCE.

⁷² See the discussion in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha I*: 5-12.

⁷³ Anderson, *Internal Diversification*, 110-111: “The preponderance of literary evidence would indicate that Enochic Judaism was extremely popular in the late Second Temple period. Beliefs in the super-human origins of evil, the freedom of these and all beings to rebel, and the freedom of God to deliver the world from such rebellion were the philosophical pillars of this alternative ways of thinking”.

⁷⁴ Although see Sacchi, *Apocalypticism*, 212, who argues that the diabolism in 1 Enoch comes from the earlier *Book of Noah*.

⁷⁵ Contrary to previous scholarly consensus that Second Temple Judaism was uniformly Torah-centric, the “Enoch tradition” attests to an alternate way of being Jewish; one less dependent on externals such as Torah and cult, and grounded more in revelation knowledge, the immediate and the individual. On this, see Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 126-127: “Numerous scholars have noticed that the Enoch literature does not put much stress on Torah. It may represent a Judaism not fully consonant with what we think as mainstream, centered on Torah and priesthood. The discussion is ongoing and has not resulted in consensus. . . . The lack of mention of the larger story centered on Sinai stands in stark contrast with other Jewish apocalypses as well as the literature of the apocalyptic community of Qumran. The religion of the Enoch literature is Jewish, but it is not Mosaic. It is covenantal, but the laws on which it is built are not those of Torah but are broader, rooted in the universe as a whole. One can compare it to the wisdom tradition in its relative lack of interest in the Sinai covenant and the particular history of Israel”.

mid-second century BCE, and recognized to be of a complex genre with affinities to “history, testament, apocalyptic, ritual law, and chronology”.⁷⁶ The writer was well acquainted with 1 Enoch and the story of the Watchers, and makes extensive reference to evil powers in the world.⁷⁷

4.2.7 *The Testaments of the Twelve*

Here we are into more debatable dating because scholars differ on whether this work falls entirely within a Christian provenance or whether it was originally a Jewish work predating Christianity, which was later shaped by Christian redaction.⁷⁸ Charlesworth has no doubt that it could not have “been composed by anyone other than a Hellenized Jew”, and discusses a date between the completion of the LXX (250 BCE) and the reign of John Hyrcanus (137-107 BCE).⁷⁹ The *Testaments* is a compendium of the “last words” of each of the Twelve Patriarchs individually made just prior to their death (on the pattern of Jacob’s last words in Genesis 49), but with a special emphasis on the significance of the tribes of Levi and Judah, the founders of the priestly and kingly traditions in Israel. This text, too, shows a major interest in the demonic, with Satan most commonly being called “Beliar”.⁸⁰ The cumulative result of the multiple references to the demonic in the *Testaments* is that it significantly advanced Jewish conceptualizations of Satan:

In this work earlier ambiguities about the relation between God and the tempter are resolved: the boundary between good and evil is clear. The devil is entirely extraneous to God; his will is inimical to God. “You must hold fast to the will of God and reject that of Belial” (*T. Naph.* 3.1). “God is Light, Belial is Darkness” (*T. Jos.* 20.2). The two kingdoms have clearly separate locales and, more than being merely distinct are opposed.⁸¹

⁷⁶ See the discussion in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 2:35-50.

⁷⁷ See Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil*, 40: “One of the sources which is permeated with evil spirits, led by Satan (Mastema) is Jubilees”.

⁷⁸ See Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 192.

⁷⁹ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 1:777-778.

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil*, 45: “Another source which is permeated with a vast demonology is the *Testaments*. Beliar is the head of the evil spirits, and either he or his cohorts are mentioned in every one of the twelve testaments”.

⁸¹ Sacchi, *Apocalypticism*, 227.

4.2.8 *The Testament of Job*

While resembling the the better-known *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, this elaborates on the biblical narrative. It is indisputably Jewish, and dated to the first century BCE. Following the tradition of the biblical book, it only uses “Satan” as the title for Job’s tormentor.

4.2.9 *Life of Adam and Eve*

Produced between 100 BCE and 100 CE, this work tells a story of Adam’s fatal illness, and how he instructs Eve and Seth to return to Eden and get him the oil of healing from the tree of life. Seth is attacked by an animal, and an angel informs him that the healing oil will only be available at the end of time. The tradition about the original “Fall” that eventually persisted into Christian theology – Adam, Eve and the Serpent – is reiterated in this book. It also only uses “Satan” as a proper name for the enemy of God.

4.2.10 *Lives of the Prophets*

Dated with a degree of probability to the first quarter of the first century CE, the *Lives of the Prophets* also provides added insight into the development of the Satan doctrine in Second Temple Judaism preceding Paul.⁸² *Lives of the Prophets* prefers the name “Beliar” for personified evil.

5. Underlying Beliefs about Personified Evil in Early Judaism

In what follows we shall attempt to bring together the extant references to the figure of Satan, and explore the most likely underlying beliefs about personified evil in Early Judaism. For greater clarity, we shall examine these under three topics: the *Origins* or *Genesis* of Satan, the *Profile* or *Functions* of Satan, and the *Prospects* or *Fate* of Satan.

5.1 The Origin or Genesis of Satan

The most common modern assumption about the origin of the devil is based on an idea that was least proffered in the Second Temple period. In fact, based on the uncertainty

⁸² For dating and introductory discussion see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 2:379-384.

in the dating of its source document (2 Enoch), it is questionable if such a view even prevailed in Jewish thinking prior to Paul.⁸³ In summary,⁸⁴ this view holds that Satan was once a “high-ranking officer in the cosmic army, known in the Hebrew Bible as the *saba’ot* or the “[angelic] hosts”, who attempted to revolt against God, and was subsequently cast down from heaven in disgrace. 2 Enoch 29:4-5 states it this way:

But one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his authority. He thought up the impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds, which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. And I hurled him out from the height, together with his angels. And he was flying around in the air, ceaselessly, above the Bottomless.⁸⁵

The language, here, alludes to a couple of passages in Isaiah (14:12-15) and Ezekiel (28:12-19), which may, in turn, have become the basis for speculation in later Judaism or Christianity. The Isaiah woe-oracle to the “king of Babylon” (here called the “Morning Star”) points out how he has “fallen from heaven”, who had once tried to “raise [my] throne above the stars of God . . . [and] make [myself] like the Most High”. The later Latin translation of “Morning Star” – *lucifer* – was picked up by J Milton in his poem, “Paradise Lost” and went on to become one of the most popular personal names for Satan in modern times.⁸⁶ Even though Ezekiel, too, addresses a human figure (the king of Tyre), it is the elevated language, strong allusions, and celestial metaphors that give rise to the possibilities that a celestial figure Satan, and not the human king of Tyre, that is the actual object of God’s speeches through the prophets.

The essence of J Oswald’s comments with regard to the object of God’s condemnation in the Isaiah text may be equally applied to the Ezekiel passage:

⁸³ The earliest extant copy of 2 Enoch is as late as the 14th century CE. Scholars dispute if it, in fact, might not be a “Christian” writing, although opinions vary as widely as the proposed dates that range from the first century BCE to the Middle Ages! See the Introduction in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* I: 91-100.

⁸⁴ See Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 108-112.

⁸⁵ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 1:148.

⁸⁶ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 111. See also, 158-160, for Milton’s influence on our conceptualization of “hell”.

Some of the church fathers, linking this passage to Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:8, 9, took it to refer to the fall of Satan described in those places. However, the great expositors of the Reformation were unanimous in arguing that the context here does not support such an interpretation. This passage is discussing human pride, which, while monumental to be sure, is still human and not angelic.⁸⁷

The narrative of Satan's origin that is more likely to have circulated within Early Judaism – from which the above 2 Enoch account may have originated – is found in the *Life of Adam* 1–17, which relates a story of what followed after Adam and Eve had been expelled from Paradise. The couple suffer great sorrow, and Eve is remorseful and suicidal. She blames herself for leading Adam to this great disgrace, but Adam comes up with a plan to show true penitence, and so, to hope for God's mercy. He suggests that he would stand neck deep in the Jordan for 37 days, and Eve should do the same in the Tigris. Their extreme penitence makes Satan angry and he works to successfully tempt Eve a second time (chapters 9–10). When Adam realizes this he cries: "O Eve, Eve . . . how have you again been seduced by our enemy?" Realizing her repeated failure Eve cries out: "Woe to you, O Devil! Why do you assault us for nothing?" In answer to that question Satan sighs, and proceeds to present a fascinating account of the genesis of our arch-enemy (chapters 12–16).

All Satan's hatred is directed towards humanity because he lost his place in heaven, was denied any further fellowship with the angels, and was thrown down to the earth, on account of Adam. When God had created Adam in God's image, Michael the archangel had presented the man to the other angels and called them all to "worship the image of the Lord God, as the Lord God has instructed". Satan refuses: "Why do you compel me? I will not worship one inferior and subsequent to me. I am prior to him in creation; before he was made, I was already made. He ought to worship me". Hearing this, "other angels who were under" Satan also refused to worship the human creature. This rebellion makes God angry, and He expels Satan and his followers and casts them to earth.

⁸⁷ J N Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 320.

The most influential narrative about the origin of Satan was, however, the myth about the Watchers, first detailed in 1 Enoch.⁸⁸ As mentioned above, this work was well received during the centuries prior to Paul, and its diabolology adopted by other esteemed works such as *Jubilees*. The elaborate narrative is extrapolated from one of the most obscure passages in Genesis (6:1–4), which talks about the “sons of God” having relations with the “daughters of men” and producing the *Nephilim* (from נִפְּלִים, “the fallen ones”?).

The primordial “sin” in this account is lust, since it is the beauty of the antediluvian women that entices about two hundred angels who had been appointed to watch over the universe. They determine to breach the created boundaries and engage in illicit sexual alliances with women. At the beginning, their leader is Semyaza, who is cautious; he doesn’t want to be left carrying the can: “I fear that perhaps you will not consent that this deed should be done, and I alone will become responsible for this great sin” (1 Enoch 6:3). In response, they all bind themselves by an oath, and descend to earth and carry out their ill-advised plan. In addition to illicit intercourse, they corrupt humanity by teaching magical arts, metallurgy, and beauty culture (1 Enoch 7-8).⁸⁹

A total of eighteen leaders of the Watchers are named (6:7-8); but as the narrative progresses another Watcher named Azazel is identified as the head of this group of rebel angels (see 1 Enoch 8:1; 9:6; 10:4).⁹⁰ The *Nephilim* wreak havoc on the earth, and

⁸⁸ W Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1975), 22: “In some cases the adversary is portrayed as the fallen angels, who according to Gen. 6 mingled with the children of men and begot the host of demons, the cause of sickness and the ones who lead people astray into idolatry and other sins. This conception dominates, for example, in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, which knows the angels Azazel and Semjaza as the leading figures of the evil powers”.

⁸⁹ See Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 217; Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 127-130.

⁹⁰ This echoes the name of the enigmatic wilderness-demon mentioned in Lv 16:8, 10, and 26. For a discussion on the relationship between 1 Enoch and Lv 16, and for the interesting argument as to how and why the Azazel tradition served both diabolology and Christology in Judaism and early Christianity respectively, see Grabbe, “The Scapegoat Tradition,” 152-167.

bring great distress to humanity, and are eventually destroyed, but their souls live on, and they become the evil spirits or demons that continue to torment humanity.⁹¹

A third significant strand of tradition about the origin of Satan is reflected in writings located within the DSS corpus. Here we find a systemic dualism within its apocalyptic thought⁹² that is not characteristic of the other literature within the comparable period.⁹³ In *The Community Rule* (1QS III–IV) the following ideas are found:

He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and injustice . . . All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness . . . Until now the spirits of truth and injustice struggle in the hearts of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly . . . For God has established the two spirits in equal measure until the determined end, and until the Renewal, and he knows the reward of their deeds from all eternity.⁹⁴

By comparing these various traditions, it is possible to conclude that Second Temple Judaism was greatly burdened by the problem of evil, and sought an explanation for its existence. This was noticeably unlike the writers of the Hebrew Bible, and even the Apocrypha. Those writers posited the existence of a rational and independent being that was the fountainhead of evil, temptation, and misery. Who exactly this figure may be, and the one name he may be called was still in flux; thus, various candidates appear in

⁹¹ Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 218: “Regarding the giants [Genesis 6:1-4], God made them quarrel and kill each other in fratricidal battles. Unfortunately this measure could be only a palliative: their souls, immortal like all souls, remained on the earth to do evil to humans and turn them against God”.

⁹² Although at no point does it go as far as the absolute dualism of Persian religion which saw no temporal relationship between Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) and Ahriman (Fiendish Spirit), they were viewed as “original in being themselves uncreated representatives of contradictory principles”. See Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 85-87; also see Murphy, *Apocalypticism*, 204: “Jewish thought could not fully accommodate the idea that there is any power in the universe equal to that of its God. Therefore the scrolls tell of a universe whose dualism is transcended by God and is therefore not absolute”.

⁹³ Although see *T. Ash.* 1:3-5: “God has granted two ways to the sons of men, two mind-sets, two lines of action, two models, and two goals. Accordingly, everything is in pairs, the one over against the other. The two ways are good and evil; concerning them there are two dispositions within our breasts that choose between them” (*Pseudepigrapha* 1:816-817).

⁹⁴ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 101-103; see also Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 57-58: “The Prince of Light thou has appointed to come to our support; but Satan, the angel Mastema, thou hast created for the pit; he rules in darkness, and his purpose is to bring about evil and sin. (1 QM 19:10-12)”.

different texts. However, the idea of a separate entity and an elaborate organization of evil has, by the first century CE, become mainstream Judaism.

Questions remain. Is Satan, then, to be understood to be a *bene Elohim*, a member of the divine council who fell away from his lofty position due to pride or lust, and dragged a host of other, lesser angelic beings with him (as for example in the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Enochic* literature, and *Jubilees*)? Or is he, as Qumran would have it, a special creation of God for the purpose of leading a stream of evil in the world so as to test the mettle of humans and distinguish between those who are worthy to be called the “children of Light” and those who ought to be condemned as “the children of Darkness”?

5.2 The Profile or Functions of Satan

Judaism, in general, was diffident about depicting the Devil’s physical appearance; quite unlike every other culture, where art and sculpture almost always were primary vehicles for expressing religious beliefs.⁹⁵ In Hebrew religion, the greater emphasis in characterization was placed on moral qualities. Consequently, the isolated reference to *Melkiresha*’s physical appearance in the *Testament of Amram* is arresting:

I raised my eyes and saw one of them. His looks were frightening [like those of a viper] and his garments were multi-coloured and he was extremely dark . . . And afterwards I looked and behold . . . by his appearance and his face he was like that of an adder, and he was covered with . . . together, and over his eyes . . .⁹⁶

Satan is portrayed as existing to persecute humanity, wreak destruction in the world, and corrupt creation. The *Damascus Document* speaks about an age when “Belial shall be unleashed against Israel” and he will set “three nets” by which he will catch Israel: fornication, riches, and profanation of the Temple.⁹⁷ In *Jubilees* 10:1-3 Noah’s

⁹⁵ See for example the graphic representations of Quetzalcoatl (Mexico), Sumbha and his followers (India), Shiva (India), Kali (India), Emma-O (Japan), Sekhmet (Egypt), Pazuzu (Mesopotamia), Lilitu (Mesopotamia), Anath (Ugarit), and Ahriman (Persia), in Russell, *The Devil*, 55-109.

⁹⁶ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 571.

⁹⁷ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 132: it continues to warn that those who do not hold fast to the Covenant “shall be visited for destruction by the hand of Belial” (135).

grandchildren are being led astray, blinded, and destroyed, and Noah has to pray for their rescue. We have already seen Satan's avowed intentions in *The Life of Adam and Eve* 12:1: "O Adam, all my enmity and envy and sorrow concern you"; and 16:3: "So with deceit I assailed your wife and made you to be expelled through her from the joys of your bliss". In *1 Enoch* 9:6, Azazel is held responsible for "all forms of oppression on the earth", and later God calls him the source of all sin: "And the whole earth has been corrupted by Azazel's teachings of his own actions; and write upon him all sin" (10:8). Again the *Testament of Benjamin* 3:3 suggests that "the spirits of Beliar seek to derange [people] with all kinds of oppression".⁹⁸

The Devil is known as a cunning deceiver who uses his trickery against individuals and nations alike. In the *Lives of the Prophets* 17:1-4, the prophet Nathan perceives ahead that David was going to "transgress" in the Bathsheba affair, and so hurries to warn him. On his way Beliar tricks him by getting him to encounter "a dead man who had been murdered". Delayed by this incident, Nathan is unable to help David. In the *Life of Adam and Eve*, we recall how Satan masqueraded as an angel of light (9:1, *Pseudepigrapha* II: 260). In the *Testament of Job*,⁹⁹ Satan is angry with Job because he had destroyed the "temple of the idol" (5:1-3; cf. 4:3-4). In the subsequent story, Satan's primary *modus operandi* is cunning and deceit, on more than one occasion coming at Job through disguise. In 6:4 he comes, "having disguised himself as a beggar"; in 7:1, "Satan departed and put a yoke on his shoulders"; in 17:2 he comes, "disguising himself as the king of the Persians"; and in 23:1 he deceives Sitis, Job's wife, having "disguised himself as a bread seller".

With regard to the nation, the *Damascus Document* states: "In ancient times Moses and Aaron arose by the hand of the Prince of Lights and Belial in his cunning raised up Jannes and his brother when Israel was first delivered".¹⁰⁰ And *Jubilees* 48:9 says: "And Prince

⁹⁸ Also see *T.Benj.* 7:1-2: "Flee from the evil of Beliar, because he offers a sword to those who obey him. The sword is the mother of seven evils: moral corruption, destruction, oppression, captivity, want, turmoil, desolation" (*Pseudepigrapha* 1:827).

⁹⁹ *Pseudepigrapha* 1:839-868.

¹⁰⁰ Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 133.

Mastema stood up before you and desired to make you fall into the hand of Pharaoh. And he aided the magicians of the Egyptians and they stood up and acted before you”.

Satan is also (as in Job) quite dependent on God for the space and time he is granted to exercise his evil intentions in the world. One example is when Noah intercedes for his grandchildren who are being led astray and destroyed by demons that had emanated from the bodies of the *Nephilim*. The angels are thereby ordered to bind the demons, at which point Mastema makes a plea that while ninety percent may be lost, that God allows him to keep ten percent: “And let them do everything which I tell them, because if some of them are not left for me, I will not be able to exercise the authority of my will among the children of men”.¹⁰¹

5.3 The Prospects or Fate of Satan

Despite this entire devilry, Satan is clearly a temporal being of limited power, whose morbid end is repeatedly rehearsed. In the *Benedictions* (4Q280) Melkiresha, the Satan-like figure of Qumran texts, is both cursed and threatened with retribution:

Be cursed Melkiresha, in all the thoughts of your guilty inclination. May God deliver you up for torture at the hands of your vengeful Avengers. May God not heed when you call on Him. May he raise his angry face towards you . . . May you be cursed with no remnant, and damned without escape.¹⁰²

1 Enoch makes clear that Azazel and his armies will face condemnation and be punished in due course; the forces of God (inclusive of the chief angels Asuryal, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael)¹⁰³ overwhelmingly dominate the sequence of events: “The Lord said to Raphael, ‘Bind Azazel hand and foot and throw him into the darkness’”.¹⁰⁴ *T Levi*

¹⁰¹ Jubilees 10:1-9, *Pseudepigrapha* 2:75-76.

¹⁰² Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 395.

¹⁰³ See 1 Enoch 10; *Pseudepigrapha* 1:17-18.

¹⁰⁴ So Raphael proceeds to put Azazel in a hole in the desert, and covers it with sharp rocks, and prevents him from enjoying any light “in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of Judgment”. *Pseudepigrapha* 1:17. Later Enoch pronounces Azazel’s judgement (13:1-2), *Pseudepigrapha* 1:19: “There will not be peace unto you; a grave judgment has come upon you. They will put you in bonds, and you will not have an opportunity for rest and supplication, because you have taught injustice and because you have shown to the people deeds of shame, injustice, and sin”.

mentions that the Lord will raise up a new priest, and “Beliar will be bound by him”.¹⁰⁵ *T Judah* 25:3 speaks of the destruction of Beliar: “There shall be no more Beliar’s spirit of error, because he will be thrown into the eternal fire”.¹⁰⁶

6. References to Satan and the Theology of Paul

Within the chronological appearance of the writings of the New Testament, the letters of Paul represent our earliest documents. Until recently, 1 Thessalonians was regarded as the first among them, but more recently Galatians has been proposed for the top slot. The latter is thought to have been composed as early as 48 CE. In any case, all of Paul’s letters had to have been written before 64 CE when, tradition has it, Paul was executed by beheading just outside the city of Rome.¹⁰⁷

Paul, like the Judaism of his time, was subject to the formative influences of multiple cultures and traditions. In fact, Paul may be identified as simultaneously inhabiting three worlds: Judaism, as expressed both in the cosmopolitan context of Tarsus, as well as through the more conservative rabbinic school of Gamaliel; Hellenism, “which by Paul’s day had permeated most of the recesses of the Eastern Mediterranean world” because of which, “Paul [was] at home, in fact, in the street-level world of Hellenistic discourse”; and of course, Roman citizenship, which Paul was privileged to enjoy from birth, and which he prudently used on occasion, as recorded by Luke in Acts.¹⁰⁸

What, then, do the letters reveal as Paul’s views about Satan? What is the extent of his interest in the “enemy”? What is Paul’s diabolology? Does he maintain the intensity of interest that was evident in the pre-Pauline literature? And, given his distinction as

¹⁰⁵ *Pseudepigrapha* 1:794-795.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 802.

¹⁰⁷ “Paul was beheaded, tradition asserts, at Aquae Salviae (now Tre Fontane) near the third milestone on the Ostian Way,” F F Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), 450.

¹⁰⁸ On this see N T Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), 3-6; also, Bruce, *Paul: Apostle*, 22-52. Some, however, question Paul’s Roman citizenship.

perhaps the most influential exponent of Christian theology in its early years, did he advance any innovative ideas about Satan and the existence of evil?

It is obvious that Paul believed in a personal devil, not merely a principle or force of evil. As will be seen below, in his references he uses the language of personality, indicating that Satan is capable of scheming, hindering, entrapping, masquerading, deceiving, and leading astray.

At the same time, one is struck by the relative lack of interest that Paul shows towards the subject. In the undisputed letters of Paul, the word “Satan” is only used ten times, while the term “the devil” does not appear (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Thess 2:9; 1 Tm 1:20; 5:15). On the other hand, in the disputed letters of Ephesians, and 1 and 2 Timothy the term “the devil” is used (Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tm 3:6–7; 2 Tm 2:26). However, Paul does use other terms for Satan: “Beliar” (2 Cor 6:14–18); “serpent” (2 Cor 11:3), “the tempter” (1 Thes 3:5), and, “the evil one” (2 Thes 3:3).¹⁰⁹ Only in three instances does the Pauline corpus refer to “demon” – δαιμονια (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 10:18–22; 1 Tm 4:1).

Unlike the apocalyptic writers that preceded him, Paul does not engage in any speculations about the origins of Satan¹¹⁰ nor does he dwell on Satan’s demise except to tell the Roman church that “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under [your] feet” (16:20). The notion of a cosmic battle between the forces of evil and the angels of God that seemed to be a major theme in Jewish apocalyptic writings, and would later be picked up again in Revelation, is absent from Paul.

There is a pragmatic feel to Paul’s references to Satan; he is usually mentioned in the course of describing his ministry experiences, or in the process of exhorting the church or individuals to live courageously in the face of challenges. Unlike subjects such as

¹⁰⁹ See, D G Reid, “Satan” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 864; C Brown “Satan,” *NIDNTT 3* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976), 468–477.

¹¹⁰ Although 1 Tm. 3:6–7 may constitute a faint allusion to *The Life of Adam and Eve*, chapters 12–16, suggest that *pride* was the “original sin” that resulted in a devil.

Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, or eschatology – on which the apostle innovatively elaborated and bequeathed a great legacy for posterity – Paul makes no effort at all to construct a systematic teaching on Satan:

Paul’s references to Satan always occur in the course of meeting the demands of his apostolic ministry; nowhere in the Pauline corpus is there any attempt to set forth a systematic “satanology”. But the picture which emerges from the fragments of evidence preserved in the Pauline letters seems in most respects compatible with that which we find in the common “satanology” of Judaism – though in Paul these themes are transposed into a Christian framework.¹¹¹

We also agree with Reid’s latter point that the connotations of most of Paul’s references to Satan echo the pre-Pauline literature of the Second Temple Period. The key characteristics of Satan, found in common in both sets of literature, are that of hindering or obstructing the will of God, cunning and deceptive actions, and the entrapment of the people of God.

6.1 Satan Hinders and Obstructs the Will of God

On one occasion, Paul tells the Thessalonians that he and his co-workers intensely longed to visit the church “but Satan hindered us” (1 Thes 2:18). This is reminiscent of the account in *The Lives of the Prophets*, where Nathan was “hindered” by Beliar from warning David about the danger of sinning with Bathsheba.¹¹² Wray and Mobley suggest that “hindering” could well be Satan’s main function in Paul’s thought:

When Paul chooses the word “Satan” in his letters, he has one particular role in mind: Satan as obstructor. Specifically, Paul uses “Satan” to refer to those who hinder – usually through undermining Paul’s teaching – the fully realized existence that the Christian religious experience offers.¹¹³

6.2 Satan is Cunning and Deceitful

On more than one occasion, Paul alludes to Satan’s cunning and deceitfulness, a dominant characteristic of the devil in Second Temple literature. In 2 Thes 2:9, when he speaks about a person who will come “according to the working of Satan” performing

¹¹¹ Reid, “Satan,” 864.

¹¹² Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 2:395.

¹¹³ Wray and Mobley, *Birth of Satan*, 129.

“miracles, false wonders and signs”, one is reminded of how Mastema “aided the magicians of the Egyptians” (Jubilees 48:9).¹¹⁴

In 1 Cor. 7:5, Paul warns married couples, who wish to separate and abstain from sex during periods of prayer, that “Satan [may] tempt you because of your lack of self-control”. This brings to mind the account of Adam and Eve desperately seeking God’s favour by separating themselves and standing neck-deep, in silence, in the waters of the Jordan and the Tigris. The separation gave Satan the opportunity to once again tempt Eve.¹¹⁵

Similar to the account in *Life of Adam and Eve*, in 2 Cor 11 Paul mentions that “Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning” (2 Cor 11:3), and goes on to argue that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14).¹¹⁶

6.3 Satan Entraps the People of God

In Ephesians, the author portrays the devil (“Satan” is not used) as one who is constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to gain a foothold through the weaknesses in the Christian community (Eph 4:27), using μεθοδεια (schemes) to defeat God’s people (Eph 6:11). The same objective – to entrap Christ’s followers to make them ineffective in serving God – is repeated in the later-pastorals (1 Tm 3:6-7; 2 Tm 2:26).

This notion of Satan as one who conspires to bring about the downfall of God’s people is found in Second Temple literature. In Jubilees 48:12, Mastema inspires the Egyptian army to pursue the Israelites with their superior vehicles and weaponry.¹¹⁷ In the

¹¹⁴ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 2:139.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 259-260.

¹¹⁶ See *Life of Adam and Eve* 9:1: “Eighteen days went by. Then Satan was angry and transformed himself into the brightness of angels and went away to the Tigris River to Eve and found her weeping,” *Pseudepigrapha* 2:260.

¹¹⁷ *Pseudepigrapha* 2:139.

Testament of Job Satan is relentless in pursuing Job's downfall, and succeeds somewhat by entrapping Sitis, Job's wife, to barter her hair and urge Job to curse God and die.¹¹⁸

6.4 Echoes from the Hebrew Bible

On a few occasions however, Paul appears to be working more directly with the assumptions of the Hebrew Bible rather than the later ideas of Early Judaism. In one reference, Paul talks about "handing over to Satan" (1 Cor 5:5; this phrase is repeated exactly in 1 Tm 1:20). A closer reading shows that this drastic action is, paradoxically, with a positive outcome in mind. In the first instance, it is so that the spirit of an egregious sinner may be saved; and in the second instance, so that two blasphemers "may be taught not to blaspheme". Here then, Satan functions more like an unsavoury divine agent; one through whom God's purposes are accomplished (cf. Jb 1–2).

This notion occurs in a very explicit way in 2 Cor 12:7: καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων. διὸ ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι ("Now because of the surpassing revelations, in order that I be not conceited, a thorn in the flesh – a messenger of Satan – was given to torment me, in order that I be not conceited"). In this context it is not difficult to argue that ἐδόθη is a "theological passive" suggesting that the "messenger of Satan" was, in actuality, "given (by God)" to Paul!¹¹⁹

Although sitting easily within the context of the Hebrew Bible and its high view of the sovereignty of Yahweh, the idea that Satan works towards the fulfilment of the divine will was jettisoned in Second Temple literature. In the latter context, Satan was viewed as an almost completely independent personality ruling over a rival kingdom. In fact, some of the Qumran Scrolls come very close to a Persian-type dualism with their rhetoric about the Prince of Darkness and the Prince of Light.

¹¹⁸ *Pseudepigrapha* 1:848-849.

¹¹⁹ Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 590: "The apostle describes the thorn as a 'gift' . . . the verb should be understood as a divine passive, with God as the 'giver'".

This brief mention of the “angel of Satan” in 2 Cor 12:7 is therefore significant. It may hint that Paul stands closer to the Satan-concept of the Hebrew Bible than with the later views of Second Temple Judaism, and therefore, maintained a more radical recommitment to the sovereignty of God in the affairs of the world and the church. Thrall notes that this particular text with its claim that an unpleasant “thorn” had been “bestowed on [Paul] by God” through the “agency of Satan” is “somewhat strange” because it suggests that the initiative, that Satan displayed even in his early manifestation in the tale of Job, has been lost because “in the present passage the initiative clearly comes from God”.¹²⁰ Consequently, this may explain why he maintains a “low-view” of Satan. Thus, while he concedes that Satan was an adversary of some intelligence and power, Paul’s low-view maintained that Satan was entirely finite, and that his most certain future prospect was to be humiliatingly “crushed” under the feet of those he once enslaved (Rom.16:20).

7. Conclusion

This survey of the development of the Satan-concept from Jewish antiquity to Paul was undertaken in response to the assertion of commentators that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul was employing the loftiest language for Satan by calling him “God”. Our tracing of the term “Satan” from its earliest appearance in Num 22:22 confirmed that this concept did in fact become significantly more complex as Judaism moved into the Second Temple period. In fact, this latter period allowed for such imaginative speculation that Satan began to be seen as almost a totally independent malevolent being ruling a vast domain by means of his power and his command over great hordes of demonic forces. Scholars have understandably assumed that such a “high view” of Satan stood in the background of Paul’s thought when he wrote 2 Corinthians. Our study establishes that despite this background, there is no evidence that Paul himself subscribed to such a “high view” of Satan. In fact, we find only ten references to “Satan” in the undisputed Pauline texts, and each reference is conspicuous by the sheer dumbing down of the image of Satan as the “independent archfiend” of Second Temple Judaism. Instead, these Pauline texts create in the reader the growing sense that for Paul the seat of real power belongs

¹²⁰ M E Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 808.

exclusively to God, although he acknowledges that Satan is capable of actively opposing the people and the purposes of God. Consequently, we find little evidence in Paul that would justify the claim that for him the ascription of ὁ θεός for Satan was a logical decision.

CHAPTER 5

Historical and Literary Background to 2 Corinthians

1. Corinth in History and Paul's Association with the City

1.1 Corinth in the Time of Paul

Recent studies of the recorded history and archaeology of ancient Corinth have yielded fascinating insights into the geographical, cultural, social, and political realities that Paul encountered in his personal dealings with this Roman city of the first century CE.

During its heyday as a Greek city, in the third and second centuries BCE, Corinth had been one of the leading cities of the Achaian League.¹ The Roman statesman Cicero (103–43 BCE) later commented that Corinth had been “the light of all Greece”.² This golden age, however, ended rather abruptly when a dispute between members of the league resulted in a war against Rome. In 146 BCE, a massive army led by Lucius Mummius crushed the Achaian forces, plundered and pillaged the city of Corinth, and finally put it to flames.³

A hundred years later (44 BCE), Julius Caesar reestablished Corinth as a Roman colony with Roman governance and Roman architecture.⁴ Unlike Philippi and other such Roman colonies, which were designated for army veterans, Corinth was used as a place of relocation for freedmen (*libertini*) from Rome.⁵ The excessive number of freedmen, being just one rank higher than slaves, had posed a threat to the stability of the mother

¹ V P Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 4-6.

² P W Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 1.

³ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 6.

⁴ B Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 6.

⁵ G Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 2; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 7; although see, Witherington, *Conflict*, 6, for a more inclusive suggestion: “that the city would be colonized by Romans – chiefly some of Caesar’s veterans along with urban plebeians and freedmen and freedwomen from Rome itself and some Romanized Greeks”.

city.⁶ Consequently, although later on the number of well-off resident Romans became the majority, the initial settlers in Corinth were mostly poorer Syrians, Egyptians, and Jews, familiar with Rome, but without a citizenship of their own.⁷

Caesar's intention in choosing Corinth, however, was more commercial than political. He saw in its strategic location and history a potential to fill the coffers of Rome that few sites could match. As the "sentry" of the narrow isthmus that bridged the Peloponnese with mainland Greece, Corinth was famously blessed with two harbours: Lechaemum on the western side, and Cenchraeae on the east.⁸ Given that the isthmus was just 6,000 metres at its narrowest, merchants found unloading and transporting their cargo overland to the opposite harbour far more viable economically than facing the threat of shipwreck around the Peloponnese. With the increasing recognition of Corinth as a commercial hub, her wealth dramatically increased. The Greek historian Strabo makes specific mention of this:

Corinth is called "wealthy" because of its commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbours, of which the one leads straight to Asia, and the other to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other . . .⁹

G Fee mentions the importance of the twin harbours but identifies four other reasons why Roman Corinth prospered almost immediately: her natural defensive position in the Acrocorinth, adequate water supplies from nearby springs, her relationship to Rome, and control of the Isthmian Games.¹⁰ The latter refers to the biennial event that drew

⁶ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 2; Witherington, *Conflict*, 7: "It was also a shrewd way of removing disaffected and potentially volatile elements from Rome".

⁷ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 7.

⁸ R P Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), xxviii.

⁹ Strabo, *Geography*, Book VIII, Chapter 6 (paragraph #20), http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/8F*.html (accessed, July 5, 2015); also see, Martin, *2 Corinthians*, xxviii.

¹⁰ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 2; On this see W Sze-Kar, *Power in Weakness: The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 19-21, who adds "temple prostitution" and the manufacture of "highly sought after Corinthian bronze" as further reasons for Corinth's remarkable economic growth; Strabo, *Geography*, Book VIII, Chapter 6 (paragraph #20), too, comments on the commercial advantages of the Isthmian Games and the city's rampant temple prostitution: "But to the Corinthians of later times still greater advantages were added, for also the

huge crowds rivaling the more famous Olympic Games that were held only every four years. The Isthmian Games had been revived by the Romans around 3 CE and would have been held at least twice during the period when Paul interacted with the city (including when he corresponded by letter). Corinth also hosted the quadrennial Imperial and Caesarean Games, and thereby became a well-known “tourist” destination in the ancient world as well.¹¹ A theatre of 18,000 seating capacity and a concert hall for 3,000 served the latter purposes admirably well.¹² Archaeologists conclude that most of Corinth’s magnificent constructions that greeted Paul on his arrival had been completed within a brief period of thirty years between 14 and 44 CE:

At Paul’s arrival Corinth was at the height of its glory, a tribute to human-made splendor. Its south stoa was, at 500 feet, one of the longest buildings in Greece and its agora was among the largest in the Empire. The city featured an abundance of temples, three theatres (including the only Roman amphitheatre in Greece) and countless shops. Excavations reveal homes laid out handsomely, adorned by mosaics, frescoes and marble statues. Baths, fountains and monuments rounded out the appeal of this elegant city. The cumulative effect must have inspired awe.¹³

Corinth had been, from 27 BCE, the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia.¹⁴ When Emperor Tiberius combined Achaia with Macedonia in 15 BCE as part of a larger Imperial province, Corinth soon gained the prestige of being the third most important city in the empire behind Rome and Alexandria.¹⁵ In 44 CE, Emperor Claudius reconstituted Achaia as a senatorial province, governed by a proconsul appointed annually, with his seat in

Isthmian Games, which were celebrated there, were wont to draw crowds of people. . . . And the temple of Aphroditê was so rich that it owned more than a thousand temple slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. And therefore it was also on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich”.

¹¹ Witherington, *Conflict*, 12.

¹² S J Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 24.

¹³ T B Savage, *Power Through Weakness: Paul’s Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36.

¹⁴ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 32: “Strabo . . . gives the account of Caesar Augustus’ determination to create two kinds of Roman province in 27 B.C.: ‘provinces of Caesar,’ or imperial provinces, and ‘provinces of the people,’ senatorial provinces, governed by a proconsul”.

¹⁵ Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 23; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 9.

Corinth. The proconsul Gallio, before whom Paul appeared according to Acts 18:12-17, probably commenced his appointment on July 1, 51 CE.¹⁶

Roman societies were usually divided between patricians (those who owned land) and plebeians (everyone else including merchants, freedmen, and slaves).¹⁷ The situation in Corinth, however, was anomalous. Unlike most cities of the ancient world, Corinth had no landed aristocracy with its typical feudal system in attendance.¹⁸ Rather, given the rapid formation of a society of mostly poor colonists, with equal opportunities in trade and commerce, an “aristocracy of money” soon developed. Those who formed the resultant wealthy class were an elite few. The remaining majority, therefore, were divided among the artisans and the slaves.¹⁹ This brought with it a whole new social dynamic that would pose unique challenges for Paul and the church in Corinth,²⁰ chief among which was the dedication towards social mobility²¹ and the insatiable desire for, and infatuation with, status:

All sorts of Corinthians, even slaves, are mentioned in inscriptions, often paid for and erected by and for themselves that describe their contribution to building projects or their status in clubs (*collegia*). The number of such

¹⁶ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 9-10; see Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 33, n27: “Gallio’s accession on July 1, 51, as proconsul of Achaia in southern Greece is one of the fixed points of apostolic chronology”.

¹⁷ Witherington, *Conflict*, 23.

¹⁸ “As a result of the short history of the colony and the general Roman pattern of colonization, few among the population in Roman Corinth, at least compared to other cities of greater antiquity, came from the old patrician class” (Wan Sze-Kar, *Power in Weakness*, 21).

¹⁹ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 2.

²⁰ See for example, Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 24: “The resultant class distinctions based on acquired wealth, not birth, are reflected in the social tensions that came to a head during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11: 17-34)”.

²¹ Sze-Kar, *Power in Weakness*, 21: “A result of such a mixed demography is relative mobility between the social classes in Corinth. The distinguished citizens in Corinth were of the merchant class who had no inherited status but plenty of opportunity to amass enormous wealth”; also, Savage, *Power Through Weakness*, 20: “In the cities civil magistrates sat at the top of a steep pyramid. At the bottom, representing nearly a third of the population, were the indigent and slaves. That left a huge mass of people, nearly two-thirds of the total, in the middle – men and women who were relatively free to maneuver, if not into the ranks of the nobility, at least into higher strata within their own heterogeneous class. *For these individuals upward mobility became a passion*”. (emphasis added)

inscriptions is staggering. Corinth was a city where public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form.²²

Nevertheless, a society of defined social classes gradually emerged, and with it the relative distribution of power and influence. At the bottom of the pile were the *incolae*, the original Greek inhabitants who had been living in and around the ruins of pre-44 BCE Corinth. They were not usually allowed to vote, and were certainly barred from holding office. Only the colonists were recognized as *cives*, or citizens. Even so, to aspire to participate in the local senate, a *civis* had to show adequate wealth and property. The only other means by which to qualify to hold office was to already have been elected “a city business manager” (*aedile*) or “a chief magistrate” (*duovir*).²³

1.2 Paul and Christianity in Corinth

According to Acts, the gospel first reached Corinth through the lone arrival of Paul, after his relatively unsuccessful ministry in Athens. He had left Silas and Timothy behind, in Berea, and was awaiting their arrival from there. Until then Paul had moved in with a family of fellow-Jews – Aquila and Priscilla – so he could engage in tent-making to sustain himself, while speaking about Jesus in the synagogue every Sabbath. Since Paul was later hauled before the proconsul Lucius Junius Gallio, who administered at Corinth only from July 1, 51 CE to June 52 CE, and since Paul only spent a year and a half there, he had to have arrived any time from early 50 CE to early 51 CE.

The presence of at least one synagogue suggests that Corinth had an established Jewish population. The fact that Luke records that Paul’s audience in the synagogue was a mix of “Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4) suggests that a large number of pagans had been attracted to the unique claims of monotheistic Judaism, and had become God-fearers. This concurs with the profile of Corinth that has emerged of an engineered, urban society, unshackled from religious traditions, and open to new ideas.

²² Witherington, *Conflict*, 8; also see, Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 41: “Putting oneself on show was not a ritual reserved for the elite. It was a passion played out at every level, though on lesser scales. In Corinth, perhaps more than anywhere else, social ascent was the goal, boasting and self-display the means, personal power and glory the reward”.

²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Paul's approach in Corinth won him a following, albeit more with the Greeks than with the Jews. At one point, the latter rejected him so much that he announced his exclusive attention would be on the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). G Theissen makes the interesting suggestion that the bone of contention would most probably have been the fact that Paul was successful in stealing the very people of pagan background that the Jews had managed to "convert" as patrons of Judaism.²⁴ Luke's narrative (Acts 18:1-17) shows a Jewish community of considerable influence that viewed Paul as an adversary, and this may account for Paul's constant references to the Jews and Jewish ideas in his surviving correspondence with the Corinthians. The text under examination (2 Cor 2:14-4:6) especially shows that the church at Corinth was keenly aware and interested in some of the most important themes of first century Judaism, such as covenant, law, Moses, and messiah.

The Acts record is categorical that Paul had significant gains in terms of numbers: "*many* of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized" (18:8, emphasis added). Yet, what kinds of people converted and formed the fledgling community?

It is now fairly clear that to use 1 Cor 1:26-28, to suggest that the church was chiefly made up of "peasants, slaves, and artisans" is far too simplistic an analysis of the situation that prevailed.²⁵ The fact is that Acts and the letters of Paul identify a number of Corinthian Christians, with some indication of their social and economic status. At least seventeen individuals have been named as originally from the Corinthian church, and of them nine may be classified as from the upper strata of society.²⁶ Nonetheless,

²⁴ G Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 104: "Seen in this light, the conflict between Christianity and Judaism is easier to understand: the Christian mission was luring away the very Gentiles who were Judaism's patrons". Nevertheless, texts such as 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 show, from Paul's own testimony, that several in the church were struggling with issues such as eating food offered to idols, most probably because they were still fairly high up in Corinthian society, which in turn viewed them as "insiders" in the context of its civic functions and social occasions.

²⁵ Witherington, *Conflict*, 22: "Discussion of the social level of Paul's Corinthian converts usually begins with and frequently ends with 1 Cor. 1:26-28"; see also, Theissen, *Social Setting*, 70: "At first such a passage would seem to confirm the romantic idea of a proletarian Christian community, a religious movement of the lower classes".

²⁶ See, Theissen, *Social Setting*, 94-96: "The great majority of the Corinthians known to us by name probably enjoyed high social status. We need not for that reason cast doubt on Paul's statement

the larger, unnamed polity would have been from the humbler strata of society, and would have composed a mix of Jews and Greeks, slaves, freedmen, and artisans. It was this very diversity within this new community espousing egalitarianism that brought about such grave crises and intractable problems in the pastoral care of the Corinthians. Paul's extant letters to the church there reveal a catalogue of problems ranging from competitiveness, superiority, and immorality, to ambiguity about idolatrous practices, and the attractiveness of flamboyant leadership that denied the servanthood of Christ.

1.3 Paul's Relations with the Corinthian Church²⁷

With the change of proconsul sometime after July 52 CE, it appears that Paul made a strategic withdrawal from Corinth, not wanting to risk again the opposition of the Jews. When he returned to the Aegean region (Ephesus) a year later, he was able to renew his contacts with the believers in Corinth. By this time, however, the church had been visited by ecclesiastical luminaries no less than Apollos and Cephas (3:5-6; 9:5), although it is possible that the latter was only known to the Corinthians because of emissaries that had come from him. Sadly, this had led to comparisons being drawn about their relative merits, leading to partisan politics within the church (1:11-12).

It was probably during this period that he wrote his first letter (Letter A),²⁸ in which he warned the believers not to associate with immoral people. This had been misunderstood to mean disassociation from such people in society, and the Corinthians had written urgently for clarification. 1 Corinthians (Letter B) is Paul's response to this

that "not many" Corinthians belonged to the upper strata (1 Cor 1:26). In the letters it is understandably the important people who are most likely to be mentioned by name, who keep in touch with Paul (that is, were free to travel) and who exercise influence within the congregation". See also, Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 7, who argues that all those mentioned were of some status: "The only people in Corinth whose names are to be found in the literature belonged to the middle class or above, or were among their retinues" (although we might add that Barnett's notion of a "middle class" in Corinth may be a confusing imposition of a modern, economic categorization on ancient Mediterranean society).

²⁷ Several have drawn up suggested chronologies for Paul's dealings with the Corinthians. See for example: G L Borchert, "Introduction to 2 Corinthians," *RevExp* 86, no. 3 (1989), 315; D E Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 26-30; M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 101-105.

²⁸ 1 Cor 5:9. This may be called "Letter A" of the series Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and is not extant.

and other issues they had raised, as well as to reports about dysfunction in the church (see 1 Cor 1:10-17; 5:1-12; 6:1-8; 11:17-22). Furnish points out that this letter highlights the “most fundamental challenge” Paul’s gospel ministry entailed: “How can those who have been called to belong to Christ be faithful to their new Lord while they must still belong, in so many ways, to this present age?”²⁹ In fact, a third of 1 Corinthians (5:1–11:1) is devoted to explaining that it means to “be a believing community in an unbelieving society”.³⁰

Following this letter Paul paid a visit which had led to a “painful” confrontation between an “offender”, the Corinthian Christians, and Paul (see 2 Cor 2:1–8). This had led to Paul writing another letter (Letter C), which we might term the “tearful letter” (2 Cor 2:3–4, 9; 7:8). Since this letter is not extant, the issues raised in it may only be obliquely known through references and allusions in 2 Corinthians. At the least, it is obvious that Paul’s later relationship with the Corinthian Christians was tenuous and vulnerable (although 2 Cor 2:6 suggests that the latter had attempted to make amends, acting decisively by disciplining the offender).

By the time of writing 2 Corinthians (Letter D)³¹ in the summer of 55 CE, Paul had been encouraged about the Corinthian response as conveyed by Titus (7:5-9), and felt confident to push for them to demonstrate their loyalty to his apostleship by asking them to reactivate the “Jerusalem Collection” (chs. 8 and 9).

At the same time he had been made aware of at least two matters that warranted his intervention. The first was a simmering criticism that he was fickle rather than ‘apostolic’

²⁹ V P Furnish, “Paul and the Corinthians: The Letters, the Challenges of Ministry, the Gospel,” *Int* 52 (1998): 231.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Although some theories suggest that 2 Cor 10–13 is part of a different Letter E (the “tearful letter”?) that had been later appended to Chapters 1–9. For example, Furnish, “Paul,” 232; but see Borchert, “2 Corinthians,” 317: “Scholars . . . have argued that the last four chapters represent the basic content of the earlier letter of anguish or tears mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:4. But the mention of the earlier letters in 10:9-12 and 13:10 and the references to Titus and Paul’s Macedonian experience seem, from my perspective, to call into question, that view”.

when it came to keeping to his word because, without reason, he had changed his plans to make another visit to Corinth (2 Cor 1:12–2:1). The second was a concern about the growing influence of a group of interlopers in the church whose message, methods and motives had caused considerable alarm to the Apostle (2:17; 3:1; 4:2 and 5:12).³² This latter development was more serious because these rivals were working to undermine the credibility of Paul’s apostleship and consequently the fundamental character of the “gospel” that he had pioneered among the Corinthians. Our study of 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 will consider how Paul’s argument constitutes a particular response to the challenges that had been posed.

By the time Paul penned his final words to the Corinthians (2 Cor 10–13; Letter E?) their relationship had reached its nadir.³³ His defensiveness becomes more explicit, and his language more strident. He expresses his intention of making his “third visit” to Corinth (12:14; 13:1), and warns that then he would “not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others” (13:2), and that he might have to “be harsh in [his] use of authority” (13:10).

History bears witness to the fact that Paul’s last known visit to Corinth was not as counter-productive as his second visit. D Horrell sees Paul’s third visit as a high point of the apostle’s “reconciliation” with the Corinthian church symbolized by the successful reestablishment of the Jerusalem Collection:

We learn from Rom 15:25f that the task was successfully completed. Paul finally arrived in Corinth on his third visit, from where he wrote Romans and prepared to travel to Jerusalem with the collection, as he had previously intended. The reconciliation enabled this practical goal to be attained.³⁴

³² If, as some scholars do, we hold to the integrity of 2 Corinthians as a whole, then Paul’s later references to his “opponents” in Corinth only provide greater specificity; that he viewed them as “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11:13).

³³ The suggestion that chapters 10–13 constitute Paul’s last recorded words to the Corinthians, is not without dispute. For an extensive discussion on the “Four-Chapter hypothesis,” and the varying views on whether chapters 10–13 form a separate letter, whether they precede chapters 1–9 or follow them, or whether indeed chapters 10–13 were originally sequentially integrated to form a holistic letter as attested by the textual history of 2 Corinthians, see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 29-42.

³⁴ D G Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 232.

In fact, it appears that the apprehensions he had had about the persistence of his opponents, and the Corinthian response to his coming, had proven to be unfounded, because Paul had in fact spent a most productive few months with his beloved children:

Was 2 Corinthians successful where 1 Corinthians had been only partially so? Apparently it was, because Paul made the promised visit (Acts 20:2-3) and during his three-month stay in “Greece” (primarily Corinth, in the winter of 56–57) he wrote or completed his letter to the Romans. This letter seems to betray some apprehension for the future (15:30-31) but none for the present, and Paul would hardly have contemplated implementing his long-standing desire to visit Rome . . . and to prosecute pioneer evangelism in the west (Romans 15:20-21, 23-24, 28) if the congregation in the city from which he was writing was not only harboring his opponents but was also so opposed to him (2 Cor 11:4, 20) that they were actually being seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (cf. 11:3).³⁵

1.4 Paul’s Opponents in 2 Corinthians

As is characteristic of the letters, 2 Corinthians, too, is an occasional document written in response to the real situation in Corinth that confronted Paul in the mid-fifties CE. As is often the case in his letters, Paul is clearly dealing with the influence of individuals or groups that threatened to distort the Christian convictions of the believers and afflict the wellbeing of the church.

Here, not only are these “opponents” clearly in view, but Paul’s perspective on them is explicitly expressed in certain passages (see 2:17; 3:1; 5:12; 10:2, 7, 10-11, 12; 11:4-6, 12-15, 18-20, 21b-23a; 12:11). In 1971, C K Barrett wrote: “This opposition constitutes one of the crucial questions for the understanding of the New Testament and the origins of Christianity”.³⁶ A more complete profile of these opponents, however – their origin, motives, methods, and message – may only be constructed by inference from several other allusions and references scattered throughout 2 Corinthians.³⁷ Consequently, the subject of Paul’s Corinthian opponents has been the ground for multiple theories, which

³⁵ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 53-54.

³⁶ Cited in P W Barnett, “Opposition in Corinth,” in *JSNT* 22 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 3.

³⁷ For a discussion on the “explicit references” and “apparent allusions” see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 50-51. J L Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*, *JSNTSS* 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 127-147, demonstrates how “explicit statements”, “allusions”, and “affirmations” may be used to deduce the nature of the opposition.

by 2005 amounted to at least twenty.³⁸ Given that Paul alludes to “opponents” – at least in 2 Cor 2:17; 3:1-3; and 4:2 – within the context of the text under scrutiny, arriving at a working hypothesis on who they were and their *modus operandi* will bear significantly on our reading of the details contained therein.³⁹

A more recent discussion on Paul’s opponents is featured in the work of T Blanton, who presents a coherent conclusion, which he arrives at both by engaging with the major views that have been thus far advanced, as well as by submitting these major proposals to critical reexamination against the text of 2 Corinthians.⁴⁰ Following a brief and helpful survey of nine major contributors to the debate,⁴¹ Blanton identifies a set of six “contentious issues that must be settled in order to establish a profile of this group”. The issues are summed up as questions that, for our purposes, can be condensed even further:⁴²

1. Were Paul’s missionary rivals in Corinth Jews?
2. Were they emissaries of the Jerusalem church?
3. Did they preach that Gentile converts should follow the Torah?
4. Did they use spiritual displays to establish their legitimacy?

³⁸ See Harris, *Second Epistle*, 79-80. For an earlier survey covering 150 years of scholarship, see J J Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, NovTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1973). Other complete and critical works on the subject include, D Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986); Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*.

³⁹ Barnett’s explanation for the difficulties in definitively identifying the opponents is worth noting: “Two obstacles stand in the way of clear identification of Paul’s critics and opponents in this passage. One is that Paul’s remarks are so fragmentary as to make precision difficult. Second, there is little from the Corinthian side, apart from phrases where Paul appears to be quoting their words (e.g., 10:10, which is from a later part of the letter), and even these stand within Paul’s text, not theirs. The second is that Paul here chooses to allow the present situation to give him the opportunity to make broader theological statements that transcend – and therefore, to a degree, mask – the original situation”. *Corinthians*, 142.

⁴⁰ See T R Blanton IV, *Constructing a New Covenant: Discursive Strategies in the Damascus Document and Second Corinthians*, WUNT 2, no. 233 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 107-180.

⁴¹ F C Baur, E Käsemann, W Schmithals, D Georgi, C K Barrett, D W Oostendorp, J Murphy-O’Connor, M E Thrall, and J L Sumney, in Blanton, *Constructing*, 109-121.

⁴² Blanton, *Constructing*, 120.

5. What was the nature of the “other Jesus, other spirit, other gospel” preached by them?
6. How closely were they related to earlier traditions that circulated within Judaism, and more narrowly, within the early Christian sect?

With regard to the ethnic identity of the missionary rivals, there is little dispute that they were Jews. The matter is virtually assured by the reference in 2 Cor 11:22-23a which states: “Are they Hebrews? I am too. Are they Israelites? I am too. Are they descendants of Abraham? I am too. Are they emissaries of Christ? I am speaking foolishly – I am a better one”. As to whether they functioned as “emissaries” of the church in Jerusalem, Blanton argues that there aren’t sufficient reasons that can be adduced to support such a claim as advanced by Baur, Käsemann, and Barrett.

As to whether Paul’s opponents insisted that Gentiles should observe the Torah, Blanton finds the evidence affirming. Special note is made of 2 Cor 3:7-18, where Paul compares the ministry of Moses with his own ministry and claims superiority for the latter. The opponents referred to themselves as “Hebrews”, “Israelites”, and “descendants of Abraham” and as “ministers of righteousness” (11:15), who Paul charges with attempting to “enslave” the Corinthian believers. This is highly suggestive of a similar situation reflected in the letter to the Galatians. This latter suggestion is strengthened by the fact that in Gal 5:1 and 13 Paul uses a key term, ἐλευθερία, in a discussion about whether Gentile converts ought to follow Torah. Because this term is also found in 2 Cor 3:17, Blanton suggests that Paul’s concern for Corinth is the same.

D Georgi had been the first to propose that the opponents in Corinth were θειοὶ ἄνδρες – “divine men” – who were “special individuals who were thought to have contact with the realm of divine which resulted in their ability to perform miracles, their possession of supernatural knowledge, and often culminated in an act whereby they were transformed into heavenly beings”.⁴³ Despite Georgi’s impressive construction, the evidence for such a claim is slim, and based, as Blanton alleges, mostly on “mirror-

⁴³ D Georgi, *Opponents*, 229-313.

reading” techniques. Consequently, there are no grounds to say the opponents used “pneumatic” displays to establish their legitimacy.

As for the “other Jesus, other spirit, other gospel” that the opponents preached (2 Cor 11:4), while it is difficult to arrive at its implication with certainty, Blanton sees the connections with Second Temple Judaism where “spirit” is associated with covenant renewal, and avers that the opponents may have been espousing a “variant of this theological narrative” to move the converts towards greater Torah-observance.

It is possible that these ‘missionary rivals’ were influenced by ideas that had circulated among early Christian communities that viewed the law as still in force, although not in the same way that traditional Judaism perceived it. The experience of the Spirit was understood as a means of empowering the believer to keep the Torah perfectly, and hence this view further legitimized a more radical relationship to Torah-observance. Blanton considers this another likely characteristic of Paul’s opponents.

In light of the above we may conclude that Paul’s opponents in Corinth were rival Jewish missionaries who had some association with early traditions of the Christian movement that placed high value on Torah-observance, and hence required Gentile converts to conform. They also may have viewed Spirit-renewal, in keeping with the expectations of Second Temple Judaism, to empower the believer to more perfectly keep Torah, and in all these ways exalted the Mosaic covenant. In addition, unlike Paul who legitimized himself through the “‘surpassing nature’ of the revelatory experiences and visions that he had witnessed”, these opponents depended on “letters of recommendation” and superior rhetorical ability.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Blanton, *Constructing*, 179.

2. Literary Issues in 2 Corinthians

2.1 The Integrity of 2 Corinthians

Although 2 Corinthians is set firmly by scholarly consensus within the cluster of the “undisputed Pauline epistles”⁴⁵ together with Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon, a reference to it is mysteriously absent from the letters written by the earliest post-Apostolic Fathers.⁴⁶ The latter point does not significantly challenge the authenticity of 2 Corinthians, but only raises questions about its circulation.⁴⁷ This near-century disappearance from references in contemporary literature also, “opens the door for speculation about what form 2 Corinthians originally had”.⁴⁸

The most discussed matter with regard to the literary issues of 2 Corinthians has had to do with the letter’s integrity and composition. In 1776, J Semler proposed that perhaps 2 Corinthians was a composite of two originally separate writings of Paul. Although textual history only testifies to this epistle being a unity, the dramatic change of tone between 9:15 and 10:1ff urged Semler to suggest that chapters 1–9 were part of an earlier letter, and chapters 10–13 from a later one. The flurry of scholarship that has attended to this theory from the eighteenth century on has given rise to several more-complex “partition theories” for the composition of 2 Corinthians.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ See D F Watson, “Rhetorical Criticism of the Pauline Epistles Since 1975,” *CRBS* 3 (1995), 219-248, for a discussion based on such a classification between “undisputed” and “disputed” letters of Paul.

⁴⁶ “On the one hand, 2 Corinthians is mysteriously not explicitly cited in the extant writings of the earliest Church Fathers – the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp and 1 Clement – but is first mentioned in the mid second century in Marcion’s canon – nearly a century after its composition,” according to Fredrick J Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

⁴⁷ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 30: “This fact is not sufficient to raise a question about the authenticity of 2 Cor, for it is in general thoroughly Pauline in form, style and content. Rather, the question with which one is left is whether 2 Cor was *circulated* as early as other Pauline letters, including 1 Cor, and if not, why not”.

⁴⁸ Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 3.

⁴⁹ These include the suggestions: that within chapters 1–9 there is the fragment of yet another letter commencing at 2:14; that chapters 8 and 9 were originally separate; that 6:14–7:1 is a non-Pauline interpolation; and the most extravagant proposal made by Walter Schmithals that 2 Corinthians is a composite of “parts of six authentically Pauline letters”. For details see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 30-35. For a more thorough recent treatment of the issues see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 8-51.

Nevertheless, the arguments for the literary integrity of this letter have not been muted; in fact, they have been advanced with a greater degree of conviction, and a significant number of later scholars have adopted this as their point of view.⁵⁰

Given that rhetorical criticism of the Pauline epistles is a relatively new discipline, one is inclined to ask to what extent one might imagine Paul to be influenced by ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric. D A Clark's comment in 1957 is helpful in this regard:

Although these precepts of ancient rhetoric are designed primarily to train boys and young men to win audiences by addressing them orally in public, we must recall that from the earliest times, these precepts also guided those who addressed the public in writing. The epistles of St. Paul and Seneca, whether read aloud to groups or passed from hand to hand in manuscript, derive their structure and style from the same precepts of rhetoric as do the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero.⁵¹

The first to apply rhetorical criticism to 2 Corinthians was F M Young, in 1987, who "proposed that 2 Corinthians as a whole is a self-consciously conceived apologetic letter in keeping with the rhetorical conventions of the Greco-Roman culture of Paul's time".⁵² Following this trend, Witherington argues that whereas 1 Corinthians focuses on the present and future, 2 Corinthians maintains a focus on the past. He takes the position that rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians argues in favour of its literary integrity: "2 Corinthians taken as a compositional *whole* is an example of forensic or judicial rhetoric".⁵³ Long argues that 2 Corinthians is in response to actual charges that had been

⁵⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 42, lists no less than 38 twentieth-century scholars who espouse the unity of 2 Corinthians.

⁵¹ Cited in Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 11.

⁵² Harris, *Second Epistle*, 43. For the application of a novel model of rhetorical analysis to 2 Corinthians involving 5 steps: Rhetorical unit, Relational posture of Rhetorical units, Method of argumentation, Shifts in argumentative situations, and Classification of argument – see, J D Hester (Amador), "The Unity of 2 Corinthians: A Test Case for a Re-Discovered and Re-Invented Rhetoric," *Neot* 33 (1999), 411-432: "My proposal of a 're-discovered and re-invented rhetoric' offers one model which can make sense of the complexity of the argumentation within the letter without having to pose a complex solution of multiple, individual sources later pieced together in what has been seen as a rather confused order" (430).

⁵³ Witherington, *Conflict*, 333. His comment on partition theories are also worth noting: "There are almost as many partition theories as there are commentaries on 2 Corinthians, despite the fact that there is not a shred of evidence to support the view that any part of the letter as we have it did not originally belong where it is now" (328).

issued by real opponents, and that the letter evinces “historical rhetoric working with generic features of ancient apology”.⁵⁴ He classifies 2 Corinthians as an “official apologetic letter”.⁵⁵

Although it has been standard among commentators to neatly distinguish alleged partitions in 2 Corinthians by compartmentalizing them by themes – chapters 1–7 (apologetic), 8–9 (hortatory), and 10–13 (polemical) – Harris offers compelling evidence that each of these themes is found distributed in each of the respective sections. Consequently, he asserts that the letter as a whole has “a unified character as an *apologia*”.⁵⁶

With regard to 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 (the broader text that is the key focus of this thesis), however, its assumed literary context is hardly affected whether one takes a partition-theory approach or a literary-unity approach, because both theories generally assume that chapters 1–7 constitutes a literary unit, and certainly none have proposed any partitions within 2:14–4:6.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 10. He further argues that although, “[d]etermining the rhetorical situation is a preliminary consideration when doing rhetorical work . . . [w]e cannot know for certain the rhetorical exigency that led to Paul’s decision to write 2 Corinthians as an apology. However, what we have is Paul’s *construed exigency* as a textual phenomenon that is capable of our careful exploration. Critical for this study is an analysis of Paul’s *construed exigency* . . . to understand the actual *rhetorical exigency*” (12-13).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13; see also, J D Hester (Amador), “Revisiting 2 Corinthians: Rhetoric and the Case for Unity,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 92-111 for an argument that rejects the fragmentary hypothesis and posits that 2 Corinthians as a whole functions as a complex and yet coherent act of persuasion: “The partition theory of 2 Corinthians can be radically undermined by means of an appreciation of the complexity of rhetorical strategies exhibited in the letter. An emphasis upon the persuasive dynamics and developing argumentative situations of the letter, that is, upon the impacts of *inventio* on the composition of the letter, yields a result different from that of the historical critics” (108).

⁵⁶ See chart in Harris, *Second Epistle*, 46. For examples of literary analyses of 2 Corinthians based on rhetorical criticism, see 107-110.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 114: “The majority of commentators analyze the canonical 2 Corinthians according to content alone, and find three clearly discernible sections: chs. 1–7, 8–9, and 10–13”.

2.2 Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation as an Interpretive Analytic

The writings of Paul have been subjected to rhetorical analyses from late antiquity, with interpreters such as Origen, Augustine, and Chrysostom, together with later writers such as Melanchthon, Luther, and Calvin “detecting rhetorical phenomena in New Testament texts”.⁵⁸ In the nineteenth century, attention was given to rhetorical aspects of texts by “detecting tropes and figures, that is, rhetorical ornament, in individual sentences, as well as by analyzing Paul’s way of piecing clauses and sentences together, or by debating Paul’s style and the level of his linguistic competence and cultivation”.⁵⁹ With the reintroduction of rhetorical criticism of New Testament texts in the latter period of the twentieth century, the emphasis shifted to the analysis of whole books in terms of how they compare to the Greco-Roman conventions of rhetorical arrangement.⁶⁰ What then, does “rhetorical analysis” refer to?

Rhetoric is that art of public discourse that developed and flourished in Athens from around the fifth century BCE onwards.⁶¹ Leaders in Greece had always been expected to have the ability to speak well,⁶² but it was not until the fifth century that a movement began, which sought to systematize the “knowledge of what makes speech effective”.⁶³ The crucial innovation was the “cultivation and teaching of a τέχνη (“art”, or “craft”) of

⁵⁸ P Lampe, “Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts: Quo Vadit?” in *Paul and Rhetoric*, ed. J P Sampley and P Lampe (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2010), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4: “What has been new in the last three decades is the attempt rhetorically to analyse a Pauline letter in its entirety and to understand the flow of thoughts and arguments within the framework of the entire structure of a letter”. Lampe, 5, notes that the outstanding works that paved the way for this new trend was, H D Betz, “The Literary Composition and Function of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *NTS* 21 (1975): 353-379, followed by his, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), together with G A Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

⁶¹ For a comprehensive treatment of the development of rhetoric as an academic discipline from its beginnings in Athens with the Sophists (5th century BCE) to Quintilian of Rome (100 CE), see D Litfin, *St Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-134.

⁶² Litfin, *St Paul’s*, 22.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27.

effective speech”.⁶⁴ This led to the production of a continuous supply of τέχνηαι or rhetorical handbooks which only subsided after Aristotle produced his “*Collection of Handbooks* (Συναγωγή Τεχνων)”.⁶⁵

Alongside the handbooks, there developed out of Athens a defining movement termed “the Sophists” – “a loosely defined and largely self-appointed group of professional educators who gave instruction to young men, and made public displays of eloquence, for fees”.⁶⁶ D Litfin proceeds to demonstrate that beginning with the Sophists, rhetoric was gradually reshaped to essentially be about the “art of persuasion”. Although later sophists, such as Isocrates, would attempt to convincingly argue against Plato’s suspicion that rhetoric was inimical to the pursuit of wisdom – that rhetoric sets “form” in opposition to “content” – nevertheless on a continuum it could never move beyond being viewed essentially as being about appearances and form: the studied art of persuading even a hostile audience to change and adopt the perspective of the speaker.⁶⁷

Arguably, though, it was Aristotle (384–322 BCE), who most powerfully influenced the Greek rhetorical movement. He made five major contributions: 1) Organising the rhetorical process along the lines of Invention, Disposition, Style and Delivery; 2) Explaining the tripartite nature of the means of persuasion as ηθος, παθος, and λογος; 3) Analysing human emotion (παθος) as on par with the other two means of persuasion;

⁶⁴ Litfin, *St Paul’s*, 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 28

⁶⁷ Aristotle: “Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever” (in Litfin, *St Paul’s*, 77). Quintillian presents a marvellous example of the difficulty rhetoric had in shaking off the image of being mere ornamented speech. He had argued that rhetoric is: “The science of speaking well. For this definition includes all the virtues of oratory and the character of the orator as well, since no man can speak well who is not good himself,” but Litfin avers, “The utilitarian, results-oriented focus of rhetoric creeps into his thought even while he is striving hardest to keep it out” (Litfin, *St Paul’s*, 102-103). In fact, Quintillian completely undoes himself by his inconsistency: “Though the orator will as a rule maintain what is true, this will not always be the case: there are occasions where the public interest demands that he should defend what is untrue” (Litfin, *St Paul’s*, 104).

4) Dividing speech into forensic, deliberative, and epideictic; and 5) Promoting the idea that a speech must have certain *stylistic* features.⁶⁸

Between the first century BCE and 100 CE, the practice of rhetoric had moved decisively from its Greek environment and found its home in the Latin world of Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Quintilian (35–95 CE). The former is hailed as the greatest orator Rome ever produced, and possibly, the most important Latin writer on rhetoric.⁶⁹ Cicero emphasised the crucial importance of the “audience” and the necessity for “adaptation”.⁷⁰ He also rejected the division, common from the time of Socrates and Plato, between philosophy and rhetoric. For Cicero, they were two sides of the same coin: “Wisdom without eloquence is ineffectual; eloquence without wisdom is dangerous. But together they can accomplish great things for society”.⁷¹ As for Quintilian, though he was not himself an orator, he has gained the reputation of having been “Rome’s greatest rhetorical teacher”, whose “life’s work consisted mainly of training others”. The twelve books of his *Institutio Oratoria* is a comprehensive treatment of Roman rhetoric, and the largest such work to survive from antiquity.⁷²

The point at which the study of Greco-Roman rhetoric intersects with Pauline studies is an interesting one. The handbooks, in unison, focused on the three species of rhetoric: judicial (forensic), deliberative, and epideictic. The first refers to speech that properly belongs in the courtroom and focuses on acts in the past, the second to the public council and deliberations about the future, and the third to celebratory events with commendatory reference to events and persons in the present. Given that these forms of “persuasion” permeated every strata of Roman society, Pauline scholars assumed

⁶⁸ See Litfin, 78; he summarizes the points made by F Solmsen, “The Aristotelian Tradition in Ancient Rhetoric,” *American Journal of Philology* 62 (1941): 35-50 and 169-190.

⁶⁹ See *Ibid.*, 91-100.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 92: “The eloquence of orators has always been controlled by the good sense of the audience, since all who desire to win approval have regard to the goodwill of their auditors, and shape and adapt themselves completely according to this and to their opinion and approval”.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷² See *Ibid.*, 100-108.

that the rules of the rhetorical handbooks offered a missing key into the logic that underlay the letters of the apostle. Consequently, since the work of H Betz on Galatians, scholars have patiently applied the grid of Greco-Roman rhetoric to the *Corpus Paulinum*⁷³ and emerged with little unanimity even about the “species” of rhetoric each undisputed Pauline letter belongs to.⁷⁴ In recent times, a chorus of dissent appears to be rising, questioning the validity and adequacy of rhetorical criticism as a strategy for reading Paul.

The “headwinds” of dissent come from three directions. First the “new rhetoric” differentiates between “ancient rhetoric” (theory of speech) and “ancient poetics and historiographical reflections” (theory of narration). Even Paul’s letters contain biographical and narrated material, and the interpreter is forced to ask how these function in establishing the “meaning” of a given epistle.⁷⁵ This task may be more fruitfully conducted through the more recent theories of literature and narrative-critical hermeneutics.⁷⁶ A second critique is the failure of the “Betz-Kennedy approach” to take into account the significant gap that existed even in ancient times between the theory of rhetoric (as codified in the numerous handbooks) and praxis, that is, how in reality orators delivered speeches. In fact, it was quite natural for speakers to attempt to deliberately conceal the theoretical model their speeches were based on.⁷⁷ A third major challenge to purely rhetorical analyses of the Pauline corpus has been the question of

⁷³ For a “survey of the classification of the rhetorical species of the undisputed Pauline epistles and their rhetorical situations” see, D Watson, “The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles,” in *Paul and Rhetoric*, ed. J P Sampley and P Lampe (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2010), 25-47.

⁷⁴ Watson, “Three Species,” 42: “Trying to assign one of Paul’s epistles rigidly to a particular rhetorical species is a venture fraught with peril. How rhetorical species works in a Pauline epistle depends on the nature and complexity of the rhetorical situation addressed”. See also, C Forbes, “Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters,” in *Paul and Rhetoric*, 143-160: “However, despite intensive research over the last twenty years and more, there seems to be no scholarly agreement, and little methodological clarity, over how rhetorical features, and even broad rhetorical genres, are to be detected in the New Testament” (145).

⁷⁵ See Lampe, “Rhetorical Analysis,” 5-10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8: “Today, the narrative-critical exegesis of the New Testament is fruitfully molded by modern theories of literature”.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 11: “With *dissimulatio artis*, speakers even strived to conceal the theoretical model that had inspired them, so that in praxis the speeches were more flexible and multifaceted than the theoretical rules pretended”.

ancient epistolography since in ancient times, as today, people followed distinct conventions for delivering speeches and for writing letters.⁷⁸ Paul's most enduring legacy has been his letters, and their interpretation must at the least require epistolographical analysis, for which reason scholars have argued that it is, "inadequate to analyze written letters with the categories of ancient rhetoric, that is, with a theory of orally delivered speeches".⁷⁹

C Forbes' work on "Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters", however, advances a fascinating argument for the uniqueness of Paul's epistles within the vast corpus of extant letters from the Greco-Roman milieu. Comparing 520 papyrus letters with the Pauline corpus, Forbes asks the obvious question that apparently had not previously been asked: "How common was it for ancient letter writers to address letters to groups?" His research yields the remarkable result that in this regard Paul's letters stand quite alone. Thus, with regard to the Pauline epistles an either-or approach regarding rhetorical and epistolary approaches will not suffice:

Arguments that Paul's letters ought to be expected to conform more to epistolary than to rhetorical conventions have this weakness: Paul was not writing letters to individuals, to be read at their leisure. He was writing letters to Christian assemblies, where his letter would be read aloud, often in quite polemical situations. We know of no discussion of such letters – addressed to a group and designed to be read aloud to that group – in any Greco-Roman epistolary theorist.⁸⁰

Forbes' research leads him to adopt a reasonably credible middle ground: that the letters of Paul are in fact ambivalent, blending both rhetorical and epistolary features. Given the exigencies that demanded a response from the apostle, and by means of the emissaries and other agents that mediated his writings, Paul used his letters

⁷⁸ Forbes, "Ancient Rhetoric," 143: "In favor of the epistolographic approach, it can be simply urged that letters *are* what we are dealing with. The Pauline letters are obviously shaped by the conventions of Greco-Roman letter writing, notably the introductory greetings and wishes, and the farewells. Paul creatively develops his personal epistolary style within the patterns of known convention".

⁷⁹ Lampe, "Rhetorical Analysis," 13.

⁸⁰ Forbes, "Ancient Rhetoric," 148-149; also, 159: "Paul's congregational letters are a remarkably isolated phenomenon in their cultural context. This is true both at a purely literary level and in terms of the social context that generated them".

innovatively, to accomplish much more than what a typical author may have aspired to at the time:

Paul's letters were not written to be read, but to be performed. As such they function as speeches, as rhetoric, every bit as much as they function as conventional letters. They are thoroughly atypical letters, in size, in content, and in style, precisely because they are letters designed to be delivered orally to (atypical) groups. On this basis, epistolographic models can be fruitfully applied to some features of his letters; but rhetorical models will also very definitely have their place.⁸¹

Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI) as an interpretive analytic emerged in the light of the above impasse in rhetorical studies of the New Testament. As its most recognized exponent and spokesperson, V Robbins,⁸² explains that it was the "incorrect picturing" promoted by the uncritical application of the grid or genres of classical rhetoric (the settings in the Greek polis: the courtroom, the political assembly, and the civil ceremony) to the New Testament that produced the tipping point, and opened the way for socio-rhetorical approaches for viewing the text:

Rhetorical interpretation, as it was re-introduced to New Testament interpretation during the last half of the twentieth century used an incorrect picturing of the situations underlying the argumentation in the New Testament. Hans Dieter Betz, William Wuellner, and George A. Kennedy, who led the way, all used the classical categories of judicial (forensic), deliberative (symbouletic), and epideictic (demonstrative) rhetoric as the gateway into rhetorical interpretation of the New Testament. The problem is that the picturing of the conventional situations underlying classical rhetoric is incorrect for the conventional situations underlying the rhetoric in the New Testament.⁸³

In 1996, Robbins released two titles,⁸⁴ which deSilva called "the first programmatic announcement of this interpretive analytic".⁸⁵ One of the most fundamental distinctions

⁸¹ Forbes, "Ancient Rhetoric," 159.

⁸² See D A deSilva, "Seeing Things John's Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6-13," *BBR* 18, no. 2 (2008), 271: "Although several scholars combine social-scientific exegesis and rhetorical criticism in fruitful ways that deserve the eponym 'socio-rhetorical', Vernon Robbins has been at the center of developing socio-rhetorical interpretation as a distinctive, interdisciplinary mode of textual analysis that promises to facilitate 'exploration of the fascinating web of reality spun by each of the New Testament writers and their worlds'".

⁸³ V K Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse* (Dorset: Deo, 2009), 1:1-2.

⁸⁴ V K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

of SRI is that it proposes a new metaphor that may be used for working with texts. In an earlier stage of hermeneutical thought, historians and literary interpreters used the metaphor of windows and mirrors, respectively. The literary interpreter treated the characters, events, and features in a text as mirrors reflecting against each other and thereby producing the inner world of the text. Historical interpreters on the other hand treated a text as a window “either to look briefly in at the text or to look out at the outside world, rather than as a set of mirrors, to find out what is inside the text”.⁸⁶ This approach, though having served a useful purpose, has caused certain problems because it was founded on a philosophical dualism in thought.⁸⁷ SRI replaces the metaphors of windows and mirrors with the metaphor of “texts as a thick tapestry”:

A text is a thick matrix of interwoven networks of meanings and meaning effects. These networks extend far beyond the boundaries we construct to analyse and interpret phenomena; they interconnect phenomena inside and outside of texts in ways quite difficult for us even to imagine. Therefore, no interpreter should allow one arena of texture to be an environment for creating boundaries that separate this arena permanently from other arenas of texture. We must learn both how to create boundaries and how to take boundaries away.⁸⁸

In these 1996 works, Robbins essentially outlined an approach to analyse the rhetorical features of the biblical text, by examining its diverse textures including the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.⁸⁹ In his conceptualization of a socio-rhetorical “model of textual communication” all the individual textures are interwoven with each other; that is, they maintain their individual

⁸⁵ deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way,” 271.

⁸⁶ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 18-19;

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19: “The problem is that it separates the ‘internal’ mind of a text from the ‘external’ body of the world in a manner that is not true either to the texts we read or to the lives we live. The metaphor of windows and mirrors reflects a polarity between literature and history that is part of the dualism between mind and body in modern thought and philosophy”.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁹ The first four textures are duplicated in the two books, with the chapter on “Sacred Texture” included only in *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.

distinctiveness but at the same time find expression and communicate meaning only as a matrix of interconnected textures.⁹⁰

With the publication of *The Invention of Christian Discourse* in 2008, Robbins moves beyond the scope of his 1996 works which had aimed at organizing “socio-rhetorical strategies of analysis and interpretation in a manner that showed their relationship to one another and encouraged people to use them in programmatic ways to perform socio-rhetorical exegesis”.⁹¹ Robbins explains the distinctive advancement of the former:

A basic presupposition of the approach is that although first century Christians lived in a culture we regularly describe as “traditional,” they found ways to weave new dimensions into existing modes of Mediterranean discourse. The study concludes that early Christians reconfigured multiple forms of preceding and contemporary discourse by blending pictorial narrative with argumentative assertions in ways that created distinctive social, cultural, ideological, and religious modes of understanding and belief in the Mediterranean world.⁹²

Whereas the emphasis in rhetorical analyses of New Testament texts had been on what Robbins calls the “rhetology” of a text – that is, the argumentative texture of a text that is based on claims supported by reasoning and rationales – it was necessary to balance this with attention also towards a text’s “rhetography” – that is, the way the inner texture of texts can invoke “a graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality”.⁹³ As deSilva explains, if “rhetology” refers to the “skeleton and sinews” of an argument or persuasive text, “rhetography” refers to the “flesh” that gives life to the argument.⁹⁴ Robbins and the new socio-rhetorical school integrated research in cognitive science – on “conceptual blending” and “cognitive integrative

⁹⁰ For a visual presentation of the model, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 21.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ See the glossary entries in Robbins, *Invention*, xxvii. For an extensive discussion on rhetography, see, V K Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C Black and D F Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

⁹⁴ deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way,” 273.

networks” – with the ongoing discussion within rhetorical analysis of texts, to develop their ideas of rhetography:

Starting at the most basic level, human beings make decisions based largely on their ability to run “mental simulations,” that is, to project pictorially the processes they would entertain as possible courses of action and their consequences. Past observation and experience (including the past cultural experience encoded in, for example, texts, rites, and traditions) provides the vast reservoir on which human beings can draw for this enterprise. Language, in turn, gives human beings the power to “share” these “mental simulations” with one another, assigning phonemes to represent the “scenes”, and thus to effect persuasion. Rhetography, then, “refers to the features of a spoken or written communication that create a picture (graphic image) in the mind of a hearer or reader”. These pictures, in turn, “conjure visual images in the mind which . . . evoke ‘familiar’ contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader”.⁹⁵

Through his insights into rhetography, Robbins discovered that Christians within the first century Mediterranean context developed their own modes of discourse for communicating the particularities of the new beliefs and imperatives of Christian thought: they created varying “dialects” of discourse appropriate to the particular setting envisaged in the discourse.⁹⁶ Robbins terms these “rhetorolects”, and proposes that in the first century, Christians regularly had at their disposal six such “rhetorical dialects”: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, priestly, and miracle. These dialects or rhetorolects served as vehicles of communication.⁹⁷ Each rhetorolect blends both the argumentative (rhetology) and the pictorial (rhetography) within its distinctive texture.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way,” 273-274. For Robbins’ own description of “conceptual blending”, “critical spatiality”, and a “Rhetorolect as an Idealized Cognitive Model” see, *Invention*, 77-120.

⁹⁶ Robbins, *Invention*, 17: “Analysis of rhetography in early Christian discourse has produced an awareness of the differences when a speaker uses language associated with households, kingdoms, imperial armies, imperial households, temples, and intersubjective bodies of people. Each picture evokes special configurations of meanings that are important for persuading or convincing people to do certain things and not to do other things”.

⁹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 7-9. This being volume 1, Robbins explores in detail the first three of these rhetorolects: wisdom, prophetic and apocalyptic (121-482). The remaining rhetorolects, it is presumed, await the publication of volume 2 of *The Invention of Christian Discourse*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16: “It is necessary not only to interpret reasoning in argumentation but also to interpret picturing of people and the environments in which they are interacting. This means that interpreters must work not only with rhetology (the logic of rhetorical reasoning) but rhetography (the graphic picturing in rhetorical description)”.

The early stage of Robbins' work was weighted more on analysing the interwoven textures of a biblical text. He focuses on discerning the argument of a text by examining it using multiple heuristic tools, including both inductive methods (studying the inner texture and intertexture), as well as comparison with the social, cultural and political environments in which the text functioned. It is his later work on rhetography and conceptual blending that complemented and arguably completed SRI⁹⁹ as a robust approach to elucidating the biblical text.¹⁰⁰ deSilva's comments back in 1999 about the potential of SRI, however, show remarkable foresight:

As interpreters work programmatically through socio-rhetorical investigation of texts, they will find that the "program" can grow. That is to say, the method is not close-ended but always opens to being enriched by other methods across a wide variety of disciplines. One should expect that the next decade of work in socio-rhetorical interpretation will produce many refinements and add many elements to the investigation of each texture – particularly social and cultural texture and ideological texture – as the models from the disciplines of sociology, sociology of knowledge, and anthropology continue to be refined and reworded for application to New Testament texts.¹⁰¹

In this investigation of 2 Cor 4:1-6, SRI will be adopted as the basic interpretive analytic. In addition to analysing the rhetology of the text by giving particular attention to its inner texture and intertexture, we will also look for signals with regard to its rhetography. Implications regarding its social and cultural world together with its ideological and sacred textures will be drawn out as they arise in the course of the discussion.

⁹⁹We must, however, be cautious when using the language of "completion" about an approach to biblical research whose signature has been its adaptability and openness to change.

¹⁰⁰ See Robbins, "Rhetography" 81, n. 2, which establishes that even the term "rhetography" was coined and gained currency only from 2004-2006.

¹⁰¹ D A deSilva, "A Sociorhetorical Interpretation of Revelation 14:6-13: A Call to Act Justly toward the Just and Judging God". in BBR 9 (1999), 65-117.

CHAPTER 6

A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

1. Introduction

Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians has been the subject of increasing scholarly interest in recent years. C. Wanamaker suggests at least two strong reasons for this: the fact that the twenty-nine chapters of 1 and 2 Corinthians constitute "the most extensive correspondence of Paul with any single Christian community available to us"; and the fact that this collection "provides us with a wealth of social information about the Christian community at Corinth that is unmatched for any other community in the earliest period of Christianity".¹

The interest in the study of specialized aspects of 2 Corinthians began with J Semler's commentary in 1776, in which he argued that canonical 2 Corinthians was in fact a composite of "fragments of letters that Paul wrote to Corinth".² A spate of "partition theories" then followed Semler, and this trend has continued unabated until recent times when counter-arguments for the integrity of 2 Corinthians have been more forcefully advanced.

Another debate of special interest in 2 Corinthians involves the identity of Paul's opponents. This debate was prompted by the work of F C Baur in the middle years of the nineteenth century,³ but took off from the 1940s with Ernst Käsemann's *Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10–13*, followed by major works on the subject by W Schmithals, D Georgi, and more recently, J Sumney, among several others.⁴

¹ C A Wanamaker, review of *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, by D Horrell (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* vol. 101 (1998), 97.

² D E Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 33.

³ F C Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi. Sein Leben, sein Wirken, sein Briefe und sein Lehre. Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristenthums* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1866).

⁴ See W Schmithals, trans., *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1971); D Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986); J L Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The question of Method*

This debate, too, has generated multiple theories, and, like the discussion on the composition of 2 Corinthians, it, too, has remained inconclusive.

A third, and most recent, discussion on 2 Corinthians has emerged since the mid-1970s, and pertains to the social setting of the epistle, as well as the rhetorical features in it. G Theissen's *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* pioneered the application of sociology to the Pauline texts. Alongside this was the growing interest in the study of Greco-Roman rhetoric and its potential application as a hermeneutical strategy to understand Paul. This, too, has generated a significant volume of literature and, despite the benefits of rhetorical criticism in elucidating the texts, increasing disagreement on which aspects of ancient rhetoric may be presumed for Paul.

The particular interest of this thesis in 2 Corinthians, though not unaffected by the outcomes of these specialized debates, is highly specific: it aims to examine the meaning of Paul's unique expression, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, in the context of 2 Cor 4:4. Thus, this does not require that a definite position be taken on the debates mentioned above. Nevertheless, the quest for the meaning of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is complicated by the history of its interpretation. Since Marcion employed the phrase in support of his argument for a second, inferior deity in the second century, 2 Cor 4:4 was subjected to extraordinary interest in the context of the polemic against the heresies that followed, including Marcionism, Manichaenism, and Arianism. In the interest of their arguments, some patristic authors (beginning with Irenaeus of Lyons) even went as far as emending the text by transposing a phrase so that the translation read: "God has blinded the *unbelievers of this world*" (emphasis added). This violation of the integrity of the text, no doubt, compromised the exegetical task for later interpreters.

Thereafter, as we have seen, the pendulum on the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4 swung with the work of Erasmus and Calvin in the sixteenth century, who insisted that the

in 2 Corinthians. JSNTSS 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990). For a recent overview of research, see T R Blanton IV, *Constructing a New Covenant: Discursive Strategies in the Damascus Document and Second Corinthians*, WUNT 2, no. 233 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 109-121.

epithet could have been applied by Paul only to Satan.⁵ Their combined genius, and reputations, have cast an imposing shadow on scholarship of the following centuries. It is not difficult to see that Calvin's sweeping disdain towards the arguments of the patristic writers and other exegetes before him, for drawing the opposite conclusion, has largely forestalled any serious reexamination of the case for 2 Cor 4:4 to be a reference to the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

Taking as a given Erasmus' and Calvin's ascription of the epithet "the God of this age" to Satan, scholars have thereafter focused more on providing stronger grounds to sustain this interpretation. With less regard to the overall literary context or to the rhetorical exigency, exegetes have essentially drawn attention to three features in the sentence found in 4:3-4: "this age", "he has blinded", and "the unbelievers". The strength of the overall argument is that each of these three expressions bears a negative connotation, and when they are viewed in combination, they make it highly incompatible with the perceived nature of God as held by post-Reformation Christianity. Could we possibly think that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is God of *this (evil?) age*, and that he *blinds unbelievers* to the light of the gospel, when the NT shows a God who loves unbelievers and desires to lead them from their dark existence to the light?

We have seen how scholars have posited apocalyptic dualism as the indisputable *sitz Im Leben* of the text. Thus they have insisted on limiting the semantic potential of του αἰῶνος τουτου, so that it mainly carries the connotation of "this evil age" within a schema of temporal dualism. The semantic range, however, allows for the phrase to be simply understood as a reference to the world of natural human experience (including no doubt its inherent fallenness), in contrast to those aspects of reality beyond natural human experience. This broader understanding allows for the phrase to be rendered, if necessary, as "the God of this world". In fact, the noun αἰών, ῶνος evinces a very wide semantic range: from "age" to "world order" to "eternity". How it is rendered is determined by each individual context, and in some instances demands a significant exercise of interpretive choice. In any event J Guhrt observes: "Paul does not develop

⁵ One of the most recent voices in favour of the preferred view is D R Brown, "The God of This Age: Satan in the Churches and Letters of the Apostle Paul" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2011).

any systematic doctrine of aeons; neither does the rest of the NT. The ages are interlocked: eschatology is determined solely by the revelation of Christ: Christ is the turning point of time”.⁶

Although both Marcion and most modern commentators hold in common the assumption of dualism behind Paul’s thought in 2 Cor 4:4, there is a fundamental difference in the type of dualism assumed. Marcion and his contemporaries were working with Greek notions of ontological dualism based on the platonic distinction of spirit and matter. The majority of modern commentators, however, assume temporal dualism for Paul. In this dualism, the present age is thought to be dominated by pagans and evil spiritual forces, but it will give way to a glorious, messianic future age that will be eternal and exclusively ruled by God.⁷

As we have seen, post-Calvin hermeneutics is not without voices of dissent. An ostensible lone voice in the nineteenth century was A Clarke (1826).⁸ He has been joined by others in the twentieth century, such as Young and Ford (1987)⁹ and J M Scott (1998)¹⁰. The most recent scholar to advance the view that “God” in 4:4 refers to Yahweh and not Satan is D Hartley (2005).¹¹

In the light of this history of research, what is necessary is that this unique Pauline phrase, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, must be read afresh in the light of its literary

⁶ See, J Guhrt, “Time,” in *NIDNTT* 3: 826-833.

⁷ For an example see M Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 328: “As a Christian rabbi, Paul divided time into two ages or aeons: “this age” (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος, *ha’ôlām hazzeh*) and “the age to come” (ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μελλων/ἐρχομενος, *ha’ôlām habbā*; cf. Eph.1:21). . . . Such dualism as is found in Paul is temporal and ethical, not material or metaphysical”.

⁸ A Clarke, *The New Testament: Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York, NY: Bangs and Emory, 1826).

⁹ F Young and D F Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (London, SPCK: 1987).

¹⁰ J M Scott, *2 Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998).

¹¹ D E Hartley, “2 Corinthians 4:4: A Case for Yahweh as the ‘God of This Age’” (paper presented at the 57th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Valley Forge, PA, November 16-18, 2005), accessed January 7, 2014, <http://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/2cor-44.pdf>.

context, 2 Cor 4:1-6, paying careful attention to the socio-rhetorical exigency that prompted Paul to write as he did.

2. Locating the Text

Our efforts to understand what Paul meant by his unique phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου must begin with an identification of the basic textual unit that provides its most immediate literary context. Proposing that 4:1–6 constitutes this unit does not require elaborate argument, since the major editions of the Greek text recognize 4:1 as a necessary break in thought after 3:18, and conclude the ensuing paragraph at the end of 4:6.¹² A large number of commentaries also isolate 4:1-6 as a textual unit.¹³

The first six verses of chapter 4 conclude Paul’s argument that has its climax in 3:18, as the διὰ τοῦτο in 4:1 indicates:

The customary chapter division after II Corinthians 3:18 is widely recognized to be both mistaken and misleading. II Corinthians 3:18 is an exceptionally difficult verse. Its artificial isolation, created by this incorrect chapter break, contributes unnecessarily to its obscurity. . . [n]umerous grammatical and lexical features indicate the unity of 4:1 – 6 with what precedes. The first verse of the section begins with the strong connective διὰ τοῦτο, introducing the logical conclusion of what has gone before.¹⁴

¹² See most recent editions of, *The Greek New Testament (UBS)*, and Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

¹³ See H Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*. MeyerK 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1924); C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973); V P Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984); R Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985); R P Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986); M E Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians I: Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I–VIII* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994); Garland, *2 Corinthians*; Harris, *Second Epistle*.

¹⁴ C K Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant*, AnBib 116 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 158-159. For another careful presentation of the tight connections between 4:1-6 and the sub-sections that precede in 2:14-3:18 see E Ashley, *Paul’s Defense of His Ministerial Style: A Study of His Second Letter to the Corinthians* (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011), 181-183: “From Paul’s opening statement in 2 Corinthians 4, ‘Therefore, since we have *this* ministry as a result of receiving mercy, we do not lose heart,’ it is apparent that the assertions of 2 Cor 4:1-18 are dependent on those in 2 Cor 2:14–3:18. This is supported by clear verbal links between 4:1-6 and each of the previous three subsections: 2:14-17, 3:1-6 and 3:7-18” (181).

Since a detailed analysis of the inner texture will be presented later in this chapter, I will begin with some observations on the structure of the pericope. Two proposals have been made regarding the structure of 4:1-6: some scholars see a break between vv. 1-2 and 3-6,¹⁵ but others see a more natural division into three couplets (vv.1-2, 3-4, and 5-6).¹⁶ The subject-person pattern in the text supports the conclusion that 4:1-6 consists of three couplets. In vv.1-2 and vv.5-6 the emphasis is on the first person plural subject: ἠλεήθημεν, ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀπειπάμεθα, ἑαυτούς (vv.1-2); ἑαυτούς (twice), κηρύσσομεν, ἡμῶν (vv.5-6). In vv.3-4, however, the emphasis shifts from the first-person plural to an implied third person plural subject: ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἐν οἷς (“in their case”/“among whom”), τῶν ἀπίστων.¹⁷

Since the 1983 publication of J Lambrecht’s “Structure and Line of Thought in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6”,¹⁸ there has been a growing consensus that 4:1-6 may rightly be identified as the closing unit of a three-part structure for the broader text in 2:14–4:6.¹⁹ Lambrecht,

¹⁵ For example, C Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians,” *CTR* 4 (1989): 3-20, detects a chiasmus outlining 2 Corinthians 1:12–7:16, within which scheme, 4:1-2 is unified under the theme “false versus true approaches to ministry” as 4:3-6 is unified under the theme “darkness versus light” (8-9).

¹⁶ So, A Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1915), 109: “The six verses run in couplets; the glory of the new ministry (1, 2); the condition of those who are too blind to see the glory of the Gospel (3, 4); the source of the glory (5, 6)”; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 203, summarizes the “segments” as follows: how Paul commends himself to the conscience of others through the open statement of the truth (vv.1-2); characterization of the spiritual condition of those who do not see the glory of Christ in “our gospel” (vv.3-4); the basic thrust of Paul’s preaching (vv.5-6); Harris, *Second Epistle*, 321 adopts the same breakdown: vv.1-2, the glory of the ministry prompts perseverance and openness; vv.3-4, the glory of the gospel is veiled to minds blinded by Satan; vv.5-6, the glory of God is known in the gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord.

¹⁷ See J Lambrecht, “Structure and Line of Thought in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6,” in *Studies on 2 Corinthians*, ed. R Bieringer and J Lambrecht (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 275-276. For thematic reasons Lambrecht recognizes the “a – b – a’ movement”.

¹⁸ Lambrecht, “Structure,” *Biblica* 64 (1983), 344-380, cited from its republication in *Studies on 2 Corinthians*, ed. R Bieringer and J Lambrecht (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 257-294.

¹⁹ Lambrecht, “Structure,” 260: I. 2:14–3:6; II. 3:7-18; III. 4:1-6. Lambrecht also points out that several scholars before him also held to this same tripartite structure (see “Structure,” 258, n2); Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 188-190; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 135-139; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 240-241 are examples of commentators who explicitly cite Lambrecht’s work. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 43ff., follows the same structure, although without making reference to Lambrecht. Also see K O Sandness, *Paul: One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle’s Self-Understanding*, WUNT 2, no. 43 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 132-133, who adopts the same structure listing the units as a, b, and c, respectively: “Section a and c contain apologetic and polemical elements indicating the opposition between Paul and other missionaries. The two sections correspond to each other with respect to both theme and vocabulary. They are both

together with most commentators on 2 Corinthians, views 2:14–4:6 as the rhetorical unit with a clearly discernible “opening–middle–closing” texture.²⁰ He goes further to propose that this structure follows an “A-B-A’ pattern”,²¹ whereby in the opening section A (2:14–3:6) Paul’s theme is the apostle (and his co-workers) and his apostolic existence. This theme is again picked up in the closing section A’ (4:1-6): “From 4,1 onwards, however, Paul is again talking very clearly about the minister and his way of life”.²²

Attention to the “opening–middle–closing texture” of texts began from the 1970s and has provided new angles on the explication of texts.²³ Robbins argues that identifying the opening and closing units in a text helps the interpreter to discern the overall arrangement of the various subunits,²⁴ which in turn moves the interpretive task towards its goal: “The goal is to discern the persuasive effects of the parts, how they work together, in relation to the persuasive nature of the entire text”.²⁵

In addition to the thematic correspondences, Lambrecht presents the following impressive linguistic comparison between the “two framing sections” (4:1-6; 2:14–3:6) that “frame the central unit, 3:7-18”:²⁶

concerned with Paul’s apostolic ministry. In between is section b, which further develops the antithesis in 3:3.6”.

²⁰ Arguably the highest recognition 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 has gained in establishing its status as a discernible unit of thought in the NT was through becoming one of the topics for the Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum peer reviewed series: L De Lorenzi ed., *Paolo. Ministro del Nuovo Testamento (2 Co 2,14–4,6)*, Benedictina 9 (Rome: Benedictina, 1987).

²¹ Lambrecht, “Structure,” 260: “The sections 2,14–3,6 and 4,1-6 correspond with each other”.

²² *Ibid.*, 261.

²³ V K Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 50-53.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50: “Opening and closure exhibit the span of a rhetorical unit – whether that unit be the entire work or a section in it. A discernible beginning and ending are part of an overall arrangement of units and subunits”.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

²⁶ See Lambrecht, “Structure,” 261-262: “In an A-B-A’ structure the A’-part is rarely a pure repetition of A, no matter how closely the two passages are attuned”.

4:1 – 6	2:14 – 3:6
διακονία (4:1)	διακόνος (3:6) (διακονηθεῖσα, 3:3)
οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν (4:1)	πεποίθησιν. . ἔχομεν (3:4)
δολοῦντες (4:2)	καπηλεύοντες (2:17)
τὸν λόγου[σίς] τοῦ θεοῦ (4:2)	τὸν λόγου[σίς] τοῦ θεοῦ (2:17)
ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (4:2)	κατέναντι τοῦ θεοῦ (2:17)
τῇ φανερώσει (4:2)	φανεροῦντι (2:14) (φανερούμενοι, 3:3)
συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοῦς (4:2)	ἑαυτοῦς συνιστάνειν (3:1)
πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων (4:2)	ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων (3:2)
ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις (4:3)	ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις (2:15)
ἑαυτοῦς (4:5)	ἑαυτοῦς (3:1)
δούλους (ὑμῶν) (4:5)	διακόνους (καινῆς διαθήκης) (3:6)
κηρύσσομεν (4:5)	λαλοῦμεν (2:17)
ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν (4:6)	ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν (3:2)
πρὸς φωτισμόν (4:6)	φανεροῦντι (2:14)
τῆς γνώσεως . . . τοῦ θεοῦ (4:6)	τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ (2:14)

Martin proposes limiting the “opening’ unit to 2:14-17, but concurs that 4:1-6 functions as a “closing” unit: “The links between 2:14-17 and 4:1-6 suggest that Paul is employing a literary device known as “ring-composition” i.e., his closing thoughts revert to his earlier statements and complete the circle of ideas”.²⁷

By becoming aware of the opening–middle–closing texture of 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, it is possible to go deeper in analysis by asking incisive questions. Robbins clarifies:

Some of the questions evoked by this analysis are as follows: What is the nature of the opening of a unit in relation to its closure, whether the unit is an entire text or a subdivision in it? What is the nature of the topics with which the text begins in relation to the topics with which it ends? What is the nature of the topics that replace the topics at the beginning? Is there repetition that interconnects the beginning, middle and end; or is repetition of a particular kind

²⁷ See the fuller discussion in Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 75.

limited to one or two of the three regions of the discourse? What is the function of the parts of a text in relation to the entire text?²⁸

The closing unit (4:1-6) certainly is also tightly connected both by theme and vocabulary with the “central unit” (3:7-18), clearly demonstrating that Paul intended 2:14–4:6 to function as a rhetorical whole, in response to the apparent exigency.²⁹

Harris summarises the compelling correspondences:³⁰

4:1- 6	3:7-18
v. 1 τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην	v. 8 ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος v. 9 ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης
v. 3 κεκαλυμμένον (twice)	vv. 13 – 16 κάλυμμα v. 18 ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ
v. 4 ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων	v. 14 ἐπώρωθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν
v. 4 τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι	v. 7 μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι v. 13 τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι
vv. 4,6 φωτισμόν	v. 18 κατοπτριζόμενοι
vv. 4,6 τῆς δόξης	vv. 7 – 11, 18 δόξα

Although other scholars have persuasively argued for alternative ways to outline the structure of 2 Cor 1-7, Thrall is convinced that the tripartite division of this rhetorical unit, 2:14–4:6, is sound:

Whilst this is not the only way of understanding the structure of these chapters, it does appear convincing, and the analysis has the advantage that it is based on formal elements clearly visible in the text, rather than on presuppositions concerning Paul’s intentions in this section of the letter.³¹

²⁸ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 53.

²⁹ See Lambrecht, “Structure,” 262-263: “It follows, therefore, that there are many corresponding elements between B and A'. A thematic and vocabulary analysis of both 3,7-18 and 4,1-6 could prove that 3,7-8 can hardly be a later insertion with no correspondence with the context”. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 139, concurs: “Recognizing the A B A' pattern helps us better understand the function of 3:7-18. It provides the theological basis for the affirmations of 2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6”.

³⁰ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 320-321: “Such an overlap of terms and concepts shows that several key themes of 3:7-18 are continued in 4:1-6: the glory of the Christian ministry, veiling, unresponsiveness of mind, and seeing and not seeing”.

³¹ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 190.

3. The Rhetorical Exigency of 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6

The preceding enquiry has produced ample evidence to show that 2:14–4:6 is a carefully conceived argument, structurally held together by tight verbal and thematic connections and other rhetorical devices to be further examined below. At the same time, it is only one part of a larger unit, chapters 1–7, which constitutes by far the longest single division of canonical 2 Corinthians.³² Scholars are without dispute that 2 Corinthians is unique in its display of the highly complex and evidently conflictual relationship that existed between a Christian community of the first century and its founding apostle. At the same time, given the unavailability of primary data to inform the exegete of the Corinthian Christians' own reading of the crisis, we cannot be dogmatic about any reconstruction based on the limited understanding we can gain from allusions and other more direct references that are found in the Corinthian correspondence, and in other NT writings such as Acts.³³ Second Corinthians offers us Paul's view or, at least, the construction that he sought to put on the situation.

In spite of the above caveat, we cannot avoid the question about rhetorical exigency, that is, what might have been the realities and turn of events that would most likely have prompted Paul to write 2 Corinthians and, for the purposes of this thesis, particularly 2:14–4:6. How could one arrive at a reconstruction of the motivation for this work that is both relatively simple – in that it bases its conclusions on available data without recourse to elaborate conjecture – and relatively comprehensive – in that it takes into account all the available data?

F Long explores these questions in his helpful chapter "The Rhetorical Exigency of 2 Corinthians". He begins with the following observation: "In 2 Corinthians Paul was accused with acting inconsistently by (1) saying that he will visit and then not doing so

³² G A Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 86-91, uses rhetorical criticism to demonstrate that all of chapters 1–7 is a single letter. See further, Harris, *Second Epistle*, 11-14.

³³ Barrett (*Second Epistle*, 6) has observed: "No one who has made a serious attempt to study the Corinthian situation is likely to feel convinced that he has a monopoly of truth".

and writing instead and (2) being worldly, i.e. using worldly rhetoric and underhandedly pursuing financial gain when teaching against these things”.³⁴

The first of these accusations was clearly in the foreground when Paul constructed his response in the form of 2 Corinthians. Long avers that “failing to visit, appears to have been the catalyst for much of Paul’s problem in Corinth”.³⁵ It is possible that his change of his expressed plans (see 1 Cor 16:5-7) without warning had distressed many in Corinth, and had made Paul vulnerable to the charge of fickleness. Therefore, early in the letter, he broaches the subject and mounts a defense (2 Cor 1:12-17), and rhetorically asks, “Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this?” Once this theme is introduced Paul returns to it time and again (see 2:1-11; 7:2-16; 10:1, 9-11; 12:20–13:10).³⁶

The second charge – of being worldly – could also attach quite easily to Paul’s reputation due to the huge mismatch that continued between the Corinthians’ worldview and that of the apostle. With the long tradition in Corinth and all such Greek cities, of sophistry in rhetoric, the Corinthians were already prepared to receive speeches – whether spoken in person or written in epistles – with an allowance for exaggeration, insincerity, and attempted manipulation. In 1 Cor 2:1-5, Paul had disavowed ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας and πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις and σοφία ἀνθρώπων, but it appears that there had been a growing suspicion that Paul was a mere sophist,³⁷ who hid behind “weighty and strong” letters because he was disadvantaged by his unimpressive physical appearance.³⁸ Another criticism regarding worldliness that was easy to stick on Paul had

³⁴ F J Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117-142.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 128: “The *divisio* of 2 Corinthians at 1.17b also indicates that Paul was accused of using worldly rhetoric: Paul says *yes* and then *no*. This was the standard criticism against those trained in rhetoric”.

³⁸ In 1:12 Paul appears to refute the charge that he acts according to σοφία σαρκικῆ; 10:1-11 sees Paul mounting a robust defense against charges that he uses rhetoric in his letters to manipulate and hide his duplicity.

to do with financial integrity because Paul was at the time heading a massive famine relief for the Jerusalem church. He had previously “boasted” to the Corinthians that he had not accepted their patronage because he wished to “preach the gospel to them free of charge” (1 Cor 9:18, emphasis added), and the impression he may have created is that he did not receive money from his churches. Later though, the Corinthians may have found out that he did, in fact, receive support from the Macedonian churches (see 2 Cor 11:8-9; Phil 4:15-16), and this may have given rise to questions about Paul’s honesty. Furthermore, with his urgency about the Jerusalem Collection, suspicions may have arisen about Paul’s financial integrity: “Perhaps, they seem to have suggested, some of the money was really not destined for the poor in Jerusalem”.³⁹

Paul was vulnerable to deprecation in the eyes of the Corinthians because his outlook and behaviour seemed so much at variance with the typical expectations of Corinthian society.⁴⁰ They wished for leaders that exhibited superior presence and rhetorical skills, asserted status in a society obsessed with hierarchy and honour-shame, and operated out of patron-client relationships. In contrast, Paul’s personal presence was “unimpressive”, he counter-culturally insisted on glorifying weakness and suffering through his λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ, and humiliated himself by persisting with his tent-making and menial labour.⁴¹

They also expected that a “man of God” would be attested to by claims to divine power and experiences, and earthly recognition and adulation. Instead, Paul cut a sorry figure,

³⁹ See Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 130.

⁴⁰ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 30: “The breach between Paul and the Corinthians was not simply over theological issues but had its roots in Corinthian cultural values that clashed with Christian values he wanted them to adopt”.

⁴¹ A historical precedent to the Corinthians’ disappointment with Paul is the criticism levelled by the Sophist Antiphon at Socrates: “Socrates, I suppose that philosophy must add to one’s store of happiness. But the fruits you have reaped from philosophy are apparently very different. For example, you are living a life that would drive even a slave to desert his master. Your meat and drink are of the poorest: the cloak you wear is not only a poor thing, but is never changed summer or winter; and you never wear shoes or tunic. Besides you never take money, the mere getting of which is a joy, while its possession makes one more independent and happier,” see Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1:6.2–3. <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekFeb2011&getid=1&query=Xen.%20Mem.%201.6.3> (accessed July 13, 2015), cited partly in Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant*, 197.

refused to “boast” about his experiences except those that highlighted his suffering, and faced constant persecution from religious authorities, especially the Jewish leaders. His insistence that he must “work with [his] hands” instead of winning the admiration of his congregation, worked to undermine the credibility of his apostolic claims because it implied lowliness of status and a lack of seriousness about the philosopher’s work. Blanton explains:

Working for a living often put one in the company of slaves, and the hunched postures required for some professions were regarded as demeaning and “slavish”. Also, the long hours of work required to sustain oneself detracted from the amount of philosophizing in which one could engage.⁴²

Paul’s version of the gospel – although presenting the Jewish messiah Jesus – appealed so little to the majority of the Jews, that it begged the question if it was the heaven-endorsed gospel at all. In addition, he was also somewhat isolated from the established hierarchy of the new Christian community, and seemed to lack their credentials and endorsement. In fact, some scholars, including T Blanton and Murphy-O’Connor, propose that until the Jerusalem Council of 51 CE, Antioch was the base for Paul’s version of the gospel whereby, “Gentile converts were accepted as members of the ‘Israel of God’ in full standing on the basis of their confession that ‘Jesus is Lord’ and their adherence to the standards of Hellenistic morality”.⁴³ This was the position that the council repudiated, and which led to a serious breach:

Marginalized by his refusal to accept the decision by James, Peter, Barnabas – and, we may assume, the rest of the Antioch church – Paul dissociated himself from Antioch and set off in search of “fresh” territory, in which he could promulgate his own version of the gospel.⁴⁴

Garland summarizes as follows:

Some Corinthians apparently did not share the same appreciation for this selfless suffering. To them Paul cut a shabby figure. Religion, in their mind, is supposed to lift people up, not weigh them down with suffering. They may well have asked how someone so frail, so afflicted, so stumbling in his speech and visibly afflicted with a thorn in the flesh could be a sufficient agent for the

⁴² Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant*, 185.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

power of God's glorious gospel. Paul writes an impressive letter, but his physical presence is disappointingly unimpressive. He is too reticent to boast and to act forcefully. His refusal to accept their financial support and allowing himself to be demeaned as a poor labourer reflected badly on them as well. Such unconventional behaviour betrays a lack of dignity appropriate for an apostle.⁴⁵

To complicate further the already tenuous situation, we detect in the text of 2 Corinthians the presence of powerful influences within the Corinthian community that appear to have been capitalizing on Paul's absence. Explicit statements⁴⁶ and allusions⁴⁷ within chapters 1–7 combine in support of the argument for the presence of "opponents" of Paul in Corinth. In his 1984 publication, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, S Kim reconstructed the criticism levelled by Paul's opponents:

They charged that Paul was not properly commissioned to be an apostle: he was a self-made apostle recognized by nobody, as his inability to produce letters of recommendation proved (3:1-5). They also accused Paul of distorting the gospel by not requiring the Gentile converts to observe the law of Moses (4:2). They said that such a gospel was 'veiled' (4:3), meaning that it was unintelligible because it cut itself loose from God's revelation given to Moses on Sinai.⁴⁸

These "opponents" have been the subject of intense scholarly debate, with a range of proposals having been presented as to their identity.⁴⁹ Of particular importance for this thesis is the fact that the diverse proposals about the opponents in 2 Corinthians are

⁴⁵ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 31-32. Also see J L Sumney, 'Servants of Satan', 'False Brothers', and Other Opponents of Paul, JSNTSS 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 95-96: "They demand proof of apostleship from Paul and question his legitimacy because he has not given sufficient evidence. They further challenge his apostleship because of his inglorious life and assert that he discredits his ministry by being weak. So his improper behavior includes both his lack of integrity (evidenced by his change of travel plans) and his manner of life. Perhaps in connection with questions about his integrity, they also claim that Paul's message is not clear" (emphasis added).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-85, discerns three explicit statements in chapters 1–7 that open a window into the nature and character of the threat: 2:17 (the opponents accept pay); 3:1b (the opponents bear letters of recommendation); and 5:12 (the opponents take pride in appearances).

⁴⁷ Sumney, *Servants*, 85-96, finds allusions in 1:12, 13-14, 17; 2:16b; 3:1a, 5-6a; 4:2-3, 7-9; 5:11, 16; 6:3-4; 7:2: "Allusions indicate that these opponents exacerbate the strained relations between Paul and the Corinthians, using the change in his travel plans to question his reliability. This allows the opponents to question his integrity and accuse him of being unspiritual. Thus, they also question his apostleship".

⁴⁸ See S Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 233.

⁴⁹ Sumney (*Servants*, 79-80) classifies all proposals under four categories: Judaizers, Gnostics, Divine Men, and Pneumatics.

united in assuming a Jewish background for the opposition. This conclusion significantly limits the provenance of the discussion that Paul engages in within 2:14–4:6, to Jewish issues; a possibility that will need to be corroborated through features within the text. For now, it is noteworthy that all the major theses agree on a Jewish provenance for the opposition to Paul in Corinth: Petrine Christianity with its headquarters in Jerusalem (Baur); Jewish emissaries from the church in Jerusalem (Käsemann and Thrall); Jewish Gnostics (Schmithals); Hellenistic Jews influenced by Greek θεῖτοι ἄνθρωποι (Georgi); Judaizing Jews (Barrett); Jews with close links to the Palestinian church (Oostendorp); Antioch Jews advocating Torah observance (Murphy-O'Connor).⁵⁰

In addition to the several accusations and criticisms that the Corinthians levelled more directly at Paul, it is possible to see allusions to more issues: that Paul recommended himself (3:1), lacked “sufficiency” (3:5), preached a “veiled” gospel (4:3), and behaved “craftily” and “falsified the word of God” (4:2).⁵¹

The Corinthian correspondence reveals a tragic, escalating conflict between the Achaian congregation and her founding apostle. There had been a ‘painful visit’ (2:1), misunderstanding about Paul’s travel plans (1:12–2:11), uncertainty about the Corinthians affections towards Paul (2:9; 6:11–13; 8:8), dalliances with rival missionaries (11:1–4; 12:11–13), and warnings and threats from Paul (10:9–11; 13:1–3). When Paul penned 1 Corinthians about a year earlier, the chief concerns had to do with issues internal to the community at Corinth: factionalism (1 Cor 1:10–12), misunderstanding the core values of the gospel (1 Cor 1:18–31), immorality (1 Cor 5:1–5; 6:12–20), litigation between Christians (1 Cor 6:1–6), insensitivity towards each other (1 Cor 8:9–13; 11:17–22), and boastful behaviour (1 Cor 12:21–26). There was also, to a lesser extent, some

⁵⁰ On this see the survey of scholarship in Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant*, 109–121. See further F Lindgård, *Paul’s Line of Thought in 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10*, WUNT 189 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 64: “It is obvious that they were Jewish-Christian and that they were skilled in presenting themselves in that way”; J H Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, SNTSMS 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 168: “They are pneumatics who stand on a Jewish missionary tradition which has been appropriated by Christian circles”. For a novel argument that sees “Apollon and his (unnamed) companions” as the “opponents” of Paul in Corinth, see F Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 80–87.

⁵¹ See Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant*, 186–188.

disenchantment with Paul because of his refusal of patronage and relatively unimpressive showing in comparison to other major Christian leaders the Corinthians had later got to know, such as Cephas and Apollos (9:1-6; cf. 1:12). By and large, though, the tone of the first epistle shows that the church recognized Paul as the rightful authority to pontificate over her and censure her wrong attitudes and practices.

In the short period that followed, the relationship between founder and church deteriorated dramatically, sparked no doubt by the severity of Paul's censure and tone in previous communications, and by the "offensiveness" of Paul's demeanour and behaviour as a "philosopher". With the rising chorus of criticism against Paul's weak appearance (2 Cor 10:10), exaggerated accusations emerged of unreliability (2 Cor 1:12), fickleness (2 Cor 1:17), and lack of transparency (2 Cor 6:11-12; cf. 4:2), which in turn led to full-on charges of sophistry (2 Cor 10:10), deceitfulness (2 Cor 8:13; cf. 12:16), and even misappropriation of funds (2 Cor 8:20-21).

This cocktail of ill-will was to be fatally stirred by the arrival of a group of people from outside, the "opponents", who coveted the possibility of usurping the ownership of the Corinthian community in the absence of its legitimate *paterfamilias*. To accomplish this, they adopted a two-pronged approach: (1) they presented themselves to the Corinthians in the most politically correct manner, pandering to their cultural values of patron-client transactions, deferring to status, practising boastfulness, and maintaining impressive appearances through written credentials, rhetoric, and claims to supernatural experiences; and, (2) they actively undermined the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship by fuelling the existing doubts; that is, querying his credentials, questioning his motives, and criticising his physical weakness, humility, and slave-like demeanour. The trump card in the opponents' hand, though, was Paul's (under -) performance as an evangelist, especially in being unable to convince the Jews, and particularly their leaders, about the messiahship of Jesus.⁵² They claimed that Paul's gospel was obscure and

⁵² See L L Belleville, *2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity), 115: "It would appear – if we can read between the lines – that Paul's critics reasoned from the absence of large numbers of converts (especially from among his own people) to some fault in his preaching"; R F Collins, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 91: "Paul may be responding to the accusations of people who say that some have not accepted the gospel because Paul has garbled the message and lacks eloquence and rhetorical

“veiled” to those who were best informed about the expectations of the Hebrew scriptures, in the same manner that its bearer was shady and deceitful.

In chapters 10–13, these opponents are more clearly recognizable as imposters in a masquerade – whom Paul is able to boldly name, ψευδαπόστολοι, ἐργάται δόλιοι, μετασχηματιζόμενοι εἰς ἀποστόλους Χριστοῦ and as διάκονοι of Satan (11:11-15); but in chapters 1–7 (the “first apology”), the danger is only discernible in its incipient form. At this early stage Paul only hints broadly at those who “peddle the Word of God” (2:17), flash “letters of recommendation” (3:1b), and take pride in appearances (5:12).

Although this stark contrast in language and tone allows for the possibility that 1–7 and 10–13 were written as separate pieces, it is not difficult to imagine that the very difference may be evidence of Paul’s rhetorical strategy that included three logically-related movements of persuasion: (1) the assertion of Paul’s legitimate claim to apostolic status with regard to the Corinthians and an invitation to be reconciled, thereby demonstrating an implicit recognition of Paul’s apostolic authority (1–7); (2) the reestablishment of the Jerusalem Collection project as a tangible expression of the renewed relationship of the Corinthian church with Paul and his gospel (8–9); and, (3) the disavowal and decisive rejection of the opponents of Paul along with all those supporters of the opponents within the congregation as an explicit expression of loyalty to Paul (10–13). As suggested, each successive rhetorical objective would be dependent, for effect, on the persuasiveness of that which had preceded it.⁵³

The unit encompassing 2:14–4:6, then, is the first major rhetorical segment by which Paul attempts to woo the Corinthians back to himself. He must persuade them, once

skill”; J Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41: “It was argued that Paul’s gospel had won few converts because of his unimpressive personality and lackluster preaching (cf. 10:10). He was not a dominant figure, whose words were of commanding eloquence and grandeur”; F W Danker, *II Corinthians*, ACNT (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 61-62.

⁵³ For an argument for “literary integrity” of 2 Corinthians on the basis of an evident rhetorical strategy, see D A deSilva, *The Credentials of an Apostle*, BMS 4 (North Richland Hills, TX: Bibal Press, 1998), 1-43. Also see Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 1-14.

again, to recognize his apostolic legitimacy despite his humility and cruciform life; they must, once again, invest their trust in his integrity despite him lacking letters of recommendation and other impressive endorsements; and, they must reaffirm the credibility of his gospel despite the fact that it appears to lack potency among the Jews, the very people from whom the messiah came. It is these concerns that predominate as Paul carefully weighs his options and shapes his text to move his Corinthian audience back to intimacy with himself, for which, he claims, he had been keeping his heart wide open all along (6:11-13).

4. A Socio-Rhetorical Approach to the Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

4.1 Inner Texture

At the outset, a text is only a set of symbols on a flat surface. It is only when someone, who knows what these symbols represent, begins to read them that a text comes into its own.⁵⁴ To explore the inner texture of a text the interpreter concentrates on the “word-phrase patterns” and the “narrational patterns” that are in evidence, and considers how they contribute to a pattern of argumentation within a given text. Potentially, a text may feature five kinds of inner texture: repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing, narrational, argumentative, and aesthetic.⁵⁵ The most prominent of these features will be examined in the text under consideration.

In addition to prominently repeated words or phrases, the text presents other features that invite attention. For example, the entire pericope functions as a single argument by the use of conjunctions that connect the clauses and advances the argument: Διὰ τοῦτο (v.1) . . . ἀλλὰ (v.2) . . . εἰ δὲ καὶ (v.3) . . . ἐν οἷς (v.4) . . . οὐ γὰρ (v.5). . . ὅτι (v.6). Of these, and notably, the construction that commences v. 4 (ἐν οἷς) is the only one that signals a subordinate status to its preceding concessive clause in v. 3 (see

⁵⁴ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 27-28: “For a text to ‘be itself’, it must have a reader who activates it – a reader who ‘receives’ the message. In other words, inner texture is only one part of the communication transaction”.

⁵⁵ On this see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 44-95.

discussion below).⁵⁶ This prompts the question as to how the content of v.4 relates to the clause in v. 3. Furthermore, the expression in v. 5 is unique for two reasons and warrants enquiry: it contains the only instance in the NT where the word order, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον is found; and, this is also the only verse in 2 Corinthians where Paul employs the noun δούλος.⁵⁷ Another outstanding feature that needs to be explored is the intentional parallel construction of v. 4 and v. 6.⁵⁸ Since the interest of this thesis lies in elucidating the meaning of v. 4 it will be important to see if Paul's expression in v. 6 provides clues to understanding the verse "over against which it has been set".⁵⁹

4.1.1 Repetitive–Progressive Texture

A number of words are repeated within this brief pericope: the conjunction ἀλλὰ is used thrice; the nouns, θεός (6 times), χριστός (3 times), καλύπτω (twice), εὐαγγέλιον (twice), φωτισμός (twice), δόξα (twice), and λάμπω (twice).

4.1.1.1 The contrasts implied by the use of ἀλλὰ

The double use of the adversative (ἀλλὰ) in 4:2 signifies a strong, repeated contrast with the preceding verse, 4:1. The latter, featuring the main verb ἐγκακοῦμεν, constitutes the governing clause for the entire pericope: διὰ τοῦτο ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, "Therefore having this ministry – as we have been shown mercy – we do not shrink back".⁶⁰ In 3:12, we find a close parallel to the clause in 4:1 – ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῆ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα, "Since we have such a hope, we are very bold". It is this idea of apostolic

⁵⁶ Acknowledged by Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 219-220; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305, but not translated accordingly on the basis that it is not demanded by "context" and because it is "awkward", respectively.

⁵⁷ There are 27 occurrences of the noun in the Pauline corpus.

⁵⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 251: "There is a close structural relationship between v.6 and v.4. There are material relationships as well".

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁰ Following Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 217; for a more detailed discussion on ἐγκακω see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 298-300. The verb is used in six verses in the NT (Lk 18:1; 2 Cor 4:16; Gal 6:9; Eph 3:13; 2 Thes 3:13), and may refer either to "losing heart", "growing weary", "behave remissly in a thing", or "be reluctant". The latter meaning can easily attach to all NT contexts of the verb, except perhaps Eph 3:13.

boldness that Paul picks up again, albeit now after the confident climax to the “boldness” theme in 3:18, where “[they] all with unveiled faces [were] looking at the glory of the Lord”. Such a background makes the words, “we do not shrink back”, a better rendering of ἐγκακοῦμεν than “lose heart” or “grow weary”.⁶¹ Paul’s point, then, is that in the light of the fact that he is a God-authorized “minister of a new covenant” (3:6) entrusted with the διακονία of the “Spirit” and “righteousness” (3:8 and 9), and given that all who participate in his ministry experience a Spirit-enabled transformation into glory (3:18), there can be no question of “shrinking back” or being reluctant about his apostolic responsibilities.

The two clauses commencing with ἀλλὰ forcefully argue to the contrary by means of parallel participial statements in subordination to the overall assertion: “On the contrary we have repudiated *the secretive things of shame*”.⁶² The first subordinate participial clause (see b below) states Paul’s protestation negatively: “. . . on the one hand not behaving craftily nor falsifying the Word of God”, and the second (b' below) reiterates it positively: “. . . and on the other by the open disclosure of the truth commending ourselves to the consciences of all humanity before God”.

a. ἀλλὰ ἀπειπάμεθα⁶³ τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης⁶⁴,

⁶¹ “Lose heart” (and its connotations) is widely attested (see ESV, ASV, GNB, KJV, NASB, NIV), but this may be partly due to the assimilation of the weaker reading, ἐκκακέω, “to lose spirits”, “to be fainthearted” about which option Thrall comments (*Second Epistle*, 299): “This weakens the apologetic force of Paul’s assertion. It is more likely that he was charged with being remiss in his duty than that the Corinthians were simply complaining that he seemed tired and despondent”.

⁶² Τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης: it is significant that the only other occurrence of the articular noun “the shame” within Jewish canonical literature is 1 Kgs 18:19 (LXX).

⁶³ The first person plural middle of ἀπεῖπον is a NT hapax meaning “renounced” or “put aside” and is not found in the LXX. Furnish translates “we for our part have renounced” claiming that in this way the middle form is given its full meaning (*II Corinthians*, 217).

⁶⁴ This phrase has posed an exegetical challenge for a variety of reasons including, 1) the ambiguity of the genitive, 2) the wide semantic range for τὰ κρυπτὰ, 3) the ambivalence of the quality signified by αἰσχύνη; a *good* quality of “feeling shame” or the *bad* quality of “being disgraceful” (see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 302-303 who suggests five theoretical possibilities for translation; also Harris, *Second Epistle*, 324 for more evidence that “the colorful phrase . . . has been translated in a myriad of different ways). We note additionally that of six uses of the noun αἰσχύνη in the NT (Lk 14:9; 2 Cor 4:2; Phil 3:19; Eph 3:13; Heb 12:2; Jude 1:13; Rev 3:18) this is the only use of the articular genitive singular, literally, “of The Shame”. The only other occasion where this phrase occurs is in the narrative of the contest on Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, in which the LXX terms the latter, τοῦς

b. μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ⁶⁵ μηδὲ δολοῦντες⁶⁶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ⁶⁷

a'. ἀλλὰ

b'. τῇ φανερώσει⁶⁸ τῆς ἀληθείας⁶⁹ συνιστάνοντες⁷⁰ ἑαυτοὺς⁷¹ πρὸς πᾶσαν
συνείδησιν⁷² ἀνθρώπων⁷³ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ⁷⁴

προφήτας τῆς αἰσχύνης, “the Prophets of The Shame” (1 Kgs 18:19). Could this concept of a contest be in the background as Paul rhetorically insinuates that his opponents’ stance puts them on a level with the prophets of Baal? We shall examine below, the potential of this reference from the point of view of the “rhetography” of the text.

⁶⁵ Bearing the idea “ready to do anything, especially anything bad” (see Harris, *Second Epistle*, 325), it refers to a “crafty” or “deceitful” disposition (cf. 2 Cor 11:3, “the craftiness of the serpent”). In Eph 4:14 the noun is used in a similar context of pure and false *teachings*. It was also used in “anti-sophistic polemic” in the Greco-Roman world (see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 218).

⁶⁶ From the noun, δόλος “bait for fish” the verbal idea is that of trickery, guile, falsify, and adulterate. A NT hapax, the term occurs extra biblically in a polemic against “fraudulent teachers of philosophy, out simply for their own gain” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 218). Is a twin verb for καπηλεω (“peddling” or “huckstering”) in 2:17.

⁶⁷ The phrase “the Word of God” occurs only seven times in the Pauline corpus, and in 2 Corinthians it is only found again in 2:17. Positioned, as they are, in the “framing sections” of 2:14–4:6, it strengthens the suggestion of an *inclusio* or “ring composition” (see Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 75).

⁶⁸ The noun φανερωσις occurs only here and in 1 Cor 12:7 and the dative form means, “by full disclosure”.

⁶⁹ The noun for “truth” occurs six times in 2 Corinthians, beginning with 4:2 (also 6:7; 7:14; 11:10; 12:6; 13:8).

⁷⁰ Present active participle of συνίστημι “commend, recommend, give approval”. Of a total of fifteen uses in the NT, eight are in 2 Corinthians (3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12, 18; 12:11), suggesting that this was a catchword in the context: commendation and giving and receiving of approval played a major part in Corinth and the church there.

⁷¹ “Recommending ourselves” here is related to the expression in 3:1: Ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν. In the latter, the rhetorical question implies the answer, no! In 4:2 Paul is clearly claiming to recommend himself. This may be because of his polemical rebuff to his opponents who had attempted to undermine him.

⁷² Of the twenty-nine uses of the noun, συνείδησις “conscience” ten are in the Corinthian correspondence, suggesting that this too was a catchword in their case. It may refer to “an inward faculty of judgment which assesses conduct in accordance with given norms” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 301). For a comprehensive discussion see, C A Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* (1955; repr., London: SCM, 1955).

⁷³ The phrase, πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπων is unique, and a somewhat unusual construction, “every conscience of men”. This suggests that Paul is referring to “humanity” in general, rather than merely to specified Christian communities, such as the Corinthian church. Consequently, Thrall suggests: “He assumes, therefore, that there is some general human capacity for recognizing the gospel as the truth, and the human conscience can assess anyone who claims to preach this gospel on the basis of whether his preaching evokes this recognition” (*Second Epistle*, 302).

⁷⁴ “Before God”: repeated verbatim in 7:12, and having the same meaning as the parallel expression κατέναντι θεοῦ in the framing section A (2:17).

The two parallel participial clauses forcefully argue both for a blameless lifestyle, as well as blamelessness with regard to the discharge of his duties. The first participle περιπατοῦντες is a Hebraism, borrowing from a common metaphor in the Hebrew Bible (הלך) signifying conduct and lifestyle.⁷⁵ Negatively stated, Paul's conduct has not been "crafty" and this parallels the positive participial expression in b', where, in fact, his conduct has "commended [him] to all humanity". The latter verb, συνίστημι is a catchword of the Corinthians, and Paul strategically uses it here. G Guthrie suggests that "this concept of 'commending' constitutes the letter's raison d'être, for the apostle earnestly seeks to convince the Corinthians to embrace his ministry wholeheartedly".⁷⁶ On the face of it Paul appears to contradict himself because in 3:1 he had denied any intention of "commending" himself. A simple explanation probably lies in the fact that in 3:1 Paul is alluding to certain people who were given to gaining commendation as an end in itself; they were practising Corinthian-style "boasting" and bearing impressive letters endorsing their credentials for the singular purpose of making an impression. Paul would have none of that. In 4:2, Paul speaks about a commendation that accrues as a result of his lived-out objectives of integrity, reliability and transparent honesty. He gains his commendation within society as a whole because everyday people can recognize authenticity when they see it. They make such a "judgement" (according to Greek thought) by means of the "conscience" that "inward faculty of judgement which assesses conduct in accordance with given norms".⁷⁷

The second participle, δολοῦντες, comes from a Greco-Roman background, used to describe Sophists who had no scruples about distorting the truth as long as their rhetoric would be persuasive in bringing them personal gain.⁷⁸ This sub-clause is matched by the

⁷⁵ Nearly fifty percent of the occurrence of περιπατέω in the NT bear this figurative sense, and Paul generally uses it so; see, *NIDNTT*, 3:943-945: "In the figurative sense of to walk (as designation for conduct of life) *peripateō* is found chiefly in the Pauline and Johannine writings".

⁷⁶ See G Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 182: "In the Pauline literature nine of the occurrences are in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 7:11; 10:12, 18 [2x]; 12:11) and the word weaves one of the most important threads through this book".

⁷⁷ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 301.

⁷⁸ So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 178: "Lucian writes sharply of 'philosophers [who] sell their wines – most of them [*hoi polloi*] adulterating and cheating and giving false measure'" (emphasis added).

antithetic parallel phrase Paul juxtaposes with it, τῆ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας. Thus, rather than surreptitiously adulterating God’s Word, the apostles practise a transparent policy, the “open disclosure of the truth”.

4.1.1.2 Paul’s language about God

How does Paul speak about “God” in this section of 2 Corinthians? In the context of this topic for research the question has enormous significance.⁷⁹ The fact that he uses the articular noun ὁ θεός demands our careful attention because of 281 verses where this occurs in the NT, 279 (99.2%) unambiguously refer to God.⁸⁰ Only in 2 Cor 4:4 and Phil 3:19 has there been a question about the referent. In his 1972 commentary, J F Collange made the useful observation that despite the overwhelming statistics for the exclusive use of ὁ θεός as a reference for God, there was just one occasion (other than 2 Cor 4:4), where this does not appear to be the case.⁸¹ In Phil 3:18-19, Paul comments about those who live as “enemies of the cross of Christ” (τοῦς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ): ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία (“whose God [is] the belly). Collange’s assertion was that the similarities between the two texts argued for parallel contexts addressed by Paul. However, Thrall disagrees⁸² and suggests that “the use of ὁ θεός in Phil 3:19 does, however, show that on occasion Paul can use the word θεός in the singular of some entity other than God” (emphasis added).⁸³ Yet, even this concession is open to critique on account of the rhetorical exigency of Phil 3:19.

⁷⁹ See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 306-308: “It is the term ὁ θεός that constitutes the exegetical difficulty” (306).

⁸⁰ Bibleworks 9.0 search. In all ὁ θεός occurs in the LXX and NT combined 1532 times, and its exclusive use as a reference to God in the LXX increases the improbability that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul, without any indication, intended an entirely different personality as a referent.

⁸¹ See J F Collange, *Enigmes de la deuxième épître de Paul aux Corinthiens. Étude exégétique de 2 Cor 2:14-7:4*. SNTSMS 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 126-143: “Toutefois, l’expression la plus proche de la nôtre nous semble être celle de Phil. 3:19: ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία appliquée aussi à des adversaires et dans un verset qui contient, de plus, les termes de ἀπώλεια et de αἰσχύνη” (“However, the closest to our phrase seems to be that of Phil. 3:19: ὁ θεός ἡ κοιλία also applied to opponents and in a verse that contains, in addition, the terms of ἀπώλεια and αἰσχύνη,” p133).

⁸² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 308, who sees inadequate verbal parallels and no real parallel to the “opponents” in the two contexts.

⁸³ See Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 307-308.

By Philippians 3, Paul had launched his most vociferous invective against those who opposed the gospel among the Philippian believers, who Pete O’Brien believes were, in fact, Judaizing Christians similar to the opponents Paul confronted in Corinth.⁸⁴ He had argued for his superiority over them (vv.4–6), after having described the opposition as “dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh” (v.2). By v. 18, he has added the serious charge “enemies of the cross of Christ”, and his polemical rhetoric now reaches its climax by 3:19: ὧν τό τέλος ἀπώλεια, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνη αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες. This verse displays an unusual construction: it contains four brief, semantically loaded expressions, of which none uses a finite verb. O’Brien comments:

In four short expressions the apostle provides a frightening description of the destiny and the character of these enemies. Each of the four statements contains no finite verb. They are intentionally abrupt, even staccato-like, with sharp contrasts between the subjects and predicates of the first three, and a clearly implied contrast in the fourth.⁸⁵

Most translations supply the verb “to be” and render the verse, “their end is destruction, their God is the belly, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things,” creating complete clauses with subjects and predicates.⁸⁶ However, given the flexibility afforded by the relative pronoun ὧν⁸⁷ (used twice), and recognizing the dramatic effect Paul is attempting to create throughout this polemic,⁸⁸ we may offer the following alternative as a paraphrase:

⁸⁴ P T O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 352-357.

⁸⁵ On this see *Ibid.*, 454.

⁸⁶ So *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Occurring in 28 verses in the NT and translated as “whose”, “which”, “whom”, “who”, “among whom”, and “to whom”.

⁸⁸ For a similar rhetorical effect using alliteration and brevity, and creating a staccato-like impact within the same context see Phil 3:2: βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν.

To whom⁸⁹ [in place of] “the goal”,⁹⁰ destruction, to whom [in place of] God, the stomach, and [who] glory in their shame;⁹¹ [who are] “mindful”⁹² [but of] earthly things.

I argue that Paul’s intention is to set certain elements in antithesis to others. So if one sees “goal”, “God”, “glory”, and “mindfulness” as positive terms, belonging within the Christian ethos promoted by the apostolic gospel, it is not hard to see how Paul may be describing the opponents as “enemies” by negatively employing antithetical concepts – “destruction”, “stomach”, “their shame”, “earthly things” – and placing them in apposition, to underscore emphatically the opponents’ actual values and eventual fate. This would in turn mean that when he uses ὁ θεός in this context, the referent is to God alone albeit he is saying that in the case of these “enemies”, in the place that they ought to have dedicated to God (ὁ θεός), they have substituted ἡ κοιλιά, referring either to their appetites or legalism about food laws.⁹³ Although this argument cannot be conclusive, the well-recognized ambiguity of this text creates the potential for multiple interpretations, and we venture the above approach as a credible alternative to how it has been construed so far.

In our passage, 4:1-6, the noun θεός is used six times. Again, in the ‘framing section A’ (2:14 – 3:6), θεός occurs eight times. It is noteworthy, therefore, that in the central section, and the longest (3:7-18), θεός is conspicuous by its absence. This would suggest

⁸⁹ For a striking parallel construction where successive clauses begin with the relative pronoun ὃν (without a preceding preposition), and where no finite verb is employed, see Rom 9:4-5.

⁹⁰ The noun τέλος may carry a negative connotation such as “judgement” or “destruction” (Mk 3:26; 2 Cor 3:13; 11:15); a neutral connotation such as “end” or “conclusion” (Rom 6:21-22; 1 Cor 15:24; 1 Tm 1:5); or a positive, eschatological connotation such as “goal” “fulfillment” or “consummation” (Rom 10:4; 1 Cor 1:8; 10:11).

⁹¹ Some see “their shame” as “that part of the body which bore the sign of their circumcision”. See, O’Brien, *Philippians*, 457.

⁹² The verb φρονέω occurs twenty-six times in the NT, of which twenty-three are in Paul. It is a major theme in *Philippians*, where it is used ten times [1:7; 2:2 (twice), 5; 3:15 (twice), 19; 4:2, 10 (twice)], and means much more than mere intellectual activity: “φρονέω expresses not merely an activity of the intellect, but also a movement of the will; it is both interest and decision at the same time”. O’Brien, *Philippians*, 67.

⁹³ See *Ibid.*, 455-456, for a discussion on the options for interpreting ἡ κοιλία as a preoccupation with food laws, libertinism for gluttony and sensual indulgence, or an expression for “the old earthbound humanity”.

that Paul's references to "God" in the framing panels show a strong intentionality. What kinds of ideas or actions are associated with his use of θεός in these locations? We note how God's actions are specifically connected to the apostles and the apostolic ministry. In each of these contexts the "picturing" of God is strong and definitive. In 2:14, 15 Paul uses the dative noun twice and describes God's actions by means of the present active participles, θριαμβεύοντι ("leads in triumphant procession") and φανεροῦντι ("manifests"), respectively. In 4:4, 6, he uses the nominative twice and describes God's actions by means of the aorist active indicatives, ἐτύφλωσεν ("he has blinded") and ἔλαψμεν ("he has shone"), respectively. What does Paul hope to convey about God by these strong images and associated ideas?

In the first set, by means of the metaphor of smell, "the fragrance of the knowledge" (2:14, τὴν ὀσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως), God discriminates the fate of "those who are perishing" from "those who are being saved". In the second set, by means of the metaphor of sight, "the illumination of the knowledge" (4:6, φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως), God discriminates the state of those who are "perishing" (cf. 4:4, "unbelievers") from those who are being-saved together with Paul (cf. 3:18, 4:6). In light of such striking parallels and, what may be termed literary *artistry* that attend these four specific uses of θεός (and indeed all fourteen occurrences in the context), it becomes remarkably more difficult to justify the argument that in 4:4 alone Paul, without any warning or indication, intended ὁ θεός to refer to Satan, although one of the most recent works that focus on 2 Cor 4:4 inclines to this view preferred in the post-Calvin era.⁹⁴ Having first conceded that "for Paul to predicate the term θεός to Satan would have been a lexical and theological surprise to his readers",⁹⁵ Brown then asserts: "ὁ θεός is Satan because it is lexically permissible, theologically unproblematic for Paul's monotheism, and because it fits within the logic of Paul's argument in 2 Cor 3–4".⁹⁶ I beg to differ and, as our argument attempts to show, find such a use for ὁ θεός lexically improbable,

⁹⁴ Brown, "God of This Age".

⁹⁵ Brown, "God of This Age," 149.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

theologically extremely problematic for Paul’s monotheism, and strikingly contradictory to the logic of Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 2:14-4:6.

In 2 Corinthians, the nominative case (ὁ θεός) is used by Paul only on a limited fifteen occasions (1:3, 18; 4:4, 6; 6:16; 7:6; 9:7, 8; 10:13; 11:11, 31; 12:2, 3, 21; 13:11), and as may be expected of the nominative, it functions to assert a particular quality of “God” or to describe “God”. There are a sufficient number of references to suggest a pattern or habitual use of the nominative when Paul wrote this letter, as the chart below shows:

Reference in 2 Corinthians	The quality or description of ὁ θεός in the clause or phrase
1:3: ὁ θεός καὶ πατήρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
1:18: πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεός	God is faithful
4:4: ὁ θεός τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου	[?]
4:6: ὁ θεός ὁ εἶπων Ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμψει	God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness”
6:16: εἶπεν ὁ θεός ὅτι Ἔνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῶν θεός	God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God”.
7:6: ἀλλ’ ὁ παρακαλῶν τοὺς ταπεινοὺς παρακάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός	The God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us
9:7: ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ θεός	God loves a cheerful giver
9:8: δυνατεῖ δὲ ὁ θεός πᾶσαν χάριν περισσεῦσαι εἰς ὑμᾶς	God is able to make all grace abound to you
10:13: κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τοῦ κανόνος οὗ ἐμέρισεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεός μέτρου	The area of influence God assigned to us

Reference in 2 Corinthians	The quality or description of ὁ θεός in the clause or phrase
11:11: ὁ θεός οἶδεν	God knows
11:31: ὁ θεός καὶ πατήρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ οἶδεν	God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, knows
12:2: ὁ θεός οἶδεν	God knows
12:3: ὁ θεός οἶδεν	God knows
12:21: ταπεινώσει με ὁ θεός	My God may humble me

μου	
13:11: ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν	The God of love and peace will be with you

Given then, as we see, Paul's careful use of ὁ θεός in 2 Corinthians in general, and its occurrence in close proximity in strikingly parallel verses in our text (4:4 and 4:6), it is difficult to imagine that Paul, with no contra-indication, suspended his habitual application of the articular nominative when he coined ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. Whatever Paul intended by this unique epithet, it appears that he deliberately chose to state it in the given manner. What was his reason? If we are to give credit to Paul's intentionality we may presume that he created this expression about God on account of what the specific pastoral situation demanded; a possibility that I believe can be reasonably argued, as detailed below.

In his book on *Paul's Language about God*, Neil Richardson dedicates an entire chapter to, "God-Language as Polemic: 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6".⁹⁷ Taking the premise that chapters 1 to 7 form "a letter of self-commendation", Richardson suggests that the circumstances in which it was written "resulted in a piece of writing which was polemical as well as apologetic".⁹⁸ Paul's "God-language" in 2:14–4:6 was also, then, a result of the polemical-apologetic thrust of the letter.⁹⁹ In the very first reference to God (in the thanksgiving in 2:14: τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ), "Paul inverts the usual order of the words, so that τῷ θεῷ is emphasized by virtue of its position".¹⁰⁰ This unusual construction suggests to Richardson that "this detail, therefore, small as it is, is the first indication in this section that God (i.e. the one God) will be the principal stay of Paul's defence".¹⁰¹ The latter strengthens the point

⁹⁷ N Richardson, *Paul's Language about God*, JSNTSS 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 139-174.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171: "A substantial part of the Pauline corpus is polemical or apologetic or both (the two terms clearly overlap, since attacking his opponents often involved defending his apostleship, and *vice versa*). We should therefore expect to find that God-language in Paul sometimes has a polemical function".

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, *Paul's Language*, 147.

above that Paul's use of ὁ θεός in 4:4 was highly intentional, placing a huge burden on those who might imagine that he would, without any explanatory comment, assign this all-important biblical title, ὁ θεός to the entity who represented everything that stood in rank opposition to a holy God. Such a simple equation of ὁ θεός with Satan is made all the more improbable by the extraordinary interest and affection for the subject of "God" shown by Paul in comparison to every other NT author. As Leon Morris puts it:

Paul's great interest is in God. We usually take it for granted that a New Testament writer will be writing about God, and this assumption is not unjustified. But we usually do not notice the fact that Paul uses the name of God with astonishing frequency. His usage is distinctly exceptional. He refers to God far more often than does anyone else in the New Testament. He has more than 40 percent of all the New Testament references to God (548 out of 1,314) – a very high proportion. It is really extraordinary that one writer, whose writings total about a quarter of the New Testament, should have nearly half the total number of references to God.¹⁰²

Richardson makes the important observation that θεός is used somewhat extravagantly and superfluously in 2:14–4:6. This may be seen from the inclusion of τῷ θεῷ in 2:15, the prepositional phrases ἐκ θεοῦ and κατέναντι θεοῦ (2:17), πρὸς τὸν θεόν (3:4), ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (3:5), ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (4:2); and by "the emphatic use of θεός in the thanksgiving of 2:14 and in the conclusion to the section (4:6)".¹⁰³ How does this function in Paul's rhetoric? It suggests that in the face of the politically unfavourable environment being created in Corinth, Paul takes pains to underscore his unique intimacy with God, the fact that his authority came from God, and that his accountability was exclusively to God.¹⁰⁴

4.1.1.3 Nuances of Christology

On the face of it, the use of Χριστός in our text may be attributed to the general fact that it is a commonplace noun in any Christian writing, and should hold no surprise.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁰² L Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 25. See also Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 39-40: "Our letter to the Corinthians manifests a profound 'Godward' grounding in the apostle's life and ministry".

¹⁰³ Richardson, *Paul's Language*, 171 (cf. 148, 150, 151).

However, as with the noun “God”, the writer who most frequently employs “Christ” is Paul,¹⁰⁵ and we may consider what nuances he provides for it in this specific context. In addition, the term itself undergoes a metamorphosis in the NT as this primarily Jewish concept is incorporated into Christian discourse.¹⁰⁶ The word מָשִׁיחַ (*mashiach*) began as an adjective, meaning “the anointed”, and later became a designation of the expected Jewish Messiah-figure. Following the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, his followers attributed the designation to him retrospectively,¹⁰⁷ and within a relatively short period began to speak of “Jesus Christ” in a manner that showed that the designation could also be used as a title, and even as a proper name.¹⁰⁸

In 2 Cor 2:14-4:6 Paul refers to “Christ” nine times and, as in the case of θεός, the noun is found concentrated in the “framing sections”: five times in 2:14–3:6 (2:14, 15, 17; 3:3, 4) and three times in 4:1-6 (4:4, 5, 6). The “middle section” has Χριστός only once (3:14), and while this is not surprising since 3:7-18 is thought to be a Pauline “midrash” on a text from Exodus 34, the unique occurrence of Χριστός here makes it stand out all the more. Although in every case the noun denotes the person of Jesus who revealed himself to Paul (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:16) – an event implied in the Lukan narrative of the Damascus-Road Christophany (“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting”, Acts 9:5) – it is the connotative significance of Χριστός in these nine occurrences that must be considered.

¹⁰⁴ Richardson, *Paul’s Language*, 171: “Paul’s self-defence involved stressing both his accountability before God, and God as arbiter and judge of Paul’s ministry”.

¹⁰⁵ Of 499 verses in the NT where Χριστός occurs, 251 are in the undisputed Pauline epistles. This amounts to fifty percent of usage.

¹⁰⁶ On this see, “Jesus Christ” in *NIDNTT*, 334-343; also, D R A Hare, “When Did ‘Messiah’ Become a Proper Name?” *ExpT* 121, no. 2 (2009), 70-73.

¹⁰⁷ *NIDNTT*, 338: “Wherever the NT is concerned with Jesus, it is concerned with him as Christ, i.e. as Messiah. This includes the fact that, for the whole of the NT, *messianism no longer stands under the sign of expectation but under that of fulfilment. Everywhere the Christ event is spoken of in the perfect or past tense*” (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁸ Hare, “Messiah,” 73, concludes that within the first century, both Jews and Christians had come to use ‘Messiah’ as *both* a title and a proper name.

With regard to the connotations Paul attached to his use of Χριστός in 2:14–4:6, we notice the marked difference in the way Paul deploys the noun in Framing Section A' (4:1-6), in comparison to Framing Section A (2:14–3:6). In each one of the five instances in the latter (2:14–3:6), “Christ” is mentioned in association with *the apostolic office*, identifying “Christ” as the locus, the source, the means, or the object of apostolic actions or roles. In all these references, the stress of the argument is on identifying, describing, and positioning Paul the apostle in such a way as to establish *his bona fides*. The references to “Christ” function as a means of strengthening this primary objective:

2:14: Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ
 (“But thanks be to God who *in Christ* always leads us in triumphant procession”)

2:15: ὅτι Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν τῷ θεῷ
 (“For we are the aroma of Christ to God”)

2:17: κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν
 (“In the sight of God we speak in Christ”)

3:3: φανερούμενοι ὅτι ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν
 (“You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us”)

3:4: Πεποίθησιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν
 (“Such is the confidence that we have through Christ before God”)

In Framing Section A' (4:1-6), however, Paul uses “Christ” with a totally different connotation because his objective is now inverted to supremely glorify the Christ. Therefore, Christ is, in the latter frame, called “the image of God”, “Lord”, and the face that reflects the very “glory of God”:

4:4: τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ
 (“the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God”.)

4:5: οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν
 (“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as LORD, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake”)

4:6: πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ
 (“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”)

In the first instance, the intention was to elevate the Corinthians’ perspective of the apostolic office, for which “Christ” is associated with the apostle and mentioned in a supportive role. In this last section (4:1-6) Paul’s intention is to elevate the Corinthians’ understanding of the apostolic message, for which “Christ” is associated with God and mentioned in a role of supremacy. The apostles, correspondingly, play the supportive role (see 4:5, οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν – “we do not preach ourselves . . . ourselves as your servants for Jesus”).

Second, we note that in vv. 4:4, 5 and 6 Paul uses “Christ” with subtle changes of nuance in each instance. In v. 4 he places the article and gives it the titular force of τοῦ Χριστοῦ – “The Christ,” whereas in v. 5 he uses it as a surname, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “Jesus Christ”, and finally, he adopts it as a proper name in v. 6 by dropping the article – thus, Χριστοῦ, “Christ”. These three uses of Χριστός in 4:4-6 may be more closely related than initially appears. First, we note that v. 4 and v. 6, being parallel verses, use phrases configuring the same or synonymous nouns to draw attention to their striking similarity:

4:4 τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ
 4:6 πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ

The extremely tight linguistic and grammatical connection of both phrases, controlled in common by the unique use of φωτισμός (and arguably with Hebrew poetic parallelism in the background as Paul composes), immediately places the following elements on par, and strongly suggests that Paul is closing this section of the “first apology” with a major Christological emphasis, intimately associating the Christ of Paul’s gospel with the God of the scriptures:

4:4	4:6
τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (the Gospel)	τῆς γνώσεως (the Knowledge)
τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ (the Glory of Christ)	τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (the Glory of God)
εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ (image of God)	προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ (face of Christ)

Third, we argue that these Christologically significant statements, positioned parallel to each other in 4:4 and 4:6, function as an *inclusio*, carefully bracketing the most profound statement on the Pauline *kerygma* in 2 Corinthians: κηρύσσομεν . . . ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν, “we preach . . . Jesus Christ [*as/is?*] LORD, and ourselves, your slaves for Jesus”. The content of Paul’s message has two components communicated by means of the two phrases connected by δε; one serves to exalt Jesus Christ to the *highest status*, κύριος, while the other correspondingly accords to the apostles the *lowest status*, δούλοι. As the argument below will show, when Paul uses κύριος in this context he is not merely employing the common Greek idea of lordship, but rather alluding to the specific Hebrew understanding of Yahweh, as it is rendered in the language of the LXX.

Our focus on the language of 4:5 is made more compelling by the fact that Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον is in itself a unique turn of phrase. In the NT, the three nouns are collocated in varying configurations,¹⁰⁹ and of the six verses in which they are arranged in the sequence, Jesus + Christ + Lord,¹¹⁰ five occur in the identical phrase, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, literally, “Jesus Christ, our Lord”. Only 2 Cor 4:5 juxtaposes the nouns in the accusative case without interference by the definite article or by pronouns – Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν Κύριον – leading translators to provide the adverb and render it “Jesus Christ *as* Lord”. Nevertheless, its uniqueness in form, the fact that it is sandwiched by what appears to be an *inclusio* to underscore the exalted status of Jesus Christ, and the immediate background of 3:7-18 where the noun κύριος occurs just five times (and these concentrated in the climax to Paul’s exegetical application of Exodus 34)¹¹¹ challenges the exegete to consider what exactly Paul was presenting as his *kerygma* in 4:5.

¹⁰⁹ The most common sequence is, Lord + Jesus + Christ (62 verses); other sequences are: Christ + Jesus + Lord (9 verses), and Jesus + Christ + Lord (6 verses).

¹¹⁰ All except one are in Paul: Rom 1:4; 5:21; 7:25; 1 Cor 1:9; Jude 1:25 and 2 Cor 4:5.

¹¹¹ See 2 Cor 3:16 (once), 17 (twice), and 18 (twice).

Scholars have long recognized that embedded in the Pauline epistles are early Christian “creeds” that encapsulated the cardinal beliefs of the earliest communities of faith.¹¹² Evidence for the most rudimentary forms of these creeds is found in Rom 1:2-4; 10:9-10; 1 Cor 12:3; 15:3-5; 1 Thess 1:9-10. Longer formulations are reflected in the christological hymns¹¹³ such as Phil 2:5-11 and Col 1:15-20. These are thought to be later compositions in the pre-Pauline Christian communities, responding to “rival christologies and cosmologies”.¹¹⁴ Although 2 Cor 4:5 is not usually listed among these early Christian creedal statements, its affinities with the most noteworthy exemplars may warrant its inclusion. Three references in Paul may be set alongside 4:5, and each translated literally:

1 Cor 12:3:	Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, “[the] LORD [is] Jesus”
Rom 10:9:	κύριον Ἰησοῦν, lit. “[the] LORD [is] Jesus”
Phil 2:11:	κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, lit. “[the] LORD [is] Jesus Christ”
2 Cor 4:5	Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, lit. “Jesus Christ [is] [the] LORD”

If we give weight to the literal reading of the first three, it can be argued that the subject-predicate order of the traditional readings, “Jesus *is* Lord” and “Jesus Christ *is* Lord,” may as easily be reversed to allow the more arresting expressions, “The Lord *is* Jesus” and “The Lord *is* Jesus Christ”. If the latter expressions are admitted, we must ask if there can be any plausible reason why Paul would intend to emphasize κύριος in this way.

¹¹² See R P Martin, “Creed,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G Hawthorne, R Martin, and R Reid (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 190-192; O Cullman, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth, 1949); L W Hurtado, *One God One Lord* (London: SCM Press, 1988).

¹¹³ For a discussion on how the hymns embedded in the NT convey early Christian devotion see, Hurtado, *One God*, 101-102: “These christological hymns exhibit the earliest observable stages of Christian reflection on the significance of Jesus and are probably the result of the fervent religious enthusiasm of the early Christian communities. Indeed, it is likely that such lyrical proclamations of Christian belief, arising from the religious experiences of the first generation of believers, set the pace for, and influenced the whole development of, christological thought”.

¹¹⁴ Martin, “Creed,” 192.

Again, in comparing them we find that Paul is ambivalent about the inclusion of Χριστὸς in these formulations, but the nouns Ἰησοῦς and κύριος are integral to each statement. With no doubt, for Paul, Ἰησοῦς “refers to the man from Nazareth who was crucified and raised from the dead, through whom God achieved his purposes”.¹¹⁵ Yet, what was Paul’s referent for the term κύριος? The question opens up an unresolved debate about the foundation of Paul’s κύριος-Christology.

W Bousset’s 1913 publication, *Kyrios Christos*, was the first to give definitive direction to the modern discussion on Paul’s use of κύριος as a designation for Jesus in the NT.¹¹⁶ His thesis was that Paul’s use of κύριος did not arise out of the traditions of Christianity that existed in its original Palestinian setting, but was essentially a product of the pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christian communities of “Antioch, Damascus, and Tarsus”.¹¹⁷ These regions, Bousset argued, keenly felt the influence of Eastern (Egyptian) religions centred on Osiris, Isis, and Serapis, as well as that of “Gnostic sects”. The Egyptians used κύριος as an appellation for their deities more frequently than did any other species of contemporary religious groups, and Gnostic sects such as the Simonians and the Valentinians routinely employed κύριος (or κύρια) as a title for their own central figures such as, Simon, Helena, or “Achamoth (μητηρ)”.¹¹⁸ Notwithstanding the formative stages of the Roman Emperor cult that hailed Caesar as Lord,¹¹⁹ or the “Greek translation of the Old Testament, with its translation of the name of Yahweh by means

¹¹⁵ Hare, “Messiah,” 71.

¹¹⁶ W Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginning of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. J E Seely (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970). At the mid-point of this period of christological debate another important work appeared: O Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1963); L W Hurtado, “New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset’s Influence,” in *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), 306-317, comments: “Wilhelm Bousset’s *Kyrios Christos* not only is the high water mark of the German History-of-religions school of the early twentieth century but *has determined the agenda for the scholarly study of NT Christology since the publication of the book in 1913*” (emphasis added).

¹¹⁷ Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 119.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146. We note, though, that the assertion that Gnosticism as a system of thought and practice existed in the early first century has now been all but abandoned; the evidence clearly points to the phenomenon (including groups such as the Simonians and the Valentinians) originating from the second century CE onwards.

¹¹⁹ See Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 138ff.

of κύριος”,¹²⁰ Bousset insisted that Paul’s use of the title must certainly have arisen from this peculiar religious ferment of the Syrian region:

It was in this atmosphere that Antiochene Christianity and that of the other primitive Christian Hellenistic communities came into being and had their growth. In this milieu the young Christian religion was shaped as a Christ cultus, and out of this environment then people also appropriated the comprehensive formula κύριος for the dominant position of Jesus in worship. No one thought this out, and no theologian created it; *people did not read it out of the sacred book of the Old Testament*¹²¹ (emphasis added).

Though Bousset’s argument did convince a generation of scholars¹²² – not least because of the huge endorsement proffered by R Bultmann¹²³ – his views are now open to serious critique.¹²⁴ For the purposes here, it is his dismissal of the Greek versions of the Jewish scriptures as the possible background for Paul’s thoughts about κύριος that is most pertinent. The *Tetragrammaton*, יהוה (Yahweh), was considered unpronounceable by the Jewish people, and so in the “Qere” (reading), whenever the text used “Yahweh” they would vocalize אֲדֹנָי *adonay*, “LORD”, or use some other suitable substitute.¹²⁵ This oral tradition was then passed on into the translations of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, whereby wherever the personal name יהוה appeared the translators substituted it with κύριος. Given that in the vast majority of the total of 6,862 verses in the LXX that feature κύριος, it translates the *Tetragrammaton* and the referent is clearly “God”, it is highly improbable that this connotation escaped Paul when he conscientiously attached

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹²² For a useful summary of Bousset’s main points for how κύριος came to be used by Paul, see Hurtado, “New Testament Christology,” 312-313.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 307: “Though it is a major characteristic of Modern NT Christology that Bousset’s positions on several issues have dominated all subsequent research, it has to be aid that whatever the power of the book itself, part of the continued influence of *Kyrios Christos* is owed to Bultmann, who heartily endorsed Bousset’s views on nearly all points and raised up many disciples”.

¹²⁴ See *Ibid.*, 313-316.

¹²⁵ See L W Hurtado, “Lord,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 560-569: “By the time of the origin of Christianity, it appears that religious Jews had already developed a widely observed avoidance of pronouncing the Hebrew name of God, Yahweh, and that various substitutes for Yahweh were used”.

the title “LORD” to Jesus.¹²⁶ Yet, it is curious that most exegetes who see various possibilities for the connotations to be attached to Paul’s use of “Lord” limit themselves to the thought that lordship was only something he earned following his resurrection and exaltation to glory and, which in turn, invested in him the authority to rule.¹²⁷ They rarely discuss the possibility that the use of the term may, equally if not exclusively, connote that “Lord” described Jesus ontologically, that is to say that Jesus, somehow by nature, shared the divine status accorded to Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible. His life, passion, death, resurrection, and glorification, rather than earning him the status as “Lord” merely served to demonstrate this factuality. On this Hurtado’s observation is pertinent:

In some cases at least, Paul’s application of *kyrios* to Jesus connoted the conviction that Jesus had been given to share in the properties and honor of God’s “name” (with all that represented in the OT and ancient Jewish tradition) and bore the very glory of God in such fullness and uniqueness that Jesus could be compared and associated only with God “the Father” in the honor and reverence due to him.¹²⁸

The language of lordship is introduced by Paul at the climax of his discourse on Exodus 34 (2 Cor 3:16-18), in which κύριος unmistakably refers to the God of Moses and the Israelites. In an article entitled “2 Corinthians III.17: ‘The Lord is the Spirit’” J D G Dunn examines the referent of κύριος when the noun is used by Paul in 2 Cor 3:16-18. He notes that “the majority of exegetes” in the twentieth century equated the κύριος of vv. 17 and 18 with Christ, but dismisses their view as inaccurate:

This interpretation, however, must be rejected. κύριος in verse 16 is Yahweh, as we have shown; and 17a explains who this κυριος is in terms of the present argument. While κυριος in Paul does usually refer to the exalted Christ, in Old Testament citations κυριος is almost always Yahweh . . . It is not enough

¹²⁶ Hurtado, “New Testament Christology,” 314: “. . . *Kyrios* was no doubt the Qērê read aloud for Yahweh in Greek-speaking Jewish circles, and . . . this usage is reflected also in Philo and Josephus. Thus, to call Jesus *kyrios* was, for Greek-speaking Jews, to confer on him a divine title”.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Harris, *Second Epistle*, 332: “Jesus Christ as κυριος, that is, as risen from the dead and exalted to universal dominion”; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 79: “Those who respond to Paul’s call in the Gospel attest that they are accountable to the sovereign Christ for the moral direction of their lives”; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 223: “In such traditional formulations as this the title accents Jesus’ status as that of one who is lifted up on high to live and reign with God”; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 314: “It is Christ, not Paul, who exercises dominating control over believers and is preached as Paul himself as doing so”.

¹²⁸ Hurtado, “Lord,” 569.

therefore to say that in Paul ὁ κύριος usually equals Christ, and must do so in verse 17. The determinative factor in such discussions is the context, and the context here is that of a Christian midrash on an Old Testament passage where κύριος = Yahweh.¹²⁹

In fact, it could well be Paul's interest in the synonymous use of κύριος that causes him to studiously avoid using θεός in this context; thus, ensuring that there is no confusion as to the subject referred to by κύριος. One could go further to suggest that by emphatically associating this κύριος (Yahweh) with Christian conversion (3:16), Christian spirituality (3:17), and Christian sanctification (3:18), Paul accentuates the connotation of divine immanence with regard to the experience of the new covenant. The logic of Paul's argument is that ἐν Χριστῷ (3:14) the apostolic community is privileged to experience divine intimacy (3:16, ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον), spiritual liberation (3:17, οὐ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία), and personal transformation (3:18, τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). This use of κύριος in 3:16-18 – which contextually refers to the transcendent God, but has clear allusions to Jesus Christ of Christian experience – paves the way for Paul's final use of κύριος (4:5), now predicated to Jesus Christ of Christian experience, but alluding in turn to Jesus' transcendent divinity.¹³⁰

The suggestion that Paul was most probably referring to Jesus' divine status when he invested in him the title "Lord" is strengthened by the fact that when it occurs in Phil 2:11 the language distinctly echoes direct speech by God in Isa. 45:23.¹³¹ At the same time, just as we saw in the Pauline use of Χριστός, we need not rigidly assume a single

¹²⁹ J D G Dunn, "2 Corinthians III.17: 'The Lord is the Spirit,'" *JTS* 21 (1970): 317-318. Also see, Stockhausen (*Moses' Veil*, 130-131) who concurs with Dunn's reading of κύριος.

¹³⁰ See J M Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 87: "Both Paul and the early church understood Jesus Christ in terms of Psalm 110:1: 'The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet' . . . this psalm is part of the background for calling Christ 'Lord.' Hence, the one whom Paul preaches is none other than the co-occupant of the divine throne of glory, the Lord of all".

¹³¹ "Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear" (NRSV), for context see Is 45:22-25. Also, O'Brien, *Philippians*, 241-242: "Here the uniqueness of the God of Israel is proclaimed and his universal triumph is hailed. The Lord, who has already declared that he will not share his name or his glory with another, swears solemnly by his own life that 'every knee will bow before me; by me every tongue will swear'". Paul reiterates this language, but now it is "in honour of the name of Jesus' that everyone kneels".

connotation for κύριος. Based on the context, or on syntactical grounds, one may discern nuances that create a range of significations for “Lord”: extending from master of the Christian community (κύριος ἡμῶν, κύριος μοῦ), to supreme universal ruler (in the model of the exalted Roman emperors), to one who was worthy of veneration, to the full status of the God of the Hebrew scriptures.¹³² This allowance for multiple connotations is demanded by the varied ways in which Paul employs the appellation: as a proper name (κύριος), a christological title (ὁ κύριος), or by positioning it as an adjective, making “Lord” a quality of Jesus (κύριος Ἰησοῦς). In the references cited above, however (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:11), the nouns (κύριος, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός) are placed in apposition, implying that one is predicated to the other(s) (e.g., “The Lord is Jesus Christ”, Phil 2:11).¹³³ In these instances it is possible to argue that the nuance is intensified, and Paul is unequivocally asserting the divine status of Jesus Christ. Consequently, we propose that when Paul says that the essence of his message is “Jesus Christ *is* LORD” (4:5), he has reached the zenith of his christological thought within 2:14–4:6.

4.1.1.4 Was Paul’s gospel obscured?

Another repeated term in the pericope (4:1-6) is κεκαλυμμένον of 4:3 where it occurs twice. It is the perfect, passive, participle of καλύπτω (“to hide, cover”). Although it may only metaphorically be rendered as “veiled”, given that in 2:14–4:6 the noun κάλυμμα (“veil”) occurs in 3:13, 14, 15, and 16, and given the presence of the pervasive theme of “hiddenness and manifestation” in the co-text, most translators prefer “it is veiled” to translate ἐστὶν κεκαλυμμένον.¹³⁴ The clause commences with εἰ δὲ καί (“but even if”) signalling that Paul is making a concession: he is agreeing that his gospel is hidden or veiled.¹³⁵ In fact the repeated ἐστὶν in v.3 shows that Paul is emphatic. He concedes,

¹³² For discussion on usage of term, see Hurtado, “Lord,” 562-566.

¹³³ See Harris, *Second Epistle*, 331-332; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 223.

¹³⁴ So, ESV, CEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT; but see, KJV, GNB which render it by its literal meaning, “hidden”. Of the seven verses where καλύπτω is used (Mt 8:24; 10:26; Lk 8:16; 23:30; Jas 5:20; 1 Pt 4:8; 2 Cor 4:3), it typically means, “to cover, conceal,” and in no other instance is it translated “veiled”.

¹³⁵ See Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 65: “Paul can be reacting against an accusation of obscurity or absence of eloquence. His preaching, his gospel lacks “evident glory”; Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 91: “Paul may be responding to the accusations of people who say that some have not

“Yes, it is veiled”. Whose criticism is he agreeing with? Some think that Paul’s missionary rivals have levelled this charge, while others suggest it might have come from the Corinthians themselves, or from the Corinthian believers’ Jewish neighbours.¹³⁶

Paul is forced to deal with this criticism because he has just argued that his New Covenant ministry implies total clarity and transparency: in 3:18 (“we all with faces unveiled [ἀνακεκαλυμμένον]¹³⁷ reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the LORD”), and in 4:2 (“by the full disclosure of the truth we commend ourselves to every human conscience”). With such a lofty claim Paul has to explain how it is that his message is so poorly appreciated and accepted wherever he has proclaimed it, particularly among the *Jewish people*.¹³⁸

Paul’s argument is that his gospel is obscure and veiled only “to those who are perishing” (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις). By means of this rare substantivized present participle (4:3),¹³⁹ Paul draws his reader back to his comments at the commencement of the *apologia* where he had previously used the term (2:15-16). There, of course, he had coupled it with the contrasting τοῖς σωζομένοις (“to those who are being saved”) to underscore the paradoxical dual function of the apostolic ministry: “For we are to God, Christ’s aroma among *those who are being saved* and among *those who are being destroyed*; for the one the *smell from death to death*, and for the other the *smell from*

accepted the gospel because Paul has garbled the message and lacks eloquence and rhetorical skill”; Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 115: “It would appear – if we can read between the lines – that Paul’s critics reasoned from the absence of large numbers of converts (especially from among his own people) to some fault in his preaching”.

¹³⁶ See F J Matera, *II Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 100-101.

¹³⁷ The verb ἀνακαλύπτω is found in the NT again only in 3:14, although it occurs in 25 verses in the LXX mostly with a seemingly negative meaning of “being exposed”.

¹³⁸ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 304: “To many people, or so it appeared, his message was obscure. The proof was that its converting power had so often proved ineffective, *and especially so in the case of the Jews, God’s own people*” (emphasis added); Barrett, “Conclusion,” in *Paolo Ministro de Nuovo Testamento (2 Co 2,14 – 4,6)*, ed. L De Lorenzi, *Benedictina* 9 (Rome: Benedictina, 1987), 326: “Paul faces the complaint, ‘Paul, you must be a poor apostle; you cannot even convert *your own race*.’ How, in view of the ἐλπὶς and δόξα available in the Gospel, can one explain *the unbelief of Israel?*” (emphasis added).

¹³⁹ τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, participle (present, passive, masculine, plural, dative of ἀπολλυμι) is found in four verses, and all within the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3; 2 Thes 2:10). Note that three are found in the Corinthian Correspondence.

life to life, and who is equal to such a task?” (2:15-16, translated with emphasis). We have already noted that while both framing sections (2:14–3:6 and 4:1–6) take up the subject of the apostolic ministry, the emphasis of section A is on the apostolic office, whereas the emphasis of section A' is on the apostolic message. In the former case, God uses the presence of the apostle as a “smell” that simultaneously indicates both “death” and “life”, and this depends on the predisposition of the audience (cf. “those being destroyed” or “those being saved”) they encounter (see 2:15-16). This argumentation, therefore, helps to explicate the later reference to “those being destroyed” (4:3), where it insists, in similar manner, that now God uses the preaching of the apostle, that is, “the gospel”) as a “light” to simultaneously either “blind” (4:4, ἐτύφλωσεν) or “enlighten” (4:6, ἔλαψμεν) those who encounter Paul’s preaching (see 4:5). The point is that *the* one and same God who commissioned the apostles, has sovereignly ordained that their presence and their preaching will precipitate a crisis that will reveal the new contours of humanity. In the prevailing Jewish worldview, humanity was divided on ethnic grounds between the covenant people (the Jews) and everyone else (the Gentiles). Paul’s ministry radically re-imagined humanity – no longer divided by race, but divided only on the basis of response to the preaching of the gospel. For Paul, this meant that all humanity now belonged to one of two categories “those being saved” and “those being destroyed”, each consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. This understanding is articulated most explicitly when he first employs the categories τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις and τοῖς σωζομένοις in 1 Cor 1:18-25:

For the word of the cross is folly to *those who are perishing*, but to *us who are being saved* it is the power of God . . .we preach Christ crucified: a *stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles*, but to *those who are called, both Jews and Greeks*, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.¹⁴⁰ (emphasis added)

Through this trajectory of Paul’s use of τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις within the Corinthian correspondence, one fact that emerges is Paul’s uncompromising stance on the sovereignty of God. People are saved or lost (1 Cor 1:18-25) or confirmed as moving from “death to death” or from “life to life” (2 Cor 2:15-16) not because of their condition by birth nor because of the varied fortunes of a dualistic world, but on God’s evaluation

¹⁴⁰ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 1:201-202.

of how they responded to God's "message of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18) and "fragrance of the Christ" (2 Cor 2:15) borne by the instrumentality of an outwardly unimpressive apostle such as Paul. Consequently, this reasoning supports the logical conclusion that ὁ θεός, who "blinds the minds" of those among "the perishing" (4:3-4), and ὁ θεός, who "enlightens the hearts" of Paul and his community (4:6), are not two beings, but the one sovereign God.

4.1.1.5 Paul's "gospel": the gospel "of Christ"?

The noun εὐαγγέλιον¹⁴¹ appears twice in our pericope (4:1-6), once as "our gospel" (4:3), and then as "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (4:4). In all, it is found eight times (2:12; 4:3 and 4; 8:18; 9:13; 10:14; 11:4; 11:7) in 2 Corinthians and, as can be seen, in the entire literary unit 2:14–4:6 εὐαγγέλιον is used twice, and that too in successive verses.¹⁴² In 4:3, Paul uses the rare expression το εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν (only repeated in 1 Thess 1:5 and 2 Thess 2:14), indicating that he was free to think of the gospel as, in some ways, the possession of an apostle; a message he imparted from the standpoint of a certain level of ownership. His subsequent expression provides a description of the 'gospel'; it is, "the gospel of the glory of the Christ who is the image of God".

Although εὐαγγέλιον is a crucial noun for the theology of the early Christian writings, it is "found with varying degrees of frequency in the various writings of the NT".¹⁴³ Of its occurrence in seventy-three verses, fifty-seven are in the Pauline corpus. With just fourteen in the synoptics, two in Acts, and one each in 1 Peter and Revelation, one is

¹⁴¹ Originally the noun bore two essential meanings: 1) the reward received by a messenger of victory, and 2) the message of victory, but later it acquired a religious meaning through its connection with oracles and use in communications regarding the imperial cult. With regard to the latter εὐαγγέλιον came to stand for "news of the divine ruler's birth, coming of age, and enthronement, and also his speeches, decrees and acts are glad tidings which bring longed-for fulfillment to the longings of the world for happiness and peace". See, U Becker, "Gospel, Evangelize, Evangelist," in *NIDNTT*, 2:107-115.

¹⁴² 2 Corinthians provides a snapshot of the diversity of associations that "the Gospel" may be said to have: four times it is called "the Gospel of Christ" (2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14), twice it is used absolutely as "the Gospel" (8:18; 11:4), once Paul calls it "our Gospel" (4:3), and once it is called the "Gospel of God" (11:7).

¹⁴³ See Becker, "Gospel," 109-110.

forced to the conclusion that it is Paul who most shaped the Christian use of the term in its early years.¹⁴⁴

How, then, is εὐαγγέλιον in 4:3 related to its use in 4:4? As we saw in 4:3, Paul is conceding to one aspect of a criticism levelled at him; that his particular version of Christianity, “our gospel”, was hidden or veiled. In 4:4, Paul provides the counter to this charge. He argues that what his detractors claim to be veiled is nothing less than “the gospel of the glory of the Christ who is the image of God”, and thereby refutes any assertion that it was the Pauline gospel that was deficient in any way. His counter-argument in 4:4, thereby, places the full responsibility for non-comprehension of “the gospel” on the obduracy of those who find the message unclear, whether this refers merely to the Jewish “opponents” in 2 Corinthians 1–7, or to a wider group of unbelieving Jews.¹⁴⁵

4.1.1.6 From glory to glory

Of the 165 occurrences of the noun δόξα in the NT, seventy-seven are in the Pauline writings.¹⁴⁶ Regarding the latter, the highest frequency is in Romans and 2 Corinthians, and remarkably, within 2:14–4:6 Paul uses the noun and the associated verb δοξάζω a total of fifteen times.¹⁴⁷ As we shall see, “glory” was a vital concept within Paul’s rhetorical framework. The original meaning of the Greek term underwent radical changes when it was incorporated into the biblical text. In classical Greek, δόξα referred to “opinion, conjecture”, ranging from an opinion one may have about a person or a thing, to one’s own “reputation”.¹⁴⁸ However, when the translators of the LXX utilized δόξα, it was to convey the Hebrew כְּבוֹד *kābôd*. Thus, the primary reference now was to

¹⁴⁴ Becker, “Gospel,” 110: “There is good reason to believe that it was Paul who established the term *euangelion* in the vocabulary of the NT”.

¹⁴⁵ From our discussion so far (and increasingly as the argument unfolds), it will be clear that, in the context of the text under study, Paul is primarily thinking about the spiritual fortunes of an *ethnic Jewish audience*, whose prospects from the standpoint of Paul’s understanding appeared to be hopelessly bleak.

¹⁴⁶ See, “Glory,” in *NIDNTT*, 2:44-52.

¹⁴⁷ See 2 Cor 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18; 4:4, 6.

¹⁴⁸ *NIDNTT*, 2:44.

God and not people, and the primary meaning was shifted from “opinion, conjecture”, to “praise, honour”.¹⁴⁹ Of course, by the intertestamental period, the “glory” that was originally predicated to God was, by association, also predicated to angels, the throne in heaven, and “any concept which is linked with God”.¹⁵⁰

It is in this latter sense that Paul introduces δόξα to his reflection on Ex 34:1-35 in 2 Cor 3:7-18.¹⁵¹ The term itself does not occur in the narrative of the theophany in the LXX,¹⁵² but the associated meanings of manifested-honour, presence, and luminosity served Paul in comparing and contrasting the “Old Covenant” (3:14) *with* the “New Covenant” (3:6); the “ministry” of “death” and “condemnation” *with* the “ministry” of the “Spirit” and “righteousness” (3:7-9); Moses (3:7, 13, 15) *with* Paul (represented by the apostolic plural ἡμεῖς throughout the text); and, the “sons of Israel” (3:7, 13) *with* the “in-Christ” community of the Spirit (see, 3:12, 14, 16-18).¹⁵³ His is a *qal wahomer* or a *minore ad maius* (lesser-to-the-greater) argument.¹⁵⁴ The “Old Covenant” and its mediator

¹⁴⁹ NIDNTT, 2:45: “Behind the new meaning lies the Heb. OT concept of *kābôd*, glory, honour. The LXX represents this by *doxa* and gives it essentially the same meaning. When it is used of God, it does not mean God in his essential nature, but *the luminous manifestation of his person*, his glorious revelation of himself” (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵¹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 62, suggests that in this context “it is more a theological code-word than a graphic description”.

¹⁵² Although it is significant in the context (33:12-23) that God speaks to Moses “as a man speaks with his friend,” Moses requests to “see” God’s glory, God promises that his glory “will pass by Moses” allowing Moses to glimpse God’s after-glory. The glory-language of vv. 18, 19 and 22 prepares the reader for the shining face of Moses in 34:30.

¹⁵³ P Balla, “‘From Glory to Glory’: Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians 3,” in *St Paul and Corinth*, ed. C J Belezos (Athens: ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΨΥΧΟΓΙΟΣ, 2009), 1:271: “Paul emphasizes the glory of the old covenant . . . as a point of comparison. By elevating the new covenant above the old he may show the surpassing greatness of the new. In the process of elevating the new, Paul describes the old in negative terms”.

¹⁵⁴ So Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 239; but see, S Hafemann, “Paul’s Argument from the Old Testament and Christology in 2 Cor 1 – 9,” in R. Bieringer ed., *The Corinthian Correspondence* (Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1996), 277 – 303, who argues that Paul was actually working towards establishing the case that in the light of the revelation of the New Covenant it becomes obvious that the Old Covenant in fact bore no glory at all: “*In this respect* it is not *as if* the old covenant and its effects have no glory. In view of the new covenant, they *in reality* have none”. The latter position is countered in the argument from Paul Duff, “Glory in the Ministry of Death: Gentile Condemnation and Letters of Recommendation in 2 Cor 3:6-18,” *NovT* 46 (2004): 317 – 321, because as a “lesser to the greater” argument, “this type of argument

“Moses” certainly originated from God, and therefore, indeed, bore an authentic divine *gravitas* and evident splendour.¹⁵⁵ However, given that that was the old covenant – with its “letters carved on stones”(3:7) and a mediator whose visual splendour (3:7: δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ) was “coming to an end” – the “glory” of what it foreshadowed must surely be “immeasurably” greater (3:9: πολλῶ μᾶλλον περισσεύει . . . δόξη; 3:10: τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης).¹⁵⁶ Consequently, just as the translators of the LXX successfully transferred the semantic domain of δόξα to become, primarily, a reference to the “weighty” splendour of Yahweh as experienced by his covenant people Israel,¹⁵⁷ so Paul frames δόξα to refer to the resurrected presence of Jesus the Christ. This “glory” of Christ was experienced by everyone who, through the apostolic ministry, had been transferred from the old covenant to the New Covenant people of the Spirit. This is the reason for Paul’s statement that by conversion, “veiled” Jews (3:15) become “unveiled” (3:16 & 18), behold the “glory of the Lord,” and are “transformed from [one] glory to [another] glory” (3:18, ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). The thrust of Paul’s argument from 3:7 ff suggests that he is implying a conversion from Mosaic religion and the limited “glory” thereof, to the liberation of the Spirit (3:17) and the “surpassing glory” of a totally different order.¹⁵⁸

depends upon the reasoning, if X is true, then Y also is true but to a greater extent . . . We must accept the fact that, for Paul, Moses’ ministry truly participated in the כבוד (“glory”) of YHWH” (320).

¹⁵⁵ Harris, *Second Epistle*, 282 – 283: “Paul’s point is that, although the old covenant with its regulations pronounced doom on the disobedient, its inauguration and administration were marked by glorious phenomena, beginning with the awe-inspiring outward manifestations of God’s presence at Sinai (Exod. 19:16 – 22) and continuing with the reflected glory of Yahweh on Moses’ face after his second period of communing with God on the mountain (Exod. 34:28 – 35)”.

¹⁵⁶ Balla, “Glory to Glory,” 272: “That is to say that from Paul’s perspective, the old covenant and Moses its minister were a prophetic foreshadowing respectively of the new covenant and of Paul, a minister of the new covenant;” also see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 239-240, for a discussion on whether this form of Paul’s argument was intended only to assert that Paul’s ministry *also* had glory as Moses’s, or to impress that Paul’s ministry quantitatively displayed a *superior glory* to Moses.

¹⁵⁷ NIDNTT, 2: 44: “The concepts of *doxa* and *doxazō* were transformed in the LXX. This is shown, for example, by the fact that the original meaning “opinion” is not found. The meanings praise and honour are shared with secular Gk. But whereas *doxa* is seldom used for the honour shown to a man . . . it is frequently used for the honour brought or given to God”.

¹⁵⁸ Balla, “Glory to Glory,” 276: “Thus, in the context of the whole chapter the concluding phrase most likely refers to the two “dispensations,” that is, the two covenants. *Those who believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, move from one “glory,” the glory of the Old Covenant, on to another – even greater – “glory,” that of the New Covenant”.*

In our text (4:1- 6), δόξα appears as one of the common denominators of a parallelism:

4:4 τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ

4:6 πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ

This equation brings to a climax Paul's "glory Christology",¹⁵⁹ whereby he aims to establish that the "glory" of Christ (4:4) – which is found in "the gospel" Paul proclaims and "the knowledge" he imparts – surpasses any glory that may be attributed to Moses and the Old Covenant, because it is in fact the very "glory of God" (4:6).

4.1.1.7 A "light" that "shines"

The final discussion on repeated words in our text are φωτισμός (4:4, 6) and λάμπω (4:6); and, they are treated together because of the obvious relationship between the noun and the verb: it is the "light" that "shines".

Paul's use of φωτισμός is significant because it is only used by him in 4:4 and 6, and its repetition in these two parallel verses underscores an intentionality that is not easy to determine. The noun is rare even in the LXX (Job 3:9; Pss. 26:1[27:1]; 43:4 [44:3]; 77:14 [78:14]; 89:8 [90:8]; 138:11 [139:11]), and an argument could be made that Paul is alluding to its connotation in the psalms, where it primarily signifies divine immanence, the presence of Yahweh ("Yahweh is my light"; "the light of your face"; "he guided them . . . with light from the fire"; "light of your presence"). It may be, therefore, that Paul conceives of "the gospel" (4:4) and "the knowledge" (4:6) of the New Covenant as mediating the nearer-presence of God, as was celebrated in the experience of the Hebrew psalmists, and paralleled in his own experience. Thrall draws attention to the use of φωτισμός in Ps 42:3 (LXX), Ws. 7:26,¹⁶⁰ and the "linguistic parallels between Acts and 2 Cor 4:6" and suggests that "the author of Acts may thus reproduce a tradition

¹⁵⁹ See C C Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 223: "Paul thus conceives of the resurrection, parousia and gospel as a revelation of God's eschatological δόξα in Jesus – a revelation of δόξα which possesses significant prefigurements, foreshadowments and analogs in the revelation of God's כְּבוֹד in the Jewish scriptures: Glory fits Jesus into a long line of God's appearances; Glory is now revealed in a person or a preached message about that person (rather than in tabernacle or temple)".

¹⁶⁰ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, (note 888), 318.

deriving originally from Paul himself, phrased in the kind of language used in 2 Cor 4:6” and referring to Paul’s own conversion.¹⁶¹ So Thrall concludes:

If this is so, then the debatable phrase πρὸς φωτισμόν *refers most probably to the direct action of God: God shone in Paul’s heart, to effect the enlightenment produced by (or, consisting in) the knowledge of his glory in Christ. . . . God’s illuminating power was put into operation to bring about in Paul the state of enlightenment produced by the knowledge that it was God’s own glory that was made manifest in the risen Christ*”.¹⁶² (emphasis added)

Indeed, the fundamental argument of Paul’s Christocentric message was that by the revelation of Jesus Christ, God has come nearer to humanity, and that the possibility of access to God has been opened to all people. However, the choice of φωτισμός, here, need not be limited to a single connotation or semantic domain; it can, as with any term, be bearing a semantic range informed by the various contexts in which it had functioned to signify meaningful communication. For this reason, its lone occurrence in *T Levi* 14:4 is noticeable, and I will consider below whether Paul’s use of φωτισμός, here, alludes intertextually to its only occurrence in the Pseudepigrapha (in *T Levi* 14:4, in the *Testament of the Twelve*). For the moment, we note that this passage reflects on how Israel’s apostasy and failure to honour and obey the “light of the Law” (φῶς τοῦ νομοῦ) threatened to deny God’s intention for the “enlightenment of all humanity” (εἰς φωτισμόν πάντος ἀνθρωποῦ).¹⁶³

The appearance of λάμπω in the text may have been triggered off by, what appears to be, a direct quotation from the LXX: ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμπει (4:6). Most exegetes take this to be a reference to Gen. 1:3, although some think that its source is Isa. 9:1.¹⁶⁴ λάμπω, though, while occurring in the exact phrase φῶς λάμπει in Isa. 9:1, is not found in the Genesis text. Paul’s point (assuming for now that Gen. 1:3

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 317-318; for a sustained argument that 2 Cor 4:6 most clearly alludes to Paul’s Damascus Road Christophany, see Kim, *Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 5-13, 229-239.

¹⁶² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 318.

¹⁶³ Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, I:793.

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion on the relative merits of each argument see, Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 314-316.

forms the background) is that the in-Christ, apostolic community is as much a creation of God as is the natural world of his first creation.

4.1.2 Opening–Middle–Closing Texture

Literary analysis led interpreters from the 1970s to see the potential of noticing texts in terms of opening, middle, and closing sections.¹⁶⁵ This is all the more significant in a narrative text where one tries to determine the meaning that emerges by making explicit its “plotted time in relation to story time”.¹⁶⁶ Opening, middle, closing features are discernible in any rhetorical unit, and becoming aware of these demarcations in a text creates the possibility of gaining new insights into its meaning.¹⁶⁷ As was made evident in the structural analysis of 2 Cor 4:1-6, this pericope also displays a clearly discernible opening (4:1-2), middle (4:3-4), and closing (4:5-6) texture, and the ensuing task will involve directing the right kinds of questions to draw out its potential.¹⁶⁸

As was mentioned above (see “Locating the Text”) one of the strongest arguments for a tripartite division of 4:1-6 is the occurrence-pattern of the pronouns. The opening (vv. 1-2) and closing (vv. 5-6) are dominated by the first person plural, which is absent in vv. 3-4. The latter, instead, refers to third party actors: “the God of this age”, “the perishing”, those who are “blinded”, and “the unbelievers”. The “opening” relates to the “closure” in two significant ways.

¹⁶⁵ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 50.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 50, uses Mark’s Gospel as an illustration; there “plotted time” begins the narrative with John preaching in the wilderness, and ends with empty tomb. “Story time” on the other hand “begins” with the ‘indeterminate’ time when Isaiah preached, and “ends” with the ‘indeterminate’ time when Christ will return.

¹⁶⁷ See, *Ibid.*, 50: “Opening and closure exhibit the span of a rhetorical unit – whether that unit be the entire work or a section in it. A discernible beginning and ending are part of an overall arrangement of units and subunits”.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 53 provides a helpful sample: “What is the nature of the opening of a unit in relation to its closure, whether the unit is an entire text or a subdivision in it? What is the nature of the topics with which the text begins in relation to the topics with which it ends? What is the nature of the topics that replace the topics at the beginning? Is there repetition that interconnects the beginning, middle and end; or is repetition of a particular kind limited to one or two of the three regions of the discourse?”

First, the unexplained phrase καθὼς ἠλεήθημεν (4:1, “as we received mercy”) may be resolved by the expression in 4:6: ὁ θεὸς . . . ἔλαψμεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (“God . . . has shone in our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”). The former is clearly a divine passive – by implication God has shown mercy to Paul, which has led him to “this ministry” – which is matched and clarified by the latter divine active, which shows that the “mercy”, by implication, is God’s initiative to “shine” his light, bringing intimacy with God through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Secondly, Paul’s claim that “we commend ourselves” (4:2, συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτούς), is balanced by his claim, “we do not preach ourselves . . . but ourselves as your slaves for Jesus” (4:5, οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν . . . ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν). The three occurrences of ἑαυτούς are, therefore, closely connected. While the first functions to underscore Paul’s “status” in the world and before God (4:2, πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ) as a person of transparency and credibility, the latter two occurrences of ἑαυτοὺς function to clarify Paul’s “status” for Jesus and in the church, as no more important than a mere “preacher” of the “divine Christ”, and a “slave” to the Corinthian believers (4:5, οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν).

The fact that the opening and closing sections of our brief pericope are so closely bound, both linguistically and conceptually, accentuates the distinction of the middle-piece (vv.3-4) and rhetorically establishes its central importance. This centrepiece is packed with ambiguity. It begins with the concessive clause that the “gospel is veiled to those who are perishing”, and contains our enigmatic appellation “the God of this age”. In addition, it makes reference to the unique idea of “blinding the minds of the unbelievers”,¹⁶⁹ introduces the verb αὐγάζω, which is a Pauline hapax,¹⁷⁰ and also uses

¹⁶⁹ The noun ἀπιστός is rare only found again in the debated passage in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1, but used nine times in 1 Corinthians.

¹⁷⁰ Found in the LXX only in 7 verses in Leviticus (13:24, 25, 26, 28, 38, 39; 14:56), where it consistently refers to the prominent, white, “spot” that shows-up a skin disease and results in social ostracization.

the loaded phrase, εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ,¹⁷¹ as a further description for Christ. There is no gainsaying that a close reading of 4:3-4, which takes into account the part played by each of its outstanding features, is crucial to understanding what Paul most probably meant when he wrote about “the God of this age”.

4.1.3 Argumentative Texture

With argumentative texture the interpreter looks for evidence of the underlying logic that the narrator uses to drive forward the broader argument. Rhetoricians contemporary with the NT era referred to ‘enthymemes’ – a form of argumentation “from sure assumptions of social and cultural reasoning, which are probable assumptions considered to be likelihoods”.¹⁷² An enthymeme is “a statement with a supporting reason introduced by *for*, *because* or *since* or an *if . . . then* statement”.¹⁷³ Two of the most prominent features of the argumentative texture of our text will be considered below.

First, within the overall context of 2:14–4:6, a syllogistic argument may be detected, encompassing a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion:

Major premise: God has entrusted to Paul and the apostolic team “the ministry” of the new covenant (3:6; 4:1) that promises, through the Spirit (3:17), to transform a person from the glory of the Old Covenant to the “surpassing glory” of the new (3:18). Paul has discharged that “ministry” with efficiency and integrity (4:2).

Minor Premise: A significant group or number of people remains genuinely unable to see any “glory” in the message proclaimed by Paul. It may be a “gospel” to Paul, but as far as such people are concerned, it is the “stench of death” (2:16) and a “veiled” gospel (4:3).

Conclusion: Such people are unable to “see” the light of the gospel only because they have been incapacitated by a power that is beyond their control: the power of “the God of this age” (4:4).

¹⁷¹ With its possible allusion to Gn 1:26 – 27 it is only found here in the undisputed Pauline literature.

¹⁷² Robbins, *Invention*, xxii.

¹⁷³ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 59.

It is clearly evident that the identity of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is closely related to how we identify this segment of Paul's auditors who find in Paul's presence (2:14-17) and preaching (4:1-6), respectively, only the offensive odour of death and the disappointment of obscurity. Many exegetes assume that Paul is generalizing about the mass of unconverted humanity when he speaks about the "unbelieving ones" (τῶν ἀπίστων), but they do not follow the flaw in this logic to its conclusion, whereby such generalized "unbelievers" are deemed to have been incapacitated by the God of this age from even "seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of the Christ" (4:4). If such is the case, it puts all people who previously had no intimation of Christ ("unbelievers") hopelessly beyond the scope of salvation that Paul proclaimed with such hope and vigour.

On the contrary, the argumentative texture of the context strongly suggests that Paul has a very specific group of people in mind, and by means of an enthymeme he addresses the issue and alludes to who they might be. The "if . . . then" structure of 4:3-4 is then the secondmost prominent feature of the text's argumentative texture:

³ εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον, ⁴ ἐν οἷς ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάζειν τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ.

The enthymeme begins with "but even if" and refers to the alleged "hiddenness" of Paul's gospel. In the course of the discussion above, a number of the features within these two verses have been considered: the purpose of the concessive clause, the intended meaning of the twice-used perfect participle of καλύπτω (ἔστιν κεκαλυμμένον), the significance of the Pauline use of τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, and Paul's reference to "our gospel" and its association with "light" and the "glory of the Christ". The factors we have not as yet examined reside in v. 4 and the interpretation of ἐν οἷς; what significance may be attached to the terms τυφλόω, νόημα, and ἄπιστος in this context; and, how one is to render the infinitive of αὐγάζω, the *hapax legomenon*.

4.1.3.1 How is ἐν οἷς to be understood?

The focus of our enquiry, 2 Cor 4:4, begins with a seemingly inconsequential construction: the combination of the preposition ἐν and the masculine plural, dative, relative pronoun οἷς. Grammatically this construction typically indicates that the clause that follows occupies a subordinate position to its immediate antecedent. As Furnish explains, a strict construal of the grammar would argue that “the unbelievers’ would be a subgroup within the more general category of ‘those who are perishing’”.¹⁷⁴ In fact, how the grammar is rendered may play a pivotal role in determining the meaning of Paul’s enigmatic epithet for God in 4:4.

Following the survey of the history of interpretation of 4:4, the conclusion reached was that until the era of Erasmus and Calvin the epithet ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου enjoyed the recognition of being a description of God, based of course on the broader consensus of commentators and exegetes until the period of the Renaissance. The consensus, however, was radically reversed from the sixteenth century to the present, largely due to the *a priori* argument that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ may not be called the God of this *evil* world, nor should he be thought to blind people. Such an identity and action, it was thought, could only point to a malevolent being, and therefore, Satan was posited as the only candidate to whom these words could be attributed. *By following this process of deductive reasoning, modern exegetes have fallen into the same error that they imputed to the exegetes of the patristic period.* We noted how writers such as Tertullian and Chrysostom violated the integrity of the text by transposing the phrase τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου to follow the phrase τῶν ἀπίστων so that the verse read “God has blinded the minds of the unbelievers of this age”.¹⁷⁵ Modern scholars have been quick to point out, quite rightly, the invalidity of this reconstruction, and show how the *a priori* commitment to resist Marcionite and Manichean proposals about a “second god” influenced and dominated the patristic writers’ perspective of the

¹⁷⁴ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 220.

¹⁷⁵ See the discussion in Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 307.

text.¹⁷⁶ *We argue, however, that the same methodological error has manifested itself in the way modern commentators approach this text, albeit to draw the opposite conclusion.*

The interpretation of ἐν οἷς in 4:4 is a case in point. Such a construction is found in five other locations in the NT: Acts 17:34; 20:25; Eph 2:3; Phil 2:15; 2 Pt 3:13. It is noteworthy that in each of these, the grammar indicated by ἐν οἷς is used to describe a subgroup within a larger, and more general category: Dionysius and Damaris and “a number of others” among the larger group of those who believed Paul’s message in Athens (Acts 17:34); those who Paul had preached to during his extensive ministry in Ephesus, among the expanded congregation of believers in Ephesus when Paul said his final farewell at Miletus (Acts 20:25); present-believers among the more generalized group of “the disobedient” (Eph 2:2-3); the small Christian community at Philippi, among the larger entity of a “warped and crooked generation” (Phil 2:15); the existence of “righteousness” within the context of the “new heaven and the new earth” (2 Pt 3:13). This, therefore, presses the case that in 4:4, too, one should translate “*among whom* the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers”. However, since any distinction between “the unbelievers” and “the perishing” would only complicate the preferred modern interpretation of 4:4, such a construction is found to be “awkward”,¹⁷⁷ and any possibility that Paul meant to distinguish between “the perishing” and “the unbelievers” is ruled out of court.¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, as I have repeatedly noted, several scholars are of the opinion that in this specific context Paul’s referent for the ἀπίστοι is the body of unconverted Jews, particularly those who

¹⁷⁶ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 210: “Marcion used this text to make his case for an inferior creator God and a supreme savior God. In confuting Marcion, Tertullian argued that Paul refers to God, who blinds the minds of unbelievers . . . Plummer noted that “fear of the Manichean doctrine of two Gods, one good the other evil, no doubt produced this improbable interpretation”.

¹⁷⁷ So Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305.

¹⁷⁸ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 220: “Nothing in this context or in the Pauline usage of the terms [“perishing” and “unbelievers”] elsewhere suggests that the apostle actually intended any such distinction: *unbeliever(s)* is used in just as general a way . . . as *those who are perishing*,” also see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305 – 306: “The construction of the initial relative clause is awkward, but there is general agreement that the group of people to whom the ἐν οἷς refers i.e., the ἀπολλυμένοι of v.3, is co-extensive with the group who at the end of this clause are designated as τῶν ἀπίστων”.

deliberately refuse to see the merits of the Pauline gospel.¹⁷⁹ In which case Paul could be saying that his gospel is “hidden, obscure or veiled” to those who “are perishing” (constituted from among both Jews and Gentiles who will not participate in the New Covenant because they do not appropriate it through the Pauline understanding of faith (see Rom 1:16-17); but, more so, among a subgroup of resistant Jews whose incomprehension the opponents cite as evidence, both of Paul’s disqualification as an apostle, and of the failure of his gospel. Paul turns the tables on their argument by recourse to what appears to be a familiar Christian apologetic in response to Jewish unbelief. This was the idea that some part of ethnic Israel suffers from a specific judgement of obduracy which prevents them from recognizing the Messiah, and that this condition of imperviousness and incomprehension is not simply about human culpability, but rather that this severe incapacitation has been imputed on Israel by God.¹⁸⁰ In fact, Rom. 11:7 presents one of the most explicit references in Paul about the divine hardening of a section of the Jewish community as an act of divine judgement. In the same verse, Paul distinguishes between the Israelites who have been “elected” (like himself) and “the rest” (οἱ λοιποί) who have “been hardened” (ἐπωρώθησαν); a distinction that is supportive of the “subset” theory with regard to the clause commencing with ἐν οἷς. However, we may ask, can such a pivotal role be claimed for the interpretation of the seemingly nondescript expression ἐν οἷς in our text? C. Stockhausen’s comments on this are comprehensive:

This translation presupposes, though, a larger group (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, v.3), those who are being destroyed (cf. II Cor. 2:15-16) and a more specific, smaller subset of those (τῶν ἀπίστων, v.4), the unbelievers, i.e., those who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. I do not think that this is wholly far-fetched since Paul argues elsewhere that all of sinful mankind is subject to the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18; 2:1-2; 3:5-20) except those who believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26), and yet makes a considerable issue out of the relationship of Jew and Gentile within this situation . . . The term “ἀπίστος” is most properly applied to

¹⁷⁹ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 221: “Except for the problematic paragraph 6:14 – 7:1 (6:14,15), this is the only reference in 2 Cor to *unbelievers*, and elsewhere Paul uses the term only in 1 Cor . . . There it always has reference to unconverted Gentiles; but here, given the reference to the Israelites who have been hindered from seeing the glory of the new covenant (= the gospel; 3:14 – 15) unbelieving Jews may also be in mind (cf. Rom 11:20, 23, where “unbelief” [*apistia*] is used of unbelieving Jews)”. See also Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil*, 157; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305.

¹⁸⁰ Within the context of 2 Corinthians this is conveyed by the divine passive in 3:14: ἄλλα ἐπωρώθη τα νοήματα αὐτῶν, “their minds were hardened”.

such an unbelieving Jew. Gentiles who do not believe in Jesus Christ will perish, but Jews who do not believe have been blinded and will perish, because they had a revelation of the Image of God in their scriptures but could not see him.¹⁸¹

4.1.3.2 Who causes “blinding”?

Paul uses the third singular aorist of τυφλόω in our context to establish that he has an individual in mind to whom may be attributed the incapacitation of “the unbelievers” from appreciating the value of the Pauline gospel. It is also interesting that what has been “blinded” is the “mind” (νόημα) of the unbeliever, and not the eyes. This reference, consequently, draws the exegete’s attention to νόημα appearing within the broader argument, in 3:14 – “their minds were hardened”. Thus, we may consider 4:4 and 3:14 as potentially mutually interpretive.¹⁸²

In 3:14, we know that Paul is referring to ethnic Israel, and arguing that despite the “glory” of the Old Covenant and its mediator Moses, the nation by and large lost out on benefiting from the implications of God’s glorious revelation of his salvation plan. Beginning with Moses, a “veil” interfered with them apprehending God’s self-revelation. This process then culminated with the gravest tragedy that could have befallen Israel, which is that, by the actions of God himself, she was intentionally made impervious to any further revelation. This is the import of the passive verb ἐπωρώθη in 3:14, an example of a “theological passive”.¹⁸³ Since, within the space of just nine verses, Paul chooses to refer again to the “minds” (τὰ νοήματα), we are justified in asking how the two references correlate. The connections are made tighter by the fact that, while the two verses (3:14, 4:4) refer to two very different verbs – πωρώω and τυφλόω – these verbs are collocated in another text within early Christian literature – Jn 12:40. In the case of the latter, the Evangelist brings the first major section of his Gospel to a close by reflecting on the reasons for unbelief among the Jews during the ministry of Jesus. He

¹⁸¹ Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil*, 157.

¹⁸² Harris, *Second Epistle*, 328, notes the close relationship, although holding fast to a dualistic explanation: “4:4 is closely related to 3:14a. There the νοήματα of Jews are hardened by God (by implication); here, Satan blinds the νοήματα of all unbelievers, Jews or Gentiles”.

¹⁸³ See *Ibid.*, 301. For a specialized treatment on, “The Hardening of Israel” see, R H Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry Into Paul’s Theology of Israel*, WUNT 184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 218-237.

concludes with an apologetic based on the writings of Isaiah, and appears to be dependent on a version of Greek Isaiah that varies from the extant LXX text. In the version John uses, God (implied by the third-person, singular references) is said to “blind” the eyes and “harden” the hearts of Israel to prevent them from becoming eligible to “turn” to God and receive healing. This is a quotation of Isaiah 6:10 and we shall later consider the possibility that this OT passage is a significant part of the rich intertexture for 2 Cor 4:1-6.¹⁸⁴ Yet, what relevance does John offer for the interpretation of a Pauline phrase, since the latter predated the former? We propose that the texts of the NT are, by virtue of their chronological proximity to Paul, the best witnesses to the early Christian communities’ cognitive environment: that is, the way Christians understood and appropriated apostolic teaching, Christian traditions, creedal statements and apologetics. Hence, texts such as John can be a rich resource to help explain terms and concepts used by Paul.

The verb τυφλώω is found only once more in the NT, in 1 Jn 2:11, but there the writer speaks about a non-personal actor causing one to become blind: “The darkness has blinded him”. However, the only occurrence of τυφλώω in the LXX correlates once again with our arguments that these unfortunate characteristics, such as hardening and blinding of Israel, are the result of the sovereign actions of Israel’s God. The unique reference is found in Isa. 42:19 where God describes his servant Judah as both blind and mute, and adds that the “slaves of God” have “been blinded”. This, once again, raises the possibility of a theological passive: καί ἐτυφλώθησαν οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ (LXX Isa 42:19). The latter possibility is confirmed by the end of the oracle by the words: “Who has handed Jacob over to become loot and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned?” (Isa. 42:24).

¹⁸⁴ See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207-208, (who comments on the use of πωρω in 3:14a, saying), “Paul uses the verb only once more, in Rom 11:7, as he introduces a scriptural citation (v.8) compounded of LXX Isa 29:10 and Deut 29:3(4). Both texts speak of God’s causing the eyes of the people to be darkened and their ears stopped from perceiving the truth – a theme taken over by the early church, especially under the influence of yet a third passage, Isa 6:9-10 . . . Since, however, the verb is used in the citation of Isa 6:10 in John 12:40, it would appear that Paul is dependent here (and in Rom 11) on some familiar, Christian apologetic formulation”.

4.1.3.3 Who are “the unbelievers?”

“The God of this age”, according to Paul, has blinded the minds of “the unbelievers”. Who might he be referring to? The answer cannot be so easily determined since the plural adjective is used only once in this specific context, and twice more in 2 Corinthians (6:14, 15). Several commentators impute a connotation more fixed from later Christendom, by which people within the church, “believers”, are distinguished, quite simply, from all those who are outside the church, “the unbelievers”.¹⁸⁵ The circumstances of early Christianity were more complex because its authors recognized three distinguishable groups: pagan people (also referred to as “Gentiles” and “the nations”; and called, “those who are far off”, see Eph 2:17); Jews who had no faith in Jesus (called “those who are near”, see Eph. 2:17); and those “in Christ”, both Jews and Gentiles, who in turn were unambiguously called “believers”.

The adjective ἄπιστος is used in twenty-one verses, and gains its meaning within each context. On twelve occasions (Lk 12:46; 1 Cor 6:6; 7:12, 13, 14, 15; 10:27; 14:22, 23, 24; 1 Tm 5:8; Rev. 21:8), it clearly refers to unbelievers from a pagan background. On six occasions, however, the adjective describes unbelief in the context of Jewish people (Mt 17:17; Mk 9:19; Lk 9:41; Jn 20:27; Acts 26:8; Ti 1:15). This then leaves us with the three references in 2 Corinthians (4:4; 6:14, 15). We have already argued that the rhetoric of 2 Cor 1-7 is defensive, an *apologia*, and even polemical. This fact precludes too easy an assumption of meaning; it will be necessary to take into account the highly specific reasoning that attends Paul’s use of the term in order to determine what he meant.¹⁸⁶ In the light of the particular discussion of 2:14–4:6, some scholars see no difficulty in arguing that Paul had “unconverted Jews” in mind when he polemically charges that the God of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Such a general meaning for the ἄπιστοι is found in Harris, *Second Epistle*, 329; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 211-212; Matera, *II Corinthians*, 102.

¹⁸⁶ See Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78 – 79; also see Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 86: “The unbelievers whose minds are blinded include all those who reject the Pauline gospel, especially the opponents of the apostle in Corinth (cf. 6:14, 15)”.

¹⁸⁷ See, Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305: “Primarily, the ἀπολλυμένοι must be non-Christians, since in v.4 they are identified with the ἄπιστοι. The unbelieving Jews of Corinth (cf. Acts 18.4-6) may be chiefly in view, since it was especially in Corinth that Paul insisted on the scandal of the crucified (and therefore concealed) Messiah (1 Cor 1.23; 2.2)”; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 220-221, who argues that whereas in 1

4.1.3.4 Excursus: Paul and unbelieving Israel in Romans 9–11

The “unbelief” of Jewish people is also an important recurrent theme within the cognitive environment of earliest Christianity. It caused the most grief to Jesus during his earthly ministry, and was the prevalent challenge that most dogged the steps of the apostle Paul. In parallel passages in the Gospels (Mt 17:17; Mk 9:19; Lk 9:41), Jesus calls his own people “you unbelieving and perverse generation”. The burden of the Fourth Gospel is the refusal to believe by “the Jews”. When the book of Acts concludes, we encounter the Jews of Rome, some of whom “were convinced” but “others would not believe” (οἱ δὲ ἠπίστουν). Yet, probably the strongest intertextual support for the argument that the blinded “unbelievers” of 2 Cor 4:4 were “unconverted Jews” comes from within Paul’s overall argument of Rom 9–11. Here, the assertion that a section of ethnic Israel has been “hardened” (Rom 11:8, ἐπωρώθη) is followed up with the accusation of Israel’s “unbelief” (Rom 11:20, 23, τῆ ἀπιστίᾳ).

In fact, Rom 9–11 provides for us the strongest evidence that Paul had developed a robust theological response to the phenomenon of Jewish unbelief.¹⁸⁸ Paul wrote Romans sometime between 54 and 58 CE, when he was staying for about three months in the home of Gaius in Corinth.¹⁸⁹ It had only been a few months earlier that Paul had written 2 Corinthians with the hope of wresting back the loyalty of the believers in Corinth from the pernicious influence of Paul’s Jewish “opponents” there. The fact that he was back in good fellowship in Corinth, and since there is no evidence of any continuing distress in his tone with regard to the believers, it is fair to assume that the conflict had subsided and Paul’s rhetorical strategy in 2 Corinthians had been highly successful.¹⁹⁰

Corinthians the unbelievers are always “unconverted Gentiles,” in 2 Cor 4:4, “unbelieving Jews may also be in mind”.

¹⁸⁸ For a succinct examination of Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11 see, Steve Motyer, *Israel in the Plan of God* (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1989).

¹⁸⁹ G R Osborne, *Romans* (Downers Grove: IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 13-14.

¹⁹⁰ See Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 229-232; Osborne, *Romans*, 15: “Much of the trouble he had experienced from the opponents in Corinth was over, and this was a happy time for him. Romans 16 seems to show an untroubled situation in Corinth and may mean that the strong admonitions of 2 Corinthians 10-13 had worked”.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul had been confronted by Jewish opponents, who had challenged Paul's standing and effectiveness as an apostle on the basis that the majority of Jews found Paul's "gospel" unpalatable and unconvincing. Through 2:14–4:6, Paul had presented his apologetic in a polemical fashion, skilfully weaving in a *midrash* on Exodus 34:29-35 to contrast the old covenant with the new, and to argue that people who hope for salvation through Torah-observance, would only find that such a path leads to frustration, condemnation, and death. The ingenuity of Paul's response to the incontrovertible fact of Jewish unbelief in Jesus as messiah is seen in his construction of an apologetic that was firmly anchored in the Jewish scriptures. In 2 Cor 3, he used the "fading glory" of Moses (Ex 34:29-35) as a potent metaphor to contrast with the ever-increasing glory of those in Christ. He was also able to introduce the notion of the divine, judicial hardening of Israel (3:14) and the divine, judicial blinding of unbelieving Jews (4:4) – ostensibly in both cases by alluding to Isa. 6:9-10; and how, by this means, God had taken the initiative to incapacitate the majority of the Jewish people from recognizing the way to salvation. Through his fairly elaborate argument in 2 Cor 2:14-4:6, Paul's rhetorical strategy had succeeded on several fronts: he had safeguarded the sovereignty of God in the face of the covenant people's rejection of God's messiah; he had insisted on the incomparably great glory of the new covenant in Christ while affirming the glory of the Mosaic covenant; he had exonerated his apostolic ministry despite his evident lack of impressive credentials; and he had asserted the authenticity of the apostolic gospel even though his own people, the Jews, had found it to be shrouded and obscure.

Paul wrote Romans with the wisdom gained from his Corinthian experience fresh in his mind. Two immediate concerns confronted him: the task of delivering the collection to the churches in Jerusalem, and the challenge of addressing the Christians in Rome, who for reasons of their own brief history, were feeling most acutely the pain of ethnic estrangement, causing a situation that threatened to polarise the Gentile Christians from their Jewish brothers and sisters.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ See J Stott, *The Message of Romans*, BST (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 34-36: "Even the most casual reading of Romans betrays the fact the church in Rome was a mixed community consisting of

With regard to the latter concern, it has been suggested that within the narrow window of Paul's day, the Gentiles were uniquely ascendant in the Roman church over their fellow Jewish believers, and this had presented a special challenge to Paul. The theory is that the expulsion of Jews from Rome, under the edict of Claudius in 49 CE, had also affected the Jewish Christians, which in turn had rendered the church in Rome as a predominantly Gentile community for a brief period of a few years. Following the death of Claudius, when the Jews began returning to Rome, the Jewish Christians found that their former status in the church had been lost.¹⁹² It was not unlikely that the Gentile believers were excluding them, or at least marginalizing them, on the basis of the phenomenal rejection of Jesus the Messiah by the vast majority of the Jewish people. It seems that they were arguing for a new definition for God's "covenant people": one still defined ethnically, but now as an exclusively Gentile community that had replaced ethnic Israel.¹⁹³ Paul needed to respond theologically. He had to explain mass-scale Jewish disbelief, but without negating the continuing efficacy of God's covenants with Israel, and without compromising the Hebrew conviction of monotheistic sovereignty.

In Romans 9–11, Paul first establishes the difficult Jewish doctrine of the inviolable sovereignty of God (9:6-18). He argues – through references to God's dealings with the descendants of Abraham and God's dealings with the pagan Pharaoh – that God retains in himself the prerogative both to elect and to reject (vv.6-13), and the prerogative both to extend mercy and to enact judicial hardening on whom he wills (vv.14-18). He

both Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles in the majority (1:5f., 13; 11:13), and that there was considerable conflict between these groups (34)".

¹⁹² See L Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988), 13: "The reasoning is that the Roman church consisted originally almost entirely of Jews. . . . When the Jews were driven out, the Gentile Christians remained. Their numbers grew. Then when the edict of banishment was rescinded, Jewish Christians returned and found Gentiles in control of the church".

¹⁹³ Possibly the implication of 11:17-19; but see Stott, *Romans*, 301, who thinks it reflected a tendency towards anti-Semitism: "The exhortation to Gentile believers not to boast, together with the arguments with which it was buttressed, was undoubtedly much needed in Rome. For, although Jews were tolerated and protected by law from Gentile molestation, they suffered a great deal of popular Gentile ill will and sometimes from outbreaks of violence . . . Paul was determined that Gentile believers in Rome would have no share in such anti-Semitic prejudice".

concludes with the assertion: “So then God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden (v.18)”.¹⁹⁴

His next argument appears to knock down a growing logic among the Gentile Christians of Rome that God had lost all interest in his covenants with ethnic Israel. He does this by developing a theology of “the remnant”; a subject most focused in Rom. 11:1-6. To his rhetorical question “Has God rejected his people?” (11:1), Paul answers negatively, and illustrates this through his personal testimony of being saved by the gospel of Jesus while remaining a Jew (11:1), and the historical precedent of Elijah’s time when God preserved for himself a “remnant” within Israel, amounting to some “seven thousand people who have not bent the knee to Baal” (11:2-4).

He finally comes to the problem of mass-scale disbelief about the message and person of Jesus the Messiah, and provides a shocking explanation for the obduracy of Jewish people wherever the gospel had been proclaimed (see 11:7-10). In 9:6, Paul had declared a division among the descendants of Abraham – “not all who are descended from Israel are truly Israel” – and now, here (11:7), he makes the division explicit. He calls the smaller “remnant” of ethnic Jews, who had received salvation in Jesus, ἡ ἐκλογὴ (“the elect”), but refers to the vast majority of ethnic Jews, who rejected the gospel outright, as οἱ λοιποὶ (“the rest”). He describes this latter group by using the term ἐπωρώθησαν, “they were hardened” (passive third person plural of πωρώω¹⁹⁵), which most see as a divine passive, which suggests that the “hardening” of the majority of Israel was a judicial act by God. In any case Paul’s recourse, to Scripture (cf. 11:8-10) to support his claim, puts the matter beyond dispute.¹⁹⁶ The re-worked quotations of Deut. 29:2; Isa. 29:10, and Ps. 68:23-24 (LXX), clarify that the acts of “hardening”,

¹⁹⁴ Motyer, *Israel*, 131: “Like the book of Exodus [Paul] does not shrink from making God the agent of the hardening. For if God is sovereign over his creation (9:20-21) then it must ultimately be shaped according to his will”.

¹⁹⁵ See Osborne, *Romans*, 288: “The verb here is a medical term for a stone in the bladder or the hardening when bones are knit together”.

¹⁹⁶ A Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 402: “In order to amplify the theme of the “hardening” of Israel, Paul goes on to quote from scriptural passages that speak of God’s actions leading to Israel’s present condition”.

deafening, and blinding, which prevented Israel from “obtaining” the promised salvation, were deliberate acts of judgement by God on “the rest” of ethnic Israel.¹⁹⁷ As C. Evans explains: “Paul understands the present lack of belief by the Jews as not only a fulfilment of these texts, but as a condition brought on by God himself”.¹⁹⁸

We had noted before that the verb *πωρόω* was used by Paul only in 2 Cor 3:14 and Rom 11:7. This was significant because this verb also occurs in a quotation of Isa. 6:9-10 in Jn 12:40. That particular version of Isa 6:9-10 also used the very rare verb *τυφλόω*, “blind”, which is the action attributed to *ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου* in 2 Cor 4:4. Given these tight connections, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul’s theology of ethnic Israel was increasingly founded on obduracy texts such as Isa. 6:9-10, and was being developed to the point that he could explicitly attribute to God the responsibility of having made Israel incapable of seeing and believing.¹⁹⁹ In fact, S Motyer makes the observation that Paul shapes his quotations from the Hebrew Bible “so that the Lord *actually gives eyes that do not see* (rather than merely not giving them eyes that do see)”²⁰⁰ (emphasis added).

In the light of the above, we propose that when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians he was at the early stages of developing an apologetic for Jewish unbelief. With the success of his strategy and the apparent reconciliation with the church in Corinth, Paul was more confident about developing on his “theology of Israel”, and he proceeds to do so through the extensive discussion in Rom 9–11. Indications exist, however, that 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 and Rom 9–11 are organically connected. One is the clear *theme* of “unbelieving Israel”, and another is the exclusive use of the passive form of *πωρόω* to explain the condition of Israel as ordained by God (Rom 11:7; 2 Cor 3:14). Yet another

¹⁹⁷ Stott, *Romans*, 293: “There can be little doubt that Paul meant they were hardened by God (since the next verse says that God gave them a spirit of stupor)”.

¹⁹⁸ C A Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTS 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 87; see the broader discussion on pp. 84-89.

¹⁹⁹ For a comprehensive treatment of Isa. 6:9-10 as one of the most influential ‘obduracy’ texts in early Christian writings, see C. A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*.

²⁰⁰ Motyer, *Israel*, 133.

factor binds the two texts together, and in effect, offers a resolution to a stubborn question that has troubled interpreters. This has to do with the reference to “the unbelievers” (τῶν ἀπίστων) in 2 Cor 4:4. In this regard, it is quite significant that Paul associates the idea of “unbelief” (noun, ἀπιστία) as a defining characteristic of ethnic Israel (see Rom 11:20, 23). In 11:20, by means of another divine passive Paul claims that the Jews “were broken off because of unbelief” and suggests that they may be grafted back to the olive tree “if they do not persist in unbelief”. We suggest that these references in Romans only strengthen the likelihood that when Paul referred to the ἀπίστοι in 2 Cor 4:4, he was only thinking of those Jewish people who found his gospel “veiled” and incomprehensible. They were the subgroup that God had blinded; in the same way that he had “given them eyes that do not see” (Rom 11:8), and “hardened” them (2 Cor 3:14 and Rom 11:7) and “broken them off” (Rom 11:20).

4.1.3.5 Is the gospel “not seen” or does the gospel “not shine”?

Our final stop in argumentative texture is the interpretation of the *hapax legomenon*, αὐγάσαι. The aorist, active, infinitive of αὐγάζω, being only found here, is both curious and complicating. The verb has two senses: used transitively, “to see”, or intransitively, “to shine forth”.²⁰¹ Its only occurrence in the OT is exclusively in Leviticus where it appears seven times (13:24, 25, 26, 28, 38, 39; 14:56) and refers to the prominent, pigmentless, patches on the skin that were seen as evidence of infectious skin-conditions termed “leprosy”. In these instances, the second sense “to appear bright, shine” is more fitting. The related noun, αὐγάσμα, is used in Lev. 13:39 and means “a bright spot”. A similar use in Sir 43:11, σπόρδα ὠραῖον ἐν τῷ αὐγάσματι αὐτοῦ, “exceedingly beautiful in its brightness”, also shows that the sense “to appear bright, shine forth” was quite a common meaning.

Thrall weighs the pros and cons of the two senses here, and finds strong arguments for each meaning in this context.²⁰² Commentators and translators have had to make

²⁰¹ W Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. W F Arndt, F W Gingrich, and F W Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1979), 120.

²⁰² Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 311-312.

choices one way or the other, and so must we.²⁰³ On this, we see no insuperable difficulty in rendering the negative action as “to not shine”, leading to the idea that God refused to allow the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to shine on, or illumine, those classified as “unbelievers” in clear contrast to those who belong to the apostolic faithful on whom God has “shone” (ἐλάψμεν) the light of the gospel of the glory of God (4:6).

4.2 Intertexture

Within SRI, another ‘arena’ in which the interpreter operates is intertexture. As Robbins explains: “As words stand at all times in relation to other words both inside and outside any particular text, so texts stand at all times in relation to other texts”.²⁰⁴ Strictly speaking “intertexture” entails a broad spectrum including oral-scribal, historical, cultural, and social intertexture,²⁰⁵ but the focus of our attention will be on the first: oral-scribal intertexture. By this is meant the existence in a text of quotation, allusion, or echo – either oral or scribal – from a text lying outside the “foregrounded” text. In other words, in the act of composing, an author may consciously or subconsciously utilize texts known to him, by means of “recitation, recontextualization, and reconfiguration”.²⁰⁶

In his ground-breaking work on literary analysis, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, R Hays formulates a useful schema to confirm a canonical intertextual “echo” in a text.²⁰⁷ SRI goes further than Hays, and includes the corpus of the steadily-growing

²⁰³ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 221, comments: “All recent commentators agree that the infinitive [*mē*] *augazein* must be translated here as (*do not*) *see*, even though the original and more usual meaning is “shine forth”. Also Thrall, 312, explains: “The difficulty of making a decision is illustrated by the divergence of opinion on the part of translators (RSV and JB, for example, have ‘see’, whilst NEB and REB have ‘dawn upon’)”.

²⁰⁴ Robbins, *Tapestry*, 96.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 97; Robbins also makes the important point that in the arena of intertexture, “the interpreter works in the area between the author and the text, not between the text and the reader” (96).

²⁰⁷ The criteria (see R Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul*. New Haven: Yale University, 1989, 29-31), are summarized in Robbins, *Tapestry*, 102: *Availability* (Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or original readers?), *Volume* (The degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns), *Recurrence* (How often does Paul elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?), *Thematic coherence* (How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that Paul is

extant literature from the Hellenistic-Roman world whose echo may be heard in the NT. This expansion of the scope of background texts has proved useful because it acknowledges the cultural-literary dependencies of the authors of the NT.²⁰⁸ There is evidence in our brief pericope (4:1-6) of Paul's dependence on other oral or scribal texts, both within and without the sacred canon of the Jewish people. Investigating the "echoes" of these citations or allusions holds promise for the explication of the meaning of the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου.

Intertextuality, particularly with regard to the style Paul's Jewishness adopts,²⁰⁹ appears in terms of networks of texts. This is to say that while Paul's thought may commence from a concept or phrase located in one text, he may seamlessly weave in strands from other texts that relate to a greater or lesser extent to the texture he is developing. E Richard views this positively:

In effect, there are numerous quotations and a long list of short biblical excerpts and reminiscences throughout *II Corinthians*. The facility with which he employs the various books of the OT is evident, whether to prove a point, to illustrate a theological truth, to add authority to an argument, or to defend himself.²¹⁰

When it comes to 2:14–4:6, scholars agree that there is a thick matrix of intertextuality, especially related to the LXX. The "volume" of the echo of some texts – for example, Exodus 34 – is loud and much clearer, while others hardly make a sound so that the exegete must pay careful attention to hear their echoes. In 4:1-6, in particular, we find a

developing?), *Historical plausibility* (Could Paul have intended the alleged meaning effect?), *History of interpretation* (Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echo?), *Satisfaction* (Does the proposed reading make sense?).

²⁰⁸ On this see, D E Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987): "In fact, every book of the New Testament reflects to varying degrees an accommodation between Jewish religious and ethical values and traditions and Hellenistic forms of linguistic, literary, rhetorical, and conceptual expression. The Christianity of the New Testament is a creative combination of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions transformed into a *tertium quid* ("a third something"): that is, a reality related to two known things but transcending them both" (12).

²⁰⁹ E Richard, "Polemics, Old Testament, and Theology: A Study of II Cor., III, 1–IV, 6," *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981): 340-367: "Characteristic of this Jewishness is the preponderant use and inspiration of scripture in all his letters" (340).

²¹⁰ Richard, "Polemics," 340-341; but for a more pessimistic view of Paul's versatility and freedom in his use of scripture see, Morna Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 139-154: "Paul has jumped from one image to another; put them together, and he is clearly in a mess".

reasonable number of strands of intertextuality, many that are in turn interconnected to networks of texts bound by common themes and shared language. The following networks of texts in their contexts (excluding the co-text, 2:14–3:18) have been identified as lending their voices to the development of Paul’s thought as he brings, through 4:1-6, the first section of his apologia to a close:

4:2 (1 Kgs 18:19; an echo with τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης),

4:4 (2 Cor 3:14; Jn 12:40; Rom 11:7; Is. 6:10; echoes with the reference to ἐτύφλωσεν),

4:4 (1 Enoch 1:4; T. Levi 14:4; echoes with ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου and τὸν φωτισμόν),

4:6 (Gn 1:3; Is 9:2; Ex 10:20 – 29; echoes with ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπών, ἐκ σκοτους φῶς λάμψει).

4.2.1 The Rhetography behind “The Secrets of the Shame”

We have established that the tenor of Paul’s first apologia shows bursts of polemic, although not with as trenchant a style as he uses in chapters 10–13. In the mind of the Corinthians, the image they had of Paul was being overshadowed by the steady stream of vastly more impressive missionaries that pursued their affections by appealing to their peculiar Corinthian sensibilities. Paul realised that the situation was delicate, even precariously positioned, and that the parties concerned had reached a decisive moment. It is possible that Paul felt that the Corinthians needed to choose between Paul and his missionary rivals: either they must subscribe wholeheartedly to, and so be enlightened by, Paul’s gospel with its unique and absolute claim, “Jesus Christ is Lord” (4:5), or resign themselves to the obscurity of the rival missionaries’ reworked “gospel” of Mosaic, Torah-observance, which in fact was “being set aside” or nullified, from its very inception.

It is plausible that in thinking about this contest between his opponents and himself, Paul was reminded of a similar incident in Israel’s history when the community’s loyalty to its covenant with Yahweh was precariously positioned, and they were on the verge of being taken captive by the deceptive and vastly more impressive Baal cult (1 Kgs 18:16-40). On that occasion, it was the prophet Elijah who, as God’s lone advocate, challenged Israel to stop “limping between two opinions” and to choose between Yahweh and Baal (1 Kgs 18:21). It is interesting to note that the textual history of this particular narrative shows evidence of an interpretation that accentuates its polemical import. This can be seen when we compare the Hebrew text of 1 Kgs 18:19 with its counterpart in the LXX:

	Καὶ νῦν ἀπόστειλον συνάθροισον πρὸς με πάντα Ἰσραὴλ εἰς ὄρος τὸ Καρμήλιον καὶ τοὺς προφήτας τῆς αἰσχύνης τετρακοσίους καὶ πενήκοντα καὶ τοὺς προφήτας τῶν ἄλσῶν τετρακοσίους ἔσθιοντας τράπεζαν Ἰεζεβελ.
And now send and gather to me all Israel, to Mount Carmel, and the four-hundred fifty <i>prophets of Baal</i> , and four-hundred <i>prophets of Asherah</i> who eat at Jezebel’s table.	And now send and gather to me all Israel, to Mount Carmel, and the four-hundred fifty <i>Prophets of The Shame</i> and four-hundred <i>Prophets of the Grove Trees</i> who eat at Jezebel’s table.

We may observe that the translators of the LXX follow the Hebrew text with precision except in two instances: when they were required to render the descriptions of the rival prophets of the Baal and Asherah cults. At this point, they replace “Prophets of Baal” with “Prophets of *The Shame*”, and “Prophets of Asherah” with “Prophets of the *Grove Trees*”, and clearly reveal what must have been a growing antipathy towards these “opponents” in historical memory. In the narrative, the term “Prophets of The Shame” is emphasized by repetition in 18:25, and the utter bankruptcy of their enterprise is revealed by their inability to demonstrate their authenticity before “all Israel”.

Elijah, on the other hand, calls the people to himself, builds an altar with twelve stones (each dedicated to one of the tribes of Israel), and transparently proceeds to pray that the people may know “that you are LORD, the God, and that you are turning their hearts” (18:37, ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ θεὸς καὶ σὺ ἔστρεψας τὴν καρδίαν). It is possible, therefore, to suggest that Paul’s unusual statement – “We have renounced the secrets of *The Shame*” – may have arisen from his reflection on the challenges that faced the prophet Elijah in ninth century BCE Israel. That Paul did gain inspiration from Elijah in the face of a “hardened” Israel is seen in his reference to Elijah’s loneliness and the sovereignty of God in Rom 11:1-7. The unique use of the genitival phrase τῆς αἰσχύνης, found only in 2 Cor 4:2 in the NT, and in 1 Kgs 18:19 and 25 in the LXX, suggest the possibility that they are related. Both texts share a common theme: that of a contest

between God’s true representative (who is almost abandoned and alone) and the representatives of a dangerous but highly attractive falsehood (who are politically more advantageously positioned). In both situations “the people” need to “turn” back to God (1 Kgs 18:37, ἔστρεψας; 2 Cor 3:16, ἐπιστρέψη). Finally, in both instances Elijah and Paul have a single objective: they want God’s people to know with certainty who “the LORD” (κύριος) is, and to recognize the prophet or apostle as a mere “slave” (δοῦλος) of that LORD. So in 1 Kgs 18:36 Elijah prays, γνώτωσαν πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ γὰρ δοῦλός σου (“Let the people know this, that *you are LORD*, the God of Israel, and that I am your slave”). In 2 Cor 4:5 Paul declares, οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν ἀλλὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον, ἑαυτοὺς δὲ δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν (“For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ [as] LORD, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus”). Simon DeVries’ comment in his commentary on 1 Kings confirms this to be the emphasis:

Elijah’s prayer in vv. 36 – 37 . . . epitomizes the entire narrative as a demonstration that (1) Yahweh is truly God in Israel and (2) Elijah is his true servant. In the final analysis, therefore, this is not so much a story about a contest between Yahweh and Baal as a story demonstrating that Elijah is Yahweh’s true, authorized prophet. The people have doubted that authority, but in the end their witness, worship and confession show that they accept it.²¹¹

If our apprehending of the intertextual reference to Paul’s τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης is valid, then we may see how the narrative of the Mount Carmel contest lends weight to, and directs, Paul’s rhetoric as he brings this argument to a climax.

4.2.2 *Could the Act of “Blinding” be an Echo from the Rhetoric of Isaiah?*

We have already seen that τυφλόω is a rare verb in the NT (only in 2 Cor 4:4; Jn 12:40; 1 Jn 2:11), and only occurs once in the LXX (Is 42:19); and, there too, we noted that being a *hapax* makes its appearance all the more striking. As mentioned earlier, although writings such as the Fourth Gospel or the Epistles of John postdate the Pauline letters, they provide the closest and most complete exemplars of early Christian writings, and help to illuminate the cognitive environment within which Paul formulated his thinking.

²¹¹ S DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1985), 226.

The closest parallel use of τυφλώ in the NT – where a person is the subject causing the blinding – is found in Jn 12:40. In the Gospel of John, one of the major themes is the unbelief of “the Jews” despite their direct experience of the ministry of Jesus. This theme commences in the Prologue with the words: “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (1:11). The author is, therefore, burdened to show both that the majority of “the Jews” rejected the Messiah Jesus during his earthly ministry, but also that such a rejection by ethnic Israel did not in any way compromise Jewish theology of the sovereignty of God. Thus, in bringing the first major section of his Gospel to a close, the author concedes that despite Jesus demonstrating the “signs” of his Messiahship among the Jews, “they still would not believe in him” (12:37), but moves quickly to assert that a greater reason lay behind their inability to believe. To explain this, he resorts to a non-extant recension of Isa. 6:10 – “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts, nor turn – and I would heal them”.²¹²

4.2.3 Excursus: The Transmission and Appropriation of Isaiah 6:9-10 Based on the Study by Craig A Evans²¹³

The most comprehensive work on the subject of the transmission and appropriation of Is 6:9-10 has been done by C. Evans who has traced the history of the use of these two verses within the early Jewish and Christian communities. His survey is quite extensive: “The *terminus a quo* is the eighth-century prophet Isaiah who uttered the original words of Is 6:9-10. The *terminus ad quem* is the respective usages of this prophetic text in rabbinic and patristic literature”.²¹⁴ He demonstrates that by the fact that these verses became theologically important to both early Jewish and Christian communities, they

²¹² But see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 208, who suggests that the similarity could come about if both authors were dependent “on some familiar, Christian apologetic formulation;” for an extensive discussion that provides ample support to our view that Isaiah 6:9-10, along with a cluster of similar texts, stand behind Paul’s theology of the divine hardening and blinding of Israel, see Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil*, 135-150; see also, Hartley, “Yahweh is the God of This Age,” 1-22.

²¹³ C A Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989).

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

are referred to in the Rabbinic literature, in several writings within the NT, and in a number of patristic writers. In addition, it is evident that theological interests affected the manner of transmission as is seen when tracing its occurrence from the Masoretic text, the LXX, the Targums, and the Peshitta.

In the MT, Is 6:9 has the clauses “hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive”. The Hebrew verbal forms and construction show that these clauses have imperatival force; the prophet is speaking sarcastically and highlighting Judah’s rejection of God’s revelation. In 6:10, the clause “make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes” uses *hiphil* imperatives, indicating that these conditions are actively brought upon Judah by an agent of such action.²¹⁵ The text, therefore, functions with *telic* force. Judah’s obduracy, deafness, and blindness are not conditions that spontaneously arise, but who brings this about? The context of Isaiah 6 suggests that the agent is God:

In summary, it would seem that Isa. 6.9-10 means that it is God’s intention to render his people obdurate through the proclamation of the prophet. The purpose of this obduracy, it would appear, is either to render judgment certain, as is implied in vv.11-13, or perhaps to make it more fully deserved.²¹⁶

Evans shows that the divine intention to make God’s people obdurate is found not only in 6:9-10, but is a motif that runs through Isaiah with several examples of “obduracy texts” (Is 29:9-10; 42:18-20; 43:8; 44:18; 63:17).²¹⁷

When the text is transmitted to its Greek and Aramaic versions, however, we find a significant change being effected. In the case of the LXX, instead of imperatives for “hear” and “see” in v. 9, it uses the future indicatives which means that “the prophet is no longer enjoining the people to become obdurate, but is predicting that they will

²¹⁵ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 18.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

²¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 42-46; “Isa. 6.9-10 is certainly not the only obduracy passage in the book of Isaiah. Israel’s spiritual ignorance and dullness appear to be thematic in this book and are probably to be understood against the background of early wisdom (42)”.

remain obdurate”.²¹⁸ Hence, Evans comments: “It is clear from these observations that the LXX translator(s) of Isaiah wished to tone down the judgmental aspect of their Hebrew text. Indeed such a command from the Lord would have been quite embarrassing”.²¹⁹ This same tendency towards “softening the aspect of divine agency” is seen in the Targum.²²⁰

The question most pertinent to our study, however, is whether Paul ever resorts to Isa. 6:9-10 in his writings. Although the text of Is 6:9-10 is not found in the Pauline corpus, it is very likely that its influence is indicated precisely in the context of our passage in 2 Corinthians: “Strictly speaking, the text of Is 6.9-10 does not appear in the writings of Paul. However, it is quite possible that the references to the hardening of Israel in Rom 11.7 and 2 Cor 3.14 are in fact allusions to the text (ἐπωρώθη[σαν])”.²²¹

4.2.4 Isaiah 6:9-10 in 2 Corinthians 2:14–4:6

I aim to show that Is 6:9-10 is clearly in the background of 2 Cor 2:14-4:6, especially in 3:14 and 4:4, and that it appears that Paul seemed to know a version of the text that carried with it the *telic* force that was original to the MT. What, then, is the probability that Is 6:9-10 stands behind 2 Cor 2:14–4:6? First, we note the striking contextual similarity between Jn 12:35-46 and 2 Cor 2:14–4:6. In both texts, the incomprehension or outright rejection of the messianic glory of Jesus by the Jewish people at large is the author’s burden. They have had ample opportunity to be confronted by the claims of the Christ, and to see plainly the evidence of his glorious power. In John, Christ is made known through his teaching and his “signs” (12:37). In 2 Corinthians his power and presence are made known by means of the “fragrance” (2:14-16), the “ministry” (3:3; 4:1), the apostle’s “boldness” (3:12), and the manifest glory on the unveiled faces of his apostles (3:18). Second, in response to the apparent imperviousness of the majority of Jews to the gospel message, both authors concede that such is the case. In John, the

²¹⁸ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 62.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²²⁰ See *Ibid.*, 69 – 76.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

concession is explicitly stated in 12:37, and, as we have seen above, Paul uses a concessive clause in 4:3 to accomplish the same purpose. Third, both texts show linguistic and conceptual similarity. They both major on distinguishing between those who are approved of God and those who are disapproved; they compare “light” and “darkness”; and they also contrast those who are blinded and hardened with those who accept and receive the message of the gospel. They also describe God’s revelation of salvation in terms of “glory” (Jn 12:41–43; 2 Cor 3:7–11, 18; 4:4-6). Fourth, both texts show recourse to a shared recension of Is 6:10 or a “familiar Christian apologetic”. In the case of Jn 12:40, it is explicitly quoted, and differs significantly from any extant Greek version of Is 6:10. In 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, this non-extant version of Isa. 6:10 is implicit, and presented by allusions to it. Furnish explains:

Neither the verb “harden” nor the noun “hardening” (*pōrōsis*, used by Paul, also of unbelieving Israelites, In Rom 11:25) appears in these LXX texts. *Since, however, the verb is used in the citation of Isa 6:10 in John 12:40, it would appear that Paul is dependent here (and in Rom 11) on some familiar Christian apologetic formulation.*²²² (emphasis added)

A comparison of texts will clarify:

Isaiah (LXX)	John 12	2 Corinthians
<p>ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδιά τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν, μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς</p> <p>“For the heart of this people was dulled, and their ears hear with difficulty, and their eyes have shut, lest they see with their eyes, and with ears</p>	<p>τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ. καὶ στραφῶσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς</p> <p>“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they may not see with the eyes and understand with their hearts and turn and I will heal them”</p> <p>(12:40)</p>	<p>ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν</p> <p>“But their minds (understanding) were hardened”</p> <p>(3:14)</p> <p>ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρείται τὸ κάλυμμα</p> <p>“And whenever he turns to [the] LORD, the veil is taken away”</p> <p>(3:16)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued...</i></p>

²²² Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 208; see also Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil*, 136: “The presence of a quotation of Isaiah 6:9 – 10 in John 12:40 – 41 which uses the verb “πωρω” allows us to suppose that Paul may also, in using this verb in II Cor. 3:14, intend a reference to this key apologetic text”; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 262 – 263.

<i>continued...</i>		
Isaiah (LXX)	John 12	2 Corinthians
they hear, and with the heart they understand, and they turn, and I will heal them” (6:10)		ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι τὸν φωτισμὸν “The God of this world has blinded the minds (understanding) of the unbelievers so that the light does not shine” (4:4)

There are several noteworthy points to consider in the comparison above: a) the LXX refers to three organs: heart, ears, and eyes. John only refers to the eyes and hearts, and Paul uses “minds” as the object of the action; b) in the LXX and in 2 Cor 3:14 the verbs ἐπαχύνθη (“was dulled”) and ἐπωρώθη (“was hardened”) are aorist and third singular passives, respectively, whereas Jn 12:40 uses the active verb, ἐπώρωσεν (“he has hardened”); c) John and Paul share the two key verbs τυφλόω and πωρώω, which are not found in the LXX; d) in 2 Cor 3:16, Paul replaces the verb εἰσπορεύομαι (used in Ex 34:34, which he is directly quoting) with ἐπιστρέφω, which carries the connotation of “conversion” and is used in Is 6:10, although John prefers the synonym στρέφω.²²³

To further raise the probability that Paul was in fact drawing on Is 6:9-10 when he spoke about the “hardening” and “blinding” of unbelieving Israelites, we note how this text of Isaiah’s forms the bedrock of a sustained Christian apologetic in early Christianity to explain the phenomenon of the rejection of the Jewish people for their rejection of the Jewish Messiah. Such an apologetic is found in the synoptics when the disciples enquire why Jesus spoke in parables (Mt 13:10–15; Mk 4:10–12; Lk 8:9–10), and Jesus uses it to make the startling point that his method of teaching was meant to conceal truth from the disbelieving rather than to reveal it. Later, Luke turns again to Is 6:9-10 when he

²²³ See Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil*, 137: “‘ἐπιστρέφω’ is not a known Septuagint variant for the verb in Exodus 34:34. It is, however, the characteristic Septuagint and early Christian term for the ‘turning’ of conversion. Paul has altered his citation of Exodus 34 by using ἐπιστρέφω, and Isaiah 6:10 is a likely proximate source for this variation”.

brings his second volume to a close in Acts 28:17-31. Here, Paul's mission to both Jews and Gentiles is brought to a conclusion in story time, and he is making a final appeal (v. 25, ῥῆμα ἓν, "one word") to the "local Jewish leaders" (v. 17). Although they had heard the gospel message from Paul for a second time, they could not reach consensus, and so were in dispute with him, and a number "disbelieved" (ἠπίστουν). Paul quotes Isa. 6:9-10, prefacing it for effect with the words: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet. . . ."

D Hartley discusses in detail the potential background of Is 6:9-10 in 2 Cor 4:4 and asserts that this fact alone provides sufficient grounds to claim Yahweh to be the God of this age: "Isaianic fattening/hardening is best understood as divine (rather than Satanic) deprivation of salvific wisdom. Given its interpretation and connection to Is 6:9-10, it is best to construe ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as Yahweh not the devil".²²⁴

The Pauline text that most comprehensively discusses the unbelief of Israel is Rom 9–11, where Paul makes reference to Isaiah a number of times; in many instances, quoting extensively. In fact, Paul refers to the personal name Isaiah only in Romans, and four of these occur in Romans 9–11 (see 9:27, 29; 10:16, 20). It suggests that Paul viewed the historical figure of Isaiah as standing firmly behind his reading of the phenomenon of Jewish unbelief. References to Isaiah such as Rom 9:29 (Is 1:9; 13:19), 9:33 (Is 8:14; 28:16); 10:21-22 (1 Sm 65:1-2); and 11:7-8 (Is 6:10; 29:10), show how dependent Paul was on the prophet as he develops this distinctive apologetic.²²⁵

4.2.5 Is 1 Enoch the tradition from which Paul hewed the title "the God of this world"?

Our exegetical enquiry has finally brought us to the main subject of our study. The vast majority of scholars believe that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is a unique description

²²⁴ Hartley, "Yahweh is the God," 10.

²²⁵ For a comparative study of Israelite unbelief in 2 Corinthians and Romans, see G W Buchanan, "Paul and the Jews (II Corinthians 3:4 – 4:6 and Romans 11:7 – 10)," in J J Petuchowski ed., *When Jews and Christians Meet: Papers Presented at the Second Bronstein Colloquium on Judeo-Christian Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 141 – 162. For a comprehensive treatment on the role the text of Isaiah played in Paul's thought, see, D R Denny, *The Significance of Isaiah in the Writings of Paul*, Th.D. Dissertation (New Orleans: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), esp. 79 – 85.

coined by Paul, and that no parallel exists in the pre-Pauline literature. However, J Scott has already pointed out that at least two references exist in early Jewish literature that refer to God by using the phrase τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος, and concludes that this significantly increases the likelihood that in 2 Cor 4:4 Paul is in fact referring to God:

The full expression **the god of this age** (*ho theos tou aiōnos toutou*) occurs nowhere else in the NT; hence, there has been some debate whether the articular noun *ho theos* refers to God (as usual in Paul) or to Satan (unattested in Paul). It seems to have gone unnoticed that Daniel 5:4 LXX decries those who have praised idols made with their own hands rather than “the God of the age/world [*ton theon tou aiōnos*] who has power over their [life-]spirit”. Similarly, Tobit 14:6 (in Codex Sinaiticus) expects that “all the nations in the world” will one day praise “the God of the age/world [*ton theon tou aiōnos*]”. Hence, our passage apparently refers to God himself as the one who has blinded the minds of unbelievers, an idea supported by other Pauline passages (cf. 2 Cor 3:14; Rom. 11:8).²²⁶

The strength of the argument that these are parallel phrases is the presence and order of four of the five words under consideration, and the construction of two articular nouns in a genitival relationship. The variation lies in the change of case from ὁ θεός to τὸν θεόν, and in the absence of the demonstrative pronoun “this” in the suggested precedents in Daniel and Tobit. Given that Daniel and Tobit were well-read texts within the milieu of Second Temple Judaism, these examples dispel the notion of “uniqueness” regarding Paul’s description for God in 4:4. They significantly raise the level of plausibility that Paul was using a prevalent, albeit uncommon, manner of referring to God, rather than coining such an unprecedented, lofty, and shocking title for Satan.

Our search for possible antecedents to Paul’s description for God as “The God of This Age” does not end with the references in Daniel and Tobit; another earlier, well-established Jewish text yields an even more potential parallel expression. No commentator, as far as I know, has previously noticed that 1 Enoch (1:4) contains a description for God that is the closest to Paul’s phrase within the total body of extant ancient Greek literature:

²²⁶ Scott, *2 Corinthians*, 85.

καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐπὶ γῆν πατήσῃ ἐπὶ τὸ Σεινὰ ὄρος καὶ φανήσεται ἐκ τῆς παρεμβολῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ φανήσεται ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῶν οὐρανῶν

And the God of the age will march upon earth, upon Mount Sinai, and will be seen outside his camp, and be seen in the power of his strength from the heaven of heavens.²²⁷

Translators of 1 Enoch 1:4 render ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος as “eternal God” on the assumption that it reflects the Hebrew **אֱלֹהֵי הָעוֹלָם**. R H Charles recognizes that the phrase, here, could equally be rendered as “God of the world”, but chooses “eternal God”.²²⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that J Charlesworth translates it as follows: “The God of the Universe, the Holy Great One”.²²⁹ Meanwhile, Charles points to other locations where the similar expression appears: 1 En 58:4; 81:10; 82:7; 84:2.

What are the parallels, and what indicators could help establish if indeed 1 Enoch 1:4 provides Paul with a precedent to call God “The God of this age”? The strongest indicator is certainly that four of the five Pauline terms appear exactly and in exact order and, in the context of 1 Enoch, there is no ambiguity that the referent for ὁ θεός is God. A second positive indicator is that the apocalyptic scene presented by Enoch takes place on Mount Sinai (τὸ Σεινὰ ὄρος). In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul also invokes the rhetoric of Mount Sinai so as to polemically contrast the supra-glorious new covenant in Christ with the covenant of Moses and the Israelites, which was being set aside.²³⁰ Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 suggests that he understood his “rival missionaries” to be presenting Sinai, Moses, and the giving of Torah, as an inherent component of the

²²⁷ See R H Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 5-6, which translates: “The Holy Great One will come forth from His dwelling, and the *eternal God* will tread upon the earth, (even) on Mount Sinai, [And appear from His camp] And appear in the strength of His might from the heaven of heavens”.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

²²⁹ J Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 1:13.

²³⁰ Enoch has a vision of God coming in judgment, reminiscent of the theophanies found in Deuteronomy 33, Judges 5, Habakkuk 3 and Micah 1, but with one crucial difference as pointed out in J Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 48: “In Deuteronomy 33 God comes *from* Sinai. Here he comes from “his dwelling” and will tread from there upon Mount Sinai. The slight change is significant. Sinai has a place in Enoch’s revelation, but it is not the ultimate source”.

Christian “gospel” and as having salvific import. This, Paul vehemently rejects. In fact, like the author of 1 Enoch, Paul sees Sinai and the dispensation of Torah as a place of judgement; a place that symbolizes death (3:7), condemnation (3:9), and impermanence (3:11). Paul’s association with, and possible dependence on the language and thought of 1 Enoch, when he composed 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, could also be argued from the angle of their marked rhetorical similarity.

How is the rhetorical strategy of 1 Enoch similar to what Paul is doing with his argument in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6? One striking similarity is in the language of disjunction. S Davis argues for a radical disjunction between Paul’s conceptualization of the new covenant and his contemporaries’ valuation of the Mosaic Law.²³¹ He recognizes, however, that there are scholars who are “worlds apart as Pauline interpreters” (such as H Räisänen and S Hafemann), who unite in denying any “disjunctive language in 2 Corinthians”.²³² Davis contends, however, that Paul maintains a clear “theological separation from Moses and Sinai that is inspired by his interpretation of prophetic disjunction”.²³³ What is most pertinent to our discussion is how Paul’s disjunctive language may be related to the literature of 1 Enoch. It is well known that Paul shared with his contemporaries the practice of using “prophetic texts to assist in the interpretation of Torah texts”. Thus, in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, at least Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel figure prominently as interpretative prompters of Paul’s thought. What is not common among Paul’s contemporaries, though, was the kind of rhetoric where prophetic texts were read *against* Torah texts. In fact, the only other literature where this feature is prominent (where the prophetic texts are used to criticise *Torah* texts) is 1 Enoch:

Generally Paul uses prophetic texts to assist in the interpretation of Torah texts, but this is not unique among his contemporaries. In 2 Corinthians 3, however, more than any other Pauline text, Paul uses the biblical prophets *against* the Torah and Moses. The disjunctive “not like Moses” and implied “not like the

²³¹ See S K Davis, *The Antithesis of the Ages: Paul’s Reconfiguration of Torah* (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2002).

²³² *Ibid.*, 184-185.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 185.

Sinai Torah” are unique in early Jewish texts, paralleled only in 1 Enoch in a less explicit form.²³⁴

The discovery and publication of the Ethiopic *1 Enoch* in the nineteenth century provoked greater interest in the study of the genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It also opened the way to consider how the “Judaism” of the first century constituted the interweaving of radically divergent traditions that vied against each other from the beginning of the Second Temple era. It is now recognized that among the major traditions that lent themselves to Jewish theological thought, 1 Enoch constituted the fountainhead of one that stood in striking contrast to the Torah-centric tradition that later dominated Judaism and eventually led to post-Jamnian rabbinic theology.²³⁵ In fact, the fictive reconstruction of the period of Enoch was most likely intended to imply the superiority, by priority, of this literature over and against the revelation to Moses on Sinai. J Collins agrees: “We may also say that the tradition involved separatist tendencies from the start, by its appeal to the higher revelation of Enoch, over and above the Mosaic Torah”.²³⁶

Another factor strengthens the case for 1 Enoch 1 to have been in the background to Paul’s thought as he composed 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 and this is the direct quotation of 1 Enoch 1:9 in the Epistle of Jude (v. 14). D Charles examines the literary strategy behind Jude’s explicit quotation of 1 Enoch, and points firstly to the fact that this Jewish apocalyptic book enjoyed “many and diverse” roles within Jewish tradition and, in addition, that “the influence of 1 Enoch in the NT . . . can hardly be disputed”.²³⁷ With regard to the connections between Jude and 1 Enoch Charles comments:

²³⁴ Davis, *Antithesis*, 185; italics added.

²³⁵ See F J Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 126 – 127: “Numerous scholars have noticed that the Enoch literature does not put much stress on Torah. It may represent a Judaism not fully consonant with what we think as mainstream, centered on Torah and priesthood. The discussion is ongoing and has not resulted in consensus. A school of thought sees “Enochic Judaism” as different from and opposed to more mainstream Judaism as represented by Torah and the Jerusalem priesthood”.

²³⁶ J Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 79.

²³⁷ J D Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Mississauga, ON: Associated University Presses, 1993), 153-154.

Jude and 1 Enoch share in common numerous touch-points: theophany, the disenfranchisement of angels, the recurring antithesis between the righteous and the godly, cosmic disorder linked to spiritual causes, and the certainty of final judgment. Both writings attempt to cultivate faithfulness among true believers who are surrounded by sinners and apostasy.²³⁸

Some of D Charles's "touch-points" could also apply in the case of Paul's composition of 2 Cor 2:14–4:6, particularly, "theophany", "the recurrent antithesis between the righteous and the godly", "certainty of final judgment", and the "attempt to cultivate faithfulness among true believers who are surrounded by sinners and apostasy". In fact, even our suggested rhetography of the Mount Carmel battle between Elijah and the prophets of Baal has in common the theme of apostasy and the "attempt to cultivate faithfulness among true believers". Dealing as he is with the danger of apostasy among the Corinthian Christians, and seemingly fighting a lone battle to press for their faithfulness to the gospel, it is possible that Paul drew inspiration from the traditions associated with Enoch and the apocalypse that bore his name.

Another intertextual reference to 2 Cor 4:4 complements our discussion about the influence of 1 Enoch in Paul's thought at this point. This support emerges from the sole reference to φωτισμός (2 Cor 4:4, 6) in the Pseudepigraphal literature; uniquely found in the Testament of Levi 14:4. There are several important connections between the context of T Levi (14:1-4) and the texts of 2 Cor 4:1-6 and 1 Enoch 1:4. First, T Levi harks back to the Enoch literature as its authority behind the subject that is discussed in 14:1-4: "And now, my children, I know from the writings of Enoch that in the end-time you will act impiously against the Lord" (14:1). Second, it shares with both 2 Corinthians and 1 Enoch the genre of a trenchant criticism against the religious leadership and distorted teachings of its time. Third, the correspondences in the language of 2 Cor 4:1-6 and T Levi 14:4 are significant. Both texts uniquely use φωτισμός within each respective corpus, and, where the former speaks of the unbelievers being "blinded", the latter talks about the danger of Israel "being darkened" (σκοτίσθητε, aorist, passive, subjunctive of σκοτιζομαι, "to darken").

²³⁸ Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 153.

One final comment supports my proposal that 1 Enoch must be recognized as the chief candidate as the source of Paul's language in his formulation of "the God of this age", and this pertains to the nature of God-language in 1 Enoch. I pointed out earlier that the God-language of 1 Enoch 1:4 is echoed in other texts such as 58:4; 81:10; 82:7; and 84:2, although the Greek versions of these are not preserved.²³⁹ However, a remarkable cross-reference to 1 Enoch 1:4 exists in an available fragment of 8:4–9:4, which had been preserved in Syncellus, with two other versions available for comparison. The text in question is designated as G^{s1}, with the comparative texts designated as G^g and G^{s2}. Charles explains that of these G^s texts are closer to the original than G^g, and this lends added weight to the following note.²⁴⁰

1 Enoch 9:4 is a delightful piece of declarative praise, using several direct expressions for God. Among these is the phrase, θεὸς τῶν αἰώνων, "God of the ages". The full import of this way of speaking about the God of Jewish faith can be best appreciated only in its doxological context: Καὶ εἶπον τῷ κυρίῳ τῶν αἰώνων Σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ κύριος τῶν κύριων καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ θεὸς τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ὁ θρόνος τῆς δόξης σου εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τῶν αἰώνων καὶ τὸ ὄνομά σου ἅγιον καὶ εὐλογημένον εἰς πάντα τοὺς αἰῶνας ("You are the God of Gods and Lord of Lords and King of Kings and God of the *ages*, and the throne of your glory is for all the generations of the ages and your Name is holy and blessed to all the ages"). Not only does 1 Enoch 9:4 demonstrate that it was natural to call God "the God of the ages" in a concatenation of declarative praise, but by its thrice-used term "ages" it also belies the insinuation that the noun αἰών, ος must hint to the interpreter that an evil, Satanic dominion is in view.

Thus, it is the notable similarity of Paul's thought in 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 to the Enochic corpus that adds weight to the suggestion that the latter may be the rock from which Paul

²³⁹ See Charles, *Enoch*, xiv.

²⁴⁰ The Greek text of 1 Enoch 9:4 in G^{s1} and the parallels G^g and G^{s2} are provided in an appendix, and taken from Charles, *Enoch*, 282.

hewed his unique title for God.²⁴¹ The only resistance to the suggestion that Paul may be influenced to adopt ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος from its first appearance in 1 Enoch 1:4 could come from Paul's additional τουτου, which results in the phrase “the God of this age/world”. Can we find any reason for Paul to make such a modification? Is there a simple explanation why he emphatically refers to God as the God of this world? A proposal in the affirmative must await the next discussion of intertextual references for 4:1-6.

4.2.6 Back to the beginning: couching the Pauline new covenant in new-creation language

Although scholars consider the clause ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπών, ἐκ σκότους φῶς λάμπει, “Because the God who said, ‘Out of darkness, light will shine’” to be a recollection of Gn 1:3 (“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’”), others argue that the more likely source of the quotation is Isa. 9:2 (9:1 LXX): “People, who are going about in darkness, see, a great light! Those [who are] living in [the] land, even in the shadow of death, a light will shine on you”.²⁴² Yet, is an either/or dichotomy necessary? It is evident that Paul consistently works not with single texts in watertight compartments, but rather with networks of texts.²⁴³ C Stockhausen has argued that Paul, being a “skilled interpreter” of the scriptures by training, whose letters “provide ample evidence of intricate exegesis of texts”, would have found the exegetical methods in vogue in first-century Judaism of great use when writing his treatises. In this context, she draws our attention to the exegetical method of *gezera shava*: “the hook-word association of texts was very possibly the simplest, earliest, and most frequently used exegetical and literary

²⁴¹ David, *Antithesis*, 188: “Although their different genres separate them, there is much in Paul that is reminiscent of the Enochic corpus, including the disjunctive relationship to Torah as divine Wisdom”.

²⁴² See the discussion in Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 314 – 316; the merits for relating 4:6 to Gen. 1:3 – 4 is that a number of key terms are found in both texts: ὁ θεός, εἰπών, φῶς, and σκότος, but λάμπω replaces γινόμεναι in Genesis; as for the advantages with regard to Isaiah 9:2 (9:1 LXX), both texts share φῶς, σκότος and λάμπω, with the exact phrase, φῶς λάμπει appearing. Isaiah however lacks ὁ θεός and εἰπών, and the speaker there is not God.

²⁴³ Sandnes, *Paul – One of the Prophets*, 144: “Some scholars hold that Paul is primarily indebted to Isaiah here . . . we doubt this. Paul seems rather to quote Gen 1:3. In that quotation he may also have drawn upon Isa 9:2, but the motifs of darkness and enlightenment have become simple metaphor-language for conversion”.

technique of Paul's time. . . . According to this method, two texts may be associated with each other through the common occurrence of the same word in each text".²⁴⁴ Such a "hook-word association" methodology has been seen already in the several examples of intertextuality visible in 4:1-6.

The expressions in Gn 1:3-4 and Is 9:1 (LXX) share both linguistic and conceptual common ground, and hence, would have served Paul well as he pressed home his argument in 4:1-6. In addition to the shared terms in the three passages, they also share the all-important theme of a divinely ordained new beginning. While this may seem obvious in Genesis, we might say that Is 9:1-7 presents one of the most explicit and potent eschatological texts in Jewish literature. It inspired hope in the restoration of a disordered world. The experience of darkness, scarcity, war, and temporality would be reversed and replaced by light, abundance, and peace in perpetuity. In 2 Cor 2:14-4:6, too, Paul contrasts two ages by enumerating their antithetical elements. Thus, the Mosaic age of the "Old Covenant" that is "being set aside", is marked by the ministry of death and condemnation, veils, ignorance, hardening, blinding, and darkness. On the contrary, the Messianic age of the "New Covenant" that is of "surpassing glory", is marked by the ministry of the Spirit and righteousness, unveiled hearts and faces, knowledge, seeing intently, light, and enlightenment.

Nonetheless, we note that echoes of Gn 1:1-3 sound in the background of Paul's thought as well.²⁴⁵ Unlike his missionary rivals, Paul does not see Christ merely enabling once-rebellious people to return to faithful adherence to the terms of the Mosaic covenant.²⁴⁶ He understands the apostolic gospel as presenting a paradigm shift: the individual that "turns to the Lord" transitions from the frustration and darkness of the old order to an

²⁴⁴ Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, 55.

²⁴⁵ For a brief discussion on "three strong terminological connections between Genesis 1 and 2 Corinthians 4," see, C Newman, *Paul's Glory – Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 220 – 222.

²⁴⁶ For a thoroughgoing argument that, for Paul's Corinthian rivals, the essential interpretation of new covenant was a divine enabling to fulfill the Law, see T Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant* (Möhr Siebeck, 2007, 188): "Under the conditions of the new or restored covenant God would, by means of his spirit, transform the minds of individuals so that they would be able perfectly to fulfill Torah".

entirely new order of light and transformation. Later on, in 2 Cor 5:17, he presents this thought most succinctly: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ [he is] a new creation; the old has passed away, look, everything has become new”. The new covenant is not a mere reformation of the existing age, it has made possible a new creation, and this is what makes Genesis 1 so apt a text to end the first apologia.²⁴⁷

Paul’s reasons for referring to Genesis 1 may go much deeper than simply to claim that the apostolic community has been graciously enlightened “by the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (4:6). In fact it may hold the key to Paul’s modified version of the 1 Enoch title for God: “the God of this age”. In the course of our discussion we have belaboured the point that one of the greatest challenges to Paul’s ministry was the rejection of the Messiah Jesus by the majority of ethnic Israelites, both in Palestine and in the Hellenistic world. This phenomenon, where the very people that cherished the scriptures, covenants, traditions, and messianic hopes, found the presentation of Jesus utterly unconvincing, posed a major obstacle to the credibility of the apostolic gospel, and indeed prompted the church to formulate an apologetic to explain Jewish unbelief. Paul, perhaps more than any other early Christian thinker, grapples with this conundrum, and, in his later letter to the Romans, presents an extensive apologetic in chapters 9–11. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians before Romans, and was forced to respond to this particular challenge posed by his missionary rivals. They had raised questions about Paul’s apostleship. Was it not bogus, and his gospel deficient, since the Jewish people found them both so unconvincing? If, on the other hand, Paul claimed that his apostleship and gospel were divinely ordained, how do we escape the conclusion, then, that God appeared to be powerless to even convince his own people of the veracity of his revelation of salvation? Davies articulates this thought well:

But the very validity or efficacy of the gospel which he preached was poignantly, even agonizingly, challenged for Paul by the refusal of his own people to accept it. Their rejection of Jesus as the Christ called into question for Paul and for his

²⁴⁷ Newman, *Glory – Christology*, 221-222: “Paul’s Christophonic dance with Genesis provides a sense of closure. Genesis begins with the story of creation . . . most importantly how God created humanity. Now, in and through Christophony, God has effected a second creation. ἐλαψμεν (4:6) recalls the moment when the Christophonic φωτισμόν burst upon Paul, in which he “saw” . . . the “light of the gospel” of the “glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4, 6). Here Paul favorably compares his Christophonic “enlightening” with the first creation light (Gen. 1:3 LXX)”.

readers what must have sounded like exaggerated claims for the power of God unto salvation through Christ.²⁴⁸

In Jewish eschatological thinking, the old age, dominated by pagan rule and marked by the apostasy of Israel, was to be completely replaced by the dawning of the new, messianic age; one following on from the other. In Paul's new Christian worldview, given his eschatological notion of the already-not-yet, the old age of Mosaic obsolescence, Jewish unbelief, and even hostile rejection of God's messiah, simultaneously coexisted with the in-breaking of the new-creation age of Christ – proclaimed by the apostolic gospel and evidenced by the manifestation of the Spirit. Paul, as an orthodox Pharisee, must assert all this without compromising his commitment to the sovereignty of God. I propose that in Gn 1:1-3 (possibly together with Ex 10:20-29), he discovered a way to advance such an innovative discourse.

The correct interpretation of the syntax of Gn 1:1-3 has been the subject of a “complex and protracted debate”, with at least four major proposals being advanced to explain it.²⁴⁹ The view that has the greatest claim to antiquity and widest acceptance sees Gen. 1:1 as a main clause describing the first act of creation. Gen. 1:2 and 1:3 “describe subsequent phases in God's creative activity”.²⁵⁰ Wenham points out: “The versions and the Masoretic pointing imply this was the standard view from the third century B.C. (LXX) through to the tenth century A.D. (MT)”.²⁵¹ It is, therefore, most likely that Paul also held to a similar reading in which Gen. 1:1 was the overall statement about creation, followed by two clarifications about the “phases” involved in that divine act.

The text of Gen. 1:1–3 (LXX) is as follows:

¹Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν
(In the beginning **God made** the heaven and the earth)

²⁴⁸ W D Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel,” *NTS* 24 (1978), 13.

²⁴⁹ G Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 11-13.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

² ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος
(*But the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the abyss and the Spirit of God was over the water*)

³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς
(*And God said, "Let there be light". And there was light*)

As Paul views this text, he clearly sees the description of two contrasting realities depicted in v. 2 and v. 3, respectively. The one pertains to this earth or world, described in terms of formlessness, darkness and a bottomless abyss. Nevertheless, this earth (see vv.1-2, τὴν γῆν . . . ἡ δὲ γῆ) was, in its chaotic and unattractive form, a sovereign act of God (ὁ θεός, 1:1). In v.3ff, however, he sees a radically different and attractive reality, and notices how that same sovereign God (ὁ θεός) commands the creation of light, declares its worth, and with it commences the complete ordering of creation. It is this that he explicitly states in 2 Cor 4:6,²⁵² because he consistently maintained that God's act of New Creation (as in Gen. 1:3) commenced with the ministry of Jesus and his apostles, who were the first fruit or the foundation from which the new order proceeded.

Paul could very clearly see two contemporaneous and contradictory realities: the old age of life-less, Spirit-less, and Christ-less Mosaic religion, that he had once participated in and promoted, alongside the new age of the Messiah Jesus with its present experience of the freedom of the Spirit and intimacy with the glory of God. This unprecedented perspective did not push Paul to capitulate to any traditional dualistic framework of thought. He neither adopted the platonic (and later gnostic) notion of ontological dualism – assigning Israel's sinful rebellion to her nature and thus exonerating God of responsibility – neither did he collapse into Persian (and Qumranic) notions of ethical dualism, where the two opposing powers of a good God and an evil Satan vied with each other for the loyalty and servitude of humankind. To take the latter view would, in effect, be to barter away a fundamental doctrine of the Hebrew scriptures and pharisaic religion: the inviolable sovereignty of God. We may, however,

²⁵² Paul's elaborated quotation, ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν, ἐκ σκοτῶν φῶς may well be because he is conflating the sense of Genesis 1:2 – 3 (v.2 refers to σκοτος), as well as bringing together ideas from Isa. 9:1 (LXX) also to bear.

argue that Paul's view incorporated a *phenomenological dualism*, the parallel existence of two "ages" or "worlds" which, however, did not diminish his view of the absolute power and will of God. Paul's careful exegesis of the Hebrew scriptures in the light of his own experience of Christ and the Spirit, enabled him to assert that just as God, who is the God of the new-creation age, had shone on Paul and the new community to benefit from "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (4:6), so that very same God, who is also the God of this age, was sovereignly responsible for the blinding of unbelieving Jews so that they were prevented from benefiting from that same "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (4:4).

4.2.7 Exodus 10:20-29: another textual echo in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6?

Another OT incident that illustrates my suggestion above about "phenomenological" dualism within the confines of the sovereignty of God is reported in the book of Exodus (LXX, 10:20-29). Although no direct allusion to the passage is found in 2 Cor 4:1-6, given its close association of language and thought with Gn 1:1-3, I suggest that this particular narrative constitutes part of Paul's rhetography intended for an audience sufficiently familiar with, and interested in, the Exodus narratives.

The narrative of the ninth plague over Egypt, being the penultimate, is therefore the most ominous in light of the impending doom. The account is prefaced by the statement that, "Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart" (10:20) which, as we have seen, commences a trajectory that connects Isaiah's "hardening" with the multiple appearances of the theme in the NT. In particular, we note how Paul makes much of Pharaoh's hardening in Rom 9:16-18, to emphasize God's sovereignty in the face of human obduracy. As Buchanan puts it: "Why did not all Jews respond? . . . Paul found the answer he needed in the Scripture. Jews did not respond, because God had hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes, just as he had done with Pharaoh".²⁵³ The hardened heart of Pharaoh, then, prompts a judgement of darkness over Egypt, "a darkness that can be felt" (10:21). God's direct speech here, followed by Moses' action (vv 21-22), incorporating γενηθήτω σκότος . . . ἐγένετο σκότος, is reminiscent of Gen. 1:3,

²⁵³ Buchanan, "Paul and the Jews," 158.

γενηθήτω φῶς. . . ἐγένετο φῶς, and underscores the possibility that the Exodus narrative presents a picture of the reversal of creation. Yet, perhaps the most significant factor is that concurrent to the Egyptian experience, where “it was darkness . . . upon *all* the land of Egypt” (v 22, ἐγένετο σκότος . . . ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου), “yet all the sons of Israel had light in the places where they lived” (v23, πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ἦν φῶς ἐν πᾶσιν, οἷς κατεγίνοντο).

The situation then, at the time of Paul, is a catastrophic irony in the light of the Exodus narrative above. Paul sees that in his contemporary setting that “the ministry”, “the gospel”, “the glory”, and “the light” are going out to “all” (3:18) and are commended to the “conscience of all humanity” (4:2) – referring to the increasing numbers of Gentiles together with a “remnant” among the Jews, who like Paul, have been illuminated by the “light of the gospel”. On the other hand, “the sons of Israel” are “prevented from seeing” (3:7, 13) the glory of the new covenant, which is the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”. We see, both in the Exodus narrative and 2 Corinthians, the sovereignty of God ruling over the simultaneous experiences of darkness versus light, of hardening and paralysis versus freedom and movement, and of blindness versus unrestricted vision.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

At the beginning of this study I raised a question about the validity of the claim that the unique Pauline phrase, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (2 Cor 4:4), is an unambiguous reference to the devil. I suggested that despite near-unanimous support in the post-Reformation period, this preferred interpretation is open to critical review on a number of fronts, not least to do with the terminology of ὁ θεός, which, in its numerous occurrences in Paul, always refers to God. In addition, I pointed out that the phrase occurs in the context of the peculiar early Christian discourse on the phenomenon of Jewish resistance or obduracy, when confronted with the good news preached by the apostles, and here, by the apostle Paul. As in similar references elsewhere, including other Pauline texts, we find a common Christian apologetic arguing that the obduracy of many Jews was the consequence of divine hardening or blinding. This means that the most natural implication of 2 Cor 4:4 is that God had blinded the minds of the (Jewish) unbelievers. Another very strong indication that Paul meant God when he used the epithet “the God of this world/age” is the tradition of early Christian exegesis, with the majority of the patristic writers, and their successors as late as the thirteenth century CE, concurring that Paul’s referent was in fact the Christian God.

I also pointed out that the modern interpretation of the phrase as a reference to the devil has strong practical implications on three fronts. The first is theological. By the ascription of the exclusive divine title ὁ θεός to the devil, this verse would provide the primary scriptural warrant for calling the devil “God”. The second implication is missiological. To adopt such an interpretation for 2 Cor 4:4 insinuates that an unspecified number of unbelieving people are vulnerable to preventive blinding by Satan that would effectively prevent them from “seeing the light of the gospel of Christ”. Such an idea is alien to the missiology of the New Testament, except in the case of unbelieving Jews, who are said to be hardened and blinded by God. The third implication has to do with linguistics and the theory of translation. In the English language, at the least, it demands that the lower case ‘g’ must be used in translation, but several English translations have gone much further and have taken license to render

the epithet more unambiguous, using expressions such as “evil god”, “fashionable god”, “the devil”, or “Satan”. Furthermore, given that English translations and commentaries are commonly consulted in Bible translation projects worldwide, a misunderstanding of a text, such as here, has the potential to be multiplied exponentially.

I noted, however, that the modern interpretation of this phrase is not without strong support. First, very nearly every major commentator on the verse, since the sixteenth century, has concluded that although unusual, there need be no doubt that Paul has coined a special epithet for the devil in calling him “the god of this age”. Second, the description “this age” bears with it the connotations of Jewish apocalypticism with its clear formulations of a present, evil age in which the devil rules the temporal world, and wields enough power to prevent women and men from being able even to see the saving light of the gospel. Third, this phrase is very similar to another reference to the devil found in the Gospel of John where he is called “the prince of this world” (Jn 12:31), and, therefore, the phrase in 2 Cor 4:4 is evidently construed along similar lines. Fourth, “the god” is said to blind people to the gospel, and such a possibility is inconceivable of the God worshipped by Christians, whose express desire is to shine a light on those who are already in the dark. Fifth, the object of this blinding are “the unbelievers”, which is frequently used in 1 Corinthians to refer to pagan people who naturally do the will of the devil (1 Cor 7:15; 10:27).

In order to establish my thesis, I adopted a three-pronged approach to the research. First, I surveyed the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4. The objective was to establish if the current preferred interpretation of the phrase has been universally supported through Christian history or if the alternative has at any point received wide support. Second, I critically examined the two most common arguments to which commentators appeal in order to assert that ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is Satan and not God. One argument is that Paul was an “apocalyptic thinker”: hence, his perspective, categories of thought, and language were drawn from Jewish apocalypticism. The other is the claim that Paul was dependent on speculations about Satan that were popular in the period of Second Temple Judaism, and so it followed that Paul would have had no difficulty with the notion that Satan exercised territorial and temporal rule over the world. My third and most important concern was exegetical. What did 2 Cor 4:4 mean in the first century historical context of the apostle

Paul and his Corinthian congregation? How does the literary context of 2 Corinthians, and indeed that of early Christian texts, help to elucidate what Paul meant when he deployed the phrase, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου?

In Chapter two I pointed out that the interpretation of this verse has been embroiled in controversy from the very outset because the heretic Marcion seized upon it as a convenient justification for his peculiar doctrine of two Gods. In rebutting Marcion, 2 Cor 4:4 became the focus of hermeneutical debate, and at an early stage Irenaeus proposed a textual emendation to make effective his anti-Marcionite exposition, and so read the text as “God has blinded the unbelievers of this age”. Although most succeeding interpreters of Paul explicitly cited this emended reading to show that the phrase referred to God, their arguments were more complex and convincing to the Christian communities to which they belonged. In fact, this was the predominant view for very nearly the first fifteen centuries CE. These early exegetes inhabited the cognitive environment closest to Paul, and their witness is of utmost importance. I argued, therefore, that it would be a monumental disservice to Christian history, if we were to dismiss the contributions of these traditional interpreters of Paul, by caricaturing them as people who violated the text in the heat of their controversies against the heresiarchs, and charging that they did nothing but misrepresent Paul’s intended meaning.

I also researched the roots of the modern preferred interpretation of 2 Cor 4:4, and presented my findings that the earliest exegetes that succeeded in diverting the stream of interpretive tradition were Erasmus and Calvin. Erasmus set out his views on the text in his annotations to the New Testament, and essentially introduced certain traditions that would dominate in the ensuing discourse. He dismissed the teachings of the Fathers and proposed instead that it was “simpler” to read “Satan” rather than “God” in 2 Cor 4:4. I was able to argue that, thereafter, Calvin, being a figure of equal or greater stature, inadvertently collaborated with Erasmus in advancing this new hermeneutic. His writings on 2 Corinthians followed Erasmus’s work almost immediately, but he went further. His commentary on 2 Cor 4:4 launched a brief but scathing criticism of the traditional interpreters and effectively warned all who followed that subscribing to the view of the Fathers would be tantamount

to admitting both to a lack of “sound judgement” and to a general inability “to read Paul with a calm mind”.

In conclusion, I argued that it was this sixteenth century double blow that, in effect, reset the reading of 2 Cor 4:4. Commentators following Calvin have done little to critique this received tradition, and even when voices of dissent have arisen sporadically, they were not taken seriously because of a “rooted prejudice in favour of the common opinion” (so Clarke). It is incumbent then on the present generation of scholars to rectify these historical errors and to do justice to the presentation of 2 Cor 4:4.

One of the strongest arguments in favour of the preferred interpretation is the claim that Jewish apocalypticism provides the background to Paul’s thought, and in particular, that his expression “this age” is dependent on a common apocalyptic notion of temporal or historical dualism. With this in mind, my task in chapter three was twofold: 1) to trace the roots, the development and the character of Jewish apocalypticism so as to confirm to what extent Paul was an “apocalyptic thinker”; and, 2) to investigate the notion of temporal dualism so as to ascertain the veracity that it was the *sine qua non* of Jewish apocalypticism. The research confirmed that in many ways Paul’s thought reflected the categories of apocalyptic thought, but equally that Paul was not limited to operating within that framework. In fact, he shows considerable reticence towards typical apocalyptic terms such as “power”, “rulers”, “lordships”, or “thrones”; and he jettisons apocalyptic timetabling, speculations about the architecture of heaven, and elaborate discussions about angels and demons. I have argued that one may only find an ambivalent Paul rather than an apocalyptic Paul, because although he was comfortable in the world of apocalypticism, he did not, therefore, uncritically perpetuate apocalyptic thought.

As for Paul’s alleged dependence on temporal dualism in apocalyptic thought, my study led to new findings that seriously challenge the common assumption. I drew attention to the fact that while the Pauline corpus and the synoptic tradition together account for eleven references to the phrase “this age”, such an expression is completely absent from the apocalyptic texts that predate Paul. The apocalyptic texts that adopt this expression are 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, both of which are products of the late first century CE. Consequently, this

finding is a serious blow to the allegation that Paul was merely subscribing to an apocalyptic worldview when he spoke of “the god of this age”. I argued, instead, that even if the concept of temporal dualism must be invoked for the Pauline uses of “this age”, it is entirely possible to see this as emerging from Paul’s dependence on the traditions associated with Jesus’ teachings, as well as the Hebrew prophets who were the progenitors of the concept that the present world of pagan rule would give way to God’s eschatological ideal.

In Chapter four, I set out to understand the background to Paul’s conceptualizations of Satan by examining the origins of the Satan-concept in Jewish antiquity and tracing its subsequent development. It was possible to demonstrate that beginning with the concept of an adversary-figure, initially acting as a divine agent, the Satan-concept in the Hebrew Bible developed into a personal, evil being who acted to undermine the life of God’s people. However, the greatest and most daring speculations on evil and the demonic follow the period of the exile, when the devil grows to become a “semi-autonomous archfiend who wields the forces of evil against God’s will”.⁷⁹¹ I noted that during the Second Temple period, theories about Satan’s origins multiplied, he was invested with several aliases, and he became the hierarchical head of a vast dominion with numerous lesser beings subjected to his command. Against this backdrop Paul’s satanology is surprisingly plain. He only refers to “Satan” in seven verses in the undisputed Paulines, and although he speaks of Satan as a personal being of power and deceitful scheming, and advises caution as a strategy against him, Paul manifests no great apprehension of his power. By not elaborating on a satanic kingdom, nor investing multiple titles on God’s enemy, Paul effectively strips Satan of any grandeur he had achieved within Second Temple Judaism. Paul’s characteristic “low view” of Satan is a serious challenge to the claim that Paul would have found no difficulty presenting Satan as a “semi-autonomous archfiend” who exercised such dominion so as to be called “the god of this age”.

Since my task was primarily exegetical, that is to determine the most likely meaning that Paul intended when he coined this phrase in 2 Cor 4:4, I adopted socio-rhetorical interpretation as my interpretive strategy. In chapter six, after determining that 4:1-6

⁷⁹¹ P L Day, *An Adversary in Heaven* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 63.

constituted the immediate literary unit to which the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου belonged, I proceeded to analyse the rhetorical exigence that motivated its composition. It was possible to argue that Paul was writing 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 in response to twin pressures he was facing: 1) the threat by a distinct group of “opponents”, who were determined to undermine him and exert greater influence over the church in Corinth; and, 2) the threat of losing the loyalty of the church in Corinth on account of their loss of confidence in Paul, and because of their attraction to the rival missionaries’ teaching and rhetoric. One of the strongest arguments brought against Paul’s credibility as an apostle was that most Jewish people found his gospel-message (argued from the Jewish scriptures and about a Jewish messiah), obscure and incomprehensible. Paul conceded the latter – that his gospel may have been veiled to certain people (4:3a) – but refused to accept that the problem lay with him or with the gospel he preached.

Analysing the *inner texture* of the text led to several significant findings, of which the following are most relevant to my thesis.

- 1) Paul’s use of ὁ θεός in 4:4 is consistent with his “God language” in general, and since there is no indication to the contrary, there is no justification to assign a different referent to it, such as Satan.
- 2) Paul’s innovative categorization of “the perishing” (4:3, τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις) provides insight into his radical reimagining of humanity. No longer was salvation contingent on ethnic identity, but humanity was now divided on how people, whether Jews or Gentiles, responded to the preaching of the apostolic gospel. He is explicit in stating that each new category contained within it *both* Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23-24, cf. 1:18).
- 3) Critical evidence in Paul’s use of ἐν οἷς (4:4) to argue that he was imagining the τῶν ἀπίστων of 4:4 to be a subset of the τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις of 4:3. I have argued that this construction provides crucial evidence that Paul was in fact thinking about a highly specific group when he used the term τῶν ἀπίστων. He meant the unbelieving Jews within the more general category of “the perishing”: the subgroup that were unable to believe because they had been incapacitated by God.
- 4) The implication in Paul’s use of the rare verb τυφλώω, that the agent of the blinding was, in fact, God. The verb τυφλώω occurs in Jn 12 as part of a quotation of Is 6:10, and the phraseology also includes a parallel verb, πωρώω (‘harden’), which is used by Paul

extremely rarely: once, in the context of our text (2 Cor 3:14) and once in Rom 11:8. Both times he uses this verb, Paul is arguing for divine judicial hardening of ethnic Israel. I argued, therefore, that the use of the particular verb, τυφλώω, again points to the subject of the verb being God, since such an action was associated with him in early Christian writings.

My investigation into the *intertexture* of 2 Cor 4:1-6 has resulted in establishing much stronger arguments for the plausibility of the thesis that by “the God of this age” Paul was making reference to the God of his Judeo-Christian faith.

- 1) I proposed that the rhetography implied by the unique Pauline expression τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης, “the secrets of the shame”, pointed to the prophet Elijah’s lone contest against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. I suggested that Paul was insinuating that his “opponents” in 2 Corinthians stood in the same tradition as the Baal prophets that opposed Elijah.
- 2) Isa. 6:9-10 informed Paul’s apologetic in the face of the challenge of Jewish obduracy. This was the singlemost important text, from earliest Christianity up until the patristic era, to provide canonical authority to explain the imperviousness of Jews to the preaching of the gospel. Although Paul does not directly quote it in his writings, a number of scholars are convinced that in 2 Cor 2:14-4:6 he clearly alludes to it by the language he uses in 3:14 and 4:4.
- 3) I proposed that the Book of 1 Enoch is the most likely source for Paul’s unique expression, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου because the phrase in 1 Enoch 1:4, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος, “the God of the world/age”, is the closest parallel to Paul’s phrase in extant Greek literature. In addition to the fact that the Enochic epithet repeats *verbatim* the first four words of Paul’s five-word construction, I presented other reasons to support the case for 1 Enoch 1:4 to be considered the most likely antecedent to Paul’s phrase.
- 4) The allusion to Gn 1:1-3 suggests that this Hebrew Bible text was the theological template on which Paul constructed the parallel structure of 2 Cor 4:4 and 6. I have argued that the allusion to Gen. 1:3 in the words, “The God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’” (2 Cor 4:6), directs the interpreter to consider more carefully the extent to which the former text shapes the formulation of Paul’s thought. The effect of the parallel clauses, 4:4 and 4:6, is that they force the interpreter to read them as a pair in

order to discover how the meaning of each is informed and advanced by the other. Many readers follow this clue and appreciate these as Semitic antithetic parallels, but conclude that the first clause pertains to Satan and the second to God. I have proposed that Gn 1:1-3 (LXX) subverts such an interpretation because the difference lies not in the subject performing the action but in the state or condition of that which results from his creation. I have argued that in our text, to set ὁ θεός in 4:4 as an antithesis to ὁ θεός in 4:6 would be to force an unnatural reading. Rather, by following Paul's allusive clue to Gen. 1:1-3, we are able to see that what he had wanted to emphasise was that the One God who had exercised the prerogative to enlighten Paul (4:6) was the same God who had decisively acted to blind the "unbelievers" (4:4).

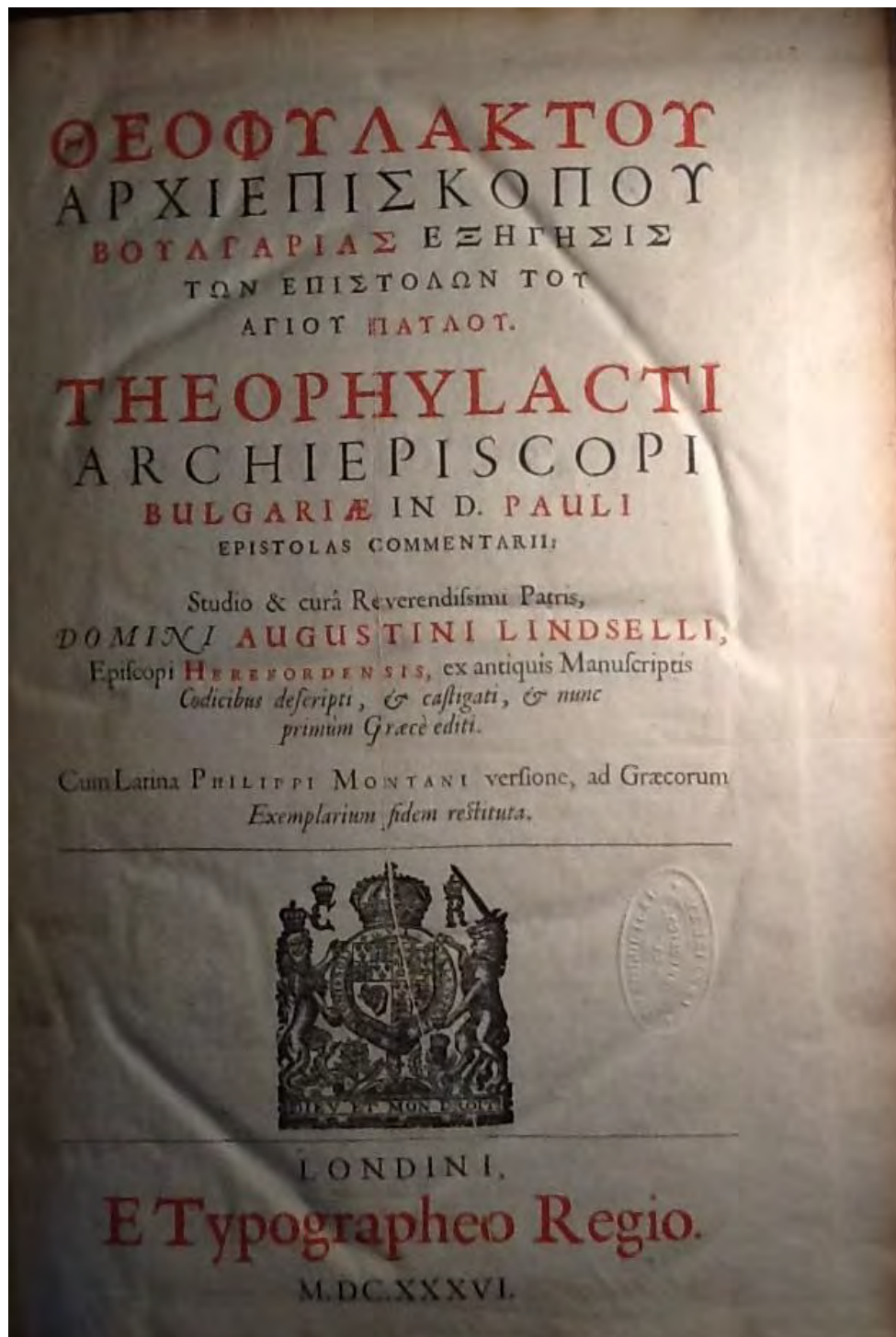
In conclusion, then, I submit that the most likely meaning that may be assigned to Paul's expression ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος is that by it he was referring to the God of Paul's Judeo-Christian heritage, and not to the devil. This conclusion is to be preferred because it is exegetically sound, traditionally attested, theologically uncomplicated, and missiologically significant.

If my conclusions are correct in respect to the different areas covered by my thesis, then it is almost certain that from the period of Erasmus and Calvin onwards that 2 Cor 4:4 has been consistently misinterpreted. This, in turn, means that those who wish to preserve the Satan-interpretation of Erasmus and Calvin will need to re-examine the evidence for their positions in order to refute my findings in a convincing way. Future translations of 2 Cor 4:4 will also need to reflect this conclusion about "the God of this age".

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Theophylact of Ohrid

Theophylacti Archiepiscopi Bulgariae. *In D. Pauli Epistolas commentarii*, 353-356.
London: 1636.



ambiantes in astutia. Proinde hæc sunt illa quæ contumeliam pariant, quæ scilicet astutia transiguntur. Sin de turpibus actionibus isthuc intelligas, nihil mirum: nam hujusmodi etiam sunt pseudapostoli.

Neque adulterantes verbum Dei.] Non solum vita, inquit, nostra simplex est & pura, & experta sceleris, verumetiam doctrina nostra & verbum fraude carent. Non enim quicquam externæ sapientiæ admiscemus ipsi, aut quicquam adulatorium, aut ex verbo pecunias colligimus: aut jam quidem hoc, jam verò illud docemus, pro temporum & personarum opportunitate, perinde ac pseudapostoli.

Sed in manifestatione veritatis commendantes nos ipsos ad omnem conscientiam hominum coram Deo.] Pseudapostoli commendant seipfos per hypocrisim, & per hoc quòd alii esse videantur, cum alii sint: ego verò commendo meipsum *manifestatione veritatis*, hoc est, ipsis operibus pro testimonio utor: veluti dico, me nihil accipere & vos testes habeo: & sic in cæteris. Atque sic me prædico & commendo apud omnes homines, tam infideles quàm fideles, cum vitam meam retagens, tum verbî prædicationem omnibus ad discendum proponens. Quia verò fieri potest ut homines fallantur, adjicit, *Coram Deo*, quem pseudapostoli testem non admitterent.

3 *Quodsi etiam opertum est Evangelium nostrum, in iis qui percunt est opertum.]* Cum suprâ dixisset, Etiam si Israelitis velamen appositum est, at tamen nos fideles apertâ facie videmus: nunc ait, si opertum est Evangelium, infidelibus est opertum. Quod enim tum Judæis respectu Mosi continebat, idem nunc infidelibus, respectu Evangelii. Illorum autem culpa est, non Evangelii: nam si credidissent, etiam ipsi aperte palam conspexissent gloriam Dei.

4 *In quibus Deo sæculi hujus excæca-*

tiōtis cō πληρωγία. Ωσαυτά ἐστὶ τὰ ἀρχαίων ἐμπροσώπα, τὰ δὲ πληρωγία γινόμενα. Εἰ δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων εἰσέλθῃς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κυρίου καὶ πνεῦμα γὰρ οἱ ψευδαπόστολοι.

Μὴ δὲ δολωῶντες τὸ λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οὐ μόνον, φησὶν, ὁ βίος ἡμῶν ἀπλοῦς ἐστὶ καὶ καθαρός, καὶ ἀπίστευτος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ δόγμα καὶ ὁ λόγος ἀδόλος. Οὐ γὰρ ἡμεῖς μίσημεν πῖ τῆς εἰσῶ σφίσις αἰσῶ, ἢ κατακαλύπτειν, ἢ χρῆματα συλλέγειν ἐκ τῶ λόγου, ἢ καὶ μὲ τῶ πνεῦμα τοῦ κυρίου διδάσκοντες πρὸς τοὺς ἐκείνους καὶ τὰ πρῶτα, ὡς αἱ ψευδαπόστολοι.

Ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆ ἀληθείας σιωπῶντες ἰσοπέθως πρὸς πάντας συνειδήσειν ἀνθρώπων εἰσώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἱ μὲ ψευδαπόστολοι, φησὶ, σιωπῶντες ἰσοπέθως ἢ ἰσοκρίσει, καὶ τῶ φαίμεθα ἄλλο ἄλλο ὄντες. ἐγὼ δὲ σιωπῶ ἑμαυτῶν τῇ φανερώσει τῆ ἀληθείας τοπίστῃ, ἀλλοίς πρὸς τῶν φημεθα μῆτις χρῶμενος. ὅτι λέγω, ἐπὶ τοῖς λαμβάνω, καὶ μῆτις εἶχω ἡμῶν. Ἐτὰ ἄλλα ὁμοίως. Καὶ ἔτι σιωπῶ ἑμαυτῶν πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ἀπίστους καὶ πιστοὺς, τὸν τι βίος καὶ ἀποστολή, καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα φανερῶν πᾶσι πρῶτα, ὡς μὴ γὰρ αἰσῶ. Εἶπα ὅτι δυνατὸν αἰσῶ πρὸς λαῶν, φησὶν, ὅτι εἰσώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτι οἱ ψευδαπόστολοι μῆτις εἶχον εἰς αὐτὸ εἰσαίτα.

3 Εἰ δὲ ἐκκαλυμμένοι ἐστὶ τὸ διαγρηγοῦν ἡμῶν, ἐν τοῖς ἀποκαλυμμένοις ἐστὶ κακαίως καλυμμένοι.] Εἶπὼν δὲ ὅτι εἰ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἰσραηλίταις κάλυμμα ἔθηκεν, ἀλλ' οἱ πιστοὶ ἡμῶν ἀποκαλυμμένοι πρῶτα ὄραμεν. φησὶ γὰρ, ἐπὶ εἰ ἔστι κακαίως καλυμμένοι τὸ διαγρηγοῦν, τῶ ἀπίστους ἐστὶ κακαίως καλυμμένοι. Ὅσον γὰρ τῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ἐγένετο πρὸς Μωσῆα, τῶ πνεῦμα τοῦ κυρίου ἀπίστους πρὸς τὸ διαγρηγοῦν. οἰσῶν δὲ τὸ ἐκκαλυμμένον, ἢ τὸ διαγρηγοῦν. ἐπὶ εἰ ἔστι ἐκκαλυμμένοι, ἰσῶν αὐτὸ καὶ αἰσῶ ἀποκαλυμμένοι πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.

4 Εἰ οἱ δὲ Θεὸς τῶ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν

English Translation: Theophylacti, translated by Fr. Aloysius Pieris s.j.

[Note: Text within square brackets are translation notes]

II Cor. 4: 3. *Quod si etiam opertum est evangelium nostrum, in iis qui pereunt est opertum:* [—If now the Gospel of ours is in fact veiled, it is veiled among those who perish]]. Since he has said above _ Even if a veil had been put for the Israelites, we the faithful see with open face [= with our face unveiled]], he now says that if the gospel was veiled, it was veiled for the unbelievers. What happened then to the Jews with regard to Moses, the same now [happens] to unbelievers with regard to the gospel. It is, of course, their fault, not that of the gospel: for if they had believed, even they would have openly and plainly seen the glory of God.

4. *In quibus deus huius saeculi excecavit mentes infidelium, ut non fulgeat illis illuminatio evangelii gloriae Christi qui est imago Dei* [—Among whom god of this world/age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God’s Image, may not shine through]]. He says [that] among those who perish – who are many and varied—there are also unbelievers. Of these [unbelievers], therefore, *God of this age blinded the minds*. Here the Marcionists come out asserting that these things are said of the Creator, whom they say is just and good. The Manicheans, however, [say that it is said] about the Devil, who, they assert, is also the creator of this world. But in fact neither of these should be said; futher, it was said about *our* God. And even if He is shown to be God of this world (age), there is nothing new, since he is also said to be God of heaven. Nor is he God only of this [=heaven]. So too He is called God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: but he is not only their God, but also of all. What is therefore new if Paul now quite fittingly calls Him God of this world, all the more because he demonstrates to the unbelievers that He himself created those things that are seen, from which they derive pleasure and disregards /ignores [denies?] the Creator? Hence this passage can be read also in this manner: He blinded the minds of the *unbelievers of this world*. For the future world (age) does not have unbelievers. What does —blinded|| really mean? This means he allowed them to be blind, like that [saying], *Tradidit eos Deus in affectus ignominia* [= He delivered them to their passions in disgrace]. After they resisted him, he dismissed them, abandoned them and did not compel [them] into [their] salvation. Note however that he (Paul) did not say that [God] blinded them in order that they might not believe, but in order that [their] profane eyes might not see the splendor of the glory of Christ. The splendor, however, is to believe that he was crucified, that he was received into heaven and that he would give us the things to come. Just as if someone would prevent a conjunctivitis patient from seeing the sun-rays, lest he gets hurt by them, in this case, they became unbelievers on their own [so that] after they had become such, God screened them from the rays of the Gospel’s glory just as in the case of Israelites, He covered the face of Moses. Thus to us also He gave commands that we do not throw pearls to the swine. In deed, He rightly said “*fulgeat*” [(lest it) —may shine||]: Now we have just a moderate splendor, not the whole illumination, [i.e.] what he earlier referred to as a pre-sentiment or a pre-payment (*arrhabonem*), showing that something greater remains out there.

Qui est imago Dei invisibilis (= which is God’s invisible Image). He shows that they are ignorant not only of the glory of Christ but also the Father’s. Since Christ is the image of the father, they neither see the one nor know the other.

Appendix 2: Desiderius Erasmus

Reeve, Anne, and M A Screech, eds. *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: Acts–Romans–I and II Corinthians*, 533. Leiden: Brill, 1990.

stim; quum Græcis eadem sit uox.
 19 Deus huius seculi.) ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. id est, Deus æui huius. Theophylactus ac scholia Græca putant legi posse per hyperbaton ad hunc modum: In quibus excæcavit cogitationes incredulorum huius seculi: ut intelligamus deum uterum ultorem scelerum, excæcare mentes infidelium huius seculi. Atq; hic quidem sensus accipi poterit, si deus subiecta hypostigme separetur ab his quæ sequuntur, hoc pacto: In quibus deus, seculi huius excæcavit mentes infidelium. hoc est, in quibus deus excæcavit mentes infidelium huius seculi. eamq; lectionem plerisque placuisse nostrorum, testis est Augustinus libro aduersus Faustum, uigesimo primo, capite secundo, quod Manichæi duos deos facerent, alterum uerum, alterum unde scaterent mala, quem Hylen uocabant. At idem aliquanto post, negat absurdum uideri debere, si diabolus dicatur deus huius seculi, quemadmodum & illud dictum est Paulo, Quorum deus uenter est. Item illud in Psalmo, Dii gentium dæmonia: Idem repetit contra aduersarium legis & prophetarum libro secundo, capite septimo. In hanc sententiam enarrat Ambrosius. Proinde quod priore loco diximus ex Græcis scholijs id uidetur affectatum ac uolentum. Simplicius est ac uerius, ut intelligamus deum huius seculi satanam, quemadmodum sentit Cyrillus, citantibus scholijs Græcanicis. Nec moueat quod illi tribuatur uocabulum dei. Non est enim simpliciter deus diabolus, sed illis est deus, qui illum anteponunt Christo. Velut auaris pecunia (siue mammona) deus est, ne potibus gula deus est, & homo homini deus est, iuxta prouerbium. Certe Ambrosius non ueretur interpretari diabolus huius seculi deum malorum. (Nam in diuinis literis triplici differentia reperitur nomen dei ac domini: iuxta naturam ac ueritatem. Ita solus deus dicitur deus ac dominus: iuxta adoptionem, Ego dixi dii estis: & iuxta opinionem primæ Corinth. octauo: Nam etsi sunt qui dicantur dii in cælo siue in terra. Chryostomus studiose repugnat, ne diabolus dicatur deus, odio Marcionis & Manichæi, uultq; hunc locum accipi de deo uero: & indicat ordinem orationis quem antea commōstrauit. Mox remisso hoc effugio tamen urget eundem sensum, ac submouet duplicem scrupum. Quomodo deus cæli ac terræ dicatur deus huius seculi: deinde quomodo is dicatur excæcare. Primum excusat cōsuetudine scripturæ mysticæ, quæ deum appellat deum Abraham, Isaac & Iacob. Item deum Israel: rursum deum cæli, quum sit deus uniuersorum. Alterum sic expedit, ex more sermonis mystici, deum frequenter dici facere, quod permittit fieri, quemadmodum in epistola ad Romanos, dicitur philosophos tradidisse in reprobum sensum, & in Exodo dicitur indurasse cor Pharaonis. Pie quidem Chryostomus, quanquā alteram sententiam arbitror esse germanam.) At non uideo quorsum pertineant hæc suffugia, quum Paulus alibi manifeste dei nomen tribuat ijs qui uere dii non sunt, sed pro dijs habentur, ueluti secundæ Corinth. octauo, Sicut sunt dii multi & domini multi: & Ephes. sexto, impios spiritus appellat ἡσμοκρατορας, id est, mundi potentes: mundum utique pro malis accipiens: quemadmodum hic usurpat uocem seculi. Ita ne protinus triumphaturi sunt Manichæi, si hic Satanas dicatur deus huius seculi? Et ad coactas defensionunculas confugiemus potius quā ad germanam interpretationem: Illud addam commentarios qui Chryostomi titulo feruntur in hanc epistolam non esse illius, sed simij cuiuspiam.]
 19 * {Illuminatio euangelij gloriæ Christi.) Congeries genitiuorum reddit orationem ancipitem. Potest enim sic accipi, ne illucesceret illis illustratio euangelij, hoc est, prædicationis gloriæ Christi: aut ne illucesceret illis lumen gloriæ euangelij Christi, aut ne illucesceret illis lux euangelij quæ est gloria Christi. Demiror autem quid legerit Ambrosius Græce, quum ita uertat hunc locum: In quibus deus seculi huius, obcæcavit sensus infidelium, ut non peruideant lumen euangelij gloriæ Christi, ni fortè pro αἰῶνις legit αἰῶνι ad hunc modum, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἀνῶσσαι αἰῶνι τοῦ φωτισμοῦ. Nam autore Hesychio, ἀνῶσσω ἔστι ἀνῶσσω Græcis est ὄρω καὶ βλέπω, uideo, siue intueor. Deinde φωτισμὸν proprie sonat illuminationem, siue illustrationem: quod Ambrosius uertit lumen. Sed lumen quum profertur, φωτισμὸς est. Chryostomus & huic succinens Theophylactus, ἀνῶσσω interpretantur subtiliter quiddam & quasi gustum futuræ gloriæ, quem ante dixit, arrabonem spiritus: φωτισμὸν, lucem illam ineffabilem, quæ post aperitur.)
 22 * {Qui est imago dei.) In Aldina æditione additur ἡορῶν, quum non sit in nostris Latinis

16-27: Tr
Hyperbaton
19: Vulgar

Diabolus deus
deus datus

16: Verum

16-27: Verum

Locus obscurus
et uarie lectus

Margina: 1
Ambrosius
165

* 22-27: en
reversed.

3 ↓

Y 3 tinis

19-22: est. Non abhorret ab hac interpretatione. Vulgarius.

Theophyl.

English Translation (Erasmus, Annotations to the New Testament)

[Note: Text within square brackets are translation notes]

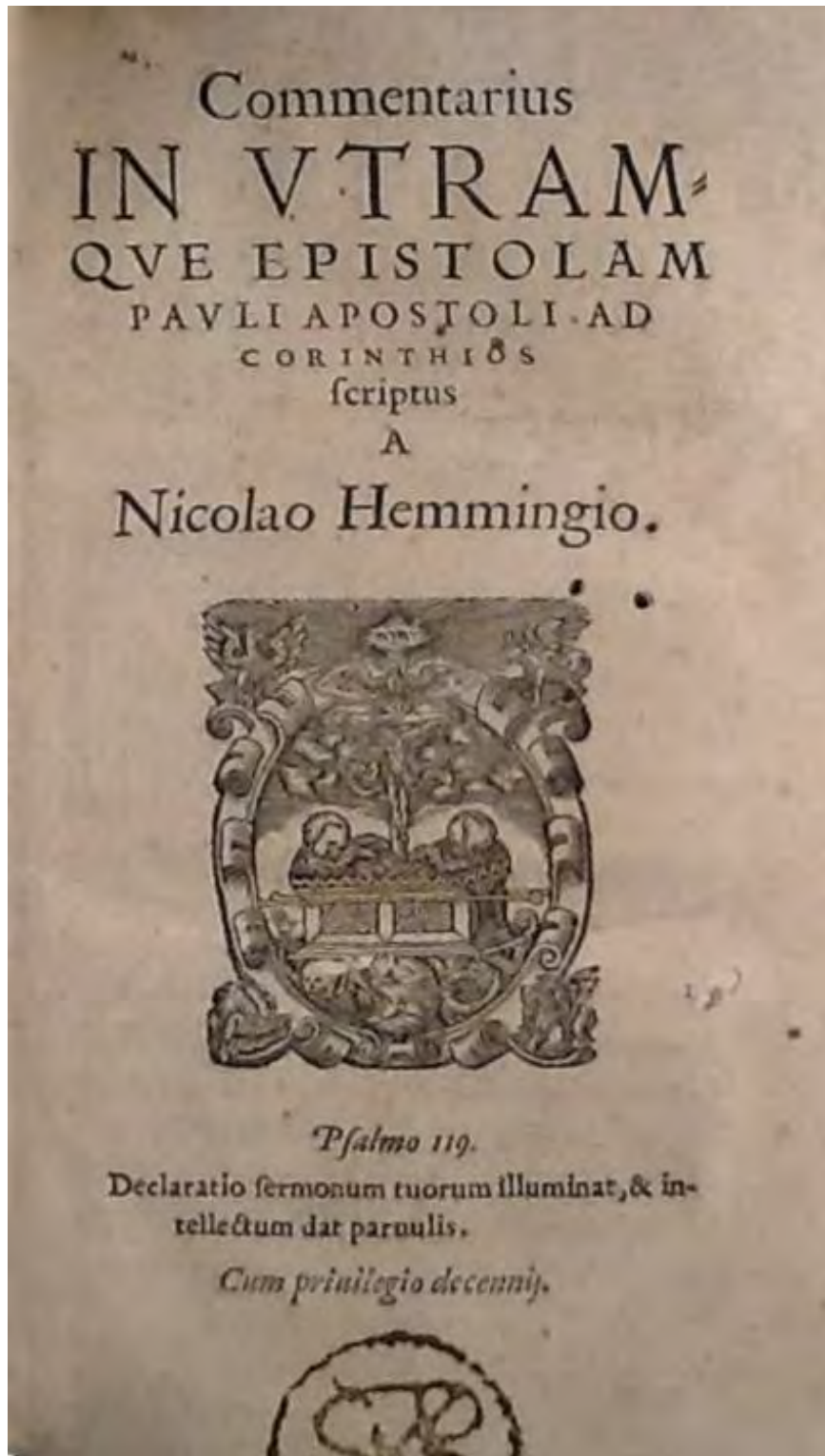
Deus huius saeculi [=God of this world] (ho theos tou aiōnos toutou) that is, God of this age. Theophylactus and the Greek commentaries are of the opinion that it can be read in the following manner by *hyperbaton* [= changing the position of words]:- Among whom [in beings that perish] he [God] blinded the thoughts of the **unbelievers of this world** so that we may know that the true God, the avenger of crimes, blinds the *minds of unbelievers of this world*. And this meaning could of course be accepted if God were to markedly separate the rejected ones from [His] followers, according to the following arrangement [of words] :-among whom [perishing ones], **God**, of these world's unbelievers' minds, **blinded** (this is to say, God blinded the minds of the **unbelievers of this world**), and this reading [of the text] satisfied many among us, Augustine being the witness in his 21st book against Faustum, second chapter, namely that the Manicheans would make out two gods, the one true and the other from whom evil things would emanate, (and) whom they called Hylen. And the same [Augustine] a little later denied that it would seem absurd if the devil were to be called the god of this world as it was also said by Paul: "Whose god is [their] belly". The same thing in the Psalm "Gods of gentiles are demons". He repeats the same thing against enemies of the Law and the prophets, in Book 2, chapter 7. Ambrose expands this opinion. Hence as to what we said earlier quoting Greek commentaries, it seems farfetched and forced. It is simpler and truer to understand the god of this world as Satan, in the way Cyril felt, citing Greek commentaries. Nor should one be led to attribute the word „god“ to him. The devil certainly is not *simply* a "god" but is "a god to those who put him against Christ". Just as money (or mammon) is god for the avaricious, appetite is god for the gluttonous, so man is god for man, according to the proverb. Certainly Ambrose does not hesitate to interpret the devil to be this world's god of evil beings. For in the divine writings, the name "God and Lord" is found with a threefold difference:- according to nature and truth, only God is called "God and Lord"; according to adoption, "I said you are gods" etc.; according to the opinion in First Corinthians, chapter 8, "for although there are those who are called gods in heaven or on earth". Chrysostom assiduously contends that the devil should not be called God, in opposition to Marcion and the Manichaeus, wanting this passage to be accepted [as referring to] the true God. And it indicates the word-order which I showed earlier. Dismissing this subterfuge, he insists on the same meaning as would ignore the two issues: How God of heaven and earth be called God of this world and then in what sense he is said to blind [the hearts of unbelievers]. He explains away the first [appealing to] the custom of the mystical literature which calls God the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob or God of Israel; on the other hand, god of heaven since he is God of all beings; as for the second, it is expedient, in the manner of mystical discourse, that God be declared to do what God allows to happen, as it is said in the Letter to Romans that God handed over the philosophers to evil inclinations; and in the Exodus it is said that [god] hardened Pharaoh's heart. Piously indeed [has] Chrysostom [written thus] although I judge the other opinion to be right. But I do not see to what purpose such subterfuges belong, when Paul in another place openly gives the name „god“ to gods who are really not gods but are regarded as gods according to 2 Corinthians, 8. "As there are many gods and many lords".

Ephesians 6: he calls unholy spirits “kosmokratoras” [world-dominators], i.e., the powerful ones of the world, interpreting the “world” to mean the wicked. [Note] how he uses the word “world” here, So that the Manicheans would not victors if Satan is said to be the god of this world. And thus we would take refuge in forced apologetics rather than in genuine interpretation. Let me add this: that the commentaries which are brought under the name [authorship] of Chrysostom are not his but of someone similar.

Illumination **of** the gospel **of** the glory **of** Christ. The series of genitive cases renders the discourse ambiguous. It can be so understood [as to mean] the representation of the gospel might not dawn on them, that means the preaching of the glory of Christ; or that the *light of the glory* of the gospel of Christ may not dawn of them; or that the light of the gospel, which is the glory of Christ might not dawn on them. But I wonder what Ambrose would have read in Greek to turn round this text. “Among whom God blinded the faculties of unbelievers so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”. Unless perhaps he read *autou* for *autois* in this manner: *eis to mē augāsai autou tou photismou*. For according to the authority of Hesychius *augāsō and augāzomai* is, for the Greeks “*horō kai blēpō*”, I see or I intuit. Hence *photismou* actually sounds [like] illumination or illustration; which Ambrose translated as light (*lumen*). Chrysostom and Theophylactus in agreement with him (Chrysostom) interpret *augāsō* as some glimmer and as a kind of foretaste of the future glory, which I earlier called *arrabo* of the Spirit: *Photismou* the ineffable light , which is disclosed later.

Appendix 3: Nicholas Hemmingio

Hemmingio, Nicolao. *Commentarius In Vtram Qve Epistolam Pavli Apostoli AD Corinthios Scriptus*, 65-66 n.d. Accessed March 2014, from the archives of Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, Atlanta.



animam maliciosam non introibit sapientia, nec in corpore obærato peccato habitabit. Hæc fusius ad Ephes. 4. ab Apostolo tractantur.

In quibus Deus huius sæculi excæcauit mentes incredulorum, vt ne resplendeat lumen Euangelij gloriæ Christi, qui est imago Dei.

Causam ponit obdurationis infidelium, nimirum quod Deus huius sæculi, hoc est, sathan sensus infidelium excæcauit, ne claritas gloriosi Euangelij eos irradiet. Oratio Pauli ob imitationem Hebraismi obscurior est: quæ hoc modo Latine reddi potest: Quibus Deus huius sæculi excæcauit mentes, id est, infidelibus, explicans nimirum quos supra vocauit ἀπειθοῦς πειντες, nimirum eos, qui Euangelio non credunt. Dæ sectæ nempe Arianorum & Manichæorum, hoc Pauli loco abusi sunt, Illi quidem, vt Christo Domino veram diuinitatem adimerent: Hi vero vt suum dogma de duobus dijs, bono & malo stabilirent. Quorum obiectionem vt refutarent Hilarius, Irenæus, Augustinus, Chrysostomus, Ambrosius & multi alij, hoc in loco ἐπέλατον dixerunt, & ita ordinandam verborum syntaxin contenderunt: In quibus Deus excæcauit sensus infidelium huius sæculi, & locum hunc de vero Deo interpretati sunt in

e 2

dispu.

disputationum seruire, vt isto pacto declinarent obiectiones hereticorum. Verum hoc refugium pugnat cum mente Apostoli. Quare in hunc modum collatis pluribus locis respondere potuisset. Diabolus Ioan. 12. dicitur princeps huius seculi, Et venter Philip. 3. dicitur Deus auarorum concionatorum, in quibus locis manifesta est κατά-
 ρεσις. Dicitur autem venter Deus, & Sathan princeps huius seculi, Item Deus huius seculi, respectu infidelium, qui ventris & Sathane imperata faciunt.

Non enim nos ipsos prædicamus, sed Iesum Christum Dominum, nos vero seruos vestros per Iesum.

Hæc ratio pertinet ad primam pericopam huius capituli. Probat enim cur non deficiat in Euangely ministerio, nec dolo tractet sermonem Domini, sed manifestatione veritatis commendet se apud omnem conscientiam hominum coram Deo. Non enim, inquit, nos ipsos prædicamus: hoc est, non studemus populari auræ & ostentationi, vt eminere supra alios videamur: sed prædicamus Iesum Christum Dominum, vt is solus emineat salutis autor, dum omnem nostrum laborem eo destinamus, vt abolito regno Diaboli ædificetur corpus Ecclesie in Christo. Quod autem addit, nos vero seruos vestros propter Iesum: præsumptio est. Nam obiectioni Pseudoapostolorum respon-

English Translation (Nicholas Hemmingio)

[Note: Text within square brackets are translation notes]

Nicolaus Hemmingius. [not *Nicolao Hemmingio* which is the ablative case of Nicolaus Hemmingius, as required by Latin grammar in the title: “written BY Nicolaus Hemmingius” = *scriptus a Nicolao Hemmingio*].

Now if the Gospel of ours is veiled, it is veiled in those who perish. [This] is a prolepsis [an anticipation] for he forestalls an objection that could be hurled at what has been said. He said that he had declared the Gospel, which the false apostles had been able to infect, on account of which many would not believe in the Gospel. The apostle, therefore, responds by shifting the blame, as if to say, ‘The fault is not of the gospel proclaimed, that many do not believe: but the fault of the hearers, who, of their own accord, plunge into destruction, hindered by their own malice lest their ears be attuned to the voice of the Teachers; according to that [well known dictum] : “Perverse thoughts separate humans from God, and wisdom will not enter a malicious soul nor will it inhabit a body indebted to sin”. These things are treated by the Apostle more profusely in Ephes. 4.

In quibus Deus huius saeculi excaecavit mentes incredulorum ut ne resplendeat lumen Evangelii gloriae Christi, qui est Imago Dei. [Among whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers in order that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God, might not shine through]. Undoubtedly God of this world provided the cause for the hardening of unbelievers, that is, Satan blinded the faculties of the unbelievers lest the light of the glorious gospel may illuminate them. Paul’s discourse is rather obscure because he follow the Hebrew idiom; which [= Paul’s discourse] can be rendered in Latin in this way: *Quibus Desus huius saeculi excaecavit mentes, id est, infidelibus* [in whom, god of this world blinded the minds, i.e., in unbelievers.], referring, obviously, to those whom he called above “*apilluminous*”, those perishing, evidently those who do not believe in the Gospel. Two sects, namely, of Arians and Manicheans, have misused this Pauline text, the former in order to rob Christ the Lord of his divinity and the latter in order to establish their dogma of two gods, good and evil. To refute their proposition, Hilary, Irenaeus, Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose and many others spoke of a hyperbaton [rearrangement of the words] in this place and contended that the syntax of words should be arranged thus:- *In quibus Deus excaecavit sensus infidelium huius saeculi* [Among whom, God blinded the unbelievers of this world] and in the heat of the dispute, interpreted this passage to be about the true God, so that in this way they could deflect the objection of the heretics. Actually, such a recourse militates against the mind of the Apostle. Wherefore , by collating many texts, it would be possible to respond in this manner:- The Devil in John 12 is said to be the Prince of this world; in Philip. 3 the belly is said to be the god of greedy pursuers. *Katachresis* (incorrect use of words) is evident in these texts. The belly, of course, is said to be god and Satan the Prince of this world/age, just as “god of this world/age” [is said] with reference to unbelievers who execute the commands of the belly and of Satan.

Appendix 4: F Zorell

Zorell, F. "Deus huius saeculi (2 Cor 4:4)." *Verbum Domini* 8. Rome: Pontificio Institutio Biblico, 1928: 54-57.

"Deus huius saeculi", 2 Cor. 4, 4.

S. Paulus, Corinthiis scribens, suam evangelii praedicandi rationem exponit asseritque se vitasse occulta dedecoris pseudodiscalorum eorumque astutiam ac verbi Dei adulterationem; gloriam suam in eo ponit quod plana manifestatione veritatis se commendat ad omnem conscientiam coram Deo. Aliis verbis: apostolus veritates fidei omnibus ita genuine, plane, fideliter proponit, ut omnis homo bonae voluntatis possit eas cognoscere nec quisquam decipiatur (2 Cor. 4, 2). Si cui adhuc nihilominus evangelium sit occultum, occultum esse ait dumtaxat in iis qui pereunt (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις) in iis scilicet qui culpabiliter se acceptando evangelio salvare nolunt.

Ad explicandam tam stultam et fatalem eorum erga evangelium resistantiam et obstinationem addit: « *in quibus* (sc. pereuntibus, in perniciem suam ruentibus) *deus huius saeculi excaecavit mentes infidelium, ut non fulgeat illis* (εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάζσαι αὐτοῖς) *illuminatio evangelii gloriae Christi*, vel, secundum textum probatiorem, *ut non cernant* seu videant (εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάζσαι) *illuminationem evangelii gloriae Christi* ». Iam quis est sensus huius sententiae, quae non unum lectorem iam obstupescit?

.1) Prima idea quam haec verba menti suggerere videntur, est haec: multos manere infideles et splendorem veritatis in evangelio fulgentis non videre, quia excaecati sint *a deo huius saeculi*. Et dum lector quaerit, quisnam sit iste « *deus huius saeculi* », plerique diabolum hoc nomine appellari arbitrantur. 'Deum huius saeculi' eum vocari aiunt, ut alibi ab apostolo dicitur 'princeps potestatis aëris huius' (Eph. 2, 2) eiusque daemones 'mundi-rectores (κοσμοκράτορες) tenebrarum harum' (Eph. 6, 12), quin etiam ab ipso Christo dictus est 'princeps huius mundi' (Ioh. 12, 31; 14, 30; 16, 11).

Et merito satanas princeps huius mundi vocari potest, quia, ubi regnum Dei nondum est constitutum, adhuc potestatem peccatis hominum obtentam habet et apud infideles retinet; quin etiam quodam sensu recte deus huius mundi appellari posset, quia in mundo eum locum occupat, qui soli Deo competit: ab homi-

nibus colitur, eos suis legibus regit, vel, ut scribit Cyrillus Alex., « deus ab illis existimatur, qui verum Deum ignorant ». Et evidenter quadamtenus recte de eo dici potest: « excaecavit mentes infidelium, ut non fulgeat illis lux evangelii Christi », non quod ipse habeat potestatem immediate animos obcaecandi, sed quatenus hominibus oculos a veritate avertendi occasiones et incitamenta praebere potest, quibus consentientes illi dein occaecantur. Quia haec verborum S. Pauli interpretatio est valde obvia, et obiective vera, a plerisque hodie proponitur et tenetur (cf. CORNELY, BELSER, LOCH-REISCHL, ALLIOLI-ARNDT etc. in l. c.), a S. THOMA quoque in *Summa* docetur (I qu. 65, art. 1); eadem a nonnullis Graecis (CYRILLO ALEXANDRINO, IOHANNE DAMASCENO, OECUMENIO) et nonnullis Latinis docetur.

2) Nihilominus Satanam ab apostolo ad gentiles scribente, sine ulla additione, mitigatione aut explicatione huius tituli, nude crude nominari « deum huius saeculi » — « deum », inquam, non solum « principem », — ab apostolo qui iisdem Corinthiis (I 8, 5) scripserat « etsi sunt qui vocantur dii sive in caelo sive in terra..., nobis tamen unus Deus [est] Pater ex quo omnia etc, » — multis iam antiquitus tam stupendum et incredibile visum est, ut textum aliter intellegendum censuerint. Ex his igitur plerique Deum ipsum, ut alibi corda hominum impiorum obdurare vel excaecare (Is. 6, 10. Ioh. 12, 40. Rom. 11, 8. 2 Cor. 3, 14) dicitur, ita hic quoque a Paulo existimant repraesentari ut infideles excaecantem. Ex his verba Pauli nonnulli ita commentantur, velutsi Paulus Deum hic appellaverit: Deum huius saeculi’.

Ut alibi, aiunt (ex. gr. CHRYSOSTOMUS, AUGUSTINUS), Deus dicitur Deus Abraham, Isaac et Iacob, Deus caeli et terrae, ita hic vocatur Deus huius mundi. Sed, ut facile patet, haec explicatio vix ullam habet probabilitatem consideranti, quid apud Paulum dictio « hoc saeculum » (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος) significet, praesertim cum in contextu loci nulla ratio appareat, Deum hoc titulo nuncupandi.

Quare longe plures veterum in hoc loco hyperbaton haberi statuere maluerunt, vocabula supponentes a Paulo insolito ordine posita esse. Genetivum igitur « huius saeculi » vocabulo « infidelium » annexerunt, ita: « Deus excaecavit mentes infidelium huius saeculi ». Ita locum interpretantur S. AUGUSTINUS l. 22 contra *Faustum*, immo ille dicit, « plerosque nostrum » sententiam Pauli ita distinguere, ut Deum verum dicant excaecasse infidelium

mentes. « Cum enim legerint, inquit, *‘In quibus Deus’*, suspendunt pronuntiationem, ac tunc inferunt: *saeculi huius excaecavit mentes infidelium’* ». Item distinguendum docent IRENAEUS (*Contra haereses* 3, 7), CHRYSOSTOMUS, THEODORETUS, THEOPHYLACTUS, TERTULLIANUS, AMBROSIASTER, PRIMASIUS, SEDULIUS. Augustinus priorem et posteriorem explicationem affert, sed hanc illi praefert; S. THOMAS Aq. quoque et PETRUS LOMBARDUS eam ad optionem proponunt. Ex versionibus N.T. veteribus, quae in usum liturgicum abierunt, hanc interpretationem sequuntur duae versiones copticae, boheirica et sahidica quae vocantur (« *in quibus Deus induravit mentes infidelium huius saeculi, ut non videant...*»), aethiopica (« *infidelibus, quorum cor obumbravit Dominus, Deus aeternus* »), georgica (« *quorum infidelium huius saeculi mentes Deus excaecavit* »). Praesertim illi veteres omnes hanc sententiam amplexi sunt, qui contra Manichaeos pugnabant, ne, diabolum dicentes « deum huius saeculi », iuxta Deum bonum, alterum malum statuere viderentur.

Revera in S. Scriptura complura talia hyperbata habentur, praesertim in graeco, ut Ioh. 9, 6 (scd. graecum): Iesus « *imposuit eius lutum super oculos* » = lutum super oculos eius; Act. 4, 33 « *virtute magna reddebant testimonium apostoli Domini Iesu resurrectionis* », apostoli reddebant testimonium resurrectionis Domini Iesu; Iac. 3, 3 « *si equorum frena in ora ponimus* », frena in equorum ora; 1 Petr. 3, 21 « *non carnis depositio sordium* », non depositio sordium carnis; Apoc. 7, 17 « *deducet eos ad vitae fontes aquarum* », ad fontes aquarum vitae. Cfr. Act. 1, 2. Eph. 1, 17.

Cum igitur tales vocabulorum transpositiones scriptoribus NT haud ita inusitatae fuerint, cum vere dubitari posse videatur num S. Paulus diabolum, gentilibus scribens, novo titulo « *deum huius saeculi* » appellare voluerit, et cum a multis veteribus id negatum sit, adhuc probabile esse censemus, h. l. diabolum hoc nomine appellatum non esse.

3) Restat adhuc tertius modus verba apostoli convenienter explicandi, qui nec hyperbaton statuere debet, nec Deum aut diabolum appellare « deum huius saeculi », nec ex his verbis sensum elicere, a Deo obcaecari mentes infidelium. Si enim copulamur quidem voces « *deus saeculi huius* », sed « *saeculi huius* » pro genetivo explicativo habemus, existit hic sensus: hoc saeculum, quod est eorum deus (i. e. cui impii toto corde serviunt), infidelium corda [tota occupat et] excaecat, ut splendor evangelii eis fulgere

non possit. Ut enim alibi apostolus audacter quidem, sed sine ullo periculo offensionis aut scandali, dicit « *quorum deus venter est* » (Phil. 3, 19), ita hic a Paulo hunc mundum supponi potest nominari deum infidelium. Est igitur velutsi Paulus scripserit *apud quos hic mundus, ipsorum deus, eorum mentes excaecavit, ut non fulgeat eis lux evangelii*: sententia plana, clara, nulli seriae difficultati obnoxia. Huic sententiae favet ex antiquis S. EPIPHANIUS (*haer.* 6, 69), qui vitia quibus pravi se totos dedunt, avaritiam, gulam etc. *deum huius saeculi* dici existimat; eandem expositionem iuxta alias exhibent LOMBARDUS et AQUINAS, ita ut quaelibet ex tribus sententiis solidis gaudeat patronis.

Animadvertere adhuc unum liceat. Secundae sententiae quae verum Deum hic a Paulo designari supponit, ii favere videntur qui suo modo scribendi Deum verum innuunt, sive illi ut recentes maiuscula initiali utuntur (*Deus*, ut Vulgata Clementina), sive abbreviatione nominum sacrorum propria, ut codices versionum veterum (codex Vaticanus scribit $\overline{\Theta C}$ velutsi de Deo agatur). Sed ex hisce quidem certum argumentum desumi non potest, cum etiam Ph. 3, 19. Act. 7, 43, ubi non de Deo agitur, maiusculâ initiali utantur (*Deus*, ut Vulgata Clementina), sive abbreviatione nominum sacrorum propria, ut codices versionum veterum (codex Vaticanus scribit $\overline{\Theta C}$ velutsi de Deo agatur). Versiones armena et slavonica, cum 2 Cor. 4, 6 (ut alibi semper pro vero Deo) nomen Dei abbreviatum ponant, sed 4, 4 nomen integrum scribant, ex tribus sententiis propositis secundam excludere, ac primam vel tertiam indicare videntur.

F. ZORELL S. I.

UMBERTO MORICCA, **S. Ambrogio** (Torino, Società Editrice Internazionale, 1928) p. 300 cm. 17×11.

Est 1 volumen seriei a P. UBALDI et S. COLOMBO editae sub titulo *Pagine cristiane antiche e moderne*. Praeter Introductionem quae est breve compendium vitae rerumque gestarum sancti Doctoris, exhibet in quinque paragraphis pulcherrima capita e scriptis eiusdem excerpta et italice reddita. Singulis paragraphis praemittitur introductio historica vel litteraria quae faciliori intelligentiae viam parat.

L. G. F.

English Translation (F Zorell s.j.) Translated by Fr. Aloysius Pieris s.j.

[Note: Text within square brackets are translation notes]

St Paul writing to the Corinthians explains his mode of preaching the Gospel and states that he had eschewed the underhand things of false teachers and their cunning and adulteration of the Word of God. He places his boast in that with clear exposition of the truth he commended himself to every conscience before God. In other words: the apostle propounded the truths of the faith to all so genuinely, plainly and faithfully that every person of goodwill could come to know them without anyone being deceived (2 Cor 4:2). If nevertheless the gospel were to be yet hidden to someone, he says it to be hidden simply in those who perish (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις), namely in those who after receiving the gospel are culpably unwilling to be saved.

To explain such foolish and fatal resistance and obstinacy of theirs towards the gospel, he adds: among whom (namely among those who perish, those falling down into ruin) *deus huius saeculi excaecavit mentes infidelium ut not fulgeat illis* (εἰς το μη ἀγασσαι αὐτοῖς) *illuminatio evangelii gloriae Christi, 1* or according to the more authentic text, *ut non cernant seu videant* [that they may not discern or see]. Now, what is the meaning of this sentence, which has stupefied more than one reader.

1) The first idea which these words seem to suggest to the mind is this: that many remain unbelieving and do not see the splendour of the truth radiating in the Gospel because they are blinded *a deo huius mundi* [by the god of this world], and when the reader asks who this *deus huius saeculi* could be, many suggest that it is the Devil that is called by this name. They say that he is called *deus huius saeculi* just as elsewhere he is called by the Apostle “ruler of the authority of the air” (Eph 2:2) and his demons [are called] world-governors (*kosmokratores*) of this darkness (Eph 6:12) and has been called “Ruler of this world” also by Christ Himself. (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

And quite deservedly Satan can be called the ruler of this world because where the Reign of God is not yet established, he holds the power gained from the sins of humans and retains it among the unbelievers; So also in some sense he can be rightly called the god of this world because he occupies the place that befits only God: he is worshipped by humans and he rules them according to his own laws, or as Cyril of Alexandria wrote, “He is regarded as god by those who do not know the true God”. And evidently, it could be said of him rightly, up to a point, “He blinded the mind of unbelievers so that the light of the gospel of Christ may not shine through”, not that he himself has the power to blind the souls straightaway but in so far as he can offer opportunities and temptations for diverting the minds of humans from the truth, and consenting to them (opportunities and temptations) they then become blinded. Since this interpretation of St Paul’s words are quite obvious and objectively true, it is proposed and held by many (cf. Cornely, Belsler, Loch-Reischl, Allioli-Arndt, etc in l.c [= *locis citatis* = in cited places (in the references given elsewhere)], taught by St Thomas too in I q 65, art 1); the same also taught by several Greeks (Cyril of Alexandria, John Damascene, Ecumenium) and by several Latins.

G ^g	G ^{s1}	G ^{s2}
<p>σιν αἱ ψυχὰι τῶν ἀνθρώπων λεγόντων Εἰσαγάγετε τὴν κρίσιν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν ὕψιστον). 4. Καὶ εἶπα(ν) τῷ κυρίῳ¹ Σὺ εἶ κύριος τῶν κυρίων καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν αἰώνων†³. ὁ θρόνος τῆς δόξης σου εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τὸ ἅγιον καὶ μέγα⁵ καὶ εὐλογητὸν εἰς πάντα τοὺς αἰῶνας.</p>	<p>2. Ἐἰσελθόντες¹ εἶπον πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἄτι 3. Τὰ πνεύματα καὶ αἱ ψυχὰι τῶν ἀνθρώπων Ἰστενάξουσιν¹ ἐντυγχάνοντα καὶ λέγοντα ὅτι Εἰσαγάγετε τὴν κρίσιν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν ὕψιστον, καὶ τὴν ἀπόλειαν ἡμῶν ἐνώπιον τῆς δόξης τῆς μεγαλωσύνης, ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῶν κυρίων πάντων τῆ μεγαλωσύνη¹. 4. Καὶ εἶπον τῷ κυρίῳ ἄτῶν αἰώνων¹ 2 Σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ κύριος τῶν κυρίων καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων ἄτῶν αἰώνων¹ 4, καὶ ὁ θρόνος τῆς δόξης σου εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τῶν αἰώνων, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά σου ἅγιον⁵ καὶ εὐλογημένον εἰς πάντα τοὺς αἰῶνας⁶.</p>	<p>2. Ἐἰσελθόντες¹ εἶπον πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἄτι 3. Τὰ πνεύματα καὶ αἱ ψυχὰι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐντυγχάνουσι Ἰστενάξοντα καὶ λέγοντα Εἰσαγάγετε τὴν ἄδέσιω¹ ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν ὕψιστοι. 4. Καὶ ἄπροσελθόντες οἱ τέσσαρες ἀρχάγγελοι¹ εἶπον τῷ κυρίῳ¹ Σὺ εἶ θεὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ κύριος τῶν κυρίων καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων ἄτῶν ἀνθρώπων¹, καὶ ὁ θρόνος τῆς δόξης σου εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τῶν αἰώνων, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά σου ἅγιον⁵ καὶ εὐλογημένον εἰς πάντα τοὺς αἰῶνας.</p>

must be taken with ἐντυγχάνουσιν as in 9¹⁰ G^g. ¹ E adds τῶν βασιλείων. G^{s1} has τῶν αἰώνων. ² E = τῶν βασιλείων = כִּיבִּיב corrupt (?) for כִּיבִּיב. Hence 'Lord of the ages'. ³ Corrupt. E G^g = τῶν βασιλείων or βασιλευόντων. If this corruption is not native to G^g

then we must assume a corruption in the Aramaic, the converse of that in note 2. ⁴ G^{s2} has ἀνθρώπων, i. e. ἀντων, corrupt for αἰώνων. Converse corruption in 11². ⁵ E G^g add καὶ μέγα (or δεδοξασμένον). ⁶ Here G^{s1} adds καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς. τότε ὁ ὕψιστος ἐκέλευσε

G^s

5. Σὺ γὰρ ἐποίησας τὰ πάντα, καὶ πᾶσαν¹ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, καὶ πάντα ἐνώπιόν σου φανερὰ καὶ ἀκάλυπτα, καὶ πάντα σὺ ὁρᾶς²

. . . 6. ἃ ἐποίησεν Ἀζαήλ, ὃς ἐδίδαξεν πάσας τὰς ἀδικίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐδήλωσεν τὰ μυστήρια τοῦ αἰῶνος τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἃ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν †ἐγνώσαν† ἄνθρωποι⁴.

7. καὶ Σεμιαζᾶς, ᾧ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκας ἄρχειν τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἅμα ὄντων. 8. καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν πρὸς τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων⁷ τῆς γῆς καὶ συνεκοιμήθησαν αὐταῖς καὶ⁸ . . . ἐμίανθησαν, καὶ ἐδήλωσαν αὐταῖς πάσας τὰς ἀμαρτίας. 9. καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες ἐγέννησαν Τιτᾶνας, *ὕφ' ὧν⁹ ὅλη ἡ γῆ ἐπλήσθη αἵματος καὶ ἀδικίας. 10. καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ βοῶσιν αἱ ψυχὰι τῶν τετελευτηκότων καὶ ἐντυγχάνουσιν μέχρι τῶν πυλῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ

τοῖς ἀγίοις ἀρχαγγέλοις, καὶ ἔθηκαν τοὺς ξεῖραρους αὐτῶν καὶ ἔβαλον αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἕως τῆς κρίσεως, καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς. Here Syncellus summarizes 10⁴, 12. Cf. end of 8³ G^s. ¹ EG^s = πάντων. ² G^s omits through hmt. καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃ κρυβῆναί σε δύναται. ὁρᾶς against EG^s.

G^s (Syncellus I. 43)

5. Σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα καὶ πάντων¹ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, καὶ πάντα ἐνώπιόν σου φανερὰ καὶ ἀκάλυπτα· καὶ πάντα ὁρᾶς, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὃ κρυβῆναί

σε δύναται. 6. ὁρᾶς ὅσα ἐποίησεν Ἀζαήλ †καὶ ὅσα εἰσήνεγκεν†, ὅσα ἐδίδαξεν, ἀδικίας †καὶ ἀμαρτίας† ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ †πάντα δόλον ἐπὶ τῆς ξηρᾶς. ἐδίδαξε γὰρ¹ *τὰ μυστήρια καὶ ἀπεκάλυψε τῷ αἰῶνι³ τὰ ἐν οὐρανῷ. *ἐπιτηδεύουσι δὲ †τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα αὐτοῦ,†¹ εἰδέναι †τὰ μυστήρια,†⁴ οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. 7. *τῷ Σεμιαζᾶ⁵ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκας †ἔχειν⁶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἅμα ὄντων. 8. καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν πρὸς τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων⁷ τῆς γῆς καὶ συνεκοιμήθησαν μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐν ταῖς θηλείαις ἐμίανθησαν, καὶ ἐδήλωσαν αὐταῖς πάσας τὰς ἀμαρτίας, †καὶ ἐδίδαξαν αὐτὰς μίσσητρα ποιεῖν⁷. 9. καὶ †νῦν ἰδοὺ αἱ θυγατέρες τῶν ἀνθρώπων⁷ ἔτεκον †ἐξ αὐτῶν υἱοὺς⁷ γίγαντας· †κίβδηλα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκκέχυται,⁷ καὶ ὅλη ἡ γῆ ἐπλήσθη

³ EG^s = καὶ ἐδήλωσεν τὰ μυστήρια τοῦ αἰῶνος. ⁴ See note on p. 21. ⁵ Corrupt. EG^s = καὶ Σεμιαζᾶς. ⁶ Corrupt for ἄρχειν (Raderm.). ⁷ E adds ἐπί. ⁸ Add ἐν ταῖς θηλείαις with EG^s. ⁹ G^s = καί.

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