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Paul's Approach to Death in His Letters and in Early Pauline Effective History

Thesis Submitted for the DPhil in Theology and Religion (New Testament)
Trinity Term 2013

Word Count: Approx. 98,300 excluding front matter, appendix, and bibliography

Abstract

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This thesis analyzes the Apostle Paul’s approach to his own death. The term “approach” is deliberately vague and is intended to encompass a number of questions: What was Paul’s attitude toward his death? How did he act and what did he say and write in view of it? What hopes did he hold for himself beyond death? These questions are explored through a close reading of three Pauline letters that look forward to Paul’s death and other relevant texts in the first two generations after Paul’s death (A.D. 70–160). Thus, this thesis is a study of Paul’s death in prospect and retrospect. Starting with the latter, the first half of the thesis examines portraits of the departed Paul in Acts 20:17–38; *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1; *Ign. Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 4.3; *Pol. Phil.* 9.1–2; and the *Martyrdom of Paul*. It is argued that these portraits exhibit a complicated network of similarities that may be described using Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblances.” Viewed as a part of Paul’s early effective history, these early portraits of Paul offer substantial resources for the interpretation of his letters. The second half of the thesis examines portraits of the departing Paul in 2 Cor 1:8–14; 4:16–5:10; Phil 1:18d–26; 2:16b–18; 3:7–14; and 2 Tim 1:12; 4:6–8, 17–18. The “decision of death” referred to in 2 Cor 1:9 is highlighted as a religious experience and one which goaded Paul to formulate his approach to death. It is argued that his death did not primarily present an *existential* challenge, but a *pastoral* one. Although touching upon three areas of recent scholarly interest (Paul’s theology of death and beyond; Paul’s religious experience; and Pauline reception), this thesis sets forth a new research question and fresh interpretations of early Christian and Pauline texts.

Long Abstract

Alexander N. Kirk, “Paul’s Approach to Death in His Letters and in Early Pauline Effective History.” Keble College, University of Oxford. DPhil in Theology and Religion (New Testament). Trinity Term 2013.

Modern Western society is seemingly allergic to a frank discussion of death. Yet in the ancient Mediterranean world this was not so. Death was an everyday reality and a lively topic for literary reflection and religious debate. In the first century A.D. an interest in a person’s approach to death can be seen in authors as different as Josephus the Jewish historian and Seneca the Roman philosopher. The Apostle Paul also displays an interest in this topic.

This thesis analyzes Paul’s approach to his own death. The term “approach” is deliberately vague and is intended to encompass a number of questions: What was Paul’s attitude toward his death? How did he act and what did he say and write in view of it? What hopes did he hold for himself beyond death? In other words, my interest is not in what Paul thought about death and beyond *in general*, but in how Paul approached literal (bodily) death as he considered it *in relation to himself*. Therefore, while the topic of this thesis is Paul’s theology of bodily death, recent attention to Paul’s religious experience provides the angle from which this topic is studied. Furthermore, the thesis incorporates a study of early Christian texts outside of and after Paul. This thesis is thus positioned at the confluence of three streams of recent scholarly interest: Paul’s theology of death and beyond; Paul’s religious experience; and Pauline reception.

This thesis will examine passages in three Pauline letters that look forward to Paul’s death and passages in Christian texts from the late first to the mid-second century that look back on Paul’s death. It will be a study on Paul’s death in prospect and retrospect. The aim in so doing is to establish a thicker account of Paul’s teaching and influence in this area of universal concern. Before conducting such a survey, however, certain methodological issues need to be addressed.

Recently, scholars have begun to explore the ancient “effective history” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the NT texts and personae. There have been some who have argued that early Christian portraits of Paul cannot tell us much about Paul himself, only about the authors, communities, or movements that created these portraits. Richard Pervo’s *The Making of Paul* (2010) is taken as the main representative of this view. In contrast, it is argued that the texts written within the first two generations after Paul’s death (A.D. 70–160)—within what has been called the period of his “living memory”—can legitimately be investigated for traces of Pauline influence through a number of channels. In many respects my use of effective history will find common cause with the work of Markus Bockmuehl. Furthermore, I employ a modified form of Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblances” to suggest that a cluster of early images of the departed Paul are likely the result of Pauline influence.

Starting with Paul’s effective history, the first half of the thesis examines portraits of the departed Paul in Acts 20:17–38; *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1; Ign. *Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 4.3; Pol. *Phil.* 9.1–2; and the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Each passage is studied in close exegetical detail in its respective literary context. In the canonical book of Acts (chapter 3), the image of Paul the herald is delineated and a discussion of the structure and function of the Miletus speech proves Luke’s interest in Paul’s approach to death. The chapter also includes an analysis of how the preceding narrative prepares for the Miletus speech and how the ending of Acts echoes the image of Paul the herald. In *1 Clement* (chapter 4) the image of Paul the athlete is examined. It is argued that this image is more closely akin to 1 Cor 9:24–27 than it is to Stoic philosophy or *4 Maccabees*. The image of Paul the athlete plays a more important role in the letter as a whole than is often realized.

In Ignatius’s letters (chapter 5) the controversial position is defended that Ignatius views Paul as blazing the trail for his own desired postmortem ascent to God. Ignatius’s concepts of attaining God and being found in him are related to similar concepts in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. While Polycarp’s letter *To the Philippians* (chapter 6) has often been considered an unoriginal pastiche of Pauline traditions, it is argued that his portrait of Paul as a teacher of righteousness is a distinct and creative one. Finally, the image of

Paul the anti-Roman martyr in the *Martyrdom of Paul* (chapter 7) is shown to be somewhat out of step with the rest of Paul's early effective history. I suggest that this image and text are more naturally grouped with certain Christian works from the mid-second century, including the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (see the appendix).

Though no single Pauline image can be traced consistently throughout this set of texts, the cohesion of this cluster of Pauline images suggests that they are at least partially the effect of Pauline influence. For example, the image of Paul as one who ascended to heaven at death, apart from his body, is noted as providing strong evidence to include in any interpretation of the related passages in the Pauline letters (see esp. 2 Cor 5:8 and Phil 1:23). Furthermore, the fact that Paul's conduct is consistently put forward as a model for imitation indicates that early Christian authors were attempting to preserve Paul's "history" for the benefit of subsequent generations. Therefore, the assessment of early Pauline effective history simultaneously prompts fresh readings of the Pauline letters and constrains some of the more radical or revisionary accounts of his life and theology. Such an assessment proves useful—on this topic at least—for our understanding and interpretation of Paul and his letters.

The second half of the thesis examines portraits of the departing Paul in 2 Cor 1:8–14; 4:16–5:10; Phil 1:18d–26; 2:16b–18; 3:7–14; and 2 Tim 1:12; 4:6–8, 17–18. Most commentators on these passages represent the view that an acute awareness of his mortality either destabilized Paul's theological self-evaluation or aggravated an existential anxiety. My own exegesis of 2 Corinthians (chapter 9) contends that Paul's newly acquired conviction that he would die before the Parousia (1:9a) prompted him to trust in God for the lasting impact of his earthly ministry (1:9b). In other words, Paul considered his anticipated death to be primarily a pastoral challenge rather than a personal or an existential one. Such a reading is rendered plausible by an analysis of the letter's dynamics of encouragement. This analysis leads to novel interpretations of Paul's "renewal within decay" (4:16) and "confidence" in departure (5:6–8).

In interpreting Philippians (chapter 10) I argue that sensitivity to the literary context and the particularity of the language of Paul's religious experience is the key to

understanding Phil 1:18d–26. A new reading of Phil 1:19 is presented in which Paul is not expecting eschatological salvation nor a release from prison but a deliverance from the anguish that his opponents were trying to stir up in him (1:17). A new reading of Phil 3:9 is also advanced, arguing that Phil 3:7–14 portrays Paul’s pursuit of the resurrection through his own bodily death.

Regarding 2 Timothy (chapter 11), the question of the letter’s authorship is more nuanced than is generally acknowledged. This thesis adopts the position that the letter’s portrait of Paul presents “authentic” Pauline material, regardless of precisely how the letter was composed or came to have its canonical form. Responding to recent challenges, it is argued that 2 Tim 4:6–8 represents Paul’s approach to his own death and not his release from prison. The interpretation of 2 Tim 4:6–8 is then supplemented with an exegesis of 2 Tim 4:17–18 and 1:12. This chapter brings forward new considerations regarding the letter’s legal setting and a new explanation of Paul’s “deposit” (1:12).

In the penultimate chapter, observations from the three Pauline chapters will be synthesized in four thesis statements: 1) The “decision of death” (2 Cor 1:9) was a significant event in Paul’s life; 2) Paul was assured of his own postmortem destination; 3) Paul’s death presented primarily a pastoral challenge; and 4) Paul set forth his approach to death as an example to be imitated.

In drawing the study to a close, the points of continuity and discontinuity between the departed Paul and the departing Paul are explored. Points of continuity include an emphasis on preaching the gospel, a concern for perseverance to the end and embodied righteousness, a postmortem spiritual ascent, and the approach to death as a model for imitation. Points of discontinuity include Paul’s stance toward imperial power, the image of Paul the tent-dweller, and a pastoral concern for Paul’s successors.

This study thus contributes to Pauline studies by delineating a new question for scholarly research, by advancing methodological reflections on early Pauline effective history (particularly in the use of Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblances”), by offering fresh interpretations of a range of early Christian texts, and by drawing attention to the “decision of death” (2 Cor 1:9) and Paul’s pastoral concern.

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Preliminary Notes

All translations of ancient and modern texts throughout the thesis are my own unless otherwise noted. Translations of key texts are reproduced in full for the convenience of the reader and follow the grammar and syntax of the original language as closely as possible, even if this results in English that is slightly wooden or overly literal. This decision is motivated by a desire for greater transparency in the commentary.

Interaction with the Greek New Testament and Septuagint is based on the texts of the Nestle-Aland 27th edition, the Göttingen *Septuaginta (editio maior)* where available, and the 1935 Rahlfs edition, though textual variants are introduced when necessary. All statistics concerning these texts and the Greek Pseudepigrapha were generated by *BibleWorks 8* biblical software.

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All abbreviations conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style* (1999) or are otherwise noted.

A version of the author-date citation style is adopted. All italics in quotations are original to the work unless otherwise noted.

Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Points of Departure

1.1 The Subject of This Study

1.1.1 Paul in the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs

Did early Christians find resources in the Apostle Paul for their approach to death? An intriguing but fleeting reference to Paul to consider in this regard can be found in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* (ca. A.D. 180). In what appears to be a transcript of court proceedings the African proconsul Saturninus pressures Speratus, a Christian, to renounce his faith. At one point in the trial Saturninus asks Speratus what he has in his “satchel” (Latin: *capsa*). Speratus replies, “Books and letters of Paul, a just man.”

This very brief exchange raises many more questions than it answers: Did Speratus intend to distinguish between “books” (*libri*) and “letters” (*epistulae*) of Paul, and how would the content of these documents compare with the letters attributed to Paul that are extant today? What prompted Speratus to characterize Paul as a “just man” (*uir iustus*)? Was Speratus unexpectedly apprehended while carrying these documents or did he intentionally bring them with him to the trial? Whether Speratus found resources in the figure of Paul or in Paul’s writings that strengthened his resolve to confess Christ unto death is a question whose answer lies buried in the sands of time. Yet Paul’s shadowy presence in this courtroom invites us to compare Speratus’s approach to death with Paul’s, more than a century earlier.

1.1.2 Paul’s Approach to His Own Death

The task of this thesis is to unearth—as far as it is possible—the Apostle Paul’s approach to his own death. The term “approach” is deliberately vague and is intended to encompass a number of questions: What was Paul’s attitude toward his death? How did

he act and what did he say and write in view of it? What hopes did he hold for himself beyond death? In other words, my interest is not in what Paul thought about death and beyond *in general*, but in how Paul approached literal (bodily) death as he considered it *in relation to himself*.

Having an approach to death implies that death is anticipated. In Paul's case an experience in Asia, referred to in 2 Cor 1:8–10, prompted him to grapple with his own mortality in a new and intense way. The historical nature of this “affliction” (θλίψις; 2 Cor 1:8) is notoriously difficult to pin down. A more productive line of research might be to inquire what Paul's new-found consciousness of death led him to write to others and why. Thus, our excavation of Paul's approach to death will primarily be a literary one. This thesis will examine passages in three Pauline letters that look forward to Paul's death and passages in Christian texts from the late first to the mid-second century that look back on Paul's death.¹ It will be a study on Paul's death in prospect and retrospect.

1.1.3 How to Approach Death: A Live Question in the Ancient Mediterranean World

By investigating Paul's approach to his death we are neither psychoanalyzing Paul nor anachronistically imposing a contemporary question on his letters. Indeed it is accurate, if somewhat hackneyed, to state that the Roman Empire of the first century was more in touch with death than we are today. As Peter Bolt has illustrated, Roman power, malevolent magic, and pervading illness all contributed to an awareness of the precariousness of life so that “inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world lived constantly under the shadow of death” (1998: 51). In the face of this grim, everyday reality much of first-century life was preoccupied with the struggle against death and much thought was expended in coming to grips with one's inevitable and often hasty demise.

One of the most well-known and important ancient accounts of a person's approach to death must be Plato's *Phaedo* (ca. 375 B.C.). This dialogue opens with two questions

¹ The key passages include 2 Cor 1:7–14; 4:16–5:10; Phil 1:18d–26; 2:16b–18; 3:7–14; 2 Tim 1:12; 4:6–8, 17–18; Acts 20:18–35; *1 Clem.* 5.5–7; Ign. *Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 4.3; Pol. *Phil.* 9.1–2; and the last section of the *Acts of Paul* (frequently called the *Martyrdom of Paul*).

Echecrates puts to Phaedo about Socrates's death: "What did he say before his death? And how did he meet his end?" (57a).² Phaedo's recollections are from the final day of Socrates's life as he is conversing with his friends before drinking the hemlock poison prescribed for him. Early on in the recollected conversation Socrates says, "It may be particularly appropriate for someone about to travel there [Hades] to consider thoroughly and tell stories about what we think the stay there is like. For what else is there to do to fill the time until sunset?" (61e). Later Socrates adds, "Other people have probably not realized that the sole pursuit of those who correctly engage in philosophy is dying and being dead."³ If this is true, it would surely be absurd for death to be their sole aim throughout their life, but, when it actually arrives, for them to resent that which has long been their aim and pursuit" (64a). These passages demonstrate the great importance "Socrates" attached to one's approach to death. Therefore, in asking Paul about his own postmortem journey and how he prepared for this departure, we are asking questions that Socrates thought appropriate.

The narration of Socrates's approach to death in the *Phaedo* exerted tremendous influence throughout the ancient world and through the centuries. According to Plutarch, Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Younger) read Plato's *Phaedo* multiple times (*Cat. Min.* 68.2–4; 70.2) before stabbing himself in the stomach and then tearing at his entrails.⁴ There are also other indications in Plutarch's account that Cato drew inspiration from the *Phaedo*, even deliberately patterning his own death after the death of Socrates: Cato takes a bath on the night of his death as Socrates did (*Cat. Min.* 66.6; *Phd.* 115a); that evening Cato engages in philosophical debate (*Cat. Min.* 67.3; *Phd. passim*); and Cato, like Socrates, remains resolute in his decision to take his own life despite the attempts of his

² Translations of the *Phaedo* (*Phd.*) are taken from Sedley and Long 2010.

³ G. M. A. Grube (in J. M. Cooper 1997) translates this sentence as follows: "I am afraid that other people do not realize that the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death."

⁴ References to *Cato Minor* (*Cat. Min.*) are dependent on Plutarch 1984.

friends to forestall it (*Cat. Min.* 69.1–5; *Phd.* 116e).⁵ Although Plutarch’s agenda in presenting Cato’s death is debated,⁶ his portrayal of Cato’s death suggests a vibrant interplay between ancient literary anticipations of death and the effects and even performances that these texts generated.

Such literary anticipations of death were not limited to Greek and Roman authors. In *The Jewish War* Josephus narrates the Romans’ penetration of Jotapata and how he leapt into a pit with forty of his comrades in order to evade capture (3.341–42). When the Romans discover Josephus and offer him clemency, the Jews who are with him contend that suicide is more honorable than surrender. In response Josephus says,

Know you not that they who depart this life in accordance with the law of nature and repay the loan which they received from God, when He who lent is pleased to reclaim it, win eternal renown; that their houses and families are secure; that their souls, remaining spotless and obedient, are allotted the most holy place in heaven, whence, in the revolution of the ages, they return to find in chaste bodies a new habitation? (3.374)⁷

Near the end of *The Jewish War* Josephus provides an account of the siege of Masada. The episode ends with mass Jewish suicide as two speeches of Eleazar, a Jewish commander, persuade the people not to allow the Romans to capture them alive. In the second speech Eleazar chastises the hesitant with the example of the “Indians” (Ἰνδοί). An extended section of Eleazar’s speech is worth quoting in full:

They, brave men that they are, reluctantly endure the period of life, as some necessary service due to nature, but hasten to release their souls from their bodies; and though no calamity impels nor drives them from the scene, from sheer longing for the immortal state, they announce to their comrades that they are about to depart. Nor is there any who hinder them: no, all felicitate them and each gives them commissions to his loved ones; so certain and absolutely sincere is their belief in the intercourse which souls hold with one another. Then, after listening to these behests, they commit their bodies to the fire, that so the soul may be parted from the body in the utmost purity, and expire amidst hymns of praise. Indeed, their dearest ones escort them to their death more readily than do the rest of mankind their fellow-citizens when starting on a very long journey; for themselves they weep, but then they count happy as now regaining immortal rank. (7.352–56)

⁵ As Alexei Zadorojnyi observes, Cato’s “Socratic pose” is “a cumulative product, crystallizing out of the undercurrent and the explicit reminiscences throughout the *Life*” (2007: 217).

⁶ See Trapp 1999 and Zadorojnyi 2007 for competing theories.

⁷ Translations of Josephus are taken from the Loeb editions (Page et al. 1927 and 1928).

This section from Eleazar's speech demonstrates that Jews were influenced by a broader discourse in the ancient world concerning death and beyond. One should also recognize that Josephus was not present at Masada and his account of what happened there likely came from two women who, according to Josephus's narrative, probably did not hear Eleazar's speeches (see *J.W.* 7.399). This suggests that Josephus constructed these speeches without any oral report of what was in them and perhaps without knowledge of whether they were given at all. Josephus could compose his account in this manner because a person's approach to death was an ancient literary *topos*.

Whereas Plato, Plutarch, and Josephus reflected on deaths that had already occurred, actual anticipations of death can be found in the writing of Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 B.C. – A.D. 65). Seneca wrote letters to his friend Lucilius that are packed with reflections on aging and death. In one letter Seneca writes, "Most people are buffeted between fear of death and the agony of living; they don't want to live and they don't know how to die" (*Ep.* 4.5).⁸ In light of this, Seneca gives Lucilius advice on how to die: "Do you want to be free in spite of this body? Then live like someone who is going to move away. Think that you will have to go without this lodging sooner or later, then you will be braver to face the necessity of departing" (70.17). Seneca offers some personal reflections in another letter:

Take this assurance about me: I shall not be trembling at the final moment, I am already prepared, I am not planning a whole day at a time. As for you, praise and imitate the man who is not reluctant to die even when it gives him pleasure to live. For what is the merit in departing when you are evicted? Yet this too is a merit; I am certainly being evicted, but as if I were leaving freely. (54.7)

Seneca also describes the high achievement in confronting fears of the afterlife:

Even when you have persuaded men that these are fantasies and nothing is left for the deceased to fear, another fear arises; for just as men are afraid of being in the underworld, so they are afraid of being nowhere. In face of these beliefs infused in us by long-held conviction, surely the brave endurance of death is glorious and among the greatest achievements of the human mind. (*Ep.* 82.16–17)

These excerpts from Plato, Plutarch, Josephus, and Seneca are presented in passing only to demonstrate that the question of how one ought to approach death was of vital

⁸ Translations of Seneca's letters are taken from Fantham 2010.

interest in the ancient Mediterranean world around the time of Paul. In this study I will not directly compare Paul's approach to death to the approaches displayed in these Greco-Roman and Jewish texts. Nevertheless, it would be easy to multiply literary examples of this kind. Anticipations of death and what lay beyond were in the literary air in the first century A.D.—air which Paul would have breathed and into which he spoke. Therefore, how to approach death would have been a prominent concern in Paul's world and among his earliest readers and followers.

1.2 A Brief Survey of Related Scholarship

If the question of how to approach one's death was of cultural concern and literary interest in the first century, then it is surprising that no previous study has focused sustained attention on Paul's contribution to this topic. Yet this study will not thereby venture into entirely uncharted territory. As we will see below, there have been a number of substantial and recent studies conducted in related areas of research. Moreover, there has obviously been much scholarly discussion of the Pauline and early Christian texts we will consider. The value of this thesis, then, is not in boldly going where no *Neutestamentler* has gone before, but rather in surveying the topography of Paul's theology from a new vantage point. In so doing I will examine textual and theological features that may have been at the fringes or outside the scope of previous works.

1.2.1 Recent Studies on Paul's Theology of Death and Beyond

The general backdrop for our investigation is what ancient Mediterranean societies believed and religions taught about death and what came after death. This area of research has been well served in recent years. Two massive and massively different books may illustrate the range of scholarship in this area.

At 817 pages N. T. Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (2003) stands as a colossal work of history and theology at the service of orthodox Christian apologetics. The book is primarily concerned with the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the question of

what really happened on Easter morning. In arguing his case, however, Wright conducts a nearly comprehensive tour of death and beyond in ancient paganism, the OT, and post-biblical Judaism. His task is to show that Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus could have grown only from Jewish soil, but that it was nevertheless a mutation within the Jewish worldview that must be accounted for historically. Wright's primary interest is in what he calls "life after life after death" and consequently many of the texts that will form the core of the present work are on the periphery of Wright's volume.⁹

Alan Segal's *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (2004) is even more sweeping in scope than *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Throughout Segal's "voyage" to map the afterlife as it is depicted in Western culture he argues that this journey is nothing more than an investigation of "our own self-consciousness through the mirror of our culture" (344). In other words, for Segal we cannot see beyond death but only into our own sociologically-conditioned selves. Segal's 42-page chapter on "Paul's vision of the afterlife" displays an interest in Paul's conversion, his visit to heaven (2 Cor 12:1–4), and his relationship to Jewish "mysticism/apocalypticism" (439; cf. 410–12 and Segal 2008). According to Segal, "Paul's own conversion experience and his mystical ascension form the basis of his theology" (438). Yet this conviction does not explain why there is no discussion of 2 Cor 5:1–10 or Phil 1:18–26 in the chapter or the book. While Segal has forcefully raised the question of the origin of Paul's vision of the afterlife, he has offered little exegesis with which to interact in this study.

These two expansive surveys of ancient beliefs about the afterlife do not engage with Paul's approach to his own death. This signals that scholarship situating Paul's view of death and beyond in its religious milieu has been preoccupied with questions other than the ones animating this thesis. Furthermore, texts such as 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15, which are central to many Pauline studies on death and beyond, will not feature in this study because they contain no *self-referential* reflections.

⁹ Wright treats Phil 1:18–26 in less than one full page (2003: 226–27) and barely mentions 2 Cor 1:7–14; Phil 2:16–18; and 2 Tim 1:12; 4:6–8, 17–18.

Other studies on Paul's theology of death concentrate on matters of literary form or genre. For example, the literary form of the farewell address or farewell discourse (*Abschiedsrede*), related to the genre of "testament,"¹⁰ has been studied by NT scholars. It is generally agreed that in the NT fully-formed farewell discourses can be found only in John 13–17, Acts 20, and perhaps Luke 22 (see Kurz 1990b). In an essay entitled "Angesichts des Todes das Leben formulieren: Abschiedsworte Sterbender in der biblischen Literatur" (2005), Klaus and Sabine Bieberstein outline the characteristics, functions, development, and variations of this form from the Hebrew Bible to the deuterocanonical and apocryphal early Jewish writings and into the NT. As the use of "Abschiedsworte Sterbender" ("parting words of the dying") in the subtitle suggests, their survey includes passages that cannot technically be considered *Abschiedsreden* but are similar enough to render comparisons productive. Although the authors devote significant space to the last words of Jesus in each of the four canonical Gospels, they invest less than a full page in treating "Die Abschiedsschreiben des »Paulus« (2Tim) und des »Petrus« (2Petr)," in which section they conclude that elements of farewell discourses have been integrated into the form of each letter (25).

Paul's reflections on death have also occasionally been read in comparison to texts on suicide or martyrdom. Arthur Droge and James Tabor in their book *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom Among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (1992) argue that the dividing line between what we call suicide and martyrdom was not recognized in antiquity before Augustine. Whether one agrees with that assessment or not, Droge and Tabor have convincingly documented the intense interest and ambiguities that have attended the discussion of voluntary death throughout antiquity. They read Phil 1:21–26 within this conversation and argue that Paul's views on voluntary death align with the dominant views of his Greco-Roman context. Yet there is a lot of Pauline data outside of Phil 1:21–26 that Droge and Tabor could have considered in investigating Paul's view of his death. Ten years after Droge and Tabor's book, Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich

¹⁰ See the very short but oft-cited introduction to this genre in Kolenkow 1986. Farewell discourses are often embedded in narratives but share similar concerns to testamentary literature.

Avemarie edited a book entitled, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (2002). Curiously, no texts from the NT are included. To this day Paul's view of "martyrdom" remains hardly explored.¹¹

Therefore, while there have been a few attempts to read Paul (esp. 2 Tim 4:1–8) in light of ancient farewell discourses and testamentary literature,¹² and while there have been a few other attempts to read Paul (esp. Phil 1:18–26) in dialogue with ancient literature on suicide and martyrdom, no previous study has incorporated all the relevant texts into an analysis of how Paul approached his death. We will investigate passages from 2 Timothy, Philippians, and 2 Corinthians. In so doing, the range of related Pauline literature will be broadened, cutting across what have been considered distinct forms and genres. This thesis thus adopts a thematic approach, though one which attempts to remain sensitive to literary form.

Yet another perspective on Paul's theology of death and beyond is from the angle of what could be called Paul's constitutive anthropology—that is, the study of the various components or aspects in which a human person consists. There has been a significant renewal of interest in Pauline anthropology in the last ten years. One noteworthy study is Joel Green's *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (2008). Though dealing with the nature of humanity in the Bible, Green's work is deliberately done at the intersection of biblical studies and "neurophilosophy." His basic project is to show how recent findings in the cognitive sciences can prompt questions and shed light on biblical interpretation without necessarily discrediting the biblical view of human nature. In the fifth chapter Green seeks to dismantle a view of the intermediate state in which an ontologically-distinct soul departs the body at death and has a conscious experience of waiting for the resurrection in the presence of Christ. Green's entire book argues against such a dualism on biblical and scientific grounds. He claims that various

¹¹ I agree with van Henten and Avemarie that "the phenomenon of martyrdom is older than the Christian or Jewish terminology that indicates it" (2002: 3) and therefore I am adopting here a functional definition, as they do. As Paul Middleton writes, "The closest Paul comes to talking about martyrdom is in the anticipation of his own death" (2009: 84).

¹² See especially C. A. Smith 2006 and the discussion in chapter 12.

forms of monism are becoming the dominant scholarly position with regard to NT anthropology (13). Although we will not address Pauline anthropology head-on, my reading of 2 Cor 5:1–10 and Phil 1:18–26 will nevertheless support the rather beleaguered “traditional” view that Paul left his body and went to heaven when he died.¹³

The subject matter of this thesis could also be considered in relation to previous works on Paul’s theology of suffering (e.g., Hafemann 1986), the development of Paul’s eschatology (e.g., Longenecker 1998), Paul’s theology of final judgment (e.g., Kuck 1992; Yinger 1999; VanLandingham 2006; Travis 2009), and Paul’s use of personal example (e.g., Fiore 1986; B. Dodd 1999). The Pauline texts within the ambit of this study touch upon all of these areas and these works will be discussed as they become germane to particular points of interpretation.

Two additional studies on Paul’s theology of death warrant special mention. The first is a chapter from Xavier Léon-Dufour’s book *Life and Death in the New Testament: The Teachings of Jesus and Paul* (1986), originally published in French under the title *Face à la mort, Jésus et Paul* in 1979. The eighth chapter of this book is entitled “Paul Faces Death” and near the start of this chapter Léon-Dufour asks the question, “Were the specter of death to draw near, how would Paul react then?” (247). He answers, “On two separate occasions he confided his sentiments in this regard, first in a serene way to the Philippians and afterward in sorrowful fashion to the Corinthians, with the result that we can assert that Paul depicted death both with a beloved face and also with a horrifying visage” (247). Like many others, Léon-Dufour focuses on Phil 1 and 2 Cor 5 in his analysis, though he does also introduce a number of other Pauline texts on both suffering and death. My interpretation of these passages will counter Léon-Dufour’s reading at almost every point, especially in his contention that the language of the “beatific vision” (i.e., the Christian afterlife) and the language of the resurrection of the dead are describing essentially the same reality.

¹³ For a recent back-and-forth on this topic see Bockmuehl 2011 and Wright’s appended response.

The second work is an essay by Lukas Bormann entitled “Reflexionen über Sterben und Tod bei Paulus” in the 2001 volume *Das Ende des Paulus: Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte*. Bormann’s description of his essay’s task overlaps with the approach of the present work to a great degree: “In what follows, texts in the Pauline letters will now be investigated that relate *experiences* with dying and death. Therefore fundamental considerations, such as in Rom 5:12 or 1 Cor 15, will not constitute the starting point, but rather texts that reflect near-death and experiences with death” (2001: 310; my translation). Bormann considers a number of texts that are also analyzed in the present work, including Phil 1:21–24; 2:16–17; 3:9–11; 2 Cor 1:8; 2:14–17; and 4:7–15. Space constraints do not allow Bormann adequate space for a thorough discussion and comparison of these texts. Yet as we will see, there is much truth to Bormann’s contention regarding the relationship between death and Paul’s apostleship: “Der apostolische Dienst steht in einem realen Verhältnis zum Tod” (316).

1.2.2 Recent Interest in Paul’s “Religious Experience”

Bormann’s essay includes a reference to the “experiences” (*Erfahrungen*) Paul had with dying and death. We have observed that many of the previous studies related to Paul’s theology of death neglect the personal dimension of Paul’s thought on this topic. This neglect may be another symptom of the relative lack of scholarly interest in studying the “religious experience” described in the earliest Christian writings. This gap in modern scholarship was forcefully exposed by Luke Timothy Johnson in his *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity* (1998).¹⁴ As Johnson writes,

Both the historical and theological paradigms—at least as usually practiced—tend toward the general and the abstract, whereas this religious language remains specific and concrete. My call for a phenomenological approach is not the advancement of a new “method” but the invitation to a way of seeing, a way that begins with the assumption that religious language and religious experience are actually about something and deserving attention in their own right. It then seeks ways of getting at that register of the texts more adequately. (182)

¹⁴ An emphasis on NT religious experience was invigorated by J. D. G. Dunn 1970 and 1975, but perhaps initiated by Gunkel 1888. See Flannery 2008: 2–8 and Batluck 2011 for histories of research.

Johnson's observations regarding a scholarly preference for the general and the abstract certainly hold true for study of Paul's theology of death and beyond. The foregoing survey has shown that scholars have concentrated on what Paul thought about death and beyond *in general* to the neglect of how Paul approached death as he considered it *in relation to himself*.

Johnson defines religious experience as "a response to that which is perceived as ultimate, involving the whole person, characterized by a peculiar intensity, and issuing in action" (60). On this definition Paul's near-death experience in Asia must certainly qualify, though Johnson does not include 2 Cor 1:8–10 in any of his lengthy lists of texts describing Paul's religious experiences.¹⁵ Furthermore, it seems reasonable to include any serious encounter with death or reflection on death as part of Paul's religious experience, though scholars working in this field have yet to seize upon this.¹⁶

In a *Festschrift* for Luke Timothy Johnson, published ten years after *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, James Dunn laments that Johnson's call for a recovery of religious experience has not been heeded: "So perhaps it is appropriate to reinforce Johnson's plea to highlight the 'missing dimension' in NT studies, since it may be a dimension that needs to be rediscovered yet again in traditional contemporary Christianity" (2008: 4). Nevertheless, there were signs even in 2008 that interest in Christian religious experience was beginning to gain steam.

In addition to the many monographs published since 1975 that can be considered within this general area of research (for which, see Batluck 2011), one significant sign of scholarly interest is the formation of the SBL program unit, "Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity," inaugurated as a "Consultation" in 2005 and now continuing as a "Section." This research group has generated two volumes of papers presented at SBL annual meetings, *Experientia* volumes 1 and 2. In the first volume, Troels Engberg-Pedersen helpfully reminds us that Paul's references to religious

¹⁵ See the numerous Pauline references Johnson provides in footnotes 3–43 on pages 4–12.

¹⁶ A partial exception might be found in Shantz 2008: 203–4, which analyzes Phil 1 and the anticipation of "pain and transformation" (203) therein as religious experience.

experience serve rhetorical purposes and always come in interpreted form (2008: 150). Nevertheless, according to Engberg-Pedersen, such references point to something that was “genuinely there,” though not necessarily in the specific way it is interpreted (157). While Paul’s actual religious experience is obviously inaccessible to us, the entire *Experientia* volume argues that “what we *can* do is to take seriously the textual *articulation* of religious experience in antiquity” (Flannery 2008: 2; reiterated in Shantz 2012: 1). As Colleen Shantz asserts in the second *Experientia* volume, “Texts communicate the residue of experience or a record of its effects” (2012: 14). Thus this thesis will embrace a literary approach to Paul’s religious experience, focusing on the textual articulation of Paul’s encounters with death. Unlike most other studies on religious experience, however, I will not use the Pauline texts to launch into the fields of anthropology, sociology, phenomenology, neuropsychology, or the like.¹⁷

Of all the secondary literature I have consulted, Steven Kraftchick’s essay, “Death’s Parsing: Experience as a Mode of Theology in Paul” in the volume *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel* (2002; cf. also Kraftchick 1993 and 2007) comes the closest to approximating my focus. Kraftchick’s essay is written in the vein of this recent emphasis on “religious experience.” He claims, “Paul’s theology is shaped not only by his heritage, his religious convictions and his struggles with his congregations, but also by his experience of the human condition” (145). Kraftchick later expands upon this remark, engaging with the thought of Calvin Roetzel. His comments are worth reproducing at length:

A significant value of Roetzel’s conception of Paul’s theologizing is that the humanity of Paul is not lost in the process of searching for his fundamental thought and belief. I want to stress two features that Roetzel’s interpretation of Paul suggests. First, that Paul’s theologizing emerges as he is thinking and that it is a dynamic process: a result of an interaction between convictions and contexts. Roetzel has emphasized Paul’s interactions with his congregations and opponents, and undoubtedly, the majority of his theologizing was a result of such engagement. However, it is also clear that, on occasion, Paul’s theologizing occurs through particular reflection on his own experiences. I want to argue that this

¹⁷ My approach does have some similar concerns to practical theology. Cf. e.g., Stephen Barton’s essay, “The Resurrection and Practical Theology with Particular Reference to Death and Dying in Christ” (2011). However, my work will be descriptive, not overtly prescriptive.

personal element must also be included in an attempt to read Paul and discern his theological process. A robust interpretation of Paul, therefore, must take into account not only his heritage and his argumentative context, but also his personal experience of his finite nature. (149)

Kraftchick returns to this point a few pages later: “A full exegesis of Paul’s writings, one that is most nearly historically and cognitively accurate, should contain elements of Paul’s humanity and subjectivity. A robust analysis of Paul requires us to examine what he says about any given subject, but also how he experienced it” (153–54). This is precisely my own claim. In expounding Paul’s approach to death—that is, the *experiential* and thus subjective dimension to Paul’s theology of death—we are not presenting an amusing sidebar to Paul’s theology. Rather, in assessing Paul’s experience with death, his premonitions of death, and principally Paul’s literary anticipations of death, I seek to provide a richer and more human account of his theology. Kraftchick clearly identifies the lacuna in scholarship that this thesis seeks to address:

I want to clarify that I am speaking of Paul’s contemplation of his own death, that is, to the topic of death as an existential reality. All Pauline interpreters recognize that Paul reflects on death in his letters; however, the vast majority of this work treats Paul’s conceptions of death as a cosmic power, its relationship to sin, or Paul’s understanding of the death of Christ. Very few investigate Paul’s reflections on his own death, not as an Apostle, but as a human being. (146–47)

Kraftchick’s essay, besides offering general methodological reflections, is limited to an analysis of 2 Cor 1:8–10. He acknowledges that there are other occasions on which Paul speaks of his death (2 Cor 4:7–12; 5:1–10; Phil 1:19–26; see page 147), but space constraints preclude any consideration of these texts. Therefore, the present work could be viewed as an extension of Kraftchick’s line of inquiry.

Although I share Kraftchick’s focus and concerns, in my view his essay has not fully resisted the pull Luke Timothy Johnson describes toward “the general and the abstract.” In commenting on Paul’s near-death experience in Asia, Kraftchick writes, “Here Paul faces the reality of *his death* and with this he experiences the fundamental human dilemma: ‘individuality within finitude’” (160). Kraftchick thus universalizes Paul’s experience, presenting it as an abstraction of the fundamental *human* dilemma, “individuality within finitude.” I would argue that this exegetical (and hermeneutical)

maneuver—which, as we will observe in later chapters, is commonly made—flattens what Johnson calls the “specific and concrete” nature of Paul’s religious language. No longer is Paul speaking as an apostle to particular, first-century congregations that he founded; rather, he becomes the mouthpiece for universal Christian, or even human, experience. In contrast, we will attempt to retain the individual and situated nature of Paul’s theologizing. This is not to suggest that his personal reflections do not have broader import—he is, after all, writing to others—but only that we will miss the crucial *apostolic* element to Paul’s thoughts on death if we move too quickly to a discussion of fundamental human dilemmas or realities. Therefore, rather than investigating “Paul’s reflections on his own death, *not* as an Apostle, *but* as a human being” (Kraftchick 2002: 146–47; italics added), we will investigate Paul’s reflections on his own death as an apostle *and* as a human being.

In sum, Kraftchick rightly stresses the importance of Paul’s overwhelming affliction in Asia as an experience that shaped his life and thought. C. H. Dodd even claims that this experience led Paul to “a sort of second conversion” (1953: 81). This thesis could be conceived of as the study of the history of effects emanating from this momentous religious experience. Paul’s approach to death, like the Spirit, can only be seen by the effects that it produces (cf. John 3:8). Kraftchick’s 2002 essay analyzes the ground near the epicenter. This study will register the near-effects but also those at some distance.

1.2.3 Recent Interest in Early Pauline Reception

In addition to a growing interest in religious experience as an object of legitimate scholarly research, there has been across many academic disciplines a burgeoning recent interest in “effective history” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and “reception history” (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*). Though sometimes used interchangeably, these terms derive from the works of different scholars (Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss, respectively) and originally denoted different approaches to interpretation (see Knight 2010 and the next chapter). There is no need to provide an account of the philosophical origin or theoretical underpinnings of either approach; others have already done so (see,

e.g., Wolfreys 2006). Neither will I attempt to take stock of how these methods have impacted NT studies in general. Rather, I will here mention some of the more pertinent studies in early Pauline reception before extensively reflecting on methodology in the next chapter.

The seminal work in this field of research is Andreas Lindemann's *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion* (1979). Against the prevailing notion that the Apostle Paul was forgotten or shunned in the second century, Lindemann forcefully argues for his unrivaled influence: "Keine Gestalt des ältesten Christentums hat auf Theologie und Geschichte der Kirche einen solchen Einfluß ausgeübt wie der Heidenapostel Paulus" (1). Something similar is demonstrated by Ernst Dassmann's book *Der Stachel im Fleisch: Paulus in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Irenäus*, published in the same year (1979), and by David Rensberger's unpublished Yale dissertation, "As the Apostle Teaches: The Development of the Use of Paul's Letters in Second-Century Christianity," two years later (1981). A major volume on Pauline reception, *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, appeared in 1990, and two additional volumes have appeared within the last few years: *The Early Reception of Paul* (2011) and *Paul and the Second Century* (2011).¹⁸ In 2008 James Aageson published a monograph entitled *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church*, in which he first discerns the "theological patterns" evident in each of the Pastoral Epistles and then compares these patterns to other NT and early Christian texts. Finally, Richard Pervo's book *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (2010) surveys portraits of Paul in early Christian texts from the undisputed Pauline letters to the writing of Irenaeus.¹⁹

Most of these previous works have been either broad-sweeping accounts of the reception of Paul's letters and theology or focused studies on the reception of Paul in a

¹⁸ See my reviews, Kirk 2012c and 2012b. Volumes edited by Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett on the reception of the NT in the Apostolic Fathers (2005b and 2005c) also include many essays on early Pauline reception.

¹⁹ See my review, Kirk 2012a.

particular author or text. None have focused specifically on Paul's death, although it is generally acknowledged that the image of Paul as "martyr" is a repeated and important one (e.g., Pervo 2010: 11). My own thematic investigation of Paul's death will extend from the Pauline letters all the way through the mid-second century in texts that explicitly mention him. Though such an investigation could be conducted simply as a comparative exercise, in the next chapter I will argue that Paul's letters and these early Christian texts may be more constructively related. I believe that a study of Paul's early effective history offers substantial resources for the interpretation of Paul's letters.

1.3 The Outline of This Thesis

To summarize, the general topic of this thesis is Paul's theology of (literal) bodily death; the angle from which this will be studied is an "experiential" one; the methodology employed will incorporate a study of early Christian texts outside of and after Paul. This work is thus positioned at the confluence of three streams of recent scholarly interest: Paul's theology of death and beyond; Paul's religious experience; and Pauline reception.

As it is academic convention and also sound practice to inform readers of the intended destination before embarking on the journey, I offer a paragraph summary of my conclusions in advance. This may act as compass, which could prove useful as we plunge into the dense thickets of texts and interpretation in chapters to follow.

Paul approached his death pointedly conscious of his apostolic calling. It seems as if Paul anticipated living until the Parousia before his "affliction in Asia" (2 Cor 1:8), but upon receiving the "decision of death" from God (2 Cor 1:9), Paul knew that he would die before the Lord came. The primary challenge this looming departure presented was not to his own person (in the form of existential anxiety or otherwise) but to the continued survival of the gospel in his congregations. It was therefore Paul's resolve to pour out what remained of his life in service to his fellow believers so that they would remain and progress in the faith. Paul never appeared to wrestle with a fear of death or with doubt concerning his own salvation. Rather he possessed a strong conviction, almost on the level of an assumption, that he would enjoy immediate and conscious fellowship with Christ apart from his body upon his death. This firm hope, based in part upon a recognition of his own good works, freed Paul to plot his life-course in order to maximize his ministry without regard for the consequences to his bodily life. Though in some ways this orientation uniquely characterized his apostolic ministry, Paul expected

that this offering up of his life to God and others would be an example worthy of emulation among all Christians under his influence.

These conclusions, a number of which are contested or have not been formulated precisely in this way before, will be explicated and supported by a thorough exegesis of passages in Paul's letters and other early Christian texts. After a chapter that defends the relevance of Paul's effective history to this study and explores some methodological considerations (chapter 2), we will proceed with a study of relevant early Christian texts in what I take to be their chronological order: the canonical book of Acts (chapter 3), *I Clement* (chapter 4), the letters of Ignatius (chapter 5), Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (chapter 6), and the *Martyrdom of Paul* (chapter 7). The results from these chapters will be summarized and synthesized in chapter 8. Then we will leap backward in time to study 2 Corinthians (chapter 9), Philippians (chapter 10), and 2 Timothy (chapter 11). Chapter 12 will then distill the findings of chapters 9–11 before a final chapter will draw all the lines of inquiry together and conclude the thesis (chapter 13).

Readers may be curious why chapters on Christian texts outside of Paul are placed before chapters on the Pauline letters, since this inverts the expected chronological order. Three considerations have prompted this sequencing. First, the presentation (and the actual sequence of my research) was designed to allow the early Christian material outside of Paul to have its own voice. Even if this material can be brought to bear on the interpretation of Paul's letters, it is also deserving of consideration in itself. Starting with the NT material could color the reading of these later texts; a fixed understanding of Paul could dictate what is looked for and seen.

Second, once these early Christian documents are allowed to stand on their own, they can helpfully (though not directly) point us back to the Pauline letters on which they are partially dependent. If Paul's effective history can set forth grist for the exegesis of Paul's letters, then it would seem useful to have this in hand while interpreting Paul's letters. We will thus reverse the typical procedures of Anthony Thiselton and Ulrich Luz—two well-known practitioners of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. By placing “analysis” before a discrete section of “history of influence,” Mark Knight charges that each views reception history

“as an activity that follows from exegesis rather than being intrinsic to it” (2010: 142). As Rachel Nicholls writes,

For anyone concerned to produce a close reading of a biblical passage, it is necessary to turn back from the contemplation of the ‘effects’ to make a return journey to a *Wirkungsgeschichte*-enriched exegesis. . . . Without this return journey, the study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a text is simply an extra bolt-on procedure for exegetes: an interesting excursion, but no real help in reaching their destination. (2008: 23–24)

Third, the most important sources we have for Paul’s approach to his death are the letters he wrote. Ending with Paul’s effective history would be anticlimactic for our purposes. It is fitting to let Paul’s writings have the final say. Therefore, for these reasons we begin our journey with Paul’s immediate followers and let them be our guides as we make our way toward Paul himself.

Chapter 2

Family Remembrances of the Departed Paul: Effective History and Paul's Approach to Death

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this thesis will be Paul's death as it is anticipated in letters he wrote and reflected upon in early Christian texts written after him. I have already indicated that an exploration of Paul's early *Wirkungsgeschichte* can enrich our understanding of him. The task of this chapter is to support that claim with further methodological reflections. Yet we will not engage the issue at the philosophical level. My study is not dependent on an overly-theorized account of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. I will rather take as dialogue partners a few of the recent *biblical* practitioners of this "approach," freely conceding that *Wirkungsgeschichte* as it has been embraced in NT studies has wandered away from some of the concerns and constraints it developed in other academic disciplines.¹ After attempting to clarify the debate regarding the usefulness of effective history for the interpretation of Paul's letters, a model of how early portraits of Paul were composed will be set forth. The chapter will conclude by introducing Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblances, which will be modified for use in this study.

2.2 The Apostle Paul—Constructed or Remembered in Early Christianity?

The question of whether Paul was constructed or remembered in late first- and second-century Christianity is an ill-formed question if it presents a binary choice. Surely

¹ See Nicholls 2008: 3–27 and Knight 2010 for an account of how Gadamer's ideas have been appropriated (and modified) by NT scholars. In this way, my adoption of "effective history" is similar to how "intertextuality" has been assimilated into NT studies, even though the study of intertextuality originally was laden with philosophical freight (for which, see Hatina 1999).

Paul was both constructed *and* remembered. Portraits of Paul were not composed and disseminated without any historical basis; neither did later Christians portray Paul simply and straightforwardly “as he was.” Yet the question is not thereby rendered meaningless. Scholars tend to weight their answer in one direction or the other, and this determines how useful the consideration of Paul’s early effective history is thought to be in a study of Paul’s (canonical) letters.

Richard Pervo inclines in one direction in his recent book, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (2010). One reviewer rightly claims, “This outstanding volume is the most current and complete book written in English on the development and diversity of Paul’s legacy in the early church” (Aageson 2011). Another reviewer gushes, “This is a remarkable book and every serious student and scholar of Paul should take note of it. It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the breadth of scholarship, richness of insight, and superb analysis displayed. . . . It [the book] made me excited about Paul and his theology in a way I have not felt so excited for a long time” (Bash 2011: 709, 710). Pervo’s book will likely exert significant influence on Pauline reception studies. As a third reviewer predicts, “this study will remain a landmark in Pauline studies for a generation or more” (Roetzel 2013: 380).

The title and subtitle of the book signal Pervo’s belief that the Paul of early Christianity was made or constructed by later Christians. He calls Paul “the protean apostle” (x), who takes on different shapes and different roles—whether hero, villain, or victim (xi).² In Pervo’s analysis Paul seems to be something of a wax nose, molded according to the needs and interests of his successors. As he provocatively declares, “The only real Paul is the dead Paul” (2). Pervo describes his book in the following terms: “The thrust of the following pages is toward defining profiles of Paul and Paulinism in terms of the needs, questions, and values of the persons, groups, or movements represented in various texts” (xii). In other words, early Christian profiles of Paul cannot tell us about

² Likewise, Judith Lieu calls the Paul of this early period “elusive” and “unstable” (2010: 14).

Paul himself, only about those who created them (and perhaps about ourselves).³ This conviction is crystalized in the claim, “The portraits of Paul that emerge in early (and subsequent) Christianity do not arise from any concern to preserve history for the benefit of subsequent investigators; they seek to address the problems of those churches in their own times” (p. xiii; reiterated on page 12).

In Pervo’s account Paul is a totally passive agent, a “dead” apostle to be manipulated and exploited in later debates that apparently have no organic connection to his own life and ministry. If Pervo is right, then it is entirely appropriate, even in this early period, to speak exclusively in terms of an author’s “use” of Paul. Though Pervo never substantiates his dichotomous claim that portraits of Paul do *not* preserve “history” *but* address contemporary problems, this judgment seems to be based on the varied and divergent profiles of Paul in early Christian literature. If these profiles were more uniform, one assumes that Pervo would be receptive to the idea that they preserved more of Paul himself. As it is, Pervo reflects very little on how Paul’s early effective history might illuminate the original meaning of Paul’s letters. In fact, Pervo thinks that the collection of Pauline letters—or “book”—we have today only represents Paul “as some early believers wished him to be received and understood” (2). The historical or “earthly” Paul has all but disappeared.

In this chapter I will provide an alternative account of Paul in early Christianity. I will argue that it is a mistake to view Paul as passively as Pervo does; Paul, like any other great historic figure, exerted such influence and created such a lasting impression while alive that the contours of his historical footprint could not be so easily reshaped a generation or two after his death. In subsequent chapters we will observe that early Christian authors did have a concern to preserve historical traditions about Paul. The “Paul of history” and the “apostle of faith” ought not to be set against each other. Paul’s

³ This perspective on the role of effective history is reflected in the *Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar* (EKK) series as well. As Mark Elliott notes, by placing effective history after detailed exegesis (as Ulrich Luz does in his influential commentary on Matthew), a step-by-step arrangement is created in which the “history of influence might logically play a part in what one concludes for today, but not what the text might have meant originally” (2010: 167). Cf. Nicholls 2008: 22–25.

early effective history can teach us about the man who catalyzed that history, even if he was a contested and controversial figure.

My assessment of the usefulness of effective history aligns with Markus Bockmuehl's view. Bockmuehl has set forth an account of the role that effective history can play in the interpretation of the NT in several publications, including a volume entitled, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (2006), an essay entitled, "New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Early Christian Appeal to Living Memory" (2007), and two recent books on the Apostle Peter: *The Remembered Peter: In Ancient Reception and Modern Debate* (2010) and *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (2012).⁴ Bockmuehl contends, "An accurate vision of history, including that of the New Testament and its *dramatis personae*, requires both proximity and distance. Proximity may seem self-evidently desirable, but distance is required for historical vision and comprehension" (2006: 167–68; cf. 2007: 345; 2010: 19). From this perspective, Paul's approach to death can only be known in the round by including viewpoints near and far. Moreover, following Bockmuehl's suggestion, I will prioritize *early* effective history by limiting our examination to the first two generations after Paul's death (ca. 70–160), which falls within what Bockmuehl calls the period of "living memory."⁵ This self-imposed constraint could lend more credibility to a study that seeks to say something about Paul's death from a consideration of its textual aftermath.⁶

⁴ Note the contrast in titles: *The Making of Paul* (Pervo) and *The Remembered Peter* (Bockmuehl). Unfortunately, Pervo's 2010 book does not interact with any of Bockmuehl's work.

⁵ See Bockmuehl 2006: 169–70; 2007: 353; 2010: 23–24. Other authors, such as Jan Assman (1992) and Richard Bauckham (2006) have spoken of "living memory," but for them the term seems to denote the lifetime of eyewitnesses. For Bockmuehl apostolic living memory extends to the second generation and the end of the second century—the latter of which John Cook has challenged in a (2011) review of *The Remembered Peter*. While I agree with Bockmuehl that certain *individuals* from each generation may have lived an extraordinarily long time (see Bockmuehl 2012: 44n12), Cook speaks in terms of generations as a whole. I will accept Cook's suggested constraint and restrict the range of dates considered to A.D. 70–160, after which apostolic memories may have ceased to be preserved *collectively*.

⁶ Bockmuehl notes the implications of studying later effective history: "The further the effects are removed in time from their causes, the more tenuous their connection becomes. *Wirkungsgeschichte* increasingly turns into a story of serendipitous echoes and often arbitrary canons of intertextual association, rather than a continuity of demonstrable effects. Consequences soon cease to shed appreciable light on the

2.3 Literary Portraits of Paul in Early Pauline Effective History

2.3.1 *The Complex Genesis of Early Pauline Portraits*

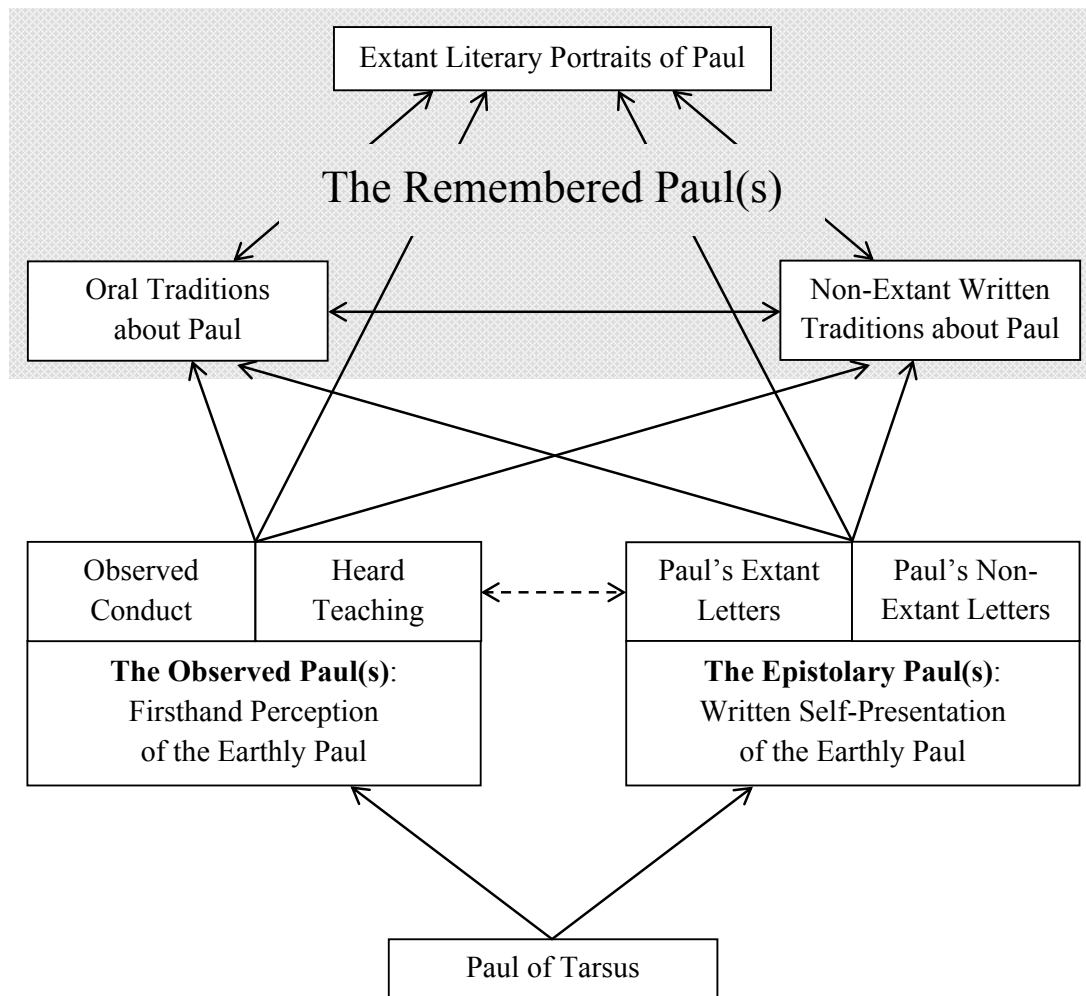
Richard Pervo repeatedly compares Paul's fate to Jesus' in early Christianity (e.g., xii, 2, 17, 19–20, 23). Though Pervo's skeptical posture toward the Jesus tradition translates into skepticism toward the Pauline tradition, this analogy is worth pondering. How were portraits of *Jesus* created in early Christian literature? The process was undoubtedly complex. At least lip service is typically rendered to the possibility that early Christian authors would have been influenced by a variety of oral and written sources in a variety of forms in a variety of settings. Attention is also given to the way in which each author's portrait of Jesus is shaped by circumstantial factors and theological concerns. Recent studies on the Jesus of the Gospels have stressed the role of eyewitnesses (e.g., Byrskog 2000; Bauckham 2006) and the importance of memory (e.g., J. D. G. Dunn 2003; Allison 2010). These studies have generated an enormous amount of discussion. The result is that we now possess more sophisticated and hefty accounts of how the earliest portraits of Jesus were transmitted and composed.

In striking contrast to Jesus scholarship, such rich methodological reflection rarely informs parallel scholarship on the earliest literary portraits of Paul. It is certainly true that the earliest portraits of Paul—perhaps excluding the book of Acts—are thin and rather more like outlines when compared to the colorful and detailed portraits of Jesus in the canonical and extra-canonical Gospels. It is also undeniable that not as much was at stake theologically for early Christians in portraying the life and death of the Apostle Paul. Yet it is my contention that the dynamics involved in the creation of the earliest literary portraits of Paul and Jesus are somewhat similar (so too Pervo 2010). Appreciating this will yield much fuller accounts of how Paul was remembered and portrayed in the earliest Christian literature.

meaning and significance of their causes" (2007: 346). Hence he proposes "to privilege the *earlier* over the more remote effects for a historical understanding of texts, persons and events" (346).

There is inevitably a degree of speculation in theorizing how early Christian literary portraits of Paul were composed. To structure the discussion a simplified diagram that seeks to capture the process will be explicated:

Figure 1 – How Literary Portraits of Paul Were Composed in the Period of Living Memory



The diagram begins at the bottom with Paul of Tarsus—that is, the actual person of Paul. Throughout this thesis I refer to the actual person of Paul as the “earthly Paul” rather than the “historical Paul,” to make it clear that what I have in view is a flesh-and-blood individual rather than what can be known of this individual through historical inquiry. By starting the diagram here I simply reiterate that there was a single person who was

observed by his contemporaries and who composed letters that were copied and circulated—letters that have been preserved, in some form, to our own day. Most scholars would agree to a bare outline of Paul’s life including his birth in Tarsus, his education as a Pharisee, some sort of Christian conversion/call in the mid-30s, a period of Christian ministry, and his eventual death in Rome, probably in the mid-60s.

The underlying lived narrative of the earthly Paul provides some cohesion to the next level of the diagram, and yet we have no direct access to the earthly Paul and (according to my presentation) neither did his contemporaries. Paul’s contemporaries could have encountered him in person or through his letters, but the Paul known to each one would have only been a partial (and potentially distorted) representation of the earthly Paul.

The left-hand block of the second level I label the “observed Paul(s)” —Paul as he was perceived by others through direct, personal contact. According to Paul’s letters and the canonical book of Acts, Paul traveled widely in the Mediterranean world, preaching and teaching in various settings for approximately thirty years, which is perhaps ten times the length of Jesus’ public ministry. One may reasonably infer, therefore, that thousands of first-century men and women would have seen and heard the Christian Paul. Perhaps hundreds of these men and women would have been exposed to Paul’s teaching on more than one occasion. The book of Acts claims that Paul reasoned daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus for a period of two years (Acts 19:9–10). People would have had varied encounters with Paul—hence the plural, the observed “Pauls.” As Judith Lieu claims, “It is easy to imagine how his earliest converts whom we glimpse through the letters would have experienced different Pauls” (2010: 6). Observation of Paul obviously ceased at his death and thus we no longer have direct access to the “observed Paul.”

We do have access to what I label the “epistolary Paul(s),” the right-hand block of the second level. However, the situation is complicated. There are 13 canonical letters internally attributed to Paul, but modern scholarship only considers seven to be undisputedly by Paul. This points to possible discrepancies between the epistolary Paul and the “canonical Paul.” In the diagram, “Paul’s extant letters” refers only to those letters directly authored by Paul, while pseudepigraphical letters would belong to the next

level up. Furthermore, Paul certainly wrote more letters than those that have survived. 1 Corinthians 5:9 mentions a letter that Paul wrote previously to the Corinthians, 2 Cor 2:3–4 a “tearful letter,” and Col 4:16 a letter to Laodicea—a reference which generated several forgeries.

Different images or “faces” of Paul are present in these letters, and different composite portraits of Paul result from different collections of letters. This diversity is indicated by the plural, the epistolary “Pauls.” The situation is further complicated when we consider the complexity of the textual tradition, the possible composite nature of some of Paul’s letters (argued most often in the case of 2 Corinthians and Philippians), and the roles of Paul’s amanuenses, co-authors, and letter carriers. In addition, we may ask how the earthly Paul relates to the “epistolary Paul.” Are the self-images that Paul’s letters project consistent with how he actually thought and behaved?

How the observed Paul relates to the epistolary Paul is another convoluted matter. Some of Paul’s opponents apparently charged that Paul’s demeanor, if not also the content of what he taught, was different in his letters than it was in his personal visits (see Gal 5:11; 2 Cor 10:10). Even if there were some discrepancies between the observed Paul and epistolary Paul, it is difficult to imagine that there would not also have been substantial overlap. Is it not reasonable to conjecture that Paul’s teaching in any given city in the Roman Empire would have resembled what he wrote in one or more of his letters (see Edsall 2013)? Paul could have honed a phrase in countless sermons and conversations that eventually made its way into a letter. Conversely, a particularly apt expression or argument in a letter could have been re-deployed in subsequent oral teaching. Furthermore, some of Paul’s letters presuppose his prior teaching and it is feasible that some of his later, oral teaching presupposed familiarity with one or more of his letters. The dynamic interplay between Paul’s extant letters and his heard teaching is indicated in the diagram with a dotted line and double arrow.

At the final level of the diagram are oral and written traditions about Paul, the “remembered Paul(s).” By this I am not referring to individual, *non-communicated* memories of Paul, but rather to the “social memory” of Paul as it was preserved in things

said and written about him.⁷ (Figure 1 does not include the visual arts or other non-literary sources.) My fourfold schema of the earthly, observed, epistolary, and remembered Paul can be compared with that of David Reis: “The existence of oral traditions surrounding Paul should be added to the material of the historical Paul, the epistolary Paul, and the legendary Paul as evidence that contributes to the complete picture of Paul (‘the *Paulusbild*’) as available to first- and second-century Christians” (2005: 295n25). In contemplating these Pauline traditions we must be aware of the range of potential source material and be cognizant of the factors related to their creation and promulgation.

Oral traditions about Paul could have been formed initially through personal experience. They also could have arisen from reading Paul’s writing or hearing it read aloud. For example, an oral tradition about Paul as a prisoner could have been created by someone who literally saw Paul in chains, but it also could have originated from a reading or hearing of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. It is even possible that an oral tradition concerning Paul the prisoner could be based on a written tradition that is not extant today. The recent scholarly emphasis on “secondary orality” (see Ong 1982: 10–15; cf. Byrskog 2000: 127–44; Gregory 2011a: 90–95) should alert us that texts about Paul—whether written by Paul or by someone else—could have co-existed and interacted with oral traditions about Paul.

What makes the first two generations after Paul’s death unique is that, in this period, oral Pauline traditions were still being refreshed and shaped by living memory. As Andrew Gregory claims, “The hypothesis that oral tradition continued well into the

⁷ I am dependent here on Rafael Rodríguez’s discussion of social memory, in which he stresses that memory “is forged and summoned in the present by individuals *constantly engaged in social interaction*” (2010: 42–43). Quoting Jeffrey Olick, Rodríguez writes, “All individual remembering takes place with social materials, within social contexts, and in response to social cues. Even when we do it alone, we do so as social beings with reference to our social identities” (42). For this reason I will not pit individual memory against collective memory in this study. Furthermore, I adopt what Chris Keith calls the “continuity perspective” (as opposed to the “presentist perspective”) on social memory, which contends that “it is memory’s inherently *social* nature that enables it to preserve the past to an extent by transcending individual existence” (2011: 169).

second century seems intrinsically probable and historically plausible, even if (almost by definition) it has left few remaining traces” (2003: 15). This is not to say that oral traditions about Paul could not have been embellished or fabricated. Nevertheless, while people who had first- or second-hand knowledge of Paul were still alive, the observed Paul both revitalized and placed constraints on the remembered Paul.⁸ With time this source for oral and written Pauline traditions began to slip away.

Non-extant written traditions about Paul range from the hypothetical (such as the “we source” supposedly used in the writing of Acts) to the known (such as Marcion’s writings about Paul). Like oral Pauline traditions, these too could have pulled from a number of sources. The “we source” postulated for Acts may have been written by a companion of Paul. Marcion apparently knew a number of Paul’s letters. Both could have been dependent to some degree on oral traditions about Paul.

At the top of the diagram are the earliest extant literary portraits of Paul in works such as Acts, *1 Clement*, Ignatius’s letters, Polycarp’s letter, and the *Acts of Paul*. These portraits of Paul are our primary interest. How were they composed?

An early Christian author who wanted to write about Paul could have drawn from four potential sources, as illustrated in the diagram. First it is possible, at least in the case of Acts or *1 Clement*, that the author was personally familiar with the Apostle Paul and wrote an account from what he had observed firsthand. Second, it is possible that the early Christian author knew one or more of Paul’s letters. Yet the “epistolary Pauls” known to early Christians are almost certainly not coextensive with the epistolary Paul

⁸ My perspective on the Pauline tradition thus mirrors, in some ways, Dunn’s perspective on the synoptic tradition. Dunn argues that the synoptic tradition as we now have it is dependent on a connection to eyewitnesses of Jesus but not necessarily a *direct* connection: “a connection, yes, since eyewitnesses were at the start of the whole process and contributed to that process to a significant extent but were not personally responsible for the whole process in all the scattered and burgeoning churches or able to exert the personal control that Richard [Bauckham] seems to want to argue for. My argument is that even without such direct supervision of the traditioning process, the character of that process, as evidenced by the synoptic tradition, ensured the coherence and consistency of the tradition” (2010: 313). Similarly, I think the Pauline traditioning process among those who directly observed him and those with whom these eyewitnesses communicated ensured the coherence and consistency of the Pauline tradition in the first two generations after his death.

known to us. Most of the attention in Pauline reception studies has been trained on this relationship between early Christian authors and Paul's (canonical) letters and we will return to it shortly.

Third, it seems that early Christian authors could not have escaped the influence of oral Pauline traditions.⁹ Anyone who personally knew Paul and later wrote about him must have talked with others who knew him, both during Paul's lifetime and afterward. So, for example, if the book of Acts was written by Luke, a companion of Paul, then in writing his narrative he must have consulted others who knew Paul (cf. Luke 1:1–4).¹⁰ Anyone who did *not* personally know Paul could not have had their knowledge of Paul mediated *solely* through Paul's letters. Since those interested in writing about Paul were part of Christian communities and Paul's letters were preserved in and by those communities, it is untenable to think that one could read Paul's letters without hearing a lot about Paul. So whether personal observation or Paul's extant letters shaped early literary Christian portraits of Paul and to what degree is an open question. Whether oral traditions about Paul shaped early literary portraits of him is not—they must have.

Fourth, we must be open to the possibility that non-extant written traditions about Paul could have been used in composing the earliest literary portraits of Paul.¹¹ As Gregory writes, “We know that vast swathes of early Christian literature have been lost, but it is important that we take fuller cognisance of this fact and its consequences than is usually the case. I do not propose to argue from silence, but I do wish to insist that we

⁹ Cf. Marguerat 2013: 6: “The memory of the apostle was preserved primarily through oral tradition circulating in the communities which he had founded. . . . In no way was the social memory of the apostle transmitted through purely literary channels.” See also the parallel emphasis on orality in Stephen Young's study on the Jesus tradition in the Apostolic Fathers (2011).

¹⁰ Cf. Aejmelaeus 2011: 72: “We can safely assume that Paul and his teachings lived further in a many-sided manner, not only in the letters, but also in memories and oral teaching, in Luke's environment. The difference between a literary quoting and the possibility of a mere using of oral tradition is sometimes only a line drawn in the water, but often the difference is yet very well recognizable.”

¹¹ The two are separated in my diagram to reinforce the point that the early portraits of Paul available to us could have been shaped by written sources other than Paul's authentic letters.

need to take seriously the vagaries of textual transmission” (2003: 17).¹² These non-extant written traditions about Paul could have been uncritically adopted, sympathetically re-expressed, or even engaged polemically. Indeed, many scholars believe that those who wrote about Paul in the second century felt compelled to rehabilitate Paul’s reputation because it had been smeared by opponents or tarnished by heretics.

2.3.2 *Implications for the Study of Paul’s Early Effective History*

Appreciating the dynamics involved in the composition of early literary portraits of Paul informs our study of early Pauline effective history in at least two critical ways. First, it suggests that precise claims about the Pauline sources early Christian authors used are very difficult to substantiate.

To illustrate this, consider the question of the use of Romans in *1 Clement*. In the landmark 1905 volume, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, A. J. Carlyle asserts that there can be no reasonable doubt that the author of *1 Clement* used Romans; he assigns the use of Romans to “Class A,” the highest rating. This conclusion is chiefly inferred from a supposed parallel between *1 Clem.* 35:5–6 and Rom 1:29–32 (see Carlyle 1905: 37–38). Likewise, in the corresponding centennial volume, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, Andrew Gregory claims that it is “very likely indeed” that the author of *1 Clement* used Romans (2005: 154).

In examining this further we find that the passages in *1 Clem.* 35 and Rom 1 are basically comparable vice lists that end with similar statements. *1 Clement* 35.6 reads, “For those who do these things are loathsome to God—not only those who do them, but also those approving of them”; and Rom 1:32 reads, “Although they know God’s decree that those doing such things are worthy of death, they not only do them but also approve of those who do them.” It is possible that the author of *1 Clement* had direct visual access to Rom 1:29–32 as he (rather freely) composed *1 Clem.* 35.5–6. However, it is possible

¹² In a footnote to this sentence (17n58) Gregory refers to Hengel’s observation that “85% of second-century Christian writings known by their titles have been lost.” Hengel suggests that “the real loss is likely to be substantially higher.”

that the author of *1 Clement* was consciously recalling the text from memory or was unconsciously influenced by the text. The author may have heard Paul's letter read aloud in his congregation, perhaps multiple times.

The similarities between *1 Clem.* 35:5–6 and Rom 1:29–32 could also be explained by oral tradition. The author of *1 Clement* could have had conversations with other Christians about this passage in Romans without ever having read it himself or he could have been told that Paul had said something like this when Paul had visited Rome a few decades earlier. It is reasonable to posit that Paul's oral teaching in Rome could have clarified and reinforced what he had said in his letter. Additionally, the use of a non-extant vice list—whether derived from Romans or not—could explain the similarities between *1 Clem.* 35 and Rom 1.¹³

Therefore, the similarities between the passages could have arisen from a use of Romans, oral traditions concerning Paul's teaching, non-extant written traditions, or some combination thereof. The pervasiveness and fluidity of the Pauline tradition in this early period makes it impossible to support definitive statements about *1 Clement*'s use of Romans, at least when the word “use” refers in a narrow sense to literary dependence.

At the least, a grasp on the dynamic process by which portraits of Paul were created should undermine very specific claims, such as Lars Aejmelaeus's claim that Acts 20:24 is Luke's conflation of 1 Thess 2:8, Phil 2:16–17, and Eph 3:6–7 (1987: 127). It strikes me as thoroughly implausible that an early Christian author would have cut and spliced together an image of Paul so precisely and mechanically from multiple proto-canonical sources alone. And even if one had, this would be impossible for us to substantiate.

A second implication is that it is inadequate to use verbal correspondence as the sole criterion by which a Christian text's relation to Paul is analyzed. A high degree of verbal correspondence may be the only indicator that establishes with quasi-scientific “certainty” that one text *uses* another. Yet even here questions abound. For example, even though *1 Clem.* 34.8, *2 Clem.* 11.7, and *2 Clem.* 14.5 all exhibit a striking degree of verbal

¹³ See the relevant discussion of oral performances and vice lists in Draper 2008.

correspondence with 1 Cor 2:9, scholars recognize that the later texts could be quoting a form of Isa 64:3 or an unknown source (see Carlyle 1905: 42–44; Gregory 2005: 284–85).¹⁴ It is also possible that the saying became something of a Christian slogan, repeated without conscious reference to, or even knowledge of, a literary source.

Furthermore, consider Ign. *Eph.* 16.1, which intones, “Do not be deceived, my brothers. Those who corrupt households will not inherit the kingdom of God.” This warning has six Greek words in common with 1 Cor 6:9a. Paul Foster concludes that this passage and three others “are probably strong enough to establish with a high degree of probability that Ignatius knew and consciously quoted phrases and concepts from [1 Corinthians]” (2005: 167). Yet this kind of warning could have been a formulaic expression in early Christian communities influenced by Paul. In the expression “Do not be deceived. Those who do ‘x’ will not inherit the kingdom of God,” any number of vices could be inserted for “x” with great rhetorical effect. This need not imply that every time the expression was employed there was a conscious quotation of 1 Cor 6:9. Paul himself employs similar warnings in Gal 5:21 and 6:7. Moreover, it is plausible that similar warnings frequently punctuated Paul’s oral instruction.

The examples of *1 Clem.* 34.8 and Ign. *Eph.* 16.1—to which many others could be added—suggest that a high degree of verbal correspondence between two texts does not necessitate a strict literary dependence. More importantly, as the diagram shows, literary dependence of this sort is only one of the channels through which Pauline influence could have flowed to early Christian authors. It is therefore insufficient to discuss early Pauline reception without reference to the many ways in which Paul could have directly or indirectly shaped the discourse.

Furthermore, it is appropriate in this early period to speak in terms of Paul’s *influence* on an author in addition to (or sometimes instead of!) the author’s *use* of Paul (cf. Lindemann 2005: 19). By the end of the second century oral Pauline traditions—at least those refreshed and challenged by living memory—were dying out (cf. Bockmuehl 2007:

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9 reads, “But, as it is written, ‘That which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and has not arisen in the heart of man, that which God has prepared for those who love him’—.”

354). Yet within the first two generations after Paul, seeking to detect Pauline *influence*, on both the verbal and the conceptual levels, is an approach that is more historically realistic and better suited to the material.¹⁵ For this reason I prefer the term “effective history” to “reception” throughout this study. The term “effective history” helpfully emphasizes Paul’s influence through potentially multiple channels. The term “reception” focuses more on the later author’s agency and, in the case of Pauline reception, usually focuses on literary dependency alone. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the earliest authors writing about Paul were positioned in an unbroken stream of tradition that connected them to Paul. The ecclesial situatedness of these early Christian authors is also helpfully invoked by the term “effective history.”¹⁶

Floating free from the secure mooring of verbal correspondence would seem to cast the hapless Pauline scholar onto a vast sea of subjectivity and speculation. In one sense, it does. Gregory and Tuckett concede that judgments regarding the use of the NT in the Apostolic Fathers “may lead to a degree of open-endedness and untidiness in any results that may be obtained” (2005a: 81–82). Likewise, with regard to the study of Peter’s early effective history, Bockmuehl acknowledges, “This line of inquiry is, to be sure, a messy business. . . . Streams of tradition or memory, like rivers, cannot be dissected. Nor, to use another image, can we decipher their DNA; there is no ‘Y chromosome’ that permits reliable tracking through the generations” (2010: 15). Nevertheless, with regard to the earliest portraits of the departed Paul, I suggest that there is a promising way forward.

¹⁵ This conclusion is strengthened by recognizing that ancient authors of this period often *intentionally* did not quote source texts verbatim but rather paraphrased their ideas. Cf. J. Whittaker 1989; Gregory 2011a: 106; and Reis 2005: 288: “[Ancient rhetoricians] instructed their students to refrain from simply ‘rewriting’ earlier texts, but rather, through a creative process of ‘internalization’ and ‘re-articulation’, to transform them so that they speak to a new situation.”

¹⁶ As Gadamer states in *Truth and Method*, “If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation . . . historical consciousness is itself situated in the web of historical effects” (2004 [1960]: 300).

2.4 Wittgenstein and Paul's Literary Family

2.4.1 Wittgenstein's Concept of Family Resemblances

In what remains of this chapter I would like to explain how Ludwig Wittgenstein's metaphor of family resemblances (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) furnishes a useful way of conceptualizing and talking about the relationships between the various portraits of Paul from the late first to the mid-second century. A modified form of Wittgenstein's concept points the way from the remembered Paul to the earthly Paul.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously in 1953, Wittgenstein asks how it is that we are able to identify what a game is when there is such noticeable diversity in the category. Is there something common to all board-games, card-games, ball-games, and athletic games by virtue of which they can all be called games? Wittgenstein rejects an essentialist account. He argues that there is not one unifying element or characteristic but rather "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small" (§66).¹⁷ Wittgenstein's point can be visualized in the following figure:

Figure 2 – The Categorical Coherence of "Games" for Wittgenstein

Features of Game 1: [A	B		D	E]
Features of Game 2: [A	B	C	D	]
Features of Game 3: [A		C	D	E]
Features of Game 4: [	B	C	D	E]
Features of Game 5: [A	B	C		E]

As seen in the figure, there is no one feature that can be found in all five games. Nevertheless, there is a cluster of features that is shared between the five games. Wittgenstein then writes, "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members

¹⁷ Citations throughout are taken from Wittgenstein 2009.

of a family—build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, and so on and so forth—overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family” (§67).

Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblances was quickly applied by literary critics to the identification of literary genres (see Fishelov 1993: 54n4 for a bibliography). These critics argued that there is no one feature present in all novels, for example, that is a necessary and sufficient feature—that is, a defining feature—of a novel. Rather, they argued, novels share many but differing characteristics with one another, which could be called, to use Wittgenstein’s term, “family resemblances.”

This line of argument was challenged by David Fishelov in a 1991 article entitled, “Genre Theory and Family Resemblance—Revisited,” which was reprinted with some modification in his 1993 book, *Metaphors of Genre*. Fishelov argued that all novels share certain *necessary* features or “conditions,” though these may seem self-evident or trivial. For novels Fishelov posits four necessary conditions: 1) a novel has to be a work of fiction, 2) written in prose, 3) of considerable length, and 4) a narrative text (1993: 60). Other texts may meet these conditions and still not be considered novels, but all novels *must* meet these conditions. This simple observation leads Fishelov to an alternative view in which one could speak of necessary conditions that apply to all novels “plus an additional cluster of characteristics that is dynamic and variable” (60). Fishelov’s view can also be visualized:

Figure 3 – The Coherence of “Novels” as a Literary Genre for Fishelov

Features of Novel 1: [N	A	B		D	E]
Features of Novel 2: [N	A	B	C	D	]
Features of Novel 3: [N	A		C	D	E]
Features of Novel 4: [N		B	C	D	E]
Features of Novel 5: [N	A	B	C		E]

In this figure, “N” represents a necessary, but not sufficient, feature or set of features for a novel. Letters A through E represent the “additional cluster of characteristics that is dynamic and variable.”

Fishelov then proposes two modifications to the application of Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblances to genre theory. First, drawing on the work of Eleanor Rosch in the field of cognitive psychology, Fishelov contends that literary genres always include prototypical members by which other potential members of a genre are measured. For Fishelov this leads to “the perception of genres neither as rigid and unified categories, nor as conglomerations of texts, randomly collected, sharing merely a loose network of similarities. Rather, literary genres would be perceived as structured categories, with a ‘hard core’ consisting of prototypical members, characterized by their relatively high degree of resemblance to each other” (62–63). Second, Fishelov notes Maurice Mandelbaum’s critique that Wittgenstein “ignored one crucial ‘stable’ element, namely that members of a family ‘are related through a common ancestry’” (65). Fishelov declares that for literary genres it is often possible to trace “the intertextual relationships among diverse writers” back to a “founding father” text or more frequently two “parental” figures such as Homer and Virgil in epic poetry, Aristophanes and Plautus in comedy, etc. (66). Thus, every writer who chooses to compose in a generic framework “participates in the transmission of a textual heritage” (67) such that it is possible to take a picture of this genre family (67).

2.4.2 Family Resemblances as a Key to Pauline Ancestry

I would suggest that Fishelov’s revisions to Wittgenstein’s concept of family resemblances can—with some further modifications—be fruitfully applied to the study of Paul’s early effective history.¹⁸ More specifically, the modified concept could be applied to the study of early portraits of the departed Paul.

¹⁸ For an application of this concept to the genre of the Hodayot, see Newsom 2010.

In this case the sole necessary condition is an explicit mention of Paul. It is difficult to speak of a portrait of Paul without Paul being mentioned.¹⁹ The “prototypical” Pauline portraits would be those Paul presents of himself in his letters. These would form the “hard core” of the text family, not by virtue of their striking resemblance to one another but by the fact that they are embedded within documents that came to have a special and authoritative place within Christian communities and literature. The great ancestor to all these portraits would not be a single “father” text or even two “parental” texts, but rather the person of Paul himself—the earthly Paul. Within this metaphor Paul’s literary self-portraits could be considered his direct and immediate descendants—“filial” depictions, as it were. The Pauline portraits painted by other early Christian authors would then be depictions of more distant relation, portraits of Paul within his extended family.

Therefore, the task of the first half of this thesis will be to discern what portrayals of the departed Paul can be identified in Christian texts within the first or second generation after Paul’s death that mention Paul by name. These parameters eliminate texts that do not explicitly mention Paul (such as *2 Clement* or what we can reconstruct of Valentinus’s writings), texts that may mention Paul but do not address his death (such as what we can reconstruct of Marcion’s writings), and texts that may be relevant but are most likely later than A.D. 160 (such as the *Apocalypse of Paul*). The texts that we will consider include the canonical book of Acts, *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius, Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians, and the *Martyrdom of Paul* (which I date to the mid-second century; see §7.3). We will observe in these texts a shared cluster of Pauline images. Even though not all of the pertinent passages in these texts specifically communicate Paul’s *approach* to death, they do reflect upon Paul’s death in at least general terms. These descriptions of Paul’s death and the textual functions that they serve will be shown as relevant to an interpretation of Paul’s letters.

In the second half we turn to the “hard core” of this textual family: literary portraits of the departing Paul in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and 2 Timothy. We will compare the

¹⁹ However, many scholars have seen veiled references to Paul in the figure of Simon Magus in the Pseudo-Clementine literature. See Bockmuehl 2010: 94–113 for a rebuttal of this claim.

cluster of images in these texts to the cluster of images we identified in Paul's early effective history. Our study will conclude by posing the question, What can early Pauline effective history and Paul's letters together tell us about the earthly Paul's approach to death? In other words, what kind of approach to death could reasonably be thought to generate both sets of literary texts and the Pauline portraits therein?²⁰

2.5 Conclusion

It is true that Pauline images and Pauline memories have no "Y chromosome" that permits reliable tracking through the generations (Bockmuehl 2010: 15). Yet this does not mean, as Pervo seems to suggest, that the diverse profiles of Paul have nothing to teach us about Paul or the letters he wrote. This thesis will show that early portraits of Paul did share to a greater or lesser extent a cluster of features—a number of "family resemblances"—between the Paul of Acts, the Paul of *1 Clement*, the Paul of Ignatius, the Paul of Polycarp, and the Paul of the *Martyrdom of Paul*. Tracking and studying this cluster of features will aid our interpretation of the departing Paul's self-portraits and round out what we can know of the earthly Paul's approach to his death. In the case of Paul and his literary "family" the proverb will prove true: "Wisdom is vindicated by all her children" (Luke 7:35).

²⁰ My methodology is thus similar to the "Jesus-memory approach" Chris Keith outlines in his 2011 article. He writes, "The Jesus historian must, in light of the various claims about Jesus preserved in early Christian commemoration, posit an actual past that best explains the existence of the Jesus-memories in light of the contexts of remembrance in early Christianity" (174).

Part II

The Departed Paul

Chapter 3

Paul the Herald: Remembering Paul's Departure in Acts

3.1 Introduction

Paul the letter-writer and Paul the martyr quickly became the dominant images of Paul in early Christian literature. The canonical book of Acts famously omits any narrative reference to either. While Acts does not narrate Paul's death, it should not be inferred from this that Luke¹ has no interest in relating Paul to his own death. On the contrary, this chapter will show that Luke's portrayal of Paul's approach to his own death is an underappreciated aspect of Luke's Pauline portrait. Furthermore, Paul's proclamation of the gospel in the face of death offers a model for the implied readers of Luke's work.

3.2 Luke's Portrayal of Paul's Approach to His Own Death

Paul does not directly speak about his death until his speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:18b–35).² This speech occupies a central place in our study and arguably a central place in the book of Acts. As Joseph Fitzmyer claims, the Miletus

¹ Though formally anonymous I will assume, on the basis of Christian tradition and compatible internal evidence, that Luke—the occasional companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24)—was the author of Acts. I incline toward dating the final draft of the book to the 70s or 80s, which appears to be the scholarly consensus. For a thorough and updated discussion of these issues, see Keener 2012: 383–422. However, neither assumption is fundamental to my argument. What is critical for this chapter is that Acts was written after (and in light of) Paul's death and that the Miletus speech preserves the gist of what Paul said on that occasion (see Keener 2012: 258–319) or, at the least, that Paul could have given a speech like the one Luke composes. These assertions will be supported in this chapter and subsequent ones.

² A few commentators have argued that Paul does not speak of his own death even in the Miletus speech (e.g., Witherington 1998: 618–20). We will briefly engage with this view in §3.2.3.

speech “is the way that Luke wants Paul to be remembered, not only by those whom he is depicted exhorting, but also by the readers of Acts” (1998: 675).³ In the speech Paul declares, “Yet I do not give any account for life as precious to myself in order that I might finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24). A little later in the narrative Paul reiterates his stance: “I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem on behalf of the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13b). We will look closely at these texts in due course, but first we must note how Paul’s actions earlier in the book anticipate these important declarations.⁴

3.2.1 Luke’s Narrative Rendering of Paul’s Ministry in Relation to Death

On a superficial reading of Acts it might appear as though Paul values his own life rather highly since he often flees death when it draws near. At the very beginning of his public (Christian) ministry, Paul escapes a plot on his life in Damascus by being lowered from the city wall in a basket and at night (Acts 9:23–25). After being received in Jerusalem he begins arguing with Greek-speaking Jews, who also attempt to kill him. Their plot is discovered and Paul’s fellow believers bring him to Caesarea and then send him to Tarsus (9:29–31). In Iconium Jews and Gentiles try to stone Paul. He learns of it and flees to Lystra (14:5–6). Later on, believers in Thessalonica send Paul to Berea the very night a mob attacks Jason’s house in search of him (17:10) and Paul is then immediately sent on from Berea when Jews of Thessalonica stir up the crowds against him (17:14). Sometime later Paul redirects his travel plans through Macedonia when Jews plot against him (20:3).

³ Cf. Haenchen 1971: 596. Aejmelaeus likewise stresses the importance of the Miletus speech to Luke’s *Paulusbild*: “Wenn Lukas gerade an dieser Stelle [in which Paul transitions from being a free missionary to a prisoner] Paulus eine Rede halten läßt, kann man erwarten, daß Lukas besonders in dieser Perikope sein Paulusbild und sein Verständnis der Bedeutung des Paulus für das junge Christentum darlegt” (1987: 74; cf. 79). Astonishingly, John Lentz’s 1993 monograph, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul*, does not deal at all with the Miletus speech.

⁴ Thus, at least with respect to Paul’s approach to death, I disagree with Pervo’s assessment that Luke has “effectively created a new character” in the Miletus speech (2009: 506; cf. page 522).

What is clear from these accounts is that Luke's Paul had no "death wish." He often chose to flee rather than die. Does this indicate that Luke portrays Paul as afraid of his own death or hesitant to embrace it?

Two general observations militate against these possible conclusions. First, it is clear that the ministry in which Paul was engaged was inherently dangerous. If staying alive was his overarching concern, then Paul simply would not have proclaimed Jesus or argued with Jews. Paul's courage is particularly seen in returning to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch after being persecuted there (14:21), staying in Corinth despite attacks (18:11, 18), and wanting to go into a crowd that was enraged against him in Ephesus (19:30).⁵

Second, and more importantly, the broader narrative within which Paul's flights are found reveals that his impulse was not so much to flee danger as to discharge his commission. We learn in Jesus' dialogue with Ananias that Paul is the Lord's chosen instrument to bear his name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel (9:15). In Antioch Paul is set apart for a work that seems to be fulfilled only when, having preached in many cities, he returns to Antioch (14:26). In two places Paul is described as shaking off the dust from his feet or garments (Acts 13:51; 18:6), which evokes the itinerant ministry described in Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:5; 10:11). Thus, if Paul were to die in Damascus, Jerusalem, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, or anywhere else before Rome, it could call into question whether he had fulfilled the call he had received from the Lord. Paul cannot die *yet*—there is more work to be done. Cast in this light Paul's escapes are seen not as the acts of a coward but as steps taken toward the higher goal of preaching in other regions.⁶

These narrative descriptions of Paul's posture toward death are summarized neatly in a brief phrase in the Jerusalem council's letter. The letter commends Paul and Barnabas

⁵ Furthermore, if Kavin Rowe is correct in asserting that Paul's speech in Acts 17 "is not simply a peaceful philosophical dialogue with his curious opponents" (2009: 31) but that the reader is "enjoined to discern in Paul's arraignment the potential for death" (32), then his boldness in Athens is seen in a new light. For Paul as Socrates *redivivus* in Acts 17, see Jipp 2012: 569–75 and Marguerat 2013: 70–74.

⁶ This understanding would be strengthened if Paul's missionary strategy was based on the Table of Nations (Gen 10). For this, see Scott 1995:135–80 and *passim*.

as “men who have given over (παραδεδωκόσι) their lives on behalf of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26). Almost all English translations render παραδεδωκόσι as “risked”—“[men] who have risked their lives” (NRSV; cf. KJV; NIV; NASB; English Standard Version)—but this nuance is somewhat inaccurate. As other uses of παραδίδωμι in Luke-Acts suggest, when a person is the object of the verb it typically indicates a decisive action in which that person is transferred from one realm of authority to another.⁷ Furthermore, since παραδεδωκόσι is a perfect active participle it more likely points to a decisive act of consecration than to repeated exposures to danger, for which the imperfect tense might have been used. The whole clause, therefore, should not be paraphrased, “Paul and Barnabas are men who have put themselves in harm’s way on multiple occasions for the sake of the Lord Jesus.” A more accurate paraphrase would be, “Paul and Barnabas are men who have surrendered all claims on their lives and are now wholly committed to the Lord Jesus.” In Acts 15:26 Luke makes Paul’s approach to death clear: his life was now in the Lord’s hands and at his service (cf. 9:15–16).

3.2.2 *Paul’s Approach to Rome*

Before turning to the Miletus speech itself, we must also situate the speech with reference to Paul’s travels. To speak of Paul’s travels in terms of three (and possibly four) “missionary journeys” is nearly universal in both popular and scholarly circles. This usually corresponds to outlining the middle section of Acts according to four major textual divisions: 1) Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28); 2) the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1–35); 3) Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22); and 4) Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:15). Despite its widespread acceptance, I would dispute whether this schema facilitates interpretation on the whole. By burying Acts 19:21 in the middle of Paul’s third missionary journey, the schema obscures the pivotal significance of this verse.

Acts 19:8–20 narrates Paul’s extended ministry in Ephesus, with the result that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (19:10). The

⁷ E.g., Luke 9:44; 21:12, 16; 23:25; 24:7; Acts 12:4; 21:11; 27:1; 28:17; cf. Isa 53:12.

section is then concluded with a Lukan summary, the last such summary in the book: “In this way the word was growing and thriving according to the might of the Lord” (19:20; cf. 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5). The next verse, Acts 19:21, then reads, “Now when these things were completed, Paul resolved by the Spirit (ἔθετο ὁ Παῦλος ἐν τῷ πνεύματι), having gone through Macedonia and Achaia, to travel to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, it is necessary (δεῖ) for me to see Rome also.’” Commentators are divided as to whether this verse refers to a human decision—“Paul resolved in [his] spirit”—or a decision guided by the Holy Spirit. I think the latter. If Luke wanted to communicate that it was merely Paul’s own inner resolve to see Rome then most likely he would have used the middle voice of τίθημι with a form of καρδία (see 1 Sam 21:13; Mal 2:2; Ezek 14:3; Dan 1:8; Luke 1:66; Acts 5:4). Even if this construction is implied, it is qualified by the phrase ἐν τῷ πνεύματι. When πνεῦμα is used without a pronoun or adjectival modifier in Luke-Acts (and especially with the definite article) it commonly refers to the Holy Spirit but never to a person’s own spirit.⁸ Furthermore, the important word δεῖ, as is often noted (e.g., Cosgrove 1984), is a Lukan word frequently connoting divine necessity. Finally, Acts 20:22–23, as we will see, strongly points toward reading Acts 19:21 as a decision prompted, or at least superintended, by the Holy Spirit.

Since Acts 19:21 is located in the middle of the so-called third missionary journey, the import of this turning point in the narrative is not regularly observed. The placement of the verse after Acts 19:8–20 suggests that Luke presents Paul’s work in Asia as finished (cf. Rom 15:18–24). The Spirit directs Paul to preach in Rome, which by all indications in Acts is the end of the line for his ministry. If Paul was convinced at this point in the narrative that God would eventually bring him to Rome, then this has interpretive consequences for Acts 20:22–24 and 21:13, to which we now turn.

⁸ See esp. Luke 2:27; 4:1, 14; Acts 6:10; 11:28; 21:4; cf. Acts 11:12. Note that Acts 17:16 has the crucial modifier αὐτοῦ. I regard Luke 1:80 and Acts 18:25 as ambiguous, but in any case they are not as similar to Acts 19:21 as some of the other verses listed.

3.2.3 Paul's Speech at Miletus and His Declaration in Acts 20:24

One of the first challenges presented to the reader of Paul's speech at Miletus (Acts 20:18b–35) is in understanding the structure. There have been a host of proposals.⁹ John Kilgallen has noted that different criteria yield different structures (1994: 112–13). I agree with him that the most productive way to analyze the speech is to look at its argumentative structure. While various motifs and time indicators are layered in this speech, the force of what Paul is saying is generated by four component parts. Consider the following outline, which summarizes and categorizes each section of the text:

Figure 4 – An Outline of the Miletus Speech in Acts 20

18b–21	“You know my teaching ministry among you.”	Past conduct, focused on Paul's teaching
22–23	“ <u>And now behold</u> (Καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ) I will be imprisoned in Jerusalem	Future imprisonment in Jerusalem
24	<u>yet</u> (ἀλλ') I do not count my life as precious.”	Paul's approach to death
25	“ <u>And now behold</u> (Καὶ νῦν ἰδοὺ) you will no longer see my face.”	Future separation from the Ephesian elders
26	“ <u>Therefore</u> (διότι) today I am innocent of your blood	Present solemn declaration of innocence
27	<u>for</u> (γὰρ) I did not shrink from declaring all of God's plan.”	Past conduct, focused on Paul's teaching
28	“Be on guard (imperative) for yourselves and all the flock.”	Exhortation
29–30	“I know that false teachers will arise among you.”	Future false teachers in the church
31a	“ <u>Therefore</u> (διὸ) be alert (imperative)	Exhortation restated
31b	<u>by remembering</u> (adverbial participle) my teaching example.”	Past conduct, focused on Paul's teaching
32	“ <u>And now</u> (Καὶ τὰ νῦν) I commit you to God's word.”	Present dedication of the elders to God's word
33–35	“You know how I labored and gave to others.”	Past conduct, focused on Paul's giving

⁹ See the helpful chart given in Walton 2000: 66 representing 15 (!) different scholarly proposals.

Paul begins by reminding the Ephesian elders of his consistent conduct among them (vv. 18b–21). In particular, Paul draws attention to his teaching: it was done humbly, with great affection, in the midst of trials, and it was comprehensive in its content, settings, and audience. In vv. 22 and 23 Paul informs the elders that he is bound by the Spirit (δεδεμένος τῷ πνεύματι) for Jerusalem to face imprisonment (δεσμά). By acknowledging that he does not know the things that will meet him there, Paul is not expressing uncertainty about whether he will live or die in Jerusalem but rather communicating that he does not know the particulars of how he will be arrested or detained.¹⁰ Even though chains and tribulations await him, Paul does not count his life as precious to himself (v. 24). In view of his imprisonment in Jerusalem (and his eventual conveyance to Rome), Paul does not anticipate that he will see the Ephesian elders again (v. 25).

Many commentators miss the significance of the next verse, Acts 20:26, and its connection with what has preceded it.¹¹ The language is solemn and emphatic: “I testify to you on this very day that I am innocent of the blood of all [of you].” Scripturally-attuned readers will not miss Luke’s allusion here to Ezekiel’s watchman (Ezek 3:16–21; 33:1–9). Like Ezekiel, Paul is commissioned to deliver God’s message and call for repentance. Failure to do so would result in death; faithfully discharging the duty would result in life. This allusion strengthens the reevaluation of life and death developed in Acts thus far. For Paul, in the face of death threats, to stop speaking for God might appear to be the way to life, but it would in fact incur God’s judgment (cf. 1 Cor 9:16b). There are also intriguing parallels between Ezekiel and Paul being “bound,” both literally and figuratively (cf. Ezek 3:25 to Acts 21:11; Ezek 4:8 to Acts 20:22–23).

Verse 26 begins with διότι (“therefore”), signaling that Paul’s declaration of innocence is somehow drawn from 20:18b–25. My interpretation of this inference is that Paul’s testimony is made *possible* by his past conduct and made *necessary* by his future

¹⁰ This is an implication of my reading of Acts 19:21. Cf. Barrett 1998: 970: “As he [Paul] goes he does not know what will befall him there. That is, he does not know in detail what form imprisonment and affliction will take.” Contra Marshall 2008 [1980]: 349.

¹¹ Witherington (1998: 614) is a rare exception.

absence. In other words, the way that Paul has taught among the Ephesians allows him to claim that he has discharged his duty (cf. 20:27) and the fact that Paul will not see them again compels him to make this declaration now, before he leaves Asia. Paul's protestation of innocence before the Ephesian elders in effect concretizes his example so that it endures beyond his departure.¹² Verse 27 shows again that Paul's ministry and his example are conceived primarily in terms of his preaching and teaching.

This leads to Acts 20:28. Along with a few other commentators (e.g., Barrett 1998: 974), I view Paul's exhortation in v. 28—essentially repeated in v. 31a—as the main thrust of the entire speech. The elders are to guard the flock because this is the task to which they have been appointed by the Holy Spirit and because the flock is precious to God; he purchased it with blood. This repeated exhortation is further supported by Paul's knowledge that false teachers will arise (20:29–30). Their activity is described as “speaking crooked things to draw away the disciples after them” (20:30). Thus it is reasonable to infer that the way in which the elders will guard themselves and the flock is by teaching the truth (cf. Acts 13:5–12 and the use of διαστρέφω in v. 10; 1 Tim 4:16). The future circumstances of Paul's departure (20:22–23, 25) and the false teachers' arrival (20:29–30) warrant Paul's exhortations (20:28, 31a). In v. 31b Paul's example is again offered, this time as a means by which the elders may stay alert. The structure of the argument in vv. 29–31 and vv. 18b–28 is the same: the exhortation to the elders is based upon Paul's example and prompted by future circumstances (cf. Aubert 2009: 105).

¹² Recently Beverly Gaventa (2004) has argued against an element of *imitatio Pauli* in the speech. She asserts, “The Miletus speech has less to do with Paul and his legacy than it does with the church as God's own creation” (37). Later she writes, “The example offered in the Miletus speech, then, is not that of doing what Paul did but of adhering to the gospel and understanding its origin in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit” (51–52). Is “doing what Paul did” really to be set against “adhering to the gospel”? In my view Gaventa's argument is plagued by a false dichotomy between Paul as a “hero” (model?) and the grace of God. Could God not graciously sustain the community in its adherence to the gospel through the encouragement and modeling of Paul (cf. Peterson 2009: 553n1; 560n30)? For more on the imitation of Paul in the Miletus speech, see Kurz 1990a, which documents “Hellenistic rhetorical paradigmatic use of narratives” (188) and then concludes, “A significant number of the narratives in Luke and Acts are specially shaped and redacted to provide clear models for imitation by implied readers” (189). Note also Watson 1991 and Schröter 2009.

Verse 32 is another formal act, in some ways parallel to v. 26. Paul commits the elders “to God and to the word (λόγος) of his grace.” The term λόγος is an important one in Acts, occurring 65 times. The most important parallels in this case are in Acts 19:10 and 20. The word to which Paul commits the Ephesian elders is the very same word that he preached in Ephesus (19:10) and that was growing and thriving there (19:20). Once these parallels are appreciated then it can be seen again that Paul’s dedication of the elders is made *possible* by his past conduct and made *necessary* by his future absence. Paul’s entrusting of the elders to God’s word solidifies the content of Paul’s teaching so that it may serve as the standard by which their teaching may be measured in the future.

Luke could have ended Paul’s speech rather cleanly with v. 32, as vv. 33–35 initially appear out of place. Whereas references to Paul’s conduct throughout the speech have focused on his teaching ministry, these verses focus on his modeling of financial self-sufficiency and generosity. I would suggest that Paul’s example of work and giving is intended to validate his teaching. Readers of Acts will have already observed how generosity confirms the presence of God’s grace, and greed, the lack thereof.¹³ Furthermore, Paul’s declaration mimics the farewell address of the prophet Samuel, in which Samuel publicly disavows that he has ever accepted a bribe or has profited from his prophetic ministry (1 Sam 12:1–5).¹⁴ In this way he is shown to be Yhwh’s true prophet, in contrast to false prophets who exploit the people (cf. Ezek 34:1–10). So rather than being a non-integrated section at the end of the speech, vv. 33–35 remind the Ephesian elders that Paul’s teaching ministry was confirmed by his manual labor and help of others. Paul’s financial integrity combines with his genuine emotions, constancy, humility, and endurance in suffering to validate his exemplary teaching.

¹³ See Acts 2:44–47; 4:32–37; 5:1–11; 8:18–23; 9:36; 10:2; 11:29; 19:19. That receiving remuneration for teaching could communicate the wrong message about the teacher and the truth is also a common theme in Paul’s letters (e.g., 1 Cor 9:15–18; 1 Thess 2:9–12; 2 Thess 3:6–13). Some commentators have suggested that Gnostic or proto-Gnostic opponents might be behind some of Paul’s comments in the speech (e.g., Barrett 1998: 968); verses 33–35 might suggest sophisticated ones. It is difficult to verify either suggestion.

¹⁴ Luke did not envision correspondence between Paul’s and Samuel’s situations in every detail, but the differences do not nullify the parallel (contra Lindemann 2009: 198).

This brief commentary on Acts 20:18b–35 indicates that the force of what Paul is saying in this speech is generated by four component parts. The *exhortations* in vv. 28 and 31b are the rhetorical high point or main thrust of the speech. They are supported in different ways by Paul’s *past conduct* (vv. 18b–21, 27, 31b, 33–35) and by *future circumstances* (vv. 22–23, 25, 29–30). Paul’s teaching legacy is crystallized in the moment by his *solemn declaration of innocence* (v. 26) and *formal dedication of the elders* to the word that he had preached (v. 32). The elders are urged to remember both the manner in which he taught and the content.¹⁵ This analysis accounts for every verse in the speech except v. 24, Paul’s approach to death. How does v. 24 function within the argument of the speech?

The first clause of the verse, ἀλλ’ οὐδενὸς λόγου ποιοῦμαι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμίαν ἐμαυτῷ, is cumbersome and its unwieldiness caused scribes to modify it, as is seen in the textual variants (see Barrett 1998: 971). It could be translated “yet I do not consider my life worthy of a single word,” but is probably better read as “yet I do not give any account for life as precious to myself.” In either case the sense is evident: Paul has relatively little regard for his earthly life.

The first clause is followed by the conjunction ὥς (according to the NA²⁷), which some translations and commentators take as qualifying the first clause (“if only”) and some take as expressing purpose (“in order that”). While either is grammatically possible, I incline toward the latter (cf. Barrett 1998: 972): Paul has little regard for his earthly life in order that he might fulfill his ministry. If Paul held onto his earthly life as precious, then he would be unable to complete the commission he received from Jesus. In other words, Paul is acknowledging that he cannot carry the Lord’s name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15) unless he is prepared to suffer and even die (9:16). The faithful discharge of his duty is more important to Paul than life itself. This enables him to travel to Jerusalem knowingly and willingly. If Paul is prepared to die for

¹⁵ Cf. Tannehill 1990: 257: “Paul’s legacy to the church, then, is not merely his example as a devoted minister but also the inclusive gospel of grace that he proclaimed. . . . The narrator has shaped this farewell scene so that Paul will be remembered in these terms.”

the sake of his ministry to the Lord Jesus (v. 24) then he will certainly be ready to face the bonds and tribulations that are awaiting him (v. 23).¹⁶

The same logic is expressed in Acts 21:13. Agabus prophesies that Paul will be bound in Jerusalem (21:11), which causes those with Paul to urge him not to go there (21:12). He responds, “I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem on behalf of the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13b). Once again, in saying this Paul is not expressing uncertainty about whether he will live or die in Jerusalem. As argued above, Acts 19:21 suggests that Paul had some indication from the Spirit that he must go to Rome after Jerusalem (cf. 23:11; 27:24). Therefore, Paul’s argument is from the greater to the lesser: if he was ready to die (the harder thing), then he certainly was ready to face imprisonment (the easier thing).

In sum, Acts 20:24 represents Luke’s depiction of Paul’s reflections on life, death, and ministry. Thus the verse naturally falls within the category of Paul’s exemplary conduct. Paul’s attitude toward death is communicated for the purpose of commending it to the Ephesian elders for their imitation. They too are to value the faithful execution of their ministry more highly than their lives. Let the ferocious wolves come; the Ephesian elders must still defend the flock.

3.2.4 Luke’s Portrayal of Paul as a Prophet and Ideal Disciple

Two additional aspects of Luke’s profile of Paul require examination. In the Miletus speech Luke portrays Paul both as a prophet of Israel and as an ideal disciple of the Lord Jesus. This is accomplished by allusions to the OT and the Third Gospel, respectively.

¹⁶ Witherington has argued that Paul’s death is not implied in the speech (1998: 618–20); Lindemann asserts that the text leaves this question open (2009: 205). I agree with the majority of commentators that the genre of the speech (a farewell discourse, broadly speaking), Paul’s word that the Ephesian elders would not see him again (v. 25) and their reaction to that word (vv. 37–38), and the fact that the book of Acts almost certainly postdates Paul’s death, all suggest that readers should understand that Paul’s “departure” is not simply his departure from Asia but his departure from this world. (Paul had already said a “normal” farewell to those in Ephesus in Acts 20:1.) This understanding is further supported by the Paul-Jesus parallels that we will discuss below and, importantly, by v. 24 itself. By declaring “I do not give any account for life as precious to myself,” Paul is essentially saying “I am ready to die” (cf. 21:13).

We have already noted that Luke draws upon language and concepts from 1 Samuel and Ezekiel to depict Paul's departure. It is also possible to detect broad parallels to Moses¹⁷ and maybe even a hint of the ministries of Elijah and Elisha.¹⁸ No work I consulted detected allusions to Jeremiah's ministry in the Miletus speech, though Paul's "tears" (δάκρυα; Acts 20:19, 31) plausibly recall the tears of Israel's "weeping prophet" (see Jer 9:1 LXX), and both Paul and Jeremiah face imprisonment for the Lord's sake (Acts 20:23; Jer 44:11–45:13 LXX). We need not rehearse the many other prophetic traits Luke connects to Paul outside of the Miletus speech.¹⁹

The cumulative effect of these prophetic evocations is twofold. First, they serve to reinforce Paul's authoritative teaching. He has a unique role of leadership within the Way regardless of whether Luke would call him an "apostle" or not. Paul's teaching is the standard by which the elders—and the wolves—must be measured. Second, with the prophetic calling comes a compulsion to speak. A prophet must deliver God's message without any regard to the consequences that might ensue. Luke seems to blend this note into his Pauline composition as well (cf. 1 Cor 9:16b; Sandnes 1991: 129–30).

What is not as pronounced in the prophetic model of ministry is the element of imitation (though consider Luke 6:22–23). Since I have asserted that the elders' imitation of Paul's model is a major feature of the Miletus speech, it would appear as if Luke needs to support this function of his Pauline picture by pulling in other associations—associations with the ideal disciple in Luke's Gospel.

¹⁷ For example, compare the humility attributed to each (Acts 20:19; Num 12:3; Sir 45:4), reminders of their past teaching (Acts 20:18b–21; Deut 1–4), predictions of future apostasy (Acts 20:29–30; Deut 32; see Pervo 2009: 526n215), solemn words of testimony in view of their deaths (Acts 20:25–27; Deut 32:44–52), and the issue of succession in leadership (Acts 20:28, 32; Deut 31:1–8). Cf. also Moessner 1986 and Aubert 2009: 288: "The situation behind the Miletus speech can be compared analogically to the time of the departure of Moses."

¹⁸ Compare Elijah's reviving of the widow's son (1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha's resurrection of the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:32–37) to Paul's revival of Eutychus, immediately before the Miletus speech (Acts 20:7–12). See Peterson 2009: 559.

¹⁹ For this, see Moessner 1986. Moessner claims, "Whatever particular purposes Luke has in mind for his audience(s), the *prophetic* parallels between Jesus and the *dramatis personae* of the Acts [including Paul] belong to the very warp and woof of his two-volume story" (223).

In several passages in the Third Gospel, Jesus foretells what his future disciples will be like. Though cast in descriptive and sometimes conditional language, Jesus' depiction is prescriptive as well: it is not only that Jesus' disciples *will* be this way but they *should* be this way also. This prescriptive feature allows these descriptions to have abiding relevance for the readers of the Gospel. For our purposes, I mention only a few verses that directly pertain to the Miletus speech.

First consider the approach to death commended in Luke 9:24: "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake—this one will save it" (cf. Luke 17:33). Luke 14:26 sounds similar, "If someone comes to me and does not hate . . . his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Paul in Acts and especially in 20:24 manifestly embodies this attitude.²⁰ Furthermore, Luke 21:16 depicts disciples being "handed over" (παραδίδωμι) by their own kinsmen because of the name of Jesus, which is exactly what is predicted (Acts 21:11; cf. 20:23) and then actualized (27:1; 28:17) in the case of Paul.

More broadly, the importance of publicly acknowledging Jesus and bearing witness to him despite opposition can be seen in Luke 12:8–12, 21:12–19, and throughout the Miletus speech. Other commentators have noted that the model of Jesus as "among you as one who serves (διακονέω)" (Luke 22:27) is echoed in Paul's service to the Lord (Acts 20:19), service to others (Acts 20:34), helping of the weak (Acts 20:35), and in the description of his entire commission as a "service" (διακονία; Acts 20:24).²¹ Paul may also play the role of the ideal disciple by embodying the alertness Jesus urges and a proper attitude toward money.²²

Moreover, Paul's "departure" in Acts (ἄφιξις; Acts 20:29) parallels Jesus' own "departure" in the Third Gospel (ἐξοδος; Luke 9:31). Jesus is pictured as resolutely devoted to his Father and the ministry the Father had given him, even to the point of

²⁰ Cf. Peterson 2009: 566 and Tannehill 1990: 259: "Paul's statement that he places no value on his ψυχή ('life') in Acts 20:24 may also paraphrase and apply Jesus' call to be willing to lose one's ψυχή in order to save it, first expressed in Luke 9:24, soon after the first passion prediction."

²¹ See Tannehill 1990: 259–60 and Walton 2000: 110–15.

²² Cf. Acts 20:31 to Luke 12:35–48; 21:34–36; and Acts 20:33–35 to Luke 12:13–21; 14:12–14, 33; 16:10–13; 18:18–30; 21:1–4.

death. His movement toward Jerusalem is under divine compulsion (Luke 9:51; 13:31–33; 18:31) just as Paul’s is.²³ There are also substantive parallels between Jesus’ farewell discourse in Luke 22 and Paul’s in Acts 20.²⁴

Thus it does not take much imagination to envision Paul as an ideal disciple of Jesus, especially as Paul is presented in the Miletus speech. The cumulative effect of these allusions to the Third Gospel is to present Paul as a faithful embodiment of Jesus’ teaching and thus as a model worthy of emulation. This is explicit in Acts 20:35, which offers Paul’s past conduct as a demonstration of Jesus’ aphorism, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” It is also implicit throughout the Miletus speech. The Ephesian elders are to be imitators of Paul as Paul is an imitator of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 11:1).²⁵

Taken together, the prophetic shading and accents of ideal discipleship render Paul as the consummate herald, or speaker of God’s word, in Luke’s Pauline portrait. This portrayal ensures that even though Paul may have departed, he will not be forgotten.

3.3 The Finishing Touches on Luke’s Portrait of Paul

3.3.1 *The End of Paul in the Book of Acts*

Two further matters call out for comment. First, we must inquire about the ending to the book. As we will observe in *1 Clement*, Ignatius, Polycarp, and the *Martyrdom of Paul*, every other piece of Christian literature in the first two generations after Paul’s death that mentions Paul also refers (though sometimes indirectly) to his death and to what happened to him after death. Why is this common element conspicuously absent in

²³ Acts 20:22; 23:11; 27:24. See Moessner 1986: 249–51 and Walton 2000: 104–7.

²⁴ Cf. Walton 2000: 117: “It is not too much to say that Luke gives us two similarly structured farewell discourses which mirror each other: the departing Jesus passes on to his disciples/apostles a model of life and leadership in his community which the departing Paul later passes on to the elders of one of his key churches.”

²⁵ Cf. Rowe 2009: 153: “The life of the missionaries in Acts, therefore, is in essence a life of response, an alternative way of being in the world that takes as its pattern the life of the one to whom they bear witness. . . . Mission in this sense is a mimetic representation of the foundational story of the Gospel of Luke: the main characters in Acts, to put it plainly, look like Jesus—and precisely in this way embody his life and carry it forth into the wider Graeco-Roman world.” See especially Walton 2000: 134–36.

Acts? It is a captivating question (with regard to Peter too; see Acts 12:17). To give a full and compelling answer would require one to explain in detail the purpose(s) for which Acts as a whole was written. Such an account is not possible here; I merely put forward a few suggestions.

In the very last verse of the book Luke describes Paul living in Rome and “heralding the kingdom of God and teaching that which concerns the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered” (28:31).²⁶ Many have found this to be an abrupt and unsatisfying ending. Barrett comments, “If room remains for conjecture—and there is indeed room for little else—it may be suggested that the end of the story was omitted because it was not edifying” (1998: 1249). As we will see, early Pauline effective history strongly argues against this conjecture. Furthermore, while Barrett’s comment implies that Luke would have ended the story differently if historical circumstances had been different, I would contend that this ending is a very fitting and powerful one if Luke’s portrait of Paul in the Miletus speech is recalled.

Troy Troftgruben has recently devoted an entire (2010) monograph to the issue of how Acts ends. In my view he rightly concludes, as many others have, that the book’s ending is intentionally open. He asserts, “The combination of durative verbs and adverbial phrases in Acts 28:30–31 creates the impression that, while the narrative ends, the activity of witness will continue on” (141). He also contends that “the precedent set by 18:11, 19:10, and other ‘summaries’ brings the reader to see 28:30–31 not as a conclusion, but as a prelude to further activity. The scene specifies a time frame (‘two years’) for Paul’s ministry in Rome, but it implies no end to the larger movement of apostolic witness that 28:30–31 signifies” (142).²⁷ I agree with these analyses. However,

²⁶ Concerning the final adverb, ἀκωλύτως, Pervo draws an intriguing comparison: “Within Acts, this stem evokes impediments to the advance of the mission beyond its Israelite origins (8:36; 10:47; cf. 11:17). . . . It puts in one sharp word what the Pastor required seventeen (Greek) words to place in the mouth of Paul: ‘[T]hat is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained’ (2 Tim 2:8–9)” (2009: 687, 688).

²⁷ Troftgruben also perceptively observes that “Acts 1:1–11 entails three pivotal promises: the gift of the Spirit (1:5, 8), the spread of witness (1:8), and Jesus’ return (1:11). The fact that the narrative fulfills the

Troftgruben goes on to argue that “the end of Acts does not summon the reader to carry on the legacy of Paul” or to continue Paul’s example (186).²⁸ He claims, “That Paul’s witness crystallizes traits of ministry from throughout Acts serves to take the focus off of Paul in 28:30–31, thus making the scene representative of the larger movement of apostolic witness” (139–40). Troftgruben rightly notes that “the final scene (28:30–31) exemplifies apostolic witness in Acts” (148), but rather than taking the focus off Paul, I would suggest the opposite: the reader is encouraged to see in Paul the Christian herald and teacher *par excellence*. Luke offers to his readers at the end of Acts what Paul offered to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20: a model for Christian proclamation and teaching.²⁹ The book ends as it does to encourage Christian witness by narrating the triumph of the gospel in Rome through Paul.

3.3.2 *The Inner Logic of Acts 20:24*

The second matter calling for attention is why, according to Luke, Paul can claim “I do not give any account for life as precious to myself.” Clearly Paul makes this declaration because he wants to fulfill his divine commission, but it is possible that there is another rationale undergirding this statement.

It appears as if Paul’s stark choice of faithful ministry over earthly life and his boldness in the face of death derive from his belief in what lay for him beyond death. Admittedly, this is not a prominent theme in the book of Acts. There are no declarations

first promise, and the second in part, assures that the third will find fulfillment as well. Thus, Acts begins by promising events that lie far beyond the end of the narrative” (2010: 174).

²⁸ In fact, Troftgruben states that “the ending, then, is not an explicit summons for participation (‘*Continue* this task’), but rather a statement of grace (‘*God will continue* this task’). The narrative describes what God is up to without making it contingent on human efforts” (2010: 187). Here is the same false dichotomy that is found in the work of Troftgruben’s supervisor, Gaventa 2004 (see footnote 12 above). If the ending can even rightly be called a “statement of grace,” does not the grace of God empower—and not preclude—human participation in God’s mission throughout the book (see Acts 4:33; 6:8; 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:32)?

²⁹ For a development of this idea see Schröter’s 2009 essay, “Paulus als Modell christlicher Zeugenschaft.” Schröter’s essay examines Acts 9:15–16, 22:14ff., 26:16–18, and 28:30–31 and argues that Luke has created a portrait of Paul as a model of the Christian witness by means of a narrative frame and the different repetitions of his call-conversion story.

parallel to “to depart and be with Christ . . . is by far much better” (Phil 1:23), nor are there exhortations parallel to “run in such a way as to obtain [the prize]” (1 Cor 9:24). Yet Acts does stress that Jesus will return to earth (1:11) to judge the world (10:42; 17:31; 24:25) and that there would be a general resurrection (24:15; 26:8; cf. 4:1; 26:23). Paul declares that he is on trial and in chains for his hope in the resurrection (23:6; 24:15; 26:6–8; cf. 28:20). He even claims that in view of the resurrection of both the just and the unjust (24:15) he strives continually to have a blameless conscience before God and people (24:16; cf. Acts 23:1; 20:26; 2 Cor 1:12). In other words, Paul strives to live a just life in order to be raised as one of the just.

The connection between Christian hope and the Christian’s approach to death can be seen in three additional verses in Acts. In the only other recorded instance of Paul’s direct preaching to Christians outside of the Miletus speech, Paul strengthens them to remain in the faith by saying, “It is necessary for us to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations” (Acts 14:33; cf. Acts 20:23–24). The hope of entering the kingdom—clearly a future eschatological reality (cf. Luke 18:25; Barrett 1994: 686)—is what fortifies Christians in their endurance of tribulations, even death. Later, in the Miletus speech, Paul commits the Ephesian elders to the word of God’s grace, which is able to “give you the inheritance (κληρονομία) among all those who are sanctified” (20:32). This verse probably indicates that the word, properly taught and believed, is able to grant Christians a share in the life and blessings of the future age (cf. the use of κληρονομία in Eph 1:14, 18; 5:5, Col 3:24; 1 Pet 1:4). Lastly, in Acts 26:18 Paul’s appointment and sending is for the purpose of opening Gentile eyes “so that they might receive forgiveness of sins and a portion (κληρος) among those sanctified by faith.” In this context, κληρος moves in the same lexical orbit as κληρονομία in Acts 20:32. It refers to “a share in the eternal destiny of God’s people, which contextually means a share in the resurrection from the dead (Acts 26:6–8, 23)” (Peterson 2009: 669; cf. Col 1:12). Paul’s teaching, and the teaching of the Ephesian elders, was meant to set a hope beyond death before their hearers.

As already conceded, the role of hope or a reward beyond death is not as pronounced in Paul’s reflections on death in Acts as it is in 2 Cor 5:1–10, Phil 1:20–23, and 2 Tim

4:6–8, as we will see below. Rather than as an athlete straining toward the finish line and prize, Paul is primarily pictured in Acts as a commissioned herald who must speak whatever the risks. The resurrection of Jesus is a major theme in the book of Acts; the resurrection of believers, heavenly rewards, and departing to be with the ascended Christ are minor ones. Nevertheless, especially when read together with Luke’s Gospel, Paul’s declaration that “I do not give any account for [this earthly] life as precious to myself” can be read as an indirect expression of hope for a better and enduring life—one that awaits Paul at the end of his “course” (δρόμος; Acts 20:24; cf. 2 Tim 4:7).

3.4 Conclusion: Luke’s Paul as Pauline Offspring?

In relating Luke’s portrait of Paul to the self-portrait(s) we have in Paul’s letters, two questions have been foregrounded by previous scholarship: “Did Luke (or the author of Acts) make use of Paul’s letters?” and “Does Paul’s theology in Acts clash with the theology of the Pauline letters?” The former question is actually quite intricate and may be separated into several ancillary questions:

- Had Luke heard of Paul’s letters?
- Did Luke have access to Paul’s letters, and if so, in what form and when?
- Even if Luke had some exposure to Paul’s letters, did he choose *not* to cite them explicitly, and if so, why?
- Might Luke have read Paul’s letters at one time but was unable to recall their precise wording at the time of composing Acts?
- If the author of Acts had personal contact with Paul, would this affect his use of Paul’s letters?³⁰ and,
- What Pauline influence upon Acts can we attribute to Paul’s letters as opposed to oral Pauline tradition or even non-canonical writing by Paul or about Paul?

³⁰ Cf. Keener 2012: 235: “Luke presumably knew that Paul wrote letters, and may have known some of these letters, but they were less important to him than the living memory of Paul himself.”

Commentators are sharply divided on these questions. In my opinion, tracing the sources of Luke's depiction of Paul is a highly subjective enterprise and of limited value. All we can say definitively is that Acts bears Pauline influence, even on the level of its language.³¹ Whether this influence is the result of literary dependence, independent tradition, or personal contact is much harder to say.³²

Hence, a more productive—and to my mind, more interesting—line of inquiry can be developed around questions of how Luke's portrait of Paul compares to Paul's self-portrait, how it compares to other portraits of Paul, how these Pauline portraits functioned in their respective literary works and corpora, and how images of Paul developed through the early centuries. As Colin Hemer writes with respect to the Miletus speech, "It is the only one of the larger speeches addressed to a Christian audience, actually of leaders of a church previously founded by Paul, and so likely to be nearer to the pastoral function of Paul's writing in the epistles than any other. It therefore offers the best prospect of direct comparison between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters" (1989: 77). The question of how Luke's portrayal of Paul's anticipated death compares to similar portrayals in the Pauline letters and related portrayals of Paul's completed death in *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius, Polycarp's letter, and the *Martyrdom of Paul*, will be postponed to later, synthetic and summary chapters (chapters 8 and 13). There we will discern the family resemblances between a whole host of Pauline pictures.

One preliminary conclusion we may draw is that Luke *was* concerned to preserve the past in creating his Pauline picture. Luke presents Paul's earthly conduct, including his demeanor in the face of death, as a model for later Christians to follow (see §3.2.3). A disinterest in how Paul actually carried out his commission (or an ignorance of it) would undermine the rhetorical effectiveness of the Miletus speech. Therefore, contra Pervo, we

³¹ Cf. Johnson 1992: 367: "Luke accurately represents not only a number of distinctively Pauline themes, but does so in language which is specifically and verifiably Paul's."

³² Regarding Acts 20:17–38, James Dunn comments, "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, whether through tradition or through personal awareness of Paul's thought, Luke's attempt to represent Paul's mind at this point has been very successful" (2009a: 951–52). This conclusion anticipates my own. See especially §13.1.1.

may assert that Luke's portrait of Paul *did* arise from a concern to preserve history for the benefit of subsequent investigators (i.e., readers) and this was precisely the means by which problems in the readership's churches were addressed. Furthermore, at least according to Luke, this concern for the Pauline legacy derived from Paul himself. It will be the task of later chapters to ascertain whether this concern is reflected in the Pauline letters. For now, all that can be said is that Acts, and the Miletus speech in particular, offers a striking image of Paul as a death-defying herald. Yet this herald seeks to ensure that his voice will continue to be heard long after his death.

Chapter 4

Paul the Athlete: Remembering Paul's Departure in *1 Clement*

4.1 Introduction

Paul the athlete-martyr and Paul the letter-writer—these are the two earliest (extant) images of Paul outside of the NT, in *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1 and 47.1–3, respectively.¹ It is intriguing to note again that neither image is present in the canonical book of Acts, even though this work may have been composed in the same city (Rome) a decade or two earlier. On the surface, the divergent portraits of Paul in each work could suggest that neither bears any resemblance to the earthly Paul and that these portraits were composed only with contemporary problems in mind. However, we will observe that an appeal to the “living memory” of Paul is essential to Clement’s exhortations.

Of the two relevant passages, *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1 and 47.1–3, the former recounts Paul’s death and will thus be the focus of this chapter. I will suggest, however, that the latter passage provides an important clue for detecting Pauline influence on Clement’s remembrance of Paul’s departure.

¹ For much of the 20th century the date of composition for *1 Clement* was pinpointed to A.D. 95–96, primarily based upon interpreting συμφορὰς καὶ περιπτώσεις in *1 Clem.* 1.1 as a reference to the persecution of Roman Christians under the emperor Domitian (see Welborn 1984: 37–38). This interpretation has been challenged—successfully, to my mind—by Welborn 1984, Herron 1989, and Erlemann 1998. In place of the conventional date, dates as early as A.D. 70 and as late as A.D. 140 have been proposed (cf. Gregory 2002: 149). For the purposes of this chapter I will assume a date sometime in the 90s, which seems to fit well with the internal evidence (e.g., 5.1–7; 44.1–6; 47.1–6; 63.3). I will also refer to the author of *1 Clement* as Clement for the sake of convenience and with a nod to the undisputed attribution of the letter to him in early Christian tradition. I do not thereby necessarily identify the author as the supposed third bishop of Rome (cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.3.3) or as a secretary of the Roman church (cf. *Herm. Vis.* 2.4.3). What is most important to my study is that *1 Clement* includes remembrances of Paul written from the perspective of believers in the first generation after his death.

4.2 Paul's Departure according to *1 Clement*

Paul's name first appears in *1 Clem.* 5.5, but references to him—and Peter—start in 5.1 and extend to 6.1. Therefore, it is helpful to have the entire passage before us:

5.1 Yet in order that we might cease from ancient examples, let us come to the athletes who were nearest us. Let us receive the noble examples of our own generation. **2** On account of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars were persecuted and competed until death. **3** Let us receive before our eyes the good apostles. **4** There is Peter, who on account of unrighteous jealousy bore up under hardships not once or twice but many more times, and having thus borne witness he departed to the place of glory that was owed to him. **5** On account of jealousy and strife Paul displayed the prize of endurance. **6** Having borne chains seven times, having been exiled, having been stoned, having been a herald in both the east and the west, he received the noble fame of his faith. **7** Having taught righteousness to the whole world, having come to the far limit of the west, and having witnessed before the leaders—thus he was carried away from the world and was taken up to the holy place, having become the greatest example of endurance. **6.1** To these men who have conducted themselves devoutly there can be joined a great multitude of the elect who, having suffered many torments and tortures on account of jealousy, became among us the finest example.

4.2.1 *1 Clement 5.5–7 in the Context of 1 Clement 4–6*

Before analyzing the passage that directly describes Paul (5.5–7) we need to situate it in its literary context. *1 Clement* begins with a prescript and a brief statement of the problem in Corinth (1.1) before launching into an account of the Corinthians' former reputation, which had been degraded because of a faction among them (1.2–2.8). Clement's diagnosis of their failure draws upon the language of Deut 32:15: the church grew fat on all its success and kicked up its heels (3.1). From this, Clement writes, came a host of evils including "jealousy" (ζήλος), which becomes the key word for 4.1–6.4. Clement introduces 4.1–6.4 by asserting that it is through jealousy that death entered into the world (3.4). He later exhorts the Corinthians, "let us turn to his [God's] compassion, having left behind fruitless toil and strife and the jealousy that leads to death" (9.1). The conjunction of jealousy and death in *1 Clem.* 3.4 and 9.1 frame the discussion in 4.1–6.4.

Richard Bauckham is one of many commentators who have noted that the catalogue of examples in *1 Clem.* 4–6 "is divided into two parts (indicated by the transitional statement in 5:1): seven examples from the Old Testament in chapter 4, and seven

examples from ‘our own generation’ (5:1: i.e. within living memory) in chapters 5 and 6” (1992: 554). Yet Bauckham has also perceived that the first five of Clement’s contemporary examples “are also united by an explicit theme which does not appear elsewhere in the examples in the catalogue”—the theme of contending to death (557). Thus, Bauckham argues, many of the details given in the accounts of Peter and Paul are “entirely redundant” to the theme “jealousy among brothers and sisters leads to death” (557) that is uniformly established by the OT examples.

Bauckham’s observation has gained little traction among commentators on *1 Clement* (perhaps because his essay does not readily turn up on digital searches for secondary literature on *1 Clement* or Paul) but it seems accurate. The primary purposes of *1 Clem.* 4–6 are to warn the Corinthians that “jealousy and discord will have dire consequences” (Bauckham 1992: 556) and to ground the subsequent exhortation to repent (see esp. *1 Clem.* 7.5 and 9.1). Paul’s example of endurance cannot be easily subsumed under either of these purposes. Furthermore, the main point of the letter is not to encourage the Corinthians to endure jealousy as Paul and Peter did, but to repent of their jealousy, resolve their disputes, and restore their peace and good order.²

How then can the conspicuous shape of the material in 5.1–6.2 be explained? Bauckham suggests that Clement started with a core of traditional martyrological material concerning Paul from which he wrote his account of Paul. Then Clement freely composed the other martyrological examples, including Peter, “on the basis of what little he knew of these other martyrs, describing them in a way broadly parallel to the account of Paul but varying the descriptions with other appropriate language from the standard stock of martyrological imagery and terminology” (1992: 559). Thus, with regard to 5.1–6.2, Bauckham argues that “Clement is elaborating traditional martyrological material, which he has adapted to its place in the catalogue by means of the phrases διὰ ζῆλον [*1 Clem.*

² Recent scholarship on *1 Clement*, especially through the use of rhetorical criticism, has demonstrated that the primary function of the letter is to promote “peace and harmony” (εἰρήνη and ὁμόνοια; 63.2). See Bowe 1988; Horrell 1996: 250–58; Gregory 2006: 225–27; Moriarty 2012: 119–21; and especially Bakke 2001. However, note my comments on this issue below (§4.2.4).

5.4], διὰ ζῆλον καὶ φθόνον [5.2], and διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔρην [5.5]” (558). And with regard to 5.5–7, he writes, “It seems very likely that Clement has not composed his account of Paul from his own reading of Pauline literature, but has substantially reproduced or at least adapted a traditional eulogy of Paul” (558).

Bauckham cannot verify his theory because no such “traditional eulogy of Paul” has ever been found or described in ancient literature. Yet Bauckham’s theory, even if proven correct, would still not adequately explain the shape of the Pauline material in 5.5–7 but only push the question one step further: Why would Clement choose to adapt a traditional (Roman?) eulogy of Paul, assuming it did exist? Why introduce at all this “second lesson” (Bauckham 1992: 558) on endurance unto death if it were so alien to Clement’s immediate purpose? These questions call for a different explanation for Clement’s description of Paul’s departure.

4.2.2 Athletic Imagery in 1 Clement 5.1–7.1 and Its Source

In reading *1 Clem.* 5.5–7 it is important to notice that this passage is set within a section (5.1–7.1) in which athletic imagery is pervasive. The first reference to the examples of the letter’s own generation in 5.1 employs the term ἀθλητής (“athlete”) to describe them. In 5.2 Clement describes the greatest and most righteous pillars (primarily or exclusively Peter and Paul?) as those who “competed” until death (ἕως θανάτου ἠθλησαν). It is said in 5.5 that Paul displayed a “prize” (βραβεῖον) and in 6.2 that the Danaids and Dircae finished their “course” (δρόμος) and thus received their “reward” (γέρας). Then in 7.1 Clement claims that the Roman church is in the same “arena” (σκάμμα) as the Corinthians and the same “competition” (ἀγών) confronts them both.

It is clear from this section that the chief attribute of the Christian athlete is his or her “endurance.” Peter endured hardships (ὑπήνεγκεν πόνους; 5.4); Paul likewise displayed the “prize of endurance” (ὑπομονῆς βραβεῖον; 5.5) and became the “greatest example of endurance” (ὑπομονῆς μέγιστος ὑπογραμμός; 5.7).³ Clement also speaks of a great

³ Horacio Lona describes how this virtue frames the description of Paul’s deeds: “Der Begriff „Ausdauer“ (ὑπομονή) umrahmt so die Aufzählung der Taten des Paulus. . . . Das ὑπομονή-Motiv bildet

multitude of the elect and the Danaids and Dircae who endured (πάσχω) torments and tortures but remained faithful (6.1–2). Throughout this section athletic imagery, the virtue of endurance, and the resulting reward are strongly linked.

Such a density of athletic terminology is found nowhere else in *1 Clement*. It appears only sporadically in the rest of the letter: ἀγών in 2.4; ἐπανατρέχω and σκοπός in 19.2; ἀγωνίζομαι in 35.4; and σκοπός in 63.1. In these occurrences the theme of endurance is found only in 35.4. Therefore, some explanation is needed for the profusion of athletic imagery in 5.1–7.1.

Scholars who have explored this issue have generally argued for one of two theories. First there are those, such as Louis Sanders (1943), who contend that the portrait of Paul has been painted with the colors of a Stoic philosopher.⁴ Passages from Dio Chrysostom (e.g., *Orations* 8) and Epictetus (e.g., *Discourses* 3.22), among others, are often adduced. This theory, however, is problematic. While there are vocabulary and images that are common to Stoic philosophy and *1 Clement*, the conception of the Christian athlete is undeniably very different from the Stoic one. According to Dio Chrysostom, “the noble man holds his hardships to be his greatest antagonists, and with them he is ever wont to battle day and night, not to win a sprig of parsley . . . but to win happiness and virtue throughout all the days of his life” (*Or.* 8.15).⁵ Here the “prize” held out to the Stoic athlete is not a posthumous reward but earthly “happiness and virtue” (εὐδαιμονίας καὶ ἀρετῆς). Furthermore, Dio Chrysostom casts the entire competition as one against “pleasure” (ἡδονή; *Or.* 8.20, 26), which finds no parallel in *1 Clement*. Epictetus likewise

also das Gerüst, innerhalb dessen die sieben Partizipialsätze die Taten des Apostels zum Ausdruck bringen” (1998: 162).

⁴ So too Grant and Graham 1965: 26: “The way in which he [Clement] depicts Peter and Paul owes a good deal to the Cynic-Stoic ideal of the perfect athlete”; and Welborn 2002: 348–49: “As Martin Dibelius demonstrated, the depiction of Paul’s labors in *1 Clem.* 5 is not derived from a Christian source at all, neither from Acts nor from 2 Corinthians, but from Cynic-Stoic portraits of the philosopher as an ideal athlete.” Dibelius 1956, however, does mention 1 Cor 9:24–27 in a footnote (195n37) as a counterexample to the claim that the theme of athletes competing unto death was almost unknown in early Christian literature before *1 Clement*.

⁵ As translated in Cohoon 1949: 385.

describes the “athlete” Diogenes as one who has detached himself from “perturbations and griefs and fears, and disappointed desires” (*Discourses* 3.22.58–61)⁶ and is thereby invulnerable to them. This is emphatically not the nature of Paul’s contest in *1 Clement*. With regard to Paul’s use of athletic imagery Victor Pfitzner has concluded, “One can admit the likelihood that Paul adopted these images from the popularised language of Stoic moral philosophy. But, and this is decisive, it is impossible to maintain that Paul’s indebtedness went beyond this point” (1967: 189–90). A similar judgment could be rendered with regard to Clement.

Another reason that the theory of Stoic influence on Clement’s depiction of Paul is problematic is that it cannot offer a convincing rationale for why a Stoicized Paul would appeal to a *Christian* audience at Corinth. Would Paul’s example have been enhanced in the eyes of a Christian community that was more than 40 years old if he was made to look like a Stoic philosopher? Would the Corinthians have embraced this picture of Paul if there was no precedent for it in their received tradition?

A more plausible theory is put forward by Horacio Lona (among others), who contends that the portrait of Paul in *1 Clement* has been shaped more directly by *4 Maccabees* (1998: 157).⁷ This theory is initially appealing as there is a greater degree of shared religious tradition between *1 Clement* and *4 Maccabees* and some remarkable verbal correspondences. For example, Eleazar is not only called an “athlete” but a “noble athlete” in *4 Macc.* 6.10 (γενναῖος ἀθλητής; cf. *1 Clem.* 5.1, 6; 6.2). In 17.15–16 Eleazar and the mother and her seven sons are called athletes. The term ἀγών is found in *4 Macc.* 9.23; 11.20; 13.15; 15.29; 16.16; and 17.11. The term ὑπομονή is found eleven times in *4 Maccabees*, and Eleazar, the mother, and the seven brothers are proclaimed as an “example” (ὑπόδειγμα) of endurance in 17.23 (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.1, 7). On the other hand, ἀθλέω (*1 Clem.* 5.2), βραβεῖον (5.5), δρόμος (6.2), γέρας (6.2), and σκάμμα (7.1) are

⁶ As translated in Gill 1995: 195.

⁷ Lona later appears to backtrack on this claim by conceding that the language *1 Clement* employs may simply be due to the intellectual milieu of the Hellenized Jewish synagogue: “Die Berührungspunkte gehen jedoch schwerlich auf literarische Beeinflussung zurück. . . . Sicher ist nur der Einfluß der hellenistischen Synagoge” (1998: 158n2).

terms that are nowhere attested in *4 Maccabees*.⁸ So if *1 Clement* does borrow from *4 Maccabees* it is selective at best.

There are reasons to think, however, that the shared terminology between *1 Clement* and *4 Maccabees* does not signal indebtedness on the conceptual level. The stated aim of *4 Maccabees* is to demonstrate that reason is sovereign over the emotions. This thesis is pronounced at the beginning of the work (1.1; cf. 1.7–9, 13; 3.19) and is woven throughout the torture narratives (e.g., 6.31; 7.16; 8.1; 13.1–7; 16.1; 18.1–2).⁹ Therefore, the fundamental competition in *4 Maccabees* is pitched as internal struggle between different human faculties, which finds no parallel in *1 Clement*. Moreover, the endurance of Eleazar and the mother and her seven sons is an endurance of the physical pains of extreme torture. While torture may be in view in *1 Clem.* 6.2, it is absent in the accounts of Peter and Paul, and it certainly is not the focus of *1 Clement* like it is of *4 Maccabees*. The concept of endurance between the two works is thus presented differently. Yet another difference is that the athletes in *4 Maccabees* are repeatedly described as dying on behalf of virtue (e.g., 1.8; 11.2), the Law (e.g., 6.27; 13.9), godliness (e.g., 9.30; 13.27), God (e.g., 10.20; 16.19), etc. There are no equivalent expressions in *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2. Finally, the death of the martyrs in *4 Maccabees* has some atoning effect (see 1.11; 6.28–29; 9.24; 17.20–22; 18.4). This idea is utterly absent in *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2.

Therefore, the central features of *4 Maccabees* and its portrayal of the martyrs' stance toward death are not present in *1 Clement*. While *4 Maccabees* or the Hellenistic synagogue could have shaped some of the language used in *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2, the core concerns of *4 Maccabees* have failed to influence Clement's portrayal of Paul.¹⁰

⁸ Interestingly, ἀθλέω occurs nowhere in the Septuagint but once in the Greek Pseudepigrapha (*Sib. Or.* 2.43) and once in the NT (2 Tim 2:5). The noun βραβεῖον occurs nowhere in the Septuagint but twice in the Pseudepigrapha (*Sib. Or.* 2.149; 3 *Bar.* 12.6) and twice in the NT (1 Cor 9:24 and Phil 3:14). The parallels between *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1 and *Sib. Or.* 2.34–51, 149–153 suggest a common early Christian discourse rather than literary dependence in either direction.

⁹ Cf. deSilva 2006: xxvi–xxviii, which argues the same.

¹⁰ Furthermore one could say, with Lindemann 1992, that the details specific to Paul in *1 Clem.* 5.5–7 find no parallel in *4 Maccabees*. Lindemann concludes, “Dieser Befund zeigt, daß sich der Vf des 1 Clem zwar offenbar eines bestimmten Sprachmodells der Märtyrerliteratur bedient, daß er aber in 5,5–7 die für

If the distinctive image of Paul as athlete cannot be explained comprehensively by influence from Stoic philosophy or *4 Maccabees*, is it possible to discern another source of influence? A possibility lies ready at hand. No scholar disputes that the author of *1 Clement* and its intended recipients had access to 1 Corinthians in some form. Paul is overtly associated with this letter in the only other place in *1 Clement* where he is explicitly mentioned (47.1). Thus it is reasonable to ask whether Clement could have been influenced by 1 Corinthians when composing *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2.¹¹

Surprisingly, this possibility has been little probed. In the standard volume *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, A. J. Carlyle classifies *1 Clem.* 5.1, 5 and 1 Cor 9:24 under category “d” (1905: 42), corresponding to “those books which may possibly be referred to, but in regard to which the evidence appeared too uncertain to allow any reliance to be placed upon it” (iii). Carlyle offers no commentary on the parallel but also indicates a comparison to Phil 3:14.

One may infer that the evidence was judged uncertain because of the lack of verbal correspondence. The presence of the noun βραβεῖον, however, is significant because it is a rare word in secular Greek, occurs nowhere in the LXX, and only twice in the NT (1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14) and twice in the Apostolic Fathers (*1 Clem.* 5.5; *Mart. Pol.* 17.1). As BDAG notes, the terms ἄθλον and νικητήριον are more common in Greek literature for the athlete’s prize (cf. *TDNT* 1.638). Furthermore, all four uses of βραβεῖον in the NT and Apostolic Fathers belong to sustained developments of athletic imagery and a Christian’s death. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there is no significant verbal correspondence between *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2 and 1 Cor 9 beyond the noun βραβεῖον.

das Paulusbild entscheidenden durchaus individuellen Elemente selbst eingesetzt hat” (40). David deSilva’s 2006 commentary does not mention *1 Clement* in a section on the influence of *4 Maccabees*. Neither does his index of ancient citations include *1 Clement*.

¹¹ Cf. Gregory 2005: 148, which discusses possible references to 1 Corinthians in *1 Clement*: “None of these possible references [including a reference to 1 Cor 9:24 in *1 Clem.* 5.1–5] is compelling in itself, and each may be explained on grounds other than of direct literary dependence, but the fact that Clement clearly used 1 Corinthians means that the possibility that each parallel arises from direct literary dependence (or at least an intimate acquaintance with the letter, such that Clement draws on its language and content quite unconsciously) should not be underestimated.”

What are most compelling are the striking *conceptual* similarities between 1 Cor 9:24–27 and *1 Clem.* 5.5–7: in both passages the image of Paul as athlete is foregrounded, Paul is pictured as striving toward a transcendent prize, the necessity of Paul’s perseverance is stressed, and Paul functions as an example for other Christians. This cluster of concepts can also be found in Phil 3:12–17, though Clement’s direct knowledge of Philippians is very difficult to demonstrate.¹²

Therefore, in my judgment, the evidence permits one to say more than Lona does, who claims that similarities between *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2 and Paul arise simply out of the use of similar images and motifs.¹³ Furthermore, while Barbara Bowe is rightly cautious in stating that “no *certainty* can be gained for the specific source of this image [i.e., the ἀγών image] in *1 Clement* (whether Stoa, Hellenistic Judaism, popular philosophy, or Paul)”¹⁴ the lack of such certainty should not cripple any attempt to say something constructive about the particular direction in which Clement’s athletic imagery is developed. It is my contention that Clement’s presentation of Paul’s approach to death, while drawing on stock imagery and vocabulary, has been shaped by Pauline concerns rather than the concerns of Stoic philosophy or *4 Maccabees*. In this case, a basic premise set forth by Donald Hagner seems applicable: “When a known source is readily available, it is difficult to argue probable dependence in another direction without the strongest of evidence. . . . We are rather reluctant to appeal to extra-biblical sources when the parallels are explainable on the basis of dependence upon our OT and NT writings” (1973: 15).¹⁵

¹² Cf. Carlyle 1905: 53–54; Gregory 2005: 151, 157. In addition, there are similarities between *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.2 and Heb 12:1–2, a letter with which Clement demonstrates close familiarity. Hebrews 12:1–2 has no explicit connection to Paul but has been considered “Pauline” in both ancient and modern times (see Rothschild 2009).

¹³ Lona 1998: 163n1: “Die Gemeinsamkeiten mit Paulus ergeben sich aus der Verwendung von ähnlichen Bildern und Motiven.”

¹⁴ Bowe 1988: 90; italics added. Cf. Lindemann 2005: 11.

¹⁵ Hagner’s comments with respect to the metaphor of the body and its members could also apply to the present discussion *mutatis mutandis*: “In the light of Clement’s admitted knowledge of 1 Corinthians, the striking parallels and Sanders’ own admission that the metaphor was suggested to Clement by Paul, assuredly it is more correct to say that Clement has borrowed from 1 Corinthians and has adapted the material to suit his own purpose (which happened to coincide with, and was perhaps strengthened by, the

This does not necessitate that *1 Clem.* 5.1–7 is literarily dependent (in the strict sense) on 1 Cor 9:24–27,¹⁶ although that scenario seems more likely than one in which Clement adapted a traditional eulogy of Paul (cf. Bauckham 1992: 558) or composed his account of Paul without any recourse to written or oral traditions. A prudently cautious conclusion would be that the strongest influence shaping *1 Clem.* 5.5–7 was Paul himself—whether through 1 Corinthians, Philippians, oral Pauline traditions, or some combination thereof.

4.2.3 *The Enduring Paul* (1 Clem. 5.5–7)

Having offered some thoughts on the literary context and Pauline imagery, we are now in a better position to present a brief exegesis of *1 Clem.* 5.5–7. *1 Clement* 5.5 begins in a similar way to 4.8, 11, 13; 5.2 and 6.2 (cf. 5.4; 6.1, 4), introducing Paul’s experiences as a result of “jealousy and strife” (διὰ ζήλον καὶ ἔριν). Paul is the victim of this jealousy, but it is not clear who the perpetrators are. Grant and Graham, commenting on 6.1, suggest that Clement “may have in mind the fact, mentioned by Tacitus, that Christians informed against one another” (1965: 27). Peter Lampe suggests that Peter and Paul were viewed jealously “in the first place by the Jews who were aware of their competition in the mission field” (2003: 47n75). It is also possible that *1 Clem.* 5.5 refers to jealousy in Roman leaders, who are mentioned in 5.7. Yet as no individual or group is named, it is best not to build anything upon a specific identification (cf. Bauckham 1992: 562). The reference may be deliberately vague in order to encompass the various actors in Paul’s suffering and death and to embrace the various readers who would apply Paul’s example to their own differing situations.

The verse continues by stating that Paul “displayed” (ἔδειξεν) the prize of endurance. The textual emendation of ὑπέδειξεν, proposed by Lightfoot (1989 [1889]-b: 28–29) and followed by Lake (1959 [1912]: 15), is unnecessary. Yet there is some disagreement regarding the translation of ἔδειξεν. Ehrman translates this verb as “pointed the way to”

Stoic application of the metaphor) than to say that he was dependent upon some Stoic source which he then coloured with Pauline allusions” (1973: 198).

¹⁶ For a clear example of literary dependence on 1 Cor 9:24–27, see Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.37.7. Cf. also 2 *Clem.* 7.1–5.

(2003: 45) while Lindemann would prefer something like “obtain.”¹⁷ The problem is that linguistically neither nuance is conveyed by δείκνυμι, and the other five occurrences of this verb in *1 Clement* plainly express the basic meaning “show.”¹⁸ Apparently Ehrman and Lindemann are wrestling with logical considerations, not linguistic ones. It appears nonsensical that Paul could “display” the prize of endurance to those who survived him if that prize is some kind of otherworldly reward related (if not equivalent) to the “place of glory” (5.4) to which Peter departed or the “holy place” (5.7) to which Paul was taken up. How could Paul display a transcendent, postmortem reward to an earthly, living audience? This ostensible inconsistency seems to have prompted Ehrman to add a prospective nuance to the verb (i.e., “pointed the way to”), while Lindemann has removed the verb’s semantic component relating the action of the subject to others (i.e., “obtain” instead of “show”).

Despite the logical problem it appears that this is exactly what Clement is declaring: Paul displayed the prize for his endurance by going to “heaven” when he died.¹⁹ Clement has no qualms in narrating Paul’s postmortem experience. This conviction is similarly expressed not only in 5.4 and 5.7 with regard to Peter and Paul, but also in 44.5, where it is said that those elders who have gone on before had a “fruitful and perfect departure” and consequently cannot be removed from “the place established for them.” Apparently the eyes of faith can see Paul’s display of the prize of endurance, his ascent to heaven, and the elders’ departure to their secure and blessed place.

The next verse, *1 Clem.* 5.6, has a similar structure, moving from hardship to reward. Whereas “jealousy and strife” expressed the travails that Paul endured in 5.5, in 5.6 Paul’s travails are expressed by four aorist participles. These participles are probably functioning causally and Paul’s faithfulness to Christ is assumed throughout. The verse

¹⁷ See Lindemann 1992: 38: “βραβεῖον ἔδειξεν meint nicht „er zeigte, wie man den Preis erlangt“ (so Knopf zSt), sondern „er wies den Preis auf (erreichte ihn)“ (Harnack, Einführung 107).”

¹⁸ Cf. Lona’s translation of ἔδειξεν in 5.5 as “zeigte” (1998: 156) and his comments on pages 162–63.

¹⁹ See Hill 2001:78–84 for the argument that *1 Clement* manifests a belief in a heavenly intermediate state. “The due place of glory [*1 Clem.* 5.4] and the holy place [5.7] must be understood as the heavenly sanctuary and not as a subterranean holding place” (84). See also below.

could thus be paraphrased, “*Since Paul bore chains seven times, was exiled, and was stoned for the name of the Lord, and since he was a herald of Christ in both the east and the west, therefore he received noble fame on account of his own faith(fulness).*” It is difficult to know whether the “noble fame” (τὸ γενναῖον κλέος) mentioned in this verse refers to an illustrious reputation among Christians (and perhaps others) on earth or to heavenly renown—i.e., praise from God. The other occurrence of κλέος in *1 Clem.* 54.3 suggests the former; if the “rewards” in 5.4, 7 and 6.2 (γέρας γενναῖον) are valid parallels, this would suggest the latter. In either case, the two must be connected. A person will, or at least should, gain recognition from Christians if they are conducting themselves in such a way as to gain recognition from God. Paul’s πίστις is the reason that he is taken up to heaven and becomes praiseworthy among Christians.

The final verse that directly describes Paul, *1 Clem.* 5.7, contains a number of interesting details. Paul is portrayed as a teacher of righteousness (see chapters 6 and 8 for a discussion of this image), as having come to the far limit of the west (i.e., Spain?), and as “having witnessed (μαρτυρήσας) before the leaders.” Commentators debate whether the verb μαρτυρέω here connotes a testimony unto death.²⁰ In my opinion the use of the active forms of μαρτυρέω in *1 Clem.* 5.4 [with οὕτω] and 38.2 would suggest that it has not, though it is not hard to see how passages such as *1 Clem.* 5.4 and 7 (along with perhaps Luke 21:12–16) contributed to this development in the word’s meaning.

The verse continues, “thus he was carried away from the world” (οὕτως ἀπηλλάγη τοῦ κόσμου). Grammatically speaking, οὕτως probably refers back to the three aorist participles of 5.7a, but it is reasonable to read it as drawing together everything that precedes it in 5.6–7. The use of the adverb is somewhat awkward and probably has an inferential sense (cf. BDAG 1b): God carries Paul away from the world *because* of his faithful acts in suffering and witness. Paul is carried away from the world and is “taken

²⁰ See e.g., Dehandschutter 1989: 89; Bauckham 1992: 559; and Lona 1998:160–61.

up to the holy place” (εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἀνελήμφθη).²¹ The verb ἀνελήμφθη (cf. 4 Kgdms 2:11; 1 Macc 2:58; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:11; 10:16) and the parallel to “the place of glory” in 5.4 (cf. 44.5; Ign. *Magn.* 5.1–2; Pol. *Phil.* 9.2; Tob 3:6) leave no doubt that Clement is referring to heaven, the place where God dwells (see *1 Clem.* 61.2). The choice of the phrase “the holy place” could evoke a heavenly temple. Clement is characterizing heaven as a place of God’s holy presence and thus as a fitting destination for God’s holy ones (i.e., the saints). This characterization may anticipate Clement’s summary statement in the next verse, “To these men who have conducted themselves devoutly . . .” (Τούτοις τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὁσίως πολιτευσαμένοις; 6.1; cf. 29.1–30.1). Paul is taken up to the holy place because he has lived a holy life on earth. He is joined there by others who have persevered in their faith (6.1–2) and indeed the promise of heaven after death is available to all who are blameless (50.3–4). That is why Paul (5.7) and other martyrs (6.1) can be an example for *all* Christians—a Christian athlete’s endurance unto death need not necessarily entail martyrdom.²²

4.2.4 The Function of “Paul the Athlete” in 1 Clement

While Bauckham is right to note that the theme of endurance unto death does not fit seamlessly into the catalogue of examples in *1 Clem.* 4–6, it does not follow that this theme has no resonance in the letter as a whole. The image of Paul the athlete probably influenced the portrayal of the Danaids and Dircae in their approach to death (6.2) and may have suggested the athletic imagery of 7.1, “we are in the same arena and the same competition confronts us.” Bowe notes the significance of this verse:

²¹ The textual variant ἐπορεύθη for ἀνελήμφθη is represented in Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Hierosolymitanus, but this can be explained as an assimilation to ἐπορεύθη in *1 Clem.* 5.4. The Latin, Syriac, and Coptic translations provide strong support for ἀνελήμφθη.

²² Cf. the important comments in Hill 2001: 81n15: “Peter and Paul are not brought forward as examples simply because they are martyrs or apostles and therefore possess rewards peculiar to an elite class, but because they constitute the most worthy examples for the readers’ emulation. Both the lives of the apostles and martyrs and their present heavenly rewards are paradigms, and thus the exemplary value of the rewards rests upon their [*sic*] being rewards available to the Christians whom Clement is addressing, not all of whom could have been conceived of as probable candidates for martyrdom.”

1 Clem. 7.1 is a particularly significant verse by virtue of its introductory function in the epistolary and rhetorical structure of the letter. It stands as the introduction to the main letter body and, therefore, to the entire paraenesis of *1 Clement*. In form, 7.1 is a “disclosure/motivation for writing” formula, the first such expression in *1 Clement*. It is all the more significant, therefore, that the particular metaphor chosen here is that of the ἀγών, for this metaphor by its structural placement colors *all* the paraenesis of the letter and provides the framework within which the entire paraenetic content must be seen. (1988: 89)

While I have already claimed that the primary purpose of the letter is to promote peace and harmony within the Christian community—corresponding to the letter’s primary virtue of “humility”²³—a singular focus on this rhetorical aim would be myopic. It seems as if perseverance within a hostile environment—whether pagan or even “Christian”—is also a concern that the letter addresses.

Hermut Löhr has observed that the term ὑπομονή, so strongly associated with Paul in *1 Clem.* 5.5 and 7, though appearing last in a summary list of virtues “we have touched on in every passage [of the letter]” (62.2) and appearing in a concluding prayer (64.1), does not occur anywhere else in the letter (2001: 203–4). However, the cognate verb ὑπομένω occurs four times, in 34.8; 35.3, 4; and 45.8. In 35.4 the exhortation is, “Therefore let us compete (ἀγωνισώμεθα) to be found among the number of those enduring (τῶν ὑπομενόντων) in order that we might share in the promised gifts.” Löhr rightly claims that what has been described in *1 Clem.* 5.5–7 as a fulfilled reality has been rendered as a future possibility in 35.4: “Deutlich ist die Verknüpfung des Motivs des Ausharrens mit agonistischer Sprache sowie mit dem Blick auf eschatologische Güter als dessen Lohn. Was in Kap. 5 am Beispiel des Paulus als schon erfüllt beschrieben war, wird hier den Adressaten als künftige und anzustrebende Möglichkeit in Aussicht gestellt” (205). Paul’s example of endurance unto death has shaped the letter’s paraenesis.

Likewise, *1 Clem.* 45.1–8 displays strong connections to 5.5–7 (see Löhr 2001: 205). Here, the examples of Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Mishaël are put forward as upright men who are persecuted by the lawless. Yet they “bore up gloriously” (εὐκλεῶς ἤνεγκαν; cf. ὑπήνεγκεν in 5.4 and κλέος in 5.6) and, because they endured, they inherited glory and

²³ Forms of ταπείνωσις, ταπεινώω, ταπεινός, ταπεινοφροσύνη, ταπεινοφρονέω, and ταπεινόφρων occur 29 times in *1 Clement*. See esp. 13.1; 19.1; 30.3; and 56.1. Cf. Bowe 1988: 112–21; Bakke 2001: 126–31.

honor (45.8). This prompts the exhortation in the following verse, *1 Clem.* 46.1,

“Therefore it is necessary for us to cleave to such examples (ὁπόδειγμα; cf. 5.1; 6.1).”

At first it might appear odd that this list of examples (45.1–8) and exhortation (46.1) would immediately follow the first direct statement of the nub of the issue in Corinth: certain blameless elders have been unjustly removed from office (44.3–6). It would seem more suited to the letter’s purpose to present positive examples by whom reconciliation had been achieved. Yet the implicit message of 45.1–8 is that the Corinthian congregation should identify the deposed elders as the suffering just and those who had a hand in removing them as the unjust persecutors. The desired resolution to the crisis is that the members of the faction would repent (see e.g., 51.1–3) and even offer to leave the congregation if need be (54.1–2). However, another possible outcome is envisioned in which members of the faction disobey God’s counsel given through the Roman church (59.1). In that case the Roman church will pray that God will preserve his elect (59.2). When peace and harmony are not achieved, endurance is needed all the more.

The long prayer from 59.3–61.3 hints that persecution for righteousness’s sake might also arise from those who rule and “lead” (ἡγέομαι) the Corinthian church on earth—that is, the Roman authorities (60.4; cf. οἱ ἡγούμενοι in 5.7). Again, the desire and prayer is for peace and harmony with these authorities (60.4–61.2) but plea for deliverance in 60.3 and the request that Christians resist the authorities in nothing *that conforms to God’s will* (61.1) suggest a darker possibility: What if the authorities urge disobedience to God?²⁴

To conclude, although the primary intention of *1 Clement* is to bring about the peace and harmony of the Corinthian church (63.2), the letter does imply that rough waters could be ahead. It is of paramount importance that the Corinthians steer a godly course (62.1) so that God may be pleased (62.2) and glorified (64.1). Unity is not encouraged for unity’s sake, but so that “we might reach the goal that is set before us” (τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν σκοπὸν καταστήσωμεν; 63.1; cf. 6.2). If peace and harmony cannot be achieved, the Corinthians can still be obedient to God by enduring in faith.

²⁴ Contra Horrell 1996: 272–78, which argues that Clement is urging total subjection to the already existing order.

This suggests that the twin images of Paul in *1 Clement* are working together: Paul the letter-writer urges unity (47.1–48.1) and Paul the athlete models endurance (5.5–7). The common threat posed by factions and by persecution is death. Clement’s departed Paul shows a better way, through harmony or through endurance—the way to life.

4.3 Conclusion: Clement’s Paul as Pauline Offspring?

The appeal that Clement makes to Peter and Paul assumes that their exemplary conduct is personally known to the Corinthian audience. These apostles are in the same category as those “among us” (ἐν ἡμῖν; *1 Clem.* 6.1). The language of *1 Clem.* 5.1, 3 is especially vivid: “Let us receive the noble examples of our own generation. . . . Let us receive before our eyes the good apostles.” In writing this, Clement is placing their examples within an early stage of living memory. By relating how Paul and Peter approached death (*1 Clem.* 5.4–7), Clement inscribes their legacy and preserves them as historical models for the benefit of present and future readers of the letter. The death of Paul is not arbitrarily manipulated according to the needs of the author, but is rather rooted in a shared history and tradition.

Nevertheless, in Acts and in *1 Clement* (and, as we will see, in Polycarp’s letter *To the Philippians*), Paul’s conduct leading up to his death has left a greater impression than the specific circumstances of his death. This will become even more apparent when we note the contrasting presentation of the *Martyrdom of Paul* in chapter 7.

There are several possible explanations for this. The specific circumstances of Paul’s death (i.e., what legal procedure led to his death; by whom, how, and when he was executed, etc.) could have been forgotten or never known, although this seems unlikely. Paul may have lost his nerve at his trial or execution and the unflattering details were deliberately suppressed by later Christians.²⁵ More plausibly, early Christian authors such as Clement, who lived in a tense political climate, could have been wary of describing the

²⁵ This possibility seems needlessly skeptical, especially given the uniformly positive legacy of Paul’s departure. See chapter 13 for further discussion.

trial or execution of a condemned criminal (cf. Bockmuehl 2010: 128–29). Yet another possibility is that relating the circumstances of Paul’s death may have been superfluous to the agenda of the early Christian texts that refer to it. These four explanations are not mutually exclusive.

A final possibility is that early Christian authors, such as Clement, painted their Pauline portraits under the influence of Paul, whether that influence was channeled through written or oral means. In later chapters we will see that Paul (from what we can discern in his letters) did not dwell on the exact timing or manner of his death, but rather concentrated on how he would approach death. It makes sense that his followers would mirror these concerns. As argued above, the portrayal of the departed Paul in *1 Clement* was largely shaped by Pauline imagery and concepts. While it is not warranted to speak of Clement’s *use* of Paul’s letters to compose *1 Clem.* 5.1–7, it does seem possible and productive to speak of Pauline *influence* on this passage.²⁶ For that reason it appears as if the image of Paul the athlete in *1 Clement* could indeed bear some resemblance to how the earthly Paul presented himself in his speaking and writing. During Paul’s lifetime, he stressed the need for his own endurance and hinted at the prize that awaited him if he held his course (see esp. 1 Cor 9:24–27); the author of *1 Clement* presents Paul as reaching the goals he set for himself and thus as an exemplary athlete in the contest of faith.

²⁶ Cf. Lona 1998: 158, which claims that in using athletic imagery the author of *1 Clement* is walking along a well-trodden path: “Wenn der Vf. dieses Motiv [of the Agon] aufnimmt, unternimmt er keinen neuen Schritt im Bereich der altchristlichen Literatur, sondern geht auf einem Weg weiter, der schon von Paulus und der Paulus-„Schule“ betreten worden ist (vgl. Phil 1,27.30; 4,3; 2 Tim 2,5; Hebr 10,32).” Lona does not cite 1 Cor 9:24–27 in this regard.

Chapter 5

Paul the Ascended: Remembering Paul's Departure in Ignatius's Letters

5.1 Introduction

To say that Ignatius is obsessed with his own death in his letters¹ is not quite accurate. For Ignatius, death is simply the means to an end. What is far more important to him is what lies beyond death. Ignatius's postmortem hope dominates his thinking about his imminent departure from this world. In this way at least, Ignatius is similar to Paul.

According to his own testimony, Ignatius was the overseer or "bishop" of Antioch in Syria (*Rom.* 2.2; 9.1). According to Acts, in the early 40s Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch and "for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people" (11:26). Paul is sent out by the church multiple times and returns, remaining "no little time" with the disciples on at least three occasions (Acts 14:28; 15:35–36; 18:22–23). Even if one takes a skeptical posture toward the historical reliability of Acts, it is hard to imagine that Paul's residence in Antioch has no basis in fact (cf. Gal 2:11). Thus it is reasonable to assume that in Antioch Ignatius would have had significant exposure to oral traditions about Paul. In any case, Ignatius had access to some of Paul's letters.²

¹ Despite the theories of Joly 1979, Rius-Camps 1980, Hübner 1997, Lechner 1999, and Schmithals 2009, I concur with the scholarly consensus that the seven epistles of the so-called middle recension are the authentic letters of Ignatius. See Mellink 2000: 5–50 and Brent 2007: 95–143 for a thorough discussion of these issues. Cf. also Hammond Bammel 1982, Edwards 1998, and Mitchell 2006. In light of the recent challenges to the traditional dating of these letters (i.e., during the reign of Trajan) by Foster 2007 and Barnes 2008, it is perhaps suitably cautious to date the letters to the first half of the second century. Regardless, Ignatius may be placed in the second generation of Paul's living memory.

² That Ignatius was familiar with 1 Corinthians, and probably Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy, *at the least* can be demonstrated by his use of them in his letters. See Inge 1905 and Foster 2005.

The brevity of the two explicit references to Paul in Ignatius's letters (as in *I Clement*) belies their importance. I will argue in this chapter that Ignatius's depiction of Paul is predominately as one who ascended to God after his death. Paul exemplifies the hope to which Ignatius aspires.

5.2 Paul's Departure according to Ignatius

Pauline influence on Ignatius's self-conception is evident throughout Ignatius's letters. I have argued elsewhere that it is Paul, and not Jesus, who functions as Ignatius's direct model for his journey to Rome and his "sacrificial" suffering along the way.³ Thus in this chapter we will concentrate on those two passages in which Paul is explicitly mentioned: *Eph.* 12.2 and *Rom.* 4.2.

5.2.1 *Paul at the End of the Road* (To the Ephesians 12.2)

The first of the two references to Paul is found in Ignatius's letter *To the Ephesians*, in 12.2. My own translation of this passage in context (11.2–13.1) is as follows:

11.2 Apart from this one [Christ Jesus] let nothing seem suitable to you. In him I am bearing chains, which are spiritual pearls—by which may I rise, by your prayer (of which may I constantly have a share!), in order that I might be found in the lot of the Ephesian Christians who always agreed with the apostles in the power of Jesus Christ. **12.1** I know who I am and to whom I am writing: I am condemned; you have been shown mercy. I am in danger; you have been made secure. **12.2** You are a highway for those being taken up to God, fellow-initiates of Paul, the one who has been sanctified, the one who has been testified to, who is worthy of blessing, in whose footsteps may I be found when I attain God, who remembers you in every letter in Christ Jesus. **13.1** Therefore, make every effort to come together more frequently for giving thanks and glory to God. For whenever you come frequently to the same place the powers of Satan are destroyed and his destructiveness is abolished by the harmony of your faith.

³ See my article, "Ignatius' Statements of Self-Sacrifice: Intimations of an Atoning Death or Expressions of Exemplary Suffering?" (2013a), in which I argue that passages such as *Eph.* 8.1; 18.1; 21.1; *Trall.* 13.3; *Smyrn.* 10.2; *Pol.* 2.3 and 6.1 "do not re-enact Jesus' salvific death on behalf of sinners but rather mimic Paul's intimate bond with his fellow believers forged by his suffering" (87; italics removed). For a detailed history of research on Ignatius's approach to death, see Mellink 2000: 51–129.

Previous commentators have not sufficiently interpreted *Eph.* 12.2 within its literary context, which may be explained partly by the habit of not reading across the imposed chapter divisions. For the purposes of this chapter we are primarily concerned with answering three questions in *Eph.* 11.2–13.1:

- When will Ignatius “rise” (11.2)?
- Who are “those being taken up to God” (12.2)? and,
- Why is Paul mentioned here?

The answer to the first question is effectively decided for readers who are dependent on the new Loeb translation, “I hope to rise again” (Ehrman 2003: 231), suggesting that Ignatius is referring here to his own bodily resurrection when the Lord comes again.⁴ The Greek text of *Eph.* 11.2, however, simply reads γένοιτό μοι ἀναστῆναι (literally, “may it be to me to rise”). While it is true that the verb ἀνίστημι refers to Jesus’ bodily resurrection in *Rom.* 6.1 and *Smyrn.* 2.1 (cf. ἀνάστασις in *Smyrn.* 3.1–3; 12.2), there are reasons to think that Ignatius uses ἀνίστημι in 11.2 to refer to his spiritual ascent to God at or immediately after his death (cf. Hill 2001: 89–90).

To start with, the phrase “by which” (ἐν οἷς) in 11.2 must have τοὺς πνευματικούς μαργαρίτας (“spiritual pearls”) and not τὰ δεσμὰ (“chains”) as its antecedent—a point often overlooked by commentators. Since the term πνευματικός (“spiritual”) is consistently contrasted with σαρκικός (“fleshly”) in Ignatius’s letters⁵ it may be significant that Ignatius hopes to rise “by” or perhaps “in” these *spiritual* pearls. This suggests a corresponding *spiritual* ascent at death (instead of a resurrection of the *flesh* at the eschaton), either accomplished through Ignatius’s suffering and death (represented by his “pearls,” that is, chains) or associated with some mark of distinction (viewing “pearls” as a symbol of reward).

⁴ Cf. Paulsen 1985: 37: “. . . in denen mir die Auferstehung zuteil werden möchte.” This is also the perspective of Mellink 2000: 257: “Ignatius perceived his violent death as a condition to participate in the resurrection at the end of time and not as a gateway to a heavenly existence with God.”

⁵ See *Eph.* 7.2; 8.2; 10.3; *Magn.* 13.2; *Smyrn.* 3.3; 12.2; 13.2; *Pol.* 1.2; 2.2. Cf. the contrast between πνεῦμα and σὰρξ in *Magn.* 1.2; 13.1; *Trall.* prescript; 12.1; *Rom.* prescript; *Phld.* 7.1; *Smyrn.* 1.1; 3.2; *Pol.* 5.1; 7.2.

Moreover, Ignatius's rising is τῇ προσευχῇ ὑμῶν—by the prayer of the Ephesians. Ignatius frequently asks the recipients of his letters to pray regarding his imminent death.⁶ For example, Ignatius urges the Magnesians, “Remember me in your prayers, in order that I might attain God” (14.1), and tells the Philadelphians, “Your prayer to God will complete me” (5.1). If Ignatius's belief that he will “rise” by the Ephesians' prayer is read together with all of these other prayer requests throughout his letters, then it is much more natural to understand that his rising happens at death. It seems illogical that Ignatius's bodily resurrection could be accomplished by the Ephesians' prayers; at the resurrection the time for praying would be over.

A final reason for thinking that Ignatius's desire to “rise” in *Eph.* 11.2 is for a postmortem spiritual ascent rather than for his resurrection at the eschaton is the subsequent purpose clause: “in order that I might be found in the lot of the Ephesian Christians who always agreed with the apostles.” Commentators have not always adequately accounted for the third-person reference (“Ephesian Christians”) or aorist verb συνήνεσαν (“agreed”). Rather, they have tended to interpret the clause as if it read, “in order that I might be found in the lot of *you* Ephesian Christians who always *agree* with the apostles” (e.g., Schoedel 1985: 72). The third-person reference and the aorist verb indicate that Ignatius is thinking not of the letter addressees but of Ephesian Christians who were faithful and have already died, thus obtaining their “lot.”⁷ Ignatius wishes to obtain the same lot as these deceased Christians by ascending to God in spirit as they have. Therefore, even though Ignatius does hold out hope for the resurrection of his body (see §5.3 below), his desire to “rise” (ἀνίστημι) in *Eph.* 11.2 is his prior and intermediate hope—a hope to be with God. To render the imagery rather baldly: one obtains a “lot” at death in an ascent to God; one cashes it in at the resurrection.

⁶ See *Eph.* 1.2; 21.1; *Magn.* 14.1; *Trall.* 12.2–3; *Rom.* 3.2; 4.2; 8.3; *Phld.* 5.1; 8.2; *Smyrn.* 11.1; cf. *Eph.* 3.1; *Rom.* 2.1; 4.1–2; 6.2; 8.1.

⁷ Cf. Ign. *Smyrn.* 3.2, “[Peter and those with him] despised death and were found (ἡρέθησαν; aorist tense) above death.” Presumably, being found above death relates to their triumph over death in a postmortem spiritual ascent.

Dependence on English translations could also obscure the second question regarding the identity of “those being taken up to God” (τῶν εἰς θεὸν ἀναιρουμένων; *Eph.* 12.2). The phrase πάροδος ἐστε τῶν εἰς θεὸν ἀναιρουμένων is translated by Ehrman as “you are a passageway for *those slain for God*,” by Holmes as “you are the highway of *those who are being killed for God’s sake*,” and is paraphrased by Lightfoot as “ye have ever escorted *the martyrs* on their way to death.”⁸ All three translators (and virtually all others) have seemingly assumed that τῶν εἰς θεὸν ἀναιρουμένων refers to Christian “martyrs.” Hence they would probably paraphrase the clause as follows: “you Ephesian Christians provide encouragement and material assistance to those Christians who are travelling from the east to Rome to die for their faith” (cf. Schoedel 1985: 73). This understanding could be strengthened by the fact that Ignatius apparently received such assistance from the Ephesians (see 2.1; 3.1).

This is not the only way to understand the phrase, however. The verb ἀναιρέω does often mean “destroy” or “kill,” yet it can also simply mean “take up” or “take away.”⁹ Instead of referring to Christian martyrs outside of the Ephesian congregation who were helped along by the Ephesians and then killed for God’s sake, it is possible that the phrase refers to the deceased Ephesian Christians, mentioned two verses earlier, who have already been taken up to God when they died in faith.¹⁰ In contrast, the standard interpretation of 12.2 understands “highway” (πάροδος) metaphorically as one that connects the east to Rome, reads εἰς θεὸν as “for God” (rather than “to God”), and downplays the present tense of the participle. Each of these decisions can be challenged.

⁸ Translations are cited from Ehrman 2003: 233; Holmes 2007: 193, and Lightfoot 1989 [1889]-a: 62, respectively; italics added. Cf. Lake 1959 [1912]: 187: “You are the passage for those who are being slain for the sake of God.”

⁹ Cf. Acts 7:21; *1 Clem.* 21.9; *Mart. Pol.* 18.2. Unfortunately there are no other occurrences of the verb in Ignatius’s letters to consider.

¹⁰ Lightfoot claims that the phrase τῶν εἰς θεὸν ἀναιρουμένων is “a condensed expression for [those] ‘who are put to death and thus conducted to God’” and that the word ἀναιρουμένων is “a *παρὰ προσδοκίαν*, where we should look for some such expression as *προπεμπομένων*” (1989 [1889]-a: 63). The phrase may not be condensed in the way Lightfoot suggests and ἀναιρουμένων need not refer to an expected outcome.

First, it is possible that the term *πάροδος* should be understood as connoting not a route from the east to Rome, but from earth to heaven. This is the sense which the word bears in *Herm. Vis.* 2.2.7 and *Herm. Sim.* 9.25.2 (the only other two occurrences in the Apostolic Fathers). In addition, *Eph.* 12.2 may find a strong parallel earlier in 9.1, which lends support to reading *πάροδος* in a spiritual sense and *εἰς θεόν* in a spatial sense: “love is the path that carries you up to God.”¹¹ Finally, if Ignatius had wanted to draw attention to a tradition that the Ephesian church had aided martyrs such as Paul in the past, then he could have used an aorist or even a perfect form of *ἀναιρέω*. Yet Ignatius’s choice of the present tense suggests that in commending the Ephesians as a highway for those being taken up to God, he is referring to their assistance in conducting members from their own church on earth to God in heaven. This interpretation accords with what we have seen in *Eph.* 11.2 and makes better sense of the subsequent exhortation for the Ephesians to meet together more frequently (*Eph.* 13.1).

Why is Paul mentioned here? In answering this third question Schoedel (1985: 73) appeals to the tradition that the Ephesians formally sent Paul off (Acts 20:38). This explanation rests on the understanding of *πάροδος* we challenged above. Furthermore, in Acts 20:38 Paul is preparing to set sail for Jerusalem, not Rome! So it is unlikely that Ignatius mentions Paul in *Eph.* 12.2 because he associates Paul’s journey to his death in Rome with Ephesus. More likely, as we will see, Paul is inserted here because he is for Ignatius the model *par excellence* of Christian faithfulness unto death.

In 12.2 the Ephesians are called “fellow-initiates of Paul” (*Παύλου συμμύσται*). The choice of the genitive *Παύλου* may be unexpected at first. In fact, most translations render the phrase as “fellow initiates *with* Paul” as if the text read *Παύλῳ* and not *Παύλου*. Yet the genitive in this case probably does not indicate that the Ephesians together with Paul are initiates into something else—the dative normally would have been used to express

¹¹ The Greek is *ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη ὁδὸς ἡ ἀναφέρουσα εἰς θεόν*. I am inclined to read *ἀναφέρω* in *Eph.* 9.1, *ἀνίστημι* in *Eph.* 11.2, *ἀναιρέω* in *Eph.* 12.2, and *ἀνατέλλω* in *Rom.* 2.2 as describing essentially the same movement upward. If Ignatius wanted to clarify that the highway in *Eph.* 12.2 was an earthly one, he could have added the qualifier *σάρξ* as he does with *ὁδός* in *Rom.* 9.3.

this idea.¹² Rather, the construction may be analogous to Phil 3:17: Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε (“become fellow-imitators of me”). Paul’s exhortation in Phil 3:17 is not that the Philippians should become *with* Paul imitators of something else; the exhortation is that the Philippians should become imitators *of* Paul—Paul being the object of their imitation (cf. Phil 4:9). Therefore, in *Eph.* 12.2 the phrase Παύλου συμμύσται suggests that while the Ephesians were fellow initiates *with* each other, they were initiates *of* Paul: either Paul was the one into whom they were initiated or the Ephesians were initiated by Paul into the mysteries of God. The latter notion receives support from the canonical letter of Ephesians (see esp. Eph 3:1–10), but Paul as the herald of mysteries can also be found in 1 Corinthians (2:1, 7; 4:1). Furthermore, the “mystery” (μυστήριον) terminology in the Ignatian letters always refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹³

Ignatius then describes Paul with two perfect passive participles and an adjective: τοῦ ἡγιασμένου, τοῦ μεμαρτυρημένου, ἀξιομακαρίστου (“the one who has been sanctified, the one who has been testified to, who is worthy of blessing”). The meaning of these appellations is not clear but there is a remarkable parallel in *Phld.* 5.2. In that verse Ignatius exhorts the Philadelphians to love the prophets,

since they proclaimed in anticipation of the gospel, and hoped in him, and awaited him in whom they were also saved by believing. They are in the unity of Jesus Christ, ones worthy of love and worthy of admiration (ἀξιαγάπητοι καὶ ἀξιοθαύμαστοι), who are holy (ἅγιοι), who have been testified to (μεμαρτυρημένοι) by Jesus Christ and have been numbered in the gospel of our common hope.

This verse and other verses in which prophets are described (*Magn.* 8.2–9.2) highlight their perseverance in faith and holy conduct. It is probable that in *Eph.* 12.2 those same qualities are being extolled in Paul.

¹²For Ignatius’s use of the dative with a συν prefix, see *Smyrn.* 4.2 (εἰς τὸ συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ; “in order to suffer together with him”).

¹³ See *Eph.* 19.1; *Magn.* 9.1; and *Trall.* 2.3. Unfortunately I cannot interact in this chapter with the creative suggestions of Allen Brent, propounded in multiple publications, to the effect that on his journey to Rome Ignatius was choreographing a pagan and cultic martyr procession. Brent’s hypothesis is light on textual warrant and heavy on imaginative reconstructions. See the incisive review of Brent 2007 by Stuart Hall in the *Journal of Theological Studies* 59.1 (2008): 331–33.

What is abundantly clear in *Eph.* 12.2 is that Ignatius views Paul as a model for himself. Ignatius wishes to be found ὑπὸ τὰ ἵχνη of Paul when he attains God. Most commentators have translated this phrase “in his footsteps”; in contrast, the entry for ἵχνος in BDAG and other commentators have understood the phrase as “under his feet,” which is supposedly another instance of Ignatius’s excessive humility. Despite the unusual use of the preposition ὑπό, the former translation is more likely on the basis of the parallel in *Mart. Pol.* 22.1: “the blessed Polycarp testified unto death, in whose footsteps (πρὸς τὰ ἵχνη) may we be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.” All three NT occurrences of the noun ἵχνος are used in this ethical sense (Rom 4:12; 2 Cor 12:8; 1 Pet 2:21). The only occurrence of ὑπό with ἵχνος in the biblical writings is 3 Kgdms 5:17: “You have known that my father David was not able to build a house to the name of the Lord my God on account of the presence of battles that surrounded him, until the Lord put them [David’s enemies] under the soles of his feet (ὑπὸ τὰ ἵχνη τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ).” The use of ὑπό with ἵχνος in this verse denotes not a voluntary display of humility but military subjection, a sense totally foreign to *Eph.* 12.2. Moreover, in 3 Kgdms 5:17 ἵχνος is linked with πούς. Thus it is doubtful on grammatical as well as contextual grounds whether ὑπὸ τὰ ἵχνη could be an expression of Ignatius’s humility. Rather, it is another way for Ignatius to state his fundamental desire: “may it be to me to rise” (*Eph.* 11.2; γένοιτό μοι ἀναστῆναι); “may it be to me to be found in his footsteps” (*Eph.* 12.2; γένοιτό μοι ὑπὸ τὰ ἵχνη εὑρεθῆναι); “may it be to me to have a share in God with them” (*Pol.* 6.1; μετ’ αὐτῶν μοι τὸ μέρος γένοιτο σχεῖν ἐν θεῷ).¹⁴ Ignatius’s hope to be found in Paul’s footsteps relates to Ignatius’s ambition in death.

In summary, Ignatius explicitly mentions Paul at this point in the letter because Paul was the preeminent model of one who had already ascended to God.¹⁵ Ignatius’s desire to

¹⁴ Cf. the related wish of *Eph.* 1.2: “I was hoping by your prayer to get to fight the beasts in Rome in order that through getting this I might be able to be a disciple.”

¹⁵ Cf. Stoops 1987: 167: “The acceptance of suffering and death were seen by Ignatius as part of a larger path leading to God. Paul was viewed as a predecessor, who completed the path.” Those deceased Ephesian Christians who have already obtained their lot (*Eph.* 11.2) might also be models for Ignatius to a lesser degree.

follow in Paul's footsteps implies that Paul was "found in the power of faith at the end" (*Eph.* 14.2). He thus stands at the end of Ignatius's journey not only to Rome but also to heaven. Ignatius longs to walk in Paul's footsteps that he might attain God, as Paul did.

5.2.2 *Paul the Free* (To the Romans 4.3)

Apart from *Eph.* 12.2 the only other explicit reference to Paul in Ignatius's letters is *Rom.* 4.3. Here is my translation: "I am not directing you as Peter and Paul [would]. They are apostles; I am a condemned man. They are free (ἐκεῖνοι ἐλεύθεροι) but I, until now, am a slave—yet if I suffer I will become a freedman of Jesus Christ and I will rise in him free. Now I am learning, though I have been bound, to desire nothing."

Ignatius has issued several "commands" to the Romans in the immediately preceding verses, all pertaining to his anticipated death. It is important to note the motivation Ignatius provides for each of these commands:

- "Allow me to be food of the beasts *through whom it is possible to attain God*" (4.1);
- "Rather, entice the beasts so that they might become a tomb for me *Then I will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ*" (4.2);
- "Petition Christ on my behalf that *through these instruments I might be found a sacrifice to God*" (4.2).

Ignatius's basic plea to the Romans not to intervene is based on self-interest: "Do not prevent me from being thrown to the beasts because it is better, in my estimation, to die; it is better for me to die now because it will ensure that I rise to God."¹⁶ If this is the case, then *Rom.* 4.3 can be seen as an extension of the general tenor of Ignatius's pleading.

¹⁶ Recently Timothy McConnell (2010) has suggested that the Roman Christian community during Trajan's reign did not have the power to overturn Ignatius's condemnation but did have enough influence to ameliorate his punishment. In his view Ignatius's pleas to the Romans should be read as pleas for a public martyrdom (i.e., to be thrown to the beasts in the amphitheater) rather than a private martyrdom (i.e., to be decapitated by sword), the latter being more desirable to the Roman Christians so that Ignatius's body could be acquired and buried properly. Despite the ingenuity of this suggestion, Ignatius's letter to the Romans never hints at the possibility of a private martyrdom or at a preference for a public martyrdom. Furthermore,

In dissociating himself from Peter and Paul, it seems clear that Ignatius is disavowing that he writes with their apostolic authority.¹⁷ This interpretation is also supported by the contrast between Peter and Paul as apostles and Ignatius as a “condemned man” (κατάκριτος). Note especially *Trall.* 3.3, “I have not presumed to the point of directing you as an apostle would because I am a condemned man.”

Even though Ignatius draws this initial contrast between himself and Peter and Paul, it appears as if the remainder of the verse posits their potential similarity. The critical question is what Ignatius means when he declares ἐκεῖνοι ἐλεύθεροι. Every translation I consulted renders this phrase as “they were free.” Yet the form of the verb εἰμί in this sentence is elided and there is a legitimate question as to whether εἰσίν (present tense) or ἦσαν (imperfect tense) is implied. Apparently, translators universally read the contrast as being between Ignatius as a bound and condemned prisoner, and Paul and Peter as “free” (of chains?) in their approach to death. Yet this image appears to contradict what we know of both Paul (see e.g., Col 4:3; 2 Tim 2:9; *1 Clem.* 5.6) and Peter (see John 21:18–19); both were bound as Ignatius was.

Hence, the other grammatical option is preferable: “they *are* free.”¹⁸ In Ignatius’s letter *To Polycarp* he writes, “Let them [male and female slaves] serve all the more for the glory of God in order that they might obtain (τύχωσιν) a better freedom (ἐλευθερίας) from God” (4.3). In the context of this verse Ignatius is comparing this “better freedom” with freedom from literal or physical slavery. Although *Pol.* 4.3 could refer to spiritual freedom from sin at conversion, the fact that this exhortation is directed toward believing slaves suggests that the freedom spoken of here is a freedom obtained at death (cf. *Rom.* 4.3 and other uses of τυγχάνω in Ignatius such as *Magn.* 1.2 and *Smyrn.* 9.2). The latter half of *Rom.* 4.3 expresses this same idea. Freedom for Ignatius at death would be a

if the Ignatian letters are to be dated in the 140s as Barnes 2008 argues, then this may render the Roman church’s political power more historically plausible.

¹⁷ Most of the references to the apostles in Ignatius’s letters highlight their foundational leadership role (see *Magn.* 6.1–7.2; 13.1–2; *Trall.* 2.1–3.3; 7.1; 12.2; *Phld.* 5.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1–2).

¹⁸ Cf. Stoops 1987: 172; Reis 2005: 295. Schoedel dismisses this too hastily: “It is also too literal a reading of our text, then, to conclude that it was martyrdom that made the apostles free” (1985: 176).

freedom from this sinful world with its temptations and passions (or freedom from the body as a barrier to fellowship with God). Therefore, if there is any internal consistency to *Rom.* 4.3 or in Ignatius's use of the term ἐλεύθερος and its related forms, then Ignatius must be describing Peter and Paul as "free" in the sense that they have already left this world and are enjoying an unencumbered relationship with God. Ignatius does not dare direct the Romans with the *authority* of the apostles, but if they acquiesce to his request to die, Ignatius will at least achieve the *freedom* of Peter and Paul.

Peter may be mentioned here with Paul because of the tradition that both were martyred in Rome under the reign of Nero (cf. the pairing of the two in *1 Clem.* 5.4–7; see also Schoedel 1985: 176) and both would have been recognized exemplars. The fact that only Paul is mentioned in *Eph.* 12.2 suggests that Paul is the primary model. This is strengthened by a potential allusion to Phil 4:11 in *Rom.* 4.3. In Phil 4:11 Paul writes that he has learned (μανθάνω) to be self-sufficient in every situation, even though he is currently in chains (Phil 1:7–17). In *Rom.* 4.3 Ignatius writes that he is learning (μανθάνω), though he is bound, to desire nothing (cf. also Phil 4:13 and 2 Tim 4:17 with *Smyrn.* 4.2). There is little verbal correspondence between the two texts, but there is a conspicuous conceptual parallel: Ignatius, like Paul, can be content in his present circumstances—though they were both bound and facing death—because Ignatius, like Paul, has the hope of departing to be with Christ.

Reading Paul's postmortem spiritual freedom as the goal to which Ignatius aspires integrates *Rom.* 4.3 into the case for Roman non-interference that Ignatius mounts in the bulk of his letter (*Rom.* 1.2–8.3). If Ignatius can attain God through his death in Rome, why should the Christians there seek to prevent this?¹⁹ Paul thus becomes not only a model for faithfully approaching death (*Eph.* 12.2) but also a model for freedom after death (*Rom.* 4.3). The image of Paul is of Paul the (spiritually) risen one. Paul has charted the way to freedom and all Ignatius has to do is follow in his footsteps so that he too might ascend to God.

¹⁹ Although Ignatius's so-called death wish may seem pathological to the modern Western mind, it probably was much less so to his first readers.

5.2.3 Paul's Influence on Ignatius's Concept of Ascending to God

This particular image of the ascended Paul plays a central role in Ignatius's letters because it relates to a major Ignatian theme—a theme variously expressed as “attaining” (τυγχάνω and ἐπιτυγχάνω), “being found” (passive forms of εὐρίσκω), or “rising.”²⁰ All three concepts describe what will happen to Ignatius at death and their interrelationship is clearly seen in verses in which they are correlated (see, e.g., *Eph.* 11.2; 12.2; *Trall.* 12.3; *Rom.* 2.1–2; 4.1; *Pol.* 7.1). A thorough study of these concepts is beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, I suggest that this theme presents another example of Pauline influence on Ignatius and perhaps an instance of the reception of Philippians.

In discussing the goal of Ignatius's martyrdom, commentators have frequently defaulted to Christological categories. Richard Bower, for example, in an article on the meaning of ἐπιτυγχάνω in Ignatius (1974) explains this concept by way of a “Christ-mysticism.” For Bower, attaining to God can be spoken of in terms of union with Christ (9). Bower writes, “‘Attaining’ has to do with the possibility of union with God; and this union is the purpose of martyrdom and obedience. In the scheme of redemption, in the typology of the human and divine realms, *Christ is our paradigm*; for in him is both *the example* and possibility of our ‘attaining to God’” (14; italics added). Such an attaining to God need not wait for death or the eschaton; it can be “realized immediately” (13).

Other commentators suggest a background to the phrase “attain God” in the magical papyri. Henning Paulsen cites *PGM* IV.216ff. and then claims a parallel to Ignatius's use of “attain”: “Der Text, der nicht singular ist, zeigt, daß dies Wortfeld von hellenistischer Religiosität bestimmt ist und dort die direkte Bemächtigung der Gottheit aussagen soll” (1978: 71). Paulsen does not develop the implications of this parallel for an understanding of Ignatius. Moreover, Mellink offers a decisive rebuttal of Paulsen's claim by

²⁰ For the theme of attaining (ultimately God), see *Eph.* 10.1; 12.2; *Magn.* 1.2; 14.1; *Trall.* 12.2; 13.3; *Rom.* 1.2; 2.1; 4.1; 5.3; 9.2; *Smyrn.* 9.2; 11.1; *Pol.* 2.3; 7.1. For the theme of “being found” after death, see *Eph.* 11.2; 12.2; *Smyrn.* 3.2; *Pol.* 7.1; and possibly *Magn.* 9.1; *Trall.* 2.2; *Rom.* 2.2. For the theme of rising (ultimately to God) see *Eph.* 9.1; 11.2; *Trall.* prescript (?); *Rom.* 2.2; 4.3; *Smyrn.* 7.1.

demonstrating how utterly foreign the conception of attaining God through magical spells is to Ignatius's thought despite the formal, grammatical parallels (2000: 236–38).

Mellink himself views the attainment of God in Ignatius to be a complete innovation: “Ignatius’ characteristic notion that the attainment of God or Christ is the eschatological goal of the Christian cannot be found in the NT or in any other writing from the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers. The phrase θεοῦ (ἐπι)τυχεῖν seems completely unique in early Christian literature” (2000: 236; but see 240). If Mellink means that “nowhere in the New Testament or in any other early Christian writing” are the verbs ἐπιτυγχάνω and τυγχάνω used “with θεός or Χριστός in the genitive case as direct objects” (235), then he is undoubtedly right. But is he equally right to state that the “notion” of the attainment of God or Christ cannot be found in the NT? Can only the terms ἐπιτυγχάνω and τυγχάνω express Ignatius’s notion of attainment?

The fact is that the notion of the attainment of God can be found in the NT book of Philippians. Philippians contains not only the concept of attaining Christ but also the concept of being found in him—and the two concepts are joined (cf. *Eph.* 12.2; *Pol.* 7.1)! The most important verses are Phil 3:8–9, “. . . on account of [Christ Jesus] I forfeit all things as loss and count them as crap in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him (ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὕρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ) . . .” Outside of Phil 3:8–9 nowhere in the NT is κερδαίνω ever used with God or Jesus as the object and nowhere else is a passive form of εὕρισκω used with a phrase such as “in God” or “in Christ.” A few verses later Paul writes about “attaining” (καταντάω) the resurrection (Phil 3:11; cf. Grant 1966: 43–44) and in the two verses after that (Phil 3:12–13) Paul uses another verb (καταλαμβάνω) for “attaining” three times. In Phil 1:21 Paul speaks of dying as “gain” (κέρδος) possibly because his dying results in departing to be with Christ (1:23). So it is evident not only that the notion of attaining God is present in (and only in) Philippians but we also can see that Paul uses a variety of terms to express his anticipated postmortem gain.²¹

²¹ Carl Smith remarks that the closest Paul comes to Ignatius’s concept of attainment is Phil 3:7–16 but he then states, “Yet, Paul’s language and concept of attainment differ from Ignatius” (2011: 52n87). Smith does not explain or defend this claim.

The concept of ascending to God or Jesus may also be present in Philippians. As mentioned, Paul envisions death as a departure (ἀναλύω) to be with Christ (Phil 1:23; cf. Ign. *Rom.* 2.2). It is clear from Phil 3:20 that Paul considers Jesus to be in heaven. So can we not infer that departing to be with Jesus is a spiritual ascent to heaven at death? Furthermore, the description of the call of God in Phil 3:14 as “above” or “upward” (ἄνω) may further reflect the idea of rising to God (though not at death—see §11.4.2). The concepts of future completion (1:6) and perfection (3:12) in Philippians also have resonance within Ignatius’s letters (see, e.g., *Eph.* 3.1; *Phld.* 5.1; cf. *Trall.* 5.2), though these concepts seem to be related to the day of Christ and the resurrection of the body rather than to something realized immediately at death.

What may we conclude from these intriguing conceptual parallels? If we frame the question in terms of Ignatius’s *use* of Paul or Philippians, then we can say nothing. We may not even notice them at all. Likewise, if we are judging the relationship between Paul and Ignatius solely on the criterion of verbal correspondence, we can conclude very little. However, if we attempt to detect Pauline *influence* on Ignatius, operating within the theoretical model presented in chapter 2, we may say something more constructive. Although it is possible that such a collocation of concepts in both Philippians and Ignatius’s letters are coincidental and no indication of Pauline influence on Ignatius, it is also possible that Ignatius meditated on Philippians as a letter of particular pertinence to his circumstances. Philippians could have shaped Ignatius’s perspective on death, perhaps in ways that he did not fully realize. Reading Ignatius’s desire to attain God as an instance of early Pauline effective history directs our interpretation of that theme and renders implausible some of the more radical readings of Ignatius’s letters. However, since Ignatius’s knowledge of Philippians cannot be demonstrated from his letters (see Inge 1905: 71 and Foster 2005: 161), we would be on firmer ground to claim simply that *Paul* influenced Ignatius’s concept of ascending to God, whether through his letter to the Philippians or by some other means.

5.3 Conclusion: Ignatius's Paul as Pauline Offspring?

In conclusion, it is important to re-affirm that while Ignatius was especially concerned with what would happen to him immediately after death, his postmortem hope did not eclipse his final, eschatological hope. Ignatius clearly believed that Jesus was raised in the flesh (see esp. *Smyrn.* 2.1–3.3) and *Trall.* 9.2 claims that “in the same way” (οὕτως) the Father will raise up those who believe in Jesus. Thus it seems unlikely that Ignatius conflated his postmortem fate with the eschatological fate of all believers (contra Mellink 2000: 342) or viewed “resurrection” as a state immediately after death (contra Schoedel 1985: 72). It is more natural to read Ignatius's hope to attain God as something he would achieve immediately at death, joining other deceased believers, while life on earth continued. As his letter *To the Romans* indicates, Ignatius will be found a Christian when he no longer appears in the world (3.2) and will attain God and truly be a disciple when the beasts leave nothing of his body behind and the watching world no longer sees his body (*Rom.* 4.1–2). If Ignatius's hope was solely focused on the resurrection of his body, these verses would make little sense. Therefore, it appears that Ignatius did articulate a doctrine of what theologians call the “intermediate state.”²² Moreover, Ignatius's emphasis is decidedly on the intermediate state or “afterlife” and not on his bodily resurrection or the final judgment.

In view of Ignatius's pervasive references to his death and anticipations of what would happen to him after death, the following assertions by Hendrik Bakker are baffling: “Ignatius is not concerned about himself, his personal entrance into the realm of heaven—he is not interested in personal death and personal eschatology—martyrdom on behalf of his fellow-Christians burns in the bishop's mind” (2003: 201). As I have shown elsewhere, Ignatius writes very little about the relation of his death to his fellow Christians (see Kirk 2013a). Rather it seems as if he is almost obsessively interested in his “personal eschatology.” Ignatius wants to die faithfully in order to ascend to God, to be

²² Further evidence for this concept can be seen in Ign. *Magn.* 5.1, “Two things lie together before us—death and life—and each one is about go forth to his own place” (ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν ἴδιον τόπον μέλλει χωρεῖν). Cf. the use of τόπος in *1 Clem.* 5.4, 7; 44.5; *Barn.* 19.1; *Pol. Phil.* 9.2.

found in God, and to attain God. As he writes in *To the Romans* 2.2, “It is good to set from the world to God, so that I might rise to him.”

A discussion of how much all of this relates to the epistolary Paul and the earthly Paul must wait until Parts III and IV of this study. Walter Rebell has suggested that Paul’s conception of “lifelong martyrdom” (*lebenslangen Martyrium*) is to be contrasted with Ignatius’s approach to death (1986: 459). Other scholars on Paul in recent years have suggested that the intermediate state was not of much interest to Paul—his was (exclusively?) a resurrection hope, we are told. Our examination of Ignatius’s letters may suggest otherwise. Whether distantly or closely related, there is no question that Ignatius’s letters are Pauline offspring or within the stream of Pauline tradition. And when Ignatius refers to Paul explicitly he speaks of the departed and *ascended* Paul. Paul is Ignatius’s spiritual lodestar, illuminating the path before him—faithful footsteps toward death (*Eph.* 12.2)—and the celestial destination (*Rom.* 4.3).

Chapter 6

Paul the Teacher of Righteousness: Remembering Paul's Departure in Polycarp's Letter *To the Philippians*

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Polycarp and the Letter He Wrote

It is probably no coincidence that many of the most memorable Christian figures from the second half of the first century into the first half of the second century wrote letters and died for their faith. This would include not only Paul of Tarsus and Ignatius of Antioch but also Polycarp of Smyrna, who has the distinction of being the addressee of one letter (Ign. *Pol.*), the author of another (Pol. *Phil.*), and the subject of a third (*Mart. Pol.*). According to the account of his martyrdom, Polycarp was Christ's servant for 86 years (*Mart. Pol.* 9.3), and according to Irenaeus, Polycarp "was educated by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen Christ" and "always taught the things that he had learned from the apostles" (*Haer.* 3.3.4). Thus, on the basis of extant sources, one may stake a reasonable claim that Polycarp was the most well-informed, well-connected, and well-remembered Christian of the first half of the second century.

Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that only one letter that Polycarp wrote has survived, *To the Philippians* (mentioned in *Haer.* 3.3.4). Most scholars now accept the authenticity of the letter, but its integrity still has challengers. The classic challenge was put forward in P. N. Harrison 1936, which argued that the extant letter is an amalgamation of what was originally two letters, one composed almost 20 years later than the other. The linchpin of Harrison's theory is the apparent incongruity between *Phil.* 9.1 (which implies that Ignatius is dead) and 13.2 (which implies ignorance of Ignatius's situation). I accept the traditional and straightforward solution to this problem that

Polycarp knew of Ignatius's death but requested more information concerning the particulars (cf. *Mart. Pol.* 20.1). Thus I incline toward reading the letter as an integrated whole.¹ On the other hand, additional problems with the letter's integrity have been raised and a version of the two-letter thesis in which the letters were written within a period of a few years (e.g., Berding 2002: 13–24) seems possible. In any case, my analysis will mostly be confined to *Pol. Phil.* 1–12, which Harrison labeled as Polycarp's second letter.

The dating of the letter(s) is pegged to the dating of Ignatius's martyrdom. Since Eusebius's reliability on fixing this martyrdom to the reign of Trajan has recently been questioned (see, e.g., Barnes 2008: 126–27) and the ecclesiological developments evident in Ignatius's letters may reflect a later period (see, e.g., Foster 2007: 87–88), it is again judicious to date Polycarp's letter, like Ignatius's letters, anywhere from A.D. 110 to 150 (cf. 83n1 above). Polycarp belongs squarely within the second generation of Paul's living memory.

6.1.2 Polycarp's Sources for His Portrait of Paul and His Redaction of Them

Unlike *1 Clement* and Ignatius's letters, Polycarp's letter *To the Philippians* demonstrates familiarity with a broad range of Pauline sources. It seems virtually certain that Polycarp used 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, and highly probable that he used 1 and 2 Timothy.² His use of Romans, Galatians, and Philippians is also possible. In fact, Polycarp's brief letter gives some evidence (though much of it tenuous) that he knew ten of the thirteen canonical letters attributed to Paul.³ Polycarp also definitely knew *1 Clement* (see Berding 2011) and may have known the book of Acts. The fact that Polycarp sent along the letters of Ignatius and commented on their contents (*Phil.* 13.2) implies that he had knowledge of them as well. With so many potential written sources to

¹ See Hartog 2002: 148–69 for a review of the issue.

² For Polycarp's attribution of Pauline authorship to 1 and 2 Timothy, see Berding 1999.

³ These conclusions are defended in Holmes 2005b. Furthermore, Polycarp's letter definitely used 1 Peter and possibly used Hebrews (see Holmes 2005b: 226)—two letters thought by many to be within the Pauline stream, broadly speaking.

draw upon—to say nothing of oral traditions—it is interesting to notice what Polycarp chose to write about Paul.

Yet for much of the last century and a half, Polycarp's letter has been characterized as an unoriginal pastiche of Christian moralistic traditions. For example, J. B. Lightfoot wrote of Polycarp, "The thoughts and words of others are reproduced with little or no modification, because the writer's mind is receptive and not creative. . . . [The Epistle of Polycarp] has intrinsically no literary or theological interest" (1989 [1889]-c: 597). Lightfoot's negative pronouncement upon Polycarp has been much repeated.⁴ Recently Michael Holmes has stated, "Much of what Polycarp says about Paul appears rather derivative and conventional, even stereotyped" (2011: 65). If this were true, then Polycarp's letter would hardly provide an independent witness to Paul's death. It would thus make only a limited contribution to our study.

Polycarp refers to Paul by name four times in this letter: in 3.2, 9.1, and 11.2, 3.⁵ Furthermore, Paul is the antecedent, or one of the antecedents, of several personal pronouns in 3.2, 9.2, and 11.3.⁶ Our main interest in this chapter will be Pol. *Phil.* 9.1–2 since this passage and its immediate context relate most directly to Paul's obedience unto death. Additionally, we will examine how Polycarp's sketch of the departed Paul in *Phil.* 9.1–2 is of one piece with the other references to Paul in 3.2 and 11.2–3. Far from being an unoriginal pastiche, Polycarp's depiction of Paul is more like a subtly-crafted mosaic: the Pauline fragments of Polycarp's composition may be derived from many sources but his configuration of these shards of tradition contributes to a cohesive and distinctive image of Paul as a teacher of righteousness. Polycarp's letter thus presents an image of Paul that carves out its own place in Paul's early effective history.

⁴ Kenneth Berding produces no less than 11 citations to this effect (2002: 4–5) and then claims that "there are many others" (5).

⁵ The last two references have only been preserved in Latin. Some have thought that the phrase *sicut Paulus docet* ("as Paul teaches") in 11.2 is an interpolation, but this is of little consequence to my analysis.

⁶ It is also possible that Paul was the primary apostle in mind for the plural ἀπόστολοι in 6.3, since he is singled out from the other apostles in the only other occurrence of ἀπόστολος in the letter (9.1). However, it appears as if the phrase οἱ εὐαγγελιστάμενοι ἡμᾶς ἀπόστολοι ("the apostles who preached the gospel to us") may be a collocation taken from *1 Clem.* 42.1 (Οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν εὐηγγελίσθησαν).

6.2 Paul's Departure according to Polycarp

We begin with some needed background. The thesis statement for the entire letter, as I read it, is *Phil.* 3.1: “I am writing these things to you concerning righteousness, brothers and sisters, not on my own initiative but because you requested me to do so.” The question of why the Philippians would have requested a letter from the bishop of Smyrna on the topic of righteousness is a difficult one to answer. Of all the explanations of the letter's occasion, I find Peter Oakes's (2005) account to be the most compelling. Oakes argues that scholars have generally not grasped the importance of the theme of suffering in the letter. He contends that the main form of suffering would have been economic and that the Christian community's relationships with pagan society could have been strained when the Philippian Christians received Ignatius and the other condemned criminals (Zosimus and Rufus?) and sent them on their way (*Phil.* 1.1). The Philippians' delicate situation could then have been further disturbed when Valens, an “elder” (*presbyter*; 11.1) in the church, abused his position of authority from a love of money (see *Phil.* 11.1–2, 4). Whether this involved stealing from the church's common fund, we cannot know. However, it does seem plausible that Valens “compromised his Christianity to escape economic suffering” (Oakes 2005: 369).⁷ The Philippian church then decided to request a letter from Polycarp that addressed what “righteousness” would look like in their particular situation of failed leadership and economic suffering.⁸ This account of the Philippians' request explains their stated interest in Ignatius's letters (*Phil.* 13.2; cf. Oakes 2005: 365), which directly address suffering and leadership.

⁷ I agree with Oakes in seeing Valens's sin as symptomatic of deeper challenges in Philippi. Thus, while managing the fallout of Valens's treachery could have been the precipitating cause of the Philippians' request, this issue does not appear to be Polycarp's primary concern in the letter, contra Steinmetz 1972, Maier 1993, Bauer 1995, Hartog 2002, and Trevett 2006.

⁸ It is not, as Schoedel suggests, that the Philippians invited Polycarp to discuss the *meaning* of the Pauline term “righteousness” (1967: 13). Yet neither, as Berding suggests, is it merely that the Philippians “desired exhortation (motivation) and practical instruction in how to live rightly as Christians” such as their parents and grandparents had received from Paul (2002: 60). In my reading, the Philippians' request would not have been so linguistically-motivated or abstract. Rather, they sought Polycarp's counsel on how to live righteously in their troubled circumstances.

6.2.1 *The Theme of Righteousness in Polycarp's Letter*

In returning to the thesis statement of *Phil.* 3.1, we may declare that, in one sense, everything in Polycarp's letter concerns "righteousness." The word's prominence in 3.1 and the fact that it occurs eight times throughout the letter (2.3; 3.1, 3; 4.1; 5.2; 8.1; 9.1, 2) suggest that it is an umbrella concept, encompassing everything else. Yet once one observes that occurrences of human righteousness are clustered in two passages (2.3–4.1; 8.1–9.2) and that a number of other virtues appear with similar frequency, it seems more accurate to state that righteousness, for Polycarp, is a hub concept in a network of Christian virtues.⁹

In Polycarp's letter Christian righteousness manifests itself in two directions. First, righteousness *within* the community of faith is demonstrated by the love that Christians have for one another, their unity in the truth, the way in which they relate to each other appropriately according to their social positions and roles, and their willingness to forgive and bring back those who have gone astray. That intracommunal virtue should be understood as "righteousness" is evident in the close associations between righteousness and love (3.3) and between arming with weapons of righteousness and teaching Christians to walk in the commandment of the Lord (4.1). In fact, it is appropriate to read all of Polycarp's instructions to various members of the church in 4.2–6.1 as an explication of the righteousness about which Polycarp is purportedly writing (3.1).

It must be recognized, though, that in Polycarp's letter righteousness is more closely linked with proper conduct in relation to those *outside* of the community of faith. The very first occurrence of the term can be found in the Lord Jesus's words, "Blessed are the poor and those being persecuted for the sake of righteousness" (2.3). This ostensible conflation of Luke 6:20 and Matt 5:10 suggests that righteousness is for Polycarp the kind

⁹ Cf. Holmes 2006: 59: "Righteousness is thus a richly evocative and parenetically useful term for Polycarp, one that primarily has to do not with divine activity on behalf of humans (as in Paul), but with how humans respond to divine activity and initiative on their behalf. It is a term that brought to mind for Polycarp a broad and probably clearly defined (though in this letter not fully stated) complex of beliefs and behaviours that ought to characterize authentic Christian existence." As stated below, I think the differences between Paul and Polycarp on righteousness have been overdrawn.

of public behavior that invites persecution and poverty in this world but is rewarded with God's blessing. As we will see below, righteousness in 8.1–9.2 is demonstrated by faithfully enduring opposition from the world, even to the point of death. Therefore righteousness, like love and purity, is a virtue that has application both within the church and outside of it.¹⁰

The demand for righteousness in Polycarp's letter must be viewed in light of his emphasis on future judgment. Polycarp stresses that nothing escapes God's notice (4.3; 7.2) and that Jesus will judge the living and the dead (2.1). Everyone must stand before the judgment seat of Christ (6.2) and God will hold the disobedient accountable (2.1). Yet if Christians are pleasing to the Lord in the present age, they will receive the age that is to come and will reign with him, having been raised from the dead (5.2). The saints will judge the world (11.2). To deny these things is to be a firstborn of Satan (7.1; cf. Hartog 2005: 378).

6.2.2 *Paul the Teacher in Visits and Letters* (Phil. 3.2–3; 11.2–3)

Having perceived the importance of the theme of righteousness, it is interesting to note that in Polycarp's letter the primary (but not foundational) "teacher" of righteousness is Paul. As mentioned above, the term "righteousness" is introduced by the teaching of Jesus in 2.3. Nevertheless, the term is then immediately expounded in 3.1ff. with reference to Paul. Polycarp admits that his discussion of righteousness cannot possibly match the wisdom of Paul, who taught the Philippians in person and later by letters (3.2).¹¹ He claims that careful study of Paul's letters will build up the Philippians in faith, and being in the midst of faith, hope, and love—a Pauline triad (see 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8)—will fulfill the commandment of righteousness (*Phil.* 3.3). Thus, in effect,

¹⁰ For the intracommunal dimension to love and purity, see 3.3; 4.2–3; 5.2–3; 6.1; 10.1; 11.1; 12.2; 14.1; for the extracommunal dimension, see 1.1; 2.2; 9.2; 10.2; 11.2.

¹¹ There is some slippage here between the initial Christian community in Philippi and the present one. Cf. Oakes 2005: 356.

Polycarp invites his readers to set his letter alongside the letters of Paul. The Pauline image present in this section is of Paul the teacher, whether in person or by letter.¹²

The role of Paul as teacher surfaces again in 11.2–3. Polycarp writes, “the saints will judge the world” (*sancti mundum iudicabunt*; 11.2)—apparently from 1 Cor 6:2 (οἱ ἅγιοι τὸν κόσμον κρινοῦσιν)—transforming it into support for his warning to avoid the love of money and its resultant idolatry. Polycarp states that this is what Paul “teaches.” It is then noted that Paul labored among the Philippians (11.3), which presumably refers to his teaching ministry while at Philippi (cf. 3.2).

Therefore in both 3.1–3 and 11.2–3, Paul the teacher is the dominant image. He taught the Philippians when physically present among them and, in his absence, through the letter(s) he wrote. Paul’s teaching concerns practical matters such as how to grow in the faith, fulfill the commandments, or avoid money and idolatry. In this way Paul may be considered the preeminent teacher of righteousness, the standard against whom Polycarp measures himself.

6.2.3 *The Example of Christ in the Departed Paul (Phil. 8.1–10.1a)*

Whereas *Phil.* 3.1–3 and 11.2–3 primarily concern intracommunal righteousness, 8.1–10.1a concern a righteousness that manifests itself in faithfully enduring unjust persecution from the world. Here is a translation of this section:

8.1 Therefore, let us persevere unceasingly in our hope and in the down payment of our righteousness, who is Christ Jesus, who took up our sins on his own body upon the cross, who did not commit sin nor was deceit found in his mouth; but for our sake he endured all things in order that we might live in him. **8.2** Therefore, let us become imitators of his endurance and if we suffer for the sake of his name, let us glorify him. For this is the example he set for us in himself, and we ourselves have believed this. **9.1** Therefore, I exhort all of you to obey the word of righteousness and to practice all endurance, which you saw with your own eyes not only in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, but also in the others who were from you, and in Paul himself and the rest of the apostles, **9.2** being convinced that all of these did not run in vain but in faith and righteousness and that they are in the place owed to them, with the Lord, with whom they also suffered. For they did not love the present world but the one who

¹² I cannot here discuss the phrase ὑμῖν ἔγραψεν ἐπιστολάς (“he wrote letters to you”; 3.2), which is problematic since we know of only one letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians. See Holmes 2005b: 201n55 for a discussion of various explanations.

died on our behalf and who was raised by God for our sake. **10.1** Therefore, stand firm in these things and follow the Lord's example, being firm in faith and immovable

The section begins with an exhortation for the Philippians to persevere unceasingly “in the down payment of our righteousness, who is Christ Jesus” (τῷ ἀρραβῶνι τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἡμῶν ὃς ἐστὶ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς; 8.1). Polycarp's language here is reminiscent of 2 Cor 1:22 and 5:5 (cf. Eph 1:14), though in Paul's thought the Spirit is the “down payment.” Furthermore, while the verses in 2 Corinthians stress that the Spirit is *given* as a down payment and is the one with whom believers are sealed, Polycarp uses the term ἀρραβῶν within an exhortation to persevere. It is hard to know what to make of Polycarp's modification of Pauline thought. The complete absence of the Spirit in Pol. *Phil.* is arresting, but does this necessarily mean that Polycarp is legalistic or has a more positive view than Paul does of human moral capability, as some have thought (e.g., Holmes 2011: 68)?

The key to understanding *Phil.* 8.1 is in appreciating its use of 1 Pet 2:21–24. Here is a side-by-side comparison of the two passages:

Figure 5 – Pol. Phil. 8.1 Compared to 1 Pet. 2:21–24

<i>Phil.</i> 8.1a	1 Pet 2:24a
<u>ὃς ἀνήνεγκεν ἡμῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας τῷ</u>	<u>ὃς τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν</u>
<u>ιδίῳ σώματι ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον</u>	<u>ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον</u>
(“[Christ Jesus] who took up our sins on his own body upon the cross”)	(“[Christ] who himself took up our sins on his body upon the cross”)
<i>Phil.</i> 8.1b	1 Pet 2:22
<u>ὃς ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὐρέθη</u>	<u>ὃς ἀμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὐρέθη</u>
<u>δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ</u>	<u>δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ</u>
(“who did not commit sin nor was deceit found in his mouth”)	(“who did not commit sin nor was deceit found in his mouth”)

Phil. 8.1c

1 Pet 2:21b, 24b

ἀλλὰ δι' ἡμᾶς ἵνα ζήσωμεν ἐν αὐτῷ

ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν . . . ἵνα . . . τῇ

πάντα ὑπέμεινεν.

δικαιοσύνη ζήσωμεν.

(“but for our sake he endured all things . . . in order
in order that we might live *in him*”) (“he suffered on your behalf . . . in order
that . . . we might live *to righteousness*”)

It can be seen readily from this comparison that *Phil.* 8.1a is nearly identical to 1 Pet 2:24a and *Phil.* 8.1b is identical to 1 Pet 2:22. Polycarp may intend to cite 1 Peter but without following the grammatical sequence of 1 Pet 2:21–24. This juxtaposition of texts raises the question of whether *Phil.* 8.1c is likewise drawn from 1 Pet 2.

There is no direct parallel to δι' ἡμᾶς πάντα ὑπέμεινεν (“for our sake he endured all things”; *Phil.* 8.1c) in 1 Peter. The closest parallel is probably ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (“he suffered on your behalf”) in 1 Pet 2:21b. Conceptually, these phrases are very similar. In 1 Pet 2:20 the author uses the verb ὑπομένω twice and in 1 Pet 2:21 Christ is offered as the example of enduring suffering for doing good. Likewise, the language of endurance and suffering is intertwined in *Phil.* 8.1–9.2.¹³ Polycarp may have chosen to write πάντα ὑπέμεινεν, rather than πάντα ἔπαθεν, because he wanted to stress Christ's endurance.

This leaves us with the phrase ἵνα ζήσωμεν ἐν αὐτῷ (“in order that we might live in him”) in *Phil.* 8.1c. I would suggest that this phrase is parallel to ἵνα . . . τῇ δικαιοσύνη ζήσωμεν (“in order that . . . we might live to righteousness”) in 1 Pet 2:24b. Again, these phrases express similar concepts, at least for Polycarp. Polycarp's exhortation in 8.1 to persevere in the down payment of our righteousness is parallel to his exhortation in 9.1 to obey the word of righteousness, and is related to the expression “running” in righteousness in 9.2. If Christ Jesus himself is the down payment of righteousness, then persevering in him must be virtually synonymous with living in him. In 1 Pet 2:21–24 it is clear that Christ's obedience to death is not only an *example* to be followed but also the

¹³ “Christ Jesus endured (ὑπέμεινεν) all things” (8.1); “let us become imitators of his endurance (ὑπομονῆς)” (8.2); “if we suffer (πάσχωμεν) on account of his name . . .” (8.2); “I exhort you . . . to practice all endurance (ὑπομονήν)” (9.1); “. . . the Lord, with whom they also suffered (συνέπαθον)” (9.2).

means by which believers can live as he did. As 1 Peter 2:24 states, “He himself took up our sins on his body upon the cross in order that, having died to sins, we might live to righteousness.” The same logic is evident in *Phil.* 8.1–2. Christ Jesus is the believers’ down payment of righteousness in that his death enables them to live a righteous life by living “in him.” Why Polycarp mutes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life still remains a question, but *Phil.* 8.1 cannot be cited as evidence that Polycarp views Christian existence “more as a matter of human effort or achievement” as opposed to “divine empowerment” (contra Holmes 2011: 68).

There is one more aspect of *Phil.* 8.1 to probe. If the term ἀπαβών implies a future fulfillment when the full payment is received, how does this idea fit within Polycarp’s thought? In other words, why would Polycarp introduce a prospective nuance to his exhortation in 8.1? As already argued, the demand for righteousness in Polycarp’s letter must be seen as a part of his emphasis on future judgment. Persevering in righteousness or having righteousness “at the end” (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 14.1–2; *Rom.* 1.1; 3.2) is what matters. Therefore, according to this reading of *Phil.* 8.1, it appears that Christ’s death for believers is the guarantee that they will persevere. Believers will obtain the fullness of righteousness after having lived faithfully unto death. Furthermore, if believers have a down payment of Christ Jesus in their earthly lives (8.1), the fullness that this anticipates is being in the place owed to them *with the Lord* at the end of their earthly life (9.2). Christian perseverance is accomplished with an eye to the future. Therefore Christ is both the *means* and the *motivation* for persevering in righteousness.

In *Phil.* 8.2 Christ then becomes the model for endurance: “therefore, let us become imitators of his endurance.” He has set the “example” (ὕπογραμμός) for believers to follow (8.2; cf. 1 Pet 2:21). This notion is reiterated in *Phil.* 10.1, “Therefore, stand firm in these things and follow the Lord’s example, being firm in faith and immovable.” It appears as if Polycarp could have smoothly transitioned from 8.2 to 10.1. This raises the question of what 9.1–2 contributes to Polycarp’s exhortation. What is the purpose of these verses? Why include them at all?

We have noted the movement from *Phil.* 2.3 to 3.1ff. in which the Lord Jesus' teaching on righteousness is refracted through Paul's teaching on the same. It seems as if there is a similar movement from *Phil.* 8.2 to 9.1: Jesus's example of endurance is clarified and concretized by Paul's example. The immediate examples of endurance that Polycarp puts before the Philippians are Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, and "others who were from you" (9.1). It is likely that Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus were the "images of true love" whom the Philippians received and then sent ahead, even though they were in chains (1.1). Polycarp's inclusion of "others who were from you" suggests that the Philippians had examples of endurance unto death from among their own number, though this does not necessarily mean that such examples were literal martyrs.¹⁴

To these examples, all of whom the Philippians could have seen with their own eyes, Polycarp adds "Paul himself." It is noteworthy that Paul is the only named figure of a previous generation. Polycarp singles Paul out from the rest of the apostles as an example of endurance.¹⁵ Apparently Paul's endurance unto death was such a fixed tradition among the Philippians that Polycarp could invoke it among those who had never actually seen Paul. Paul's stance toward death was not unique to himself or even to the apostles; rather, the endurance Paul exemplified could be observed in the Philippians' contemporaries. The thought here is very close to *1 Clem.* 5.7–6.1, in which Paul is the greatest example of endurance but by no means the only one. As *1 Clem.* 6.1 asserts, "To these men [Peter and Paul] who have conducted themselves devoutly there can be joined a great multitude

¹⁴ Polycarp did not expect imitation of Christ's endurance to entail martyrdom in every case. His exhortations in this section are addressed to the entire congregation and it is absurd to think that Polycarp was preparing every last one for a violent death. Thus it seems as if Philippian Christians who died "natural" deaths, but who had suffered righteously for Christ's name, could be considered as examples of the kind of endurance he is urging.

¹⁵ Cf. *1 Clem.* 5.7. Paulsen comments on the foregrounding of Paul here: "In auffälliger Weise wird unter den weiteren Zeugen der Vergangenheit Paulus an die erste Stelle gerückt; es dürfte sich dabei für [Polycarp] um eine prinzipielle Vorordnung gehandelt haben" (1985: 122). Cf. also Lindemann 1990: 42: "Paul is named again in 9.1, this time only in passing and without any distinguishing epithet. In the context, it is not surprising that Paul is mentioned so briefly. What is surprising is that he is mentioned at all. In a list of present-day examples of endurance, Paul is the only figure from the past."

of the elect who, having suffered many torments and tortures on account of jealousy, became *among us* the finest example.”

In the next verse, *Phil.* 9.2, the endurance of Paul, Ignatius, and everyone else is further described with several echoes of Pauline language. The Philippians ought to obey the word of righteousness and practice all endurance, being convinced that these examples “did not run in vain” (οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον). The verb τρέχω is used with reference to Paul’s approach to judgment in 1 Cor 9:24–27 but its conjunction here with the phrase εἰς κενὸν suggests that *Phil* 2:16 is in Polycarp’s mind, whether consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly.¹⁶ We will have occasion to examine *Phil* 2:16 more closely in chapter 10, but it appears as if Polycarp has again transformed a Pauline phrase. In *Phil* 2:16 Paul’s running is parallel to his labor among the Philippians; if they remain blameless and innocent, Paul will have a boast on the day of Christ and his running will not have been in vain. Paul’s running is a metaphor for his ministry. Yet in *Pol. Phil.* 9.2 running in vain is contrasted with running in faith and righteousness. Running in this verse is a metaphor for Paul’s personal, upright conduct.

Since Paul and the others have run in faith and righteousness, the Philippians should be convinced that “they are in the place owed to them, with the Lord, with whom they also suffered” (εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ ᾧ καὶ συνέπαθον; 9.2). The first prepositional phrase is clearly parallel to, and possibly dependent upon, εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον (“the place that was owed [to Peter]”) in *1 Clem.* 5.4 (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.7), but there are potential parallels to *Phil* 1:23 and *Rom* 8:17 as well (cf. Paulsen 1985: 122). Paul and the others “did not love the present age” (οὐ τὸν νῦν ἠγάπησαν αἰῶνα; *Phil.* 9.2), a statement which clearly contrasts them with Paul’s companion Demas, “who did love the present age” (ἀγαπήσας τὸν νῦν αἰῶνα; *2 Tim* 4:10). Likewise, the statement that Paul and the others loved “the one who died on our behalf and who was raised by God for our sake” (*Phil.* 9.2) is reminiscent of *2 Cor* 5:15.

¹⁶ Cf. Benecke 1905: 94: “Besides the verbal parallel, the context in Polycarp, referring to life in the prospect of death, suggests the context in Philippians.”

I would not claim that all of these parallels are intentional or significant. Nevertheless, their cumulative force imbues *Pol. Phil.* 9.2 with an evident Pauline coloring. This confirms that the explicit mention of Paul in 9.1 is not incidental. When Polycarp thought of the proper Christian approach to death, the name *and* language of the Apostle Paul sprang to mind. Paul's actions and thoughts communicate Christ's endurance unto death.

6.3. Conclusion: Polycarp's Paul as Pauline Offspring?

In *Pol. Phil.* 9.1–2 the images of Paul the athlete and Paul the ascended are undoubtedly present: Paul is pictured as an athlete by the use of the verb *τρέχω* and the prominence of the concept of endurance (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1); he is pictured as one who has risen by the phrase *εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ* (9.2).¹⁷ At first glance it may appear as if Polycarp has done nothing but paste together images of the departing and departed Paul already present in early Christian literature. Yet this chapter has argued that Polycarp's deft touch can be seen in the way in which he subsumes Paul's obedience unto death under the image of Paul as a teacher of righteousness. So Polycarp may be creatively reworking the many traditions he has received. What seems indisputable is that “the primary author that has influenced Polycarp in his letter to the Philippians is Paul” (Berding 2011: 138).

As stated above, Polycarp's primary and explicit purpose in writing to the Philippians is to write something concerning righteousness (3.1). Polycarp does this somewhat reluctantly, knowing that his wisdom is no match for the Apostle Paul, who is the founder of the Philippian community (3.2). As we have seen, in *Phil.* 3.1–3 and 11.2–3 the dominant image of Paul is Paul the teacher of righteousness (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.7). By his personal visits and by his letters Paul taught—and still teaches (*Phil.* 11.2)—the Philippians how they ought to practice righteousness amongst themselves. While these

¹⁷ It is intriguing to note that Polycarp includes Ignatius with Paul among the number of those who have risen to the Lord. If Polycarp had read the letters of Ignatius that he was forwarding to the Philippians, then this may confirm that Ignatius's wish to be found in the footsteps of Paul (*Ign. Eph.* 12.2), to ascend, and to be free like Paul (*Ign. Rom.* 4.3) was granted, at least from Polycarp's perspective.

two passages primarily deal with intracommunal righteousness, 8.1–9.2 primarily deals with extracommunal righteousness. In enduring unjust suffering Paul is again teaching the Philippians, this time in how to obey the word of righteousness (9.1) and run in righteousness (9.2). By being with the Lord in the place owed to him (9.2), Paul exemplifies the truth of Jesus’ promise that those persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of God (2.3). For Polycarp, imitation of Christ (8.1–2; 10.1) is mediated through imitation of Paul (9.1–2), which I have argued is the dynamic in Ignatius’s letters also (see Kirk 2013a).

So although Polycarp is painting mainly with colors used by others before him, the overall construal is such that his letter renders a distinctive portrait of Paul. Polycarp’s Paul is a teacher of righteousness—moral, embodied righteousness.¹⁸ For some, this is a serious degradation of Paul’s doctrine of justification. For example, Thomas Torrance declares, “Polycarp is aware of the distinctive emphasis of St. Paul, and we must allow for this, but on the other hand, there is no real evidence to think that his thought was the same as that of St. Paul. The final position of Polycarp, as we have seen it, may be described as one unconsciously opposed to grace” (1948: 97; cf. Holmes 2006: 58–60 and 2011: 66–69). Likewise, Martinus de Boer asserts,

Polycarp’s notion of righteousness (with the possible exception of *Phil.* 8.1) is quite different from that of the Paul of the seven undisputed letters. It seems to me, in fact, that the whole notion of “*teaching (didaskein)* righteousness,” found in *1 Clement* and Polycarp, is a post-Pauline understanding of the work of the apostle, an understanding that has more to do with an image of Paul than with any direct knowledge of his epistolary legacy. (1990:52)

Whether Polycarp has strayed this far from the teaching of Paul’s letters or whether he challenges us to rethink the traditional dichotomy between “forensic” and “ethical” righteousness in one’s approach to death, is an issue to be explored in later chapters (see esp. chapters 10, 12, and 13).

¹⁸ Cf. Pervo 2010: 142: “The bishop doubtless viewed himself as a faithful follower of Paul. His theme, proposed by the Philippians according to 3:1, was righteousness in the sense of proper behavior. For Polycarp, righteousness involved the specifics of right behavior rather than the power of grace. . . . *For Polycarp, Paul was first and foremost a teacher of said righteousness.* This view is consonant with that of *1 Clem.* 5:5 and is entirely characteristic of contemporary proto-orthodoxy.” Italics added.

According to Polycarp, Paul taught the Philippians while among them, he further instructed them by his letter(s), and his endurance unto death also continues to teach righteousness. That Paul could loom so large in a community he had last visited perhaps 80 years earlier is a testament to the enduring legacy of Paul's ministry, including his approach to death. And by Polycarp's estimation, Paul's running has not been in vain.

Chapter 7

Paul the Anti-Roman Martyr: Reconfiguring Paul's Departure in the *Martyrdom of Paul*

7.1 Introduction

In an evening address at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies, held in Oxford in 1991, Willy Rordorf marked out the Christian “apocryphal” literature, and especially the apocryphal *Acts of the Apostles*, as *terra incognita* (see Rordorf 1993a: 147). Since that time much more has been written on this set of texts, and if it can no longer be called *terra incognita*, it certainly is *terra disputata*.

With regard to the *Acts of Paul*, of which the *Martyrdom of Paul* is the concluding part,¹ there is currently no scholarly consensus on most of the critical questions. In his homily on baptism (ca. A.D. 200) Tertullian seems to indicate that the story was written by a “presbyter” in Asia, though scholars have claimed that the *API* was written as late as 185–195 (Schneemelcher 1992: 235) and as early as 100–117 (P. W. Dunn 2009b). The most complete early manuscript we have for the various major sections of the *API* is the Coptic Heidelberg papyrus (ca. 500?), but according to the Stichometry of Nicephorus, the entirety of the work ran to 3,600 lines. It is unclear to what extent this full version incorporated and supplemented earlier oral traditions or written versions. The evidence for the compositional history of the *API* is extremely patchy, rendering statements about the “original text” problematic.

There has also been debate about the relationship between the *API* and the canonical Acts. Some contend that the author of the *API* did not know of the canonical Acts (e.g., Rordorf 1993b), others that the author knew of the canonical Acts but did not use it (e.g.,

¹ Hereafter I abbreviate the *Acts of Paul* as *API* and the *Martyrdom of Paul* as *MPI*. I follow the numbering convention set forth in Rordorf et al. 1997, though I will use *MPI* 1–7 instead of *API* 14.1–7.

Schneemelcher 1992: 232), and others that the author knew Acts and intended the *API* to be either a replacement (Pervo 1995) or a sequel (Bauckham 1993 and 1997).² Similar skirmishes have broken out over the relationship of the *API* to the Pastoral Epistles (see, e.g., MacDonald 1983 and P. W. Dunn 2006 [1996]). Furthermore, scholars have disputed the relationships between the various apocryphal acts of the apostles, with some contending that the *Acts of Paul* is dependent on the *Acts of Peter* (e.g., Schmidt 1936), and some arguing the reverse (e.g., MacDonald 1997).³

The limited scope of this chapter will not permit a consideration of these introductory issues and neither will we interact with what has been written on the portrayal of Paul in the *API* as it relates to Paul's relationship with Thecla (e.g., Howe 1980) or to the physiognomic description of Paul in *API* 3.2 (e.g., Grant 1982; Malina and Neyrey 1996). Rather, we will focus on the portrayal of Paul's death in the *MPI*, working from what we can reconstruct of this text.⁴ Only occasional reference will be made to other parts of the *API* and to other apocryphal acts of the apostles. It will be suggested that portrayal of Paul in the *MPI* cleanly fits within the mid-second century historical development of the defiant martyr image. However, whether the *MPI* was written in the mid-second century or not, the portrait of Paul that it presents is unlike any other Pauline portrait from the late first or early second century.

7.2 Paul's Departure according to the *Martyrdom of Paul*

The *MPI* begins with Paul's arrival in Rome. Paul begins teaching in a barn he has rented and "many souls were added to the Lord" (*MPI* 1; cf. Acts 2:41; 5:14; 11:24). One

² Cf. Marguerat 1997: 170: "The rapport between the *Acts of Paul* and the Acts of Luke must be understood as a phenomenon of rereading and that this phenomenon necessarily implies both a relation and a distance between the *Acts of Paul* and the Lukan writing."

³ Cf. Rordorf 1998: 191: "We cannot draw a conclusion from the comparison of the two documents about the dating of either the *AP* or the *APL*."

⁴ My English translations and analysis are based on the edited Greek text found in Zwierlein 2009: 426–49, though I question some of his textual decisions in this chapter. Scholars continue to wait for the Greek text promised in the *Acta Pauli* volume of the Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum.

day a young man named Patroclus, who is a cupbearer for Nero, falls from a high window while listening to Paul and dies. Paul then raises him from the dead. The subsequent images of Paul that concern us here can be discussed in three sections and under three headings, roughly corresponding to Paul's interaction with Nero, his martyrdom, and his postmortem appearances.

7.2.1 *Paul the Soldier of King Jesus (MPI 1–4)*

The depiction of believers as soldiers of Christ Jesus in the *MPI* starts with Nero's encounter with Patroclus. Nero demands, "Who is the one who made you to live?" Patroclus, "being moved by a mindset of faith," replies, "Jesus Christ, the king of the whole world and of the ages" (*MPI* 2). The frank exchange ends with Nero striking Patroclus's face and asking, "Patroclus, are you serving as a soldier (στρατεύει) for this king?" Patroclus responds, "Yes." It does not appear as if fighting for Christ Jesus involves active, armed resistance against Rome, yet Nero interprets Patroclus's shift of allegiance as a threat to his own power. Patroclus remains controlled in the exchange, even calling Nero his "lord" and "Caesar," but his answers are bold and defiant. God's transformation of Patroclus is seen in his forthright witness before the Roman authorities.

The scene continues as Justus the flat-footed, Orion the Cappadocian, and Festus the Galatian, who were "chief bodyguards of Nero," come forward and confess, "We also serve as soldiers (στρατευόμεθα) for that eternal king" (*MPI* 2). Nero responds by torturing and imprisoning them. He then orders for "the soldiers of the great king" (τοὺς τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως στρατιώτας) to be sought out and issues an edict that all "Christians" (Χριστιανοί) that were found should be executed (*MPI* 2). It is unlikely that "soldiers of the great king" and "Christians" represent two distinct or even overlapping groups. Rather, all Christians are being identified *as* soldiers of Christ. Being a soldier of Christ seems to entail at least a profound change of allegiance and non-violent resistance of Roman power.

As a result of Nero's edict Paul is captured and brought in (*MPI* 3). Nero perceives that Paul is the one who is leading the troops (ἐπὶ τῶν στρατοπέδων; cf. Acts 24:5). His

question to Paul is telling: “Man of the great king and leader of the troops (στρατοπεδάρχᾳ), why did you think to come into the dominion of Rome secretly and to enlist soldiers (στρατολογεῖν) from my kingdom?” (*MPI* 3). Nero’s opening address, “Man of the great king,” is probably meant to be read satirically since Paul is now Nero’s prisoner and Nero refers to Rome as *his* kingdom. Nero characterizes Paul’s teaching as seditious and militaristic activity. In answering this question Paul is said to speak “in the presence of all” (ἔμπροσθεν πάντων). The stage is thus set for his public witness. Paul’s reply to Nero is as follows:

Caesar, we are enlisting soldiers (στρατολογοῦμεν) not only from your dominion but also from the entire inhabited world. For this is what we have been ordered to do, that no one should be excluded who desires to serve as a soldier for my king (στρατεύεσθαι τῷ ἐμῷ βασιλεῖ). Therefore, if it is agreeable to you, serve him as a soldier (στράτευσαι αὐτῷ). For riches and the splendors now in this life will not save you, but if you trust in my king, Jesus Christ, he will save you. For he is about to judge the world in righteousness in one day. (*MPI* 3)

Paul, like Patroclus, addresses Nero as “Caesar,” but his answer leaves no doubt as to who the real authority is. Paul’s response focuses on the geographically universal reign of Christ whereas Patroclus also commented on the everlasting nature of that reign (*MPI* 2). Both make it clear that they take their marching orders from Jesus and that Jesus will eventually subdue all rebellious powers. In a move somewhat similar to Acts 26:27–29 (in which Paul attempts to persuade Agrippa to become a Christian), Paul here offers Nero the opportunity to repent and believe. Yet he does so by presenting Nero’s options in stark terms: become Jesus’ soldier and be saved, or trust in earthly riches and fall to judgment (cf. Acts 17:30–31).

Paul’s conduct before Nero in *MPI* 3 is much different than Paul’s conduct before Roman (and Jewish) authorities in the canonical book of Acts. The more verbose, diplomatic, and reasoning Paul has been replaced with a terse and defiant Paul. As Andrew Gregory says, Paul’s “defiant and confrontational attitude to the emperor

contrasts sharply with Paul's much more respectful and deferential engagement with Roman officials in the canonical Acts" (2011b: 187).⁵

Paul's defiance infuriates Nero and sends him on a blind rampage (*MPI* 3). He sentences Paul to death and kills many Christians. Paul is again brought before Nero before his death sentence is to be carried out and Paul predicts that he will appear to Nero after his execution (*MPI* 4).

Paul then has a longer conversation with a certain Longus and Cestus, apparently away from Nero's presence (*MPI* 4). Paul declares that he serves as a soldier for a king who is not from earth but from heaven (cf. John 18:36). When offered the chance to compromise and escape, Paul stands his ground: "I am not a deserter so that you might show me this favor, but I am a subject soldier of Christ (ἐννομος στρατιώτης εἰμι τοῦ Χριστοῦ)" (*MPI* 4). This is the first time that Paul explicitly calls himself a soldier of Christ but the point has been implied throughout the narrative thus far by the many forms of the root στρατ. The image of the Christian soldier here in the *MPI* differs greatly from the images in 1 Tim 1:18 and 2 Tim 2:3–4 (contra P. W. Dunn 2006 [1996]: 89–90), where militaristic language is used to describe the fight against apostasy and entanglement in the affairs of "civilian" life (cf. Ign. *Pol.* 6.2; *1 Clem.* 37.1–38.1). Indeed, the image of Paul as an (anti-Roman) soldier of Christ should be considered a novel creation, even if it does employ Pauline terminology.⁶

⁵ Cf. Rhee 2005: 179: "Christians are the loyal soldiers not of the emperor but of Christ; they serve Christ the eternal king as opposed to the temporal ruler. Harmony with the Empire is impossible, for they cannot serve two masters. This is a radical transformation of attitude from that of the Lucan Acts and the Pauline Epistles; it surely resonates with the sentiment of the Revelation"; and Tajra 1994: 121: "The *Paul of faith*, the Apostle of the legend, has acquired quite a precise image in the apocryphal tradition: that of a challenger to State authority, an enemy of the Emperor and a seeker after martyrdom. This image bears little resemblance—indeed it is quite alien—to the image of the *historical Paul* as he is understood from his own Epistles and from the canonical Acts."

⁶ This claim borders on the scholarly debate concerning Paul's stance toward imperial power. On one side of the debate are those who view Paul's letters as pointedly anti-imperial (e.g., Horsley; Wright; Harrison); on the other side are those who think that Paul is far less critical of the empire as such (e.g., Kim; Barclay). To the degree that my thesis touches on this issue, I would identify with the latter camp.

7.2.2 Paul the Evangelist Martyr (MPI 4–6)

Paul speaks with Longus and Cestus at length about salvation immediately before his execution (*MPI* 4). As with Nero, Paul urges them to believe, though his tone is softer and more winsome. Paul's last words to Longus and Cestus are instructions to find Titus and Luke at his grave (*MPI* 5). The *MPI* ends with their conversions, and so the final note sounded in the narrative is that Paul's death has brought glory to God and has worked for the conversion of the ignorant (*MPI* 7).⁷ Longus the Roman prefect and Cestus the Roman centurion have become soldiers of Christ.⁸

In his dialogue with Longus and Cestus before his death Paul claims, "If I had known that I would die, Longus and Cestus, I would flee; but since I know that I live in my king (ζῶ τῷ ἐμῷ βασιλεῖ), Christ, I depart to him rejoicing in order that I also might come with him in the glory of his father" (*MPI* 4). The sentiment here is similar to 1 Cor 15:19 and 32. It is difficult to know how to translate ζῶ τῷ ἐμῷ βασιλεῖ. Does it mean that Paul lives *for* his king (i.e., he serves Christ with his life), *by* his king (i.e., Christ is the source of his life), or *in* his king (i.e., Paul's true life is somehow "in Christ")? Paul's preceding encounter with Nero might suggest the last option since Paul asserted that even beheading him would not "kill" him (*MPI* 4). Yet one may not have to choose, as all three senses are related. Paul will not flee his execution because his life is bound up with Christ.⁹

Paul claims that his "death" is a departure to be with Christ. Paul has already told Nero, "Having risen I will appear to you again" (*MPI* 4). Yet his words to Longus and Cestus indicate that this postmortem appearance to Nero (as a spirit?) does not preclude his hope to depart to be with Christ. Furthermore it seems as if Paul anticipates being with the Lord until God raises his body from the dead and Paul comes to earth with Jesus at his

⁷ Similarly, in the *Acts of Andrew* 56–59, Andrew delivers evangelistic messages from the cross on which he is hanging for three days and nights. Pesthy 1998 notes many of the similarities between the apostles' deaths in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*.

⁸ Dunn suggests that the *MPI* "amplifies the brief hint in Philippians 4.22, 'All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household'" (2006 [1996]: 148).

⁹ There are similar constructions in Rom 6:10–11; Gal 2:19; and 4 *Macc.* 7.19; 16.25. The construction is prevalent in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, in which "living for/by/in God" means both to obey his commandments and to find eternal life after death (see esp. *Herm. Mand.* 7.1.5; 8.1.6; *Sim.* 9.20.4).

return (*MPI* 4; cf. 1 Thess 4:13–17). Thus the Paul of the *MPI* simultaneously looks forward to a postmortem earthly appearance, a heavenly “intermediate state,” and a future bodily resurrection from the dead.

Nero sends Parthenius and Pheretas to see whether Paul has been beheaded (*MPI* 5). Finding him alive, they interrupt Paul’s discussion with Longus and Cestus and hasten the execution. The narrative informs us that Paul turns to the east, stretches out his hands (to heaven), and prays at length in Hebrew. These narrative details probably reinforce Paul’s Jewish identity and anti-imperial stance. Even the imminent prospect of death cannot shake Paul’s composure as he entrusts himself to God in prayer.¹⁰ Paul then “stretched forward his neck to be severed” (*MPI* 5), suggesting that he goes to his death willingly.

The Roman soldier (στρατιώτης) then decapitates Paul, which was the usual method of execution for Roman citizens.¹¹ It is said that upon cutting off Paul’s head “milk spurted on the clothes of the soldier” (*MPI* 5). What is the significance of this milk? János Bolyki, presumably on the basis of how milk imagery is employed in the NT, suggests the “milk here is mentioned with a symbolic meaning. Its opposite is solid food. Both refer to the apostolic teaching: milk signifies the basic elements of the Christian message Here we can rather think of the missionary preaching (the kerygma) as nourishment for beginners” (1996: 101–2; cf. Tajra 1994: 130). This is possible, especially in light of the fact that Paul’s death works for the conversion of the ignorant, as mentioned above. Perhaps more likely is that milk represents life, which could suggest that Paul is “alive” even in his death. Whatever its symbolic value, the fact that it was a spurt of milk—presumably from Paul’s severed neck—and not of blood, is clearly a sign from God. Thus the narrative continues: “And seeing this, the crowds (ὄχλοι) that were present were astonished and glorified the God who granted such favor to Paul” (*MPI* 5). Historically-speaking, it is hard to imagine that ὄχλοι (“crowds”) would have been present at Paul’s

¹⁰ The martyr’s prayer at the moment of execution is common to Jewish and Christian tradition. Consider, for example, Jesus, Stephen (Acts 7:59–60), Polycarp (*Mart. Pol.* 14.1–3), and the Jewish martyrs of 4 *Maccabees*.

¹¹ Cf. *MPI* 3 in which other Christians are sentenced to be burned but Paul to be beheaded “by the law of the Romans.”

execution. The word might have been chosen here to emphasize the public and powerful impact of Paul's manner of death. These crowds give glory to God, which again promotes the image of Paul as an evangelistic martyr.

After his death Paul makes his promised appearance before Nero, with whom are assembled many philosophers, officials, the wealthy and the prominent, and the centurion (*MPI* 6). This impressive entourage represents the wisdom, power, riches, social status, and military might of the Roman Empire. Paul speaks to them all. He rebukes Nero, "Caesar, behold! The soldier of God did not die but lives!" (Καῖσαρ, ἴδε ὅτι ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ στρατιώτης οὐκ ἀπέθανεν, ἀλλὰ ζῇ; *MPI* 6). The third person reference stresses again that Paul is a soldier of Christ and perhaps hints that every other soldier of Christ will live in the way Paul does. Paul then pronounces judgment upon Nero for shedding the blood of many righteous people, probably referring to those Christians who were executed without a trial earlier in the narrative (*MPI* 3).¹²

Paul's death is therefore framed by two appearances before Nero and his court in which Paul gives direct and public witness to Jesus. His willingness to die for Christ and his confidence in death make an impression on Longus and Cestus, who at the time are still loyal to Nero. The miracles at his death and after his death cause astonishment and God's opponents are either stunned silent or are compelled to give God the glory.

7.2.3 *Paul as Jesus redivivus* (*MPI* 7)

The parallels between Paul in the *API* and Jesus in the canonical Gospels have been rehearsed and do not need to be elaborated here. As Ann Brock writes, "Paul's actions often parallel those of Christ as he is depicted in the New Testament. For instance, Paul preaches in beatitudes, performs miracles, is martyred, and then makes an appearance to

¹² The note that their execution was carried out "without a trial" (ἀκρίτως) is present in the Hamburg Papyrus and Patmiacus 48. Apparently Zwierlein judges this detail as an addition at a later stage in the textual tradition (2009: 436). Regardless, the speed with which the Christians are killed, the protest that this immediately provokes, and Nero's subsequent decision to investigate matters more fully (*MPI* 3) suggest that there would not have been time for any trials.

others” (1994: 120).¹³ These parallels extend beyond the characters of Paul and Jesus to the literary genres in which they are portrayed. Dennis MacDonald states, “In the case of Pauline *praxeis*, at least, the most important literary model is the gospel. Gospels and acts betray unmistakable affinities, most especially in their basic architectures” (1990: 59; cf. Brock 1994: 133; Bovon 2003: 177).

What will concern us here, briefly, is how Paul is portrayed in the *MPI* as a kind of Jesus *redivivus* in his death and especially in his postmortem appearances. The reader of the *API* is already prepared to see Jesus in Paul’s death because of Jesus’s appearance to Paul and his solemn pronouncement, “I am about to be crucified afresh” (*API* 13.2; cf. *Acts of Peter* 35).¹⁴ After speaking these words Jesus tells Paul to go to Rome. As MacDonald states, “The implication is clear: it is in Paul’s own death that Jesus will again be crucified; the author as good as tells the reader to see in the death of Paul the death of deuterio-Jesus” (1990: 61; cf. P. W. Dunn 2006 [1996]: 188–89). This link is reinforced in the *MPI* when Paul is arrested, tried before unjust rulers, predicts a postmortem appearance, and his body spurts an unnatural liquid (cf. John 19:34).

The most striking parallels, however, might be in Jesus’ and Paul’s postmortem appearances to disciples. According to *MPI* 7 the centurion (Longus) and those who were with him went “at dawn” (ὄρθρον; cf. Luke 24:1) to the “tomb” (τάφος; cf. Matt 28:1) of Paul. They saw two men there (cf. Luke 24:4; John 20:12) with Paul and were astounded, much as Jesus’ followers were astounded to see angels. Paul apparently vanishes but the scene ends, like the Gospels, with fear turning into great joy.¹⁵

There are, of course, significant differences between *MPI* 7 and the post-resurrection accounts in the canonical Gospels. Some of these differences are to be expected as Paul did not rise bodily from the dead and Longus apparently had some expectation of what he

¹³ For a discussion of parallels see Brock 1994: 122–23, 125; and Zamfir 2010: 291–92.

¹⁴ The Greek text, according to Peter Dunn’s reconstruction, is ἀνωθεν μέλλω σταυρ[οῦσθαι] (2006 [1996]: 188).

¹⁵ This detail about Titus and Luke’s joy is present in the Hamburg Papyrus, Heidelberg Papyrus, Patmiacus 48, and Slavic version, according to Zwierlein 2009: 448. However, Zwierlein chooses to omit it in his edited text.

might find at the tomb. Yet what makes this scene in *MPI* 7 so remarkable is that there is nothing like it in early Christian literature with reference to Paul—or indeed any other Christian leader.¹⁶ Only Jesus’ postmortem appearances receive such literary expansion and narrative weight in the earliest Christian literature. The narrative thus takes Paul’s *imitatio Christi* to an entirely new level.

7.3 Conclusion: The Paul of the *Martyrdom of Paul* as Pauline Offspring?

If the earliest Christian texts that present a portrait of the departed Paul constitute a textual “family” (see chapter 2), then the Paul of the *MPI* appears to be a distant relative—and not a direct descendant—of the earthly Paul (contra MacDonald 1983). This claim, of course, will require further substantiation in later chapters. Yet by this point in the study we can already see that the Paul of the *MPI* does not resemble the “Pauls” of the canonical Acts, *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius, or Polycarp’s letter *To the Philippians*. By comparing the image of Paul the anti-Roman martyr to the image of Polycarp in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the projected image of the Christian martyr in mid-second century Greek apologists (for this, see the appendix), it could be argued that the *MPI* belongs to this later textual family. The similarities between these texts cannot be a decisive factor in dating the *MPI*, but they do suggest that it more naturally fits with the historical context and concerns of the mid-second century than it does with those of an earlier period. Furthermore, the *MPI* seems a lot closer to the *Mart. Pol.* and Justin, for example, than to the *Apology of Aristides* (ca. 125?).

Beyond this it seems that the *MPI* stands at a turning point in how early Christian literature portrays a Christian’s approach to death. As I have argued elsewhere (Kirk 2013a) early Christians such as Ignatius modeled their approach to death on the person of Jesus *as mediated through the person of Paul*. With the *MPI* and the *Mart. Pol.* Jesus becomes more and more the direct model so that by the martyr acts of the third and fourth

¹⁶ Cf. *Acts of Peter* 40, which reads almost as an aside.

centuries, Jesus's approach to death is the dominant model for imitation (on which, see Moss 2010).

This development seems to be mostly a function of the genres of the *MPI*, the *Mart. Pol.*, and the martyr acts. Like the *Mart. Pol.*, the “gospel parallels” in the *MPI* appear to be “part of the very warp and woof of the narrative” and a “widely shared feature of early Christian martyriological accounts” (Holmes 2005a: 418, 422).¹⁷ Once Gospel texts and traditions become the primary source for reflection on a Christian's relationship to death, images of Paul are adapted accordingly (*MPI*) or drop out altogether (*Mart. Pol.*). Dennis MacDonald registers a scholarly *desideratum* relevant to our discussion: “I want to discover what happened to Paul and to Pauline lore when they were poured into the literary mold of the *praxeis*. As in the case of the Pauline apocalypses, I suggest that the distortion of Paul results in large part—although by no means entirely—from the constraints of the genre” (1990: 59).¹⁸ Whether it is fair or not to call the result of this process a “distortion of Paul,” MacDonald is right to assert that the image of the departed Paul was fundamentally recast after being poured into the martyr narrative of the *MPI*.

¹⁷ Cf. Rhee 2005: 179: “Intrinsic to the genre of the Martyr Acts is the inevitable clash between the allegiance to Christ and the absolute loyalty to the Empire. Just as the martyrdom narratives of the apostles in the Apocryphal Acts heighten the disparity between Christianity and the Empire, the Martyr Acts feature the fundamental conflict between the Lord Christ and the Lord Caesar.”

¹⁸ Cf. the important remarks made by Harry Tajra (1994: 132), which reflect my perspective: “We would conclude that the Presbyter, who composed his work [i.e., the *API*] scarcely more than a century after Paul's death, took historical reminiscences which were circulating independently (both orally and in writing) and grouped them together into a new aggregate. He re-worked this assemblage, transforming it and fitting it to his goals. He added new material of his own to it. His work represented an enormous milestone in the development of the Paul-legend, forming as it did, the basis for the whole later Paul-tradition: apocryphal, Patristic and iconographical.”

Chapter 8

The Departed Paul's Family Portrait

8.1 Introduction

In describing the usefulness of studying a person's or text's effective history, one often hears that it is possible to learn a lot about the "foot" by studying the footprint that it has left behind. This is a helpful metaphor but potentially misleading if taken to suggest that the process of influence or reception is that simple or mechanical. The readers, authors, and communities following a historic person or text have a life of their own, and conceiving of them merely as a footprint or as water downstream (to evoke another metaphor) could diminish our appreciation for their creativity and originality. This study has suggested instead the metaphor of a family. Children will always bear the likeness of their parents to some degree—and probably more than they realize—yet a child is never the cookie-cutter result of parental nature and nurture. Children take on a personality and character that is all their own.

Thus far in Part II we have set ourselves the task of taking individual profiles of the departed Paul in each of the early Christian texts that mention him by name from the late first to the mid-second century (i.e., within the first two generations after Paul's death). Now we are in a position to ask whether the passages we have examined form a textual "family." To use Wittgenstein's language, can we discern between the various portraits of the departed Paul "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: similarities in the large and in the small" (*Philosophical Investigations*, §66)? If so, what might these similarities suggest to us about the earthly person who generated, or at least influenced, all these portraits? This chapter will contend that there is a cluster of images related to Paul's death. Each image in this cluster can be found in several of the texts we have examined. Therefore, the earliest extant depictions of the departed Paul do bear

some family resemblance to one another. This suggests that there is a significant degree of continuity between the remembered Paul and the observed and epistolary Paul. If there were no resemblance between these earliest depictions we would conclude that they were created according to the exigencies of each individual author or community. As it is, the recurrence of these images indicates that they are remnants of Paul's early effective history and thereby valuable to an exegesis of Paul's letters. The results of this chapter will therefore propel us into our study of three Pauline letters in Part III.

8.2 Images of the Departed Apostle in Early Pauline Effective History

This study has thus far adopted a text-based or synchronic approach. Now, as a summary and synthesis of the early Pauline effective history, I adopt an image-based or diachronic approach. The following figure presents a snapshot of my exegetical findings:

Figure 6 – The Relative Strength of Early Images of the Departed Paul

	Paul the Athlete	Paul the Teacher of Righteousness	Paul the Herald	Paul the Anti-Roman Martyr	Paul the Ascended
Canonical Acts	C	C	A	–	–
<i>1 Clement</i>	A	C	C	C	B
Ignatius's Letters	–	–	–	–	A
Polycarp's Letter	C	A	–	C	B
<i>Martyrdom of Paul</i>	–	–	B	A	B

On the left are listed the different early Christian texts we have examined; they are in roughly chronological order. Across the top are the different images of the departed Paul we have observed; they are in the order that will be most helpful to discuss them. The capital letters represent a simple rating scale: "A" indicates that the image in that

particular text is very strong; “B” indicates that the image is moderately strong; “C” indicates that the image is present but is relatively weak.

8.2.1 *Paul the Athlete*

The image of the departed Paul as an athlete is relatively weak in the canonical Acts. In fact, it appears most clearly in only one phrase: Paul does not account life as precious in order that “I might finish my course” (τελειῶσαι τὸν δρόμον μου; Acts 20:24). Yet this phrase occurs in the verse that I have argued is the most central verse in all of Acts for Paul’s approach to his own death. That the term δρόμος in this verse connotes an athletic contest is suggested by its use in the LXX (e.g., 2 Kgdms 18:27; Eccl 9:11; Jer 8:6) and, more importantly, in 2 Tim 4:7 (for which, see §12.2.2 below). It also could be argued that the term “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον), occurring only twice in all of Acts but once in Acts 20:24, lightly evokes the idea of running, since this connotation clearly belongs to the origin of the term in the LXX.¹ The concept of endurance seems to be attached to the image of Paul the athlete in Acts, but there is no notion of Paul striving for a prize or reward at the finish line—at least not in his Miletus speech.

In contrast to Acts, the image of Paul the athlete is the dominant image for the departed Paul in *1 Clement*—indeed it appears to be the umbrella image under which all the other images and descriptions are subsumed. This can be seen in how pervasive athletic imagery is in *1 Clem.* 5.1–6.1 (see again §4.2.2). Clement employs this imagery to make a statement about Paul’s virtue of endurance and about the reward Paul obtained at the end of his struggle, the “prize of endurance” (ὑπομονῆς βραβεῖον). Paul obtains this prize immediately at death.

Intriguingly, Ignatius employs athletic imagery three times in writing to Polycarp, all related to Polycarp’s approach to death. Ignatius writes, “Bear the infirmities of all as a mature athlete. Where there is much labor, there is much gain” (*Pol.* 1.3); “Be sober-minded as God’s athlete; the prize is immortality and eternal life” (2.3); and “It belongs to the great athlete to be beaten and yet to conquer” (3.1). We see in these verses both

¹ See 2 Kgdms 4:10. Cf. εὐαγγελίζω in 1 Kgdms 31:9; 2 Kgdms 1:20; 18:19; Isa 52:7.

endurance and its prize connected to the image of Polycarp as an athlete. However, Ignatius never applies this imagery to himself or to Paul.

The image of the departed Paul as athlete resurfaces in Polycarp's letter *To the Philippians* when Polycarp writes that Paul did not "run" (τρέχω) in vain (9.2; cf. Phil 2:16). Paul's faithful running is connected to the virtue of endurance (see Pol. *Phil.* 8.1–9.1), but there is no explicit mention of a prize or reward. Athletic imagery is totally absent from the *MPL*, but the *Mart. Pol.* 17.1 and 19.2 make it clear that Polycarp, having died faithfully, has *already* received the immortal crown and his "reward" (βραβεῖον; 17.1). This is not a crown first awarded at the resurrection.

In a much-cited 1967 monograph on the Agon motif in Paul, Victor Pfitzner devotes the last section to outlining post-Pauline developments. He claims that the developing theme of the "Agon of martyrdom" is "still Pauline as long as the central stress lies on the endurance of faith, and not on ὑπομονή as a meritorious virtue" (202). However, Pfitzner believes that the Agon of martyrdom in the early Church did, in actuality, tend toward a "false" development. With its emphasis on endurance as the means of winning the prize, Pfitzner pronounces, "the unique position of Paul within the Agon tradition has been surrendered!" (204). We will inquire in subsequent chapters whether this dichotomy between faith and "meritorious virtue" is a helpful way of presenting Paul's approach to death in his own letters. For now we simply note that the image of the departed Paul as an athlete is common to three of the texts we examined, but not all of them.

8.2.2 Paul the Teacher of Righteousness

Another image of the departed Paul is Paul the teacher of righteousness. This image is only marginally present in the canonical Acts. In the Miletus speech Paul is presented as a teacher (20:20) and the speech closes with Paul offering himself as a model of righteous conduct to be imitated even after his departure (20:33–35). It must be admitted, however, that while Paul as a teacher of righteousness is conceptually present, the related terminology we observe in later texts is largely absent in Acts.

In *1 Clement* Paul as a teacher of righteousness is listed in a catalogue of descriptions (5.6–7). Clement writes, “Having taught righteousness (δικαιοσύνην διδάξας) to the whole world . . . thus he was carried away from the world” (5.7). The righteousness mentioned here is almost certainly human, upright conduct.² Though one might claim that this catalogue is simply perpetuating stereotypical designations, it must still be asked why Clement has included these designations and not others. In this case, the range of Paul’s teaching of righteousness—to the “whole world,” even to the far limit of the west (5.7)—probably bolsters Paul’s great example of endurance.

Ignatius’s letters are almost entirely devoid of the language of teaching and righteousness. Yet Paul as the teacher of righteousness becomes Polycarp’s central image and one connected to Paul’s death (as argued in chapter 6). It is possible that this image was suggested to Polycarp by *1 Clem.* 5.7. It also could be that Polycarp drew this image from 1 Tim 2:7 or 2 Tim 1:11, or that any resemblances to earlier texts are coincidental. We may note once again that some have seen a sharp divide between Polycarp’s teaching on righteousness and Paul’s, positing that Polycarp represents a degradation of Paul’s thought (e.g., Torrance 1948). The task of comparing the Pauline letters to Paul’s effective history on this matter will be delayed to later chapters, but it should be stressed that Polycarp is not alone in regarding Paul as a teacher of human, “ethical” righteousness—to some degree Luke and Clement also remembered (or at least portrayed) Paul in this way.

Finally, although Paul is portrayed as teaching the word of truth in a barn in Rome directly before his death (*MPI* 1), “righteousness” terminology is lacking in the *MPI*, as is any emphasis on Paul’s past, upright conduct. Paul is put forward as a model of anti-imperial courage and resistance, but there does not seem to be any sense in which Paul’s pattern of righteous living—his faith, hope, and love—is remembered or depicted.

² Cf. the use of δικαιοσύνη in *1 Clem.* 3.4; 13.1; 31.2; 33.8; 62.2; and esp. 48.1–4.

8.2.3 Paul the Herald

There is certainly some overlap between the images of Paul as a teacher of righteousness and Paul as a preacher or “herald” (κηρυξ) of the gospel. The former image concentrates on Paul’s sustained instruction of Christians, especially through his moral example, while the latter focuses on Paul’s outward and public proclamation of the Christian message. The difference can be plainly seen in the Miletus speech of Acts. In that speech Paul claims to have “taught” just once (20:20), while other verbs describing his speaking ministry include “announce” (ἀναγγέλλω; 20:20, 27), “testify” (διαμαρτύρομαι; 20:21, 24), and “preach” or “herald” (κηρύσσω; 20:25). Paul’s speech to the Ephesian elders stresses that he will continue to herald the gospel even at the cost of his own life; the faithful discharge of his task is more important.

The image of Paul as a herald risking death is also present in *I Clement*. In the catalogue describing Paul’s activities that led to his death, Clement includes the phrase “having been a herald (κηρυξ) in both the east and the west” (5.6). Once again, the wide-ranging ministry of the apostle Paul probably testifies to his endurance and ensures that he becomes “the greatest example” (5.7) for subsequent Christian generations. So the image of Paul the herald is present but clearly subsidiary.

The language of proclamation is absent from Ignatius’s letters, Polycarp’s letter, and the *MPI*. Likewise, the term “gospel” is never connected to Paul in these texts. However, the image of Paul the herald can be considered moderately strong in the *MPI*, in which Paul makes two public speaking appearances before Nero and others. In every encounter Paul openly testifies to the Christian message, even though he anticipates that this will cost him his (bodily) life. When offered the opportunity to compromise and be released, Paul declares to Longus and Cestus, “I am not a deserter so that you might show me this favor, but I am a subject soldier of Christ” (*MPI* 4). For the Paul of the *MPI*, announcing the reign of Jesus Christ is more important preserving his life. The image of Paul as herald could be considered even stronger in the *MPI* if the characteristic terminology we find in Acts (ἀναγγέλλω, διαμαρτύρομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, κηρύσσω, etc.) was used in the *MPI* to express Paul’s activity.

8.2.4 Paul the Anti-Roman Martyr

There is also some overlap between the images of Paul the herald and Paul the anti-Roman martyr. The pertinent questions are whether Paul's testimony has an anti-imperial bent and whether he dies in direct confrontation with the Roman authorities. If these questions are answered in the positive, then the image of Paul the anti-Roman martyr may be discerned.

It is well-known in scholarship on the canonical Acts that Luke presents Paul's interactions with Roman authorities and Roman law with particular care. Some have even posited that Acts is written to convince Roman authorities that the Way is not politically threatening to the empire (e.g., Bruce 1988: 8). In my view, Acts does offer a critique of Roman religion and culture (see Rowe 2009) but in no way is Paul depicted as resisting the Roman authorities or announcing to them their inevitable demise. Paul claims at one point in the narrative, "I have not committed any offense against Caesar" (25:8). Caesar and Rome are not mentioned at all in the Miletus speech.

The image of Paul the anti-Roman martyr is only barely visible in *1 Clement*, if at all. Clement claims that Paul "witnessed" (μαρτυρέω) "before the leaders" (ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων), immediately before he writes, "thus he was carried away from the world" (5.7). This suggests that Paul's witness before these leaders resulted in his death. The leaders most likely are Roman political authorities, who are later called "our rulers and leaders upon the earth" (60.4). There is no effort here to portray Paul's interactions with the Roman authorities in a positive light, as in Acts. There are even a few clues, especially in the examples of Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Mishael (see 45.1–8) and the prayer of 59.3–61.3, that the righteous may be unjustly persecuted by pagan, political authorities (see again §4.2.2). Undoubtedly this is a muted point, but the bare fact that Paul died in Rome implies that the Roman leaders have *not* always administered "without stumbling" (61.1) or "with peace and gentleness" (61.2); they have not always stewarded their God-given authority as they should (61.1–2).

Ignatius anticipates dying in Rome, and since Ignatius desires to follow in Paul's footsteps (*Eph.* 12.2), it may be implied (and is almost certainly assumed) that Paul died

in Rome. However, Ignatius does not exploit his Roman imprisonment and condemnation for political ends. He only once complains of harsh treatment he has received from the ten soldiers who are bringing him to Rome (*Rom.* 5.1) and there is no overt indication that Ignatius will be executed unjustly or because he has transgressed any Roman laws. Likewise, the image of Paul as an anti-Roman martyr is completely absent in Ignatius's brief references to him.

In Polycarp's letter *To the Philippians*, the image of Paul the anti-Roman martyr is again barely visible. Paul is classed with the blessed Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, who are examples of endurance (9.1) and who would naturally be viewed as those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness (2.3). By grouping Paul with these men who were bound and later killed by the Romans for their faith, Polycarp is portraying Paul with a subtly political complexion. Polycarp later instructs the Philippians to pray "for kings, rulers, leaders, even (Latin *atque*) for those persecuting and hating you, and for enemies of the cross" (12.3). The conjunction of these three groups probably suggests that they are one and the same, or at least that there is significant overlap between the three. In approaching death, Paul did not love the present world (9.2).

In contrast to the preceding literature, the *MPI* has a strikingly different image of Paul. He is characterized as a soldier of King Jesus and is depicted as one who openly and pointedly defies Nero and the Roman elite, before and after his death. There is no real precedent for this image of Paul, either in Paul's early effective history or, as we will see, in his own letters (cf. Barclay 2011: 363–87; contra J. R. Harrison 2011). Of course, it could be that Paul did (as it were) spit in Caesar's face during his actual trial. This overtly insubordinate posture could have been suppressed in later Christian memory and literature out of fear of reprisals. Yet the more likely explanation is that this image of Paul was mostly the fabrication of a later period when Christians were gaining social prominence and power, and taking more aggressive stances against an empire that could persecute them in a systematic fashion. Thus, I place the *MPI* in the mid-second century along with the *Mart. Pol.* and certain Greek apologists. If the *MPI* belongs with the departed Paul's "textual family" at all, it is of distant relation.

8.2.5 Paul the Ascended

The last and strongest image is of Paul as one who ascended to God or Christ at death. Obviously this image could not be present in the canonical Acts since Paul's death is not narrated. Yet neither in the Miletus speech nor anywhere else does Luke's Paul ever offer a sustained reflection on his postmortem fate. Nevertheless, a key piece of data in this discussion is Jesus' ascension. It is said that Jesus was "lifted up" (ἐπαίρω) and that a cloud took him from the apostles' sight (Acts 1:9). Consequently, the apostles are gazing into the sky or "heaven" (οὐρανός) when the angels appear to them (1:10). The angels then relate that Jesus was "taken up" (ἀναλαμβάνω) into heaven (1:11; cf. Acts 1:2, 22). From then on, Jesus' location in "heaven" forms an important part of the narrative.³ If Paul is presented in parallel ways to Jesus (see Walton 2000: 99–136), then this could suggest that Paul's destination was heaven, to be with Jesus. Moreover, after Stephen's speech in Acts 7, he gazes into heaven and sees the glory of God and a vision of the ascended Jesus (7:55). When Stephen is then stoned and cries out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (7:59), the reader is left to assume that while Stephen's body falls asleep (7:60), his spirit ascends to heaven to be where Jesus is standing to receive him (cf. Bock 2007: 315). If a spiritual ascent to heaven is Stephen's postmortem reward and the hope of every follower of Jesus (cf. Luke 16:19–31; 23:43), then there is no reason to think that Paul would not share the same hope and reward.⁴

While the image of Paul the ascended is nowhere explicit in Acts, it is undoubtedly present in *1 Clement*. Clement claims that Peter "departed to the place of glory that was owed to him" (5.4) and that Paul "was carried away from the world and was taken up to the holy place" (5.7). The verb used to describe Jesus' ascension in Acts 1:11 (ἀναλαμβάνω) is the same verb used to describe Paul being taken up. As argued in §4.2.3, this "place" must be "heaven," although it is not explicitly called that in *1 Clement*. Presumably Paul would wait there for the resurrection of his body (cf. 24.1).

³ See e.g., Acts 2:2, 33–35; 7:49; 9:3; 10:11. See also the concept of "thirdspace" in Sleeman 2009.

⁴ See also the numerous parallels between Stephen and Paul in Clark 2001: 273–78.

If our exegesis of Ign. *Eph.* 11.2–12.2 and *Rom.* 4.3 is on target (see §5.2.1–2), then the dominant image of the departed Paul in Ignatius’s letters is of him as the paradigmatic ascended one. It is striking that Ignatius has little else to say in relating Paul to his own death. In fact, little else is said about Paul at all, except that he is remembered as a letter-writer (*Eph.* 12.2), an apostle (*Rom.* 4.3) of exemplary character (*Eph.* 12.2), and probably as the one who initiated the Ephesian church into the mystery of the gospel (*Eph.* 12.2; cf. §5.2.1). Of the many things Ignatius could have chosen to say about Paul, he only stresses that Paul was faithful unto death, has risen to God, and is now free.

The image of Paul as one who ascended to Christ is also moderately strong in Polycarp’s letter and the *MPI*. Polycarp writes that Paul and others “are in the place owed to them, with the Lord” (εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ; 9.2). The first part of this clause is reminiscent of *I Clem.* 5.4 (“the place that was owed to him”; εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον), but the remark that Paul was presently “with the Lord” makes explicit something that was only implicit in earlier texts (though cf. Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 4:14–17). In the *MPI*, Paul tells Longus and Cestus, “Since I know that I live in my king, Christ, I depart to him rejoicing in order that I also might come with him in the glory of his father” (4). Paul had already said that King Jesus will come to judge the world from heaven (*MPI* 4), so one must assume that departing to be with Christ is a departure for heaven.

As we will note in later chapters, there is a recent scholarly trend denying that Paul believed in a conscious “intermediate state” after death and apart from his body. I would contend that this denial faces an uphill battle even in the Pauline letters, but it becomes much more difficult to maintain when Paul’s early effective history is considered. If Paul really did teach—in person and through his letters—that believers, including himself, at death would “sleep” until the resurrection, without any vestige of their persons departing to heaven to be with God, then how can the persistent image of the ascended Paul be explained, especially in texts that otherwise display so much Pauline influence? Is it historically plausible to posit that teaching concerning the intermediate state that was *contrary* to Paul’s understanding came to be connected with Paul, not only in Rome (*I*

Clement) but all across Asia Minor—and that within the first two generations after his death?⁵ I would rather suggest that this particular feature of family resemblance is much more naturally explained if authors such as Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp were attributing to Paul a postmortem spiritual ascent that Paul himself had hoped for and anticipated in his oral communication and writing. It is not necessary to argue that belief in a heavenly intermediate state was peculiar to Paul or that it represents an instance of distinctly Pauline reception. Even though it could be claimed that Paul is the single most important and influential human figure in *1 Clement*, Ignatius's letters, and Polycarp's letter (outside of Jesus, of course), my argument for the relevance of this material to an exegesis of Paul's letters only requires that Paul was not out of step with any broader Christian tradition affirming the intermediate state. Thus, the recurring image of the ascended Paul is evidence that must be accounted for in the debate.⁶ Moreover, it should be noted that a hope for a postmortem spiritual ascent in no way negated or diminished the expectation in these texts for a future, bodily resurrection.

8.2.6 *The Departed Paul as a Model for Imitation*

A final feature of the departed Paul that warrants comment is how early Pauline portraits functioned within the texts of which they were a part. It is noteworthy that Paul is consistently held forth as a model for imitation: Paul's approach to death serves as a model for the Ephesian elders in the Miletus speech (see §3.2.3); in *1 Clement* Paul is called a noble "example" (ὑπόδειγμα; 5.1) and the greatest "example" (ὑπογραμμός; 5.7) of endurance (cf. 5.3); in Ign. *Eph.* 12.2 Ignatius expresses his wish to be found in the footsteps of Paul and in *Rom.* 4.3 Paul is experiencing Ignatius's ideal freedom; in

⁵ See Bockmuehl 2011: 222–29 for additional evidence supporting the claim that "all known non-Gnostic early interpreters read Paul as affirming for the departed believer both a real, immediate and permanent presence with Christ in heaven and also a real bodily resurrection in the new creation The church fathers see no need for either contradiction or compromise between these two basic beliefs" (230).

⁶ It is curious that Anthony Thiselton, who is a proponent of the study of effective history, does not trace the development of Paul's doctrine of the intermediate state in his recent book on the last things (2012), even though he includes effective history at other points in the book. See my review, Kirk 2013b.

Polycarp's letter, after citing Christ Jesus as the "example" (ὑπογραμμός; 8.1), Polycarp points to Paul, among others, as one who embodies endurance and righteousness (9.1).

For ancient ethical imitation to work, knowledge of the exemplar was prerequisite. As Paul states, "That which you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things" (Phil 4:9; cf. 3:17). Throughout his letters Paul is reminding believers of his past conduct (e.g., 1 Thess 2:5–12). Benjamin Fiore explains, "The content of Paul's own example includes behavior he modeled *when originally present with his readers*" (2003: 238; italics added).⁷ Yet such "historical" knowledge need not be gained through firsthand observation alone. Dio Chrysostom, for example, in a discourse on whether Socrates can be considered a pupil of Homer claims,

For whoever really follows anyone *surely knows what that person was like*, and by imitating his acts and words he tries as best he can to make himself like him. But that is precisely, it seems, what the pupil does—by imitating his teacher and *paying heed to him* he tries to acquire his art. On the other hand, seeing people and associating with them has nothing to do with the process of learning. (*Or.* 55.4–5)⁸

Therefore, a personal knowledge of the exemplar is necessary to imitation, regardless of how that knowledge is acquired. This suggests that in offering Paul as a model for imitation, the early Christian texts mentioned above are necessarily committed to a *remembrance* of what Paul was like, including the way in which he conducted himself up until the point of death.⁹

To this it might be objected that Paul is offered as a model for imitation as Joseph, Moses, or David are (*1 Clem.* 4.9–13)—that is, largely as a literary figure of the past, without any regard for the preservation of his "history." While it is debatable whether Clement would consider such OT figures as "literary" models as opposed to "historical"

⁷ Fiore's essay helpfully situates Paul with reference to the Greco-Roman use of exemplification.

⁸ As translated in Crosby 1946; italics added. I am indebted to Kim 2011: 153 for this reference. Kim later notes in passing that an imitation of Paul requires a close observation of his life (156). Likewise, Susan Eastman speaks of the "high degree of presence and intimacy" needed for imitation (2008: 433). For Quintilian's assertion that a "close study of the model" is the prerequisite of good (rhetorical) imitation, see Fantham 1978: 108–9.

⁹ And imitation was mediated through memory even while Paul was alive (see Copan 2007: 227).

ones, it should be observed that when Paul is presented as a model in these early Christian texts, he is consistently classified among those who would be personally known to the original audience. For example, in *1 Clem.* 6.1 Peter and Paul are grouped with those displaying endurance “among us” (ἐν ἡμῖν); in *Rom.* 4.3 Ignatius probably appeals to a local knowledge of Paul’s death in Rome; in *Pol. Phil.* 9.1 Paul is joined to Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, whom the Philippians saw with their own eyes. In every case, Paul is cited not as a literary or fictional example of the distant and unrelated past, but rather as a historical and known example of the recent or even immediate past—even in documents clearly written in the second generation after Paul’s death!

Therefore, in contrast to Richard Pervo, I would argue that for the first two generations of Christians after Paul’s death, the only “real” Paul is the one whose teaching and example lives on in the memory of the churches he founded and influenced.¹⁰ Likewise, it seems doubtful that the portraits of Paul that emerge in early Christianity “do not arise from any concern to preserve history for the benefit of subsequent investigators” (Pervo 2010: xiii). Imitation of the departed Paul requires an accurate, though not necessarily extensive, *historical* basis. If no organic connection from the observed Paul to the literary example can be maintained, then exhortations to imitate Paul’s demeanor in the face of death fail to get off the ground. Thus it appears as if Luke, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp could say,

If Paul did not teach righteousness in his life and death, if he did not endure faithfully unto death, and if he did not ascend to heaven after death, then my preaching about Paul is in vain and your imitation of Paul is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he sustained Paul in life and took him up in death. (cf. 1 Cor 15:14–15)

¹⁰ Contra Pervo 2010: 2: “The only real Paul is the dead Paul,” by which he means that we only have subsequent and biased presentations of Paul, as his later followers would have us know him.

8.3 Turning Back the Clock: From the Departed Paul to the Departing Paul

One may notice in Figure 6 that no single image of the departed Paul of the five we have highlighted is present in all five works.¹¹ Four of the images occur in three of the texts listed and the image of Paul the ascended occurs in four texts (and may be implied in the canonical Acts). This distribution of a cluster of images is aptly described as a set of “family resemblances.” Following Wittgenstein I would argue that even though there is not a single, defining image of the departed Paul, these texts form a meaningful textual family based on their network of similarities. Therefore, it seems reasonable and productive to attempt to do more than merely define the “profiles of Paul and Paulinism in terms of the needs, questions, and values of the persons, groups, or movements represented in various texts” (Pervo 2010: xii). We may also inquire how the earthly Paul and the epistolary Paul may have engendered and shaped these profiles.

Our focus has obviously been on only one aspect of these Pauline portraits (i.e., Paul’s death), and I would not want to make broader and unwarranted claims about how Paul was remembered in general. Yet Paul’s death and afterlife is an important and prominent element in these Pauline portraits. Furthermore, while the legacy of Paul’s death is certainly not uniform, neither is it deeply contested, at least in the first two generations after his death. Early Christian authors could appeal to it without needing to defend it. This suggests that the remembered Paul was perhaps not as “elusive” or “unstable” as some have claimed (e.g., Lieu 2010: 14), at least within mainstream Christianity in the late first and early second century.

In Part III we will enter into the interpretive fray concerning those passages in the Pauline letters that express Paul’s approach to his death. However, we will be armed with what we have learned from Paul’s early effective history. Though his effective history does not utter the final word on any particular interpretive decision, it will render certain

¹¹ It may also be noted that *1 Clement* has the most well-rounded depiction, presenting all five images of the departed Paul. Perhaps this is due to *1 Clement* being written a few decades after Paul’s death and in Rome. The book of Acts fits this description as well, but it has already been discussed why Luke does not narrate Paul’s death or treat it explicitly (see §3.3.1).

interpretations more or less likely. We would not expect to find a perspective on Paul's death in his extant letters that was radically different from the one expressed in literature that was written consciously following in his footsteps. On the whole, we would expect the footprint to match the foot, the family to resemble the progenitor.

Part III

The Departing Paul

Chapter 9

Paul the Tent-Dweller: Paul Approaches Death in 2 Corinthians

9.1 Introduction: The Day Before and After Paul's Death

Despite facing potentially lethal opposition in Damascus, Jerusalem, Asia Minor, Philippi, and Thessalonica,¹ Paul remained surprisingly buoyant when he dictated the letter that we now know as 1 Corinthians. Toward the end of that letter he crows, “Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55). It is possible that some of Paul’s optimism derived from an expectation that he would not die before the day of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:51 reads, “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” This verse and its immediate context clearly indicate that Paul expected some Christians—and probably some of the letter’s recipients—to be alive at the time of Christ’s Parousia. Did Paul anticipate that he would be among that number? 1 Corinthians 15:51 itself is equivocal on the question. Paul does claim in 1 Cor 6:14 that “God raised the Lord and he will raise *us*,” which could be read to imply that Paul and his audience would *all* die and be raised from the dead as Jesus was (i.e., bodily).² Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that there is a heightened sense of eschatological anticipation in 1 Corinthians. The opening describes the Corinthians as eagerly waiting for the revealing of Christ (1 Cor 1:7) and the letter ends with an exhortation to stay awake (1 Cor 16:13; cf. 1 Thess 5:1–6) and the cry, “Our Lord, come!” (μαράνα θά; 1 Cor 16:22). Furthermore, the thematic similarities between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians could indicate that

¹ See e.g., Acts 9:23–25, 29; 13:50; 14:5, 19; 15:26; 16:22–23; 17:5, 13; 18:12; 1 Cor 4:9–13; 15:30–31; 2 Cor 11:32–33; Gal 5:11; 6:17; 1 Thess 2:2, 15–16; 3:7; 2 Thess 3:2.

² Yet see Garland 2003: 743: “The identity of the ‘us’ in 6:14 is as indeterminate as the ‘we’ in 15:51.”

Paul's perspective in 1 Corinthians has not significantly shifted from the one he articulates in 1 Thess 4:13–18.³ Paul senses that the Day would come before his death.

In any case, in 1 Corinthians Paul applies the language of death to himself in only two isolated instances, in a simile (1 Cor 4:9) and metonymically (1 Cor 15:31). When Paul protests, “I die every day!” (15:31), he probably means that he suffers and assumes risks that would be senseless if there were no resurrection from the dead (cf. 1 Cor 15:19; Thiselton 2000: 1250). In the next verse (15:32) Paul articulates an approach to death that he emphatically rejects: “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’” According to Paul, an approach to death that denies the resurrection is self-indulgent and oblivious to the needs of others. It is implied that Paul's approach to death is the reverse. Rather than indiscriminately partaking of food and drink, Paul determines to eat and drink to the glory of God, seeking the benefit of the many (1 Cor 10:31–33; cf. also 11:20–34). This Christ-like posture of “other-regard” (see Horrell 2005: 241–45) is evident in 1 Corinthians, but the letter contains only the barest of reflections on Paul's death, if any at all. This is probably because Paul did not anticipate dying at the time he wrote the letter.

The outlook of 2 Corinthians is in marked contrast to 1 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians is a letter that is pervaded with the smell of death and in which Paul explicitly anticipates his own literal, physical death (2 Cor 5:1–10). Written perhaps only 18 months after 1 Corinthians (see Harris 2005: 66–67), it is clear from 2 Corinthians that Paul's relationship with the church is now on even shakier footing.⁴ Opponents of Paul have

³ In that passage Paul seems to place himself among those who will remain until the Parousia (1 Thess 4:15), an implication that he could have easily avoided by using the impersonal third person plural. See Luckensmeyer 2009: 233–35; Kraus and Kraus 2011: 200; and Harris 2005: 178–80.

⁴ Debate concerning the compositional history and historical setting(s) of 2 Corinthians shows no signs of abating, as L. L. Welborn's recent (2011) 598-page monograph demonstrates. The integrity of the canonical 2 Corinthians thus remains a vexed issue. My analysis proceeds on the assumption that it is possible and productive to read 2 Cor 1:7–14 and 4:16–5:10 together and that a certain theology of encouragement is evident in 2 Cor 1–9, if not in the letter as a whole. While readings I propose would be weakened or at least complexified by the more radical partition theories, my argument can accommodate the simpler—and to my mind, more plausible—partition theory in which a later letter written by Paul to

entered the church and have begun questioning Paul's conduct, rhetorical ability, and apostolic credentials (see e.g., 2 Cor 10:1–2, 9–10; 11:5–9; 12:16–18). Paul views this as a threat not only to his relationship with the church but also to their devotion to Christ (11:3). In response to the deteriorating situation in Corinth, Paul made a painful visit (cf. 2:1), wrote a tearful letter (2:3–4), and then sent Titus. Paul claims that a reconciliation has been recently achieved by Titus (7:6–16), but the spirited defense of his apostleship throughout the letter—especially with regard to his suffering—suggests that this reconciliation was fragile and needed to be bolstered.

Compounding the difficulties Paul faced between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians was a near-death experience he had in Asia, an affliction that burdened him excessively “beyond my strength, so that I despaired even of living” (2 Cor 1:8).⁵ I will argue below that this experience and the subsequent “decision of death” (τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου; 2 Cor 1:9) conclusively indicated to Paul that he would die before the Lord's return; the Day would come after Paul's death. This likely shift in Paul's expectation of his own death vis-à-vis the Parousia led to a demonstrable modulation in tone and emphasis between the two letters.

The task of this chapter will be to provide a close reading of the two passages in which Paul describes his approach to his own death and judgment: 2 Cor 1:7–14 and 4:16–5:10. To assist our interpretation of these passages, we will first explore what I take to be the central theme of 2 Corinthians. My analysis of the letter will show that

Corinth (2 Cor 10–13) was appended to an earlier letter (2 Cor 1–9) with minimal redactional activity. For a thorough rebuttal to the various partition theories, see Harris 2005: 8–51, which I find largely persuasive.

⁵ Commentators have long pondered Paul's seemingly inconsistent use of singular and plural pronouns and verbs throughout 2 Corinthians. Though Paul is foregrounded as the author of the letter, Timothy is also listed as a sender (2 Cor 1:1), while Timothy and Silvanus are later included in the “we” who proclaimed Jesus Christ to the Corinthians (1:19). Along with many commentators, it seems to me that almost all of the first person plural pronouns and verbs have primary reference to Paul (e.g., Lindgård 2005: 104–5; Schmeller 2010: 59–62). Since 2 Corinthians frequently distinguishes between Paul and his Corinthian audience, it is best not to read the Corinthians into the first person plural references except where context demands it (e.g., 2 Cor 2:11) or where the reference is deliberately broadened by the use of *ἡμεῖς* (2 Cor 3:18; 5:10). Therefore, in this chapter I have decided to translate first person plural references as singular to make the “Paulocentric” nature of the letter apparent.

commentators have tended to generalize Paul's approach to his own death, thereby missing its apostolic and others-oriented character.

9.2 Encouragement in Affliction, the Theme of 2 Corinthians

By adopting the translation “comfort” (or “consolation”) for *παράκλησις* and “to comfort” for *παρακαλέω*, nearly every English commentator begins their interpretation of 2 Corinthians with a slight misstep.⁶ In 2 Cor 1:3–7 *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* do not refer to the alleviation of grief or sorrow, as the English word “comfort” suggests, but they rather refer to strengthening in the midst of adversity. As Victor Furnish states, “‘Comfort’ as a [translation] for *paraklēsis* must not be confused with the more subjective notions of sympathy or pity. The meaning is, rather, to ‘comfort’ in the strict sense, i.e., in the sense of the Latin *comfortare*, ‘to strengthen much,’ to encourage” (1984: 109).⁷ More importantly, by translating *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* with forms of the English word “comfort,” commentators miss the crucial links between these words and other key terms within 2 Corinthians—terms for boasting (*καυχάομαι*, *καύχημα*, *καύχησις*), confidence (*θαρρέω*, *πείθω*, *πεποίθησις*), boldness (*παρρησία*), and joy (*εὐφραίνω*, *χαίρω*, *χαρά*), and their antonyms, anguish (*θλίβω*, *θλίψις*, *λυπέω*, *λύπη*, *συνοχή*), discouragement (*ἐγκακέω*), despair (*ἐξαπορέομαι*), shame (*καταισχύνω*), and grief (*πενθέω*). Many of these terms are found together in a remarkable cluster in 2 Cor 7:4–16, which we will comment upon in due course.

The lack of reflection on the meaning and significance of *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* is all the more striking because it is now a truism in scholarship that Paul's letter openings introduce at least some of each letter's major themes. Although many commentators recognize that the opening of 2 Corinthians is a striking expansion of a Jewish blessing of

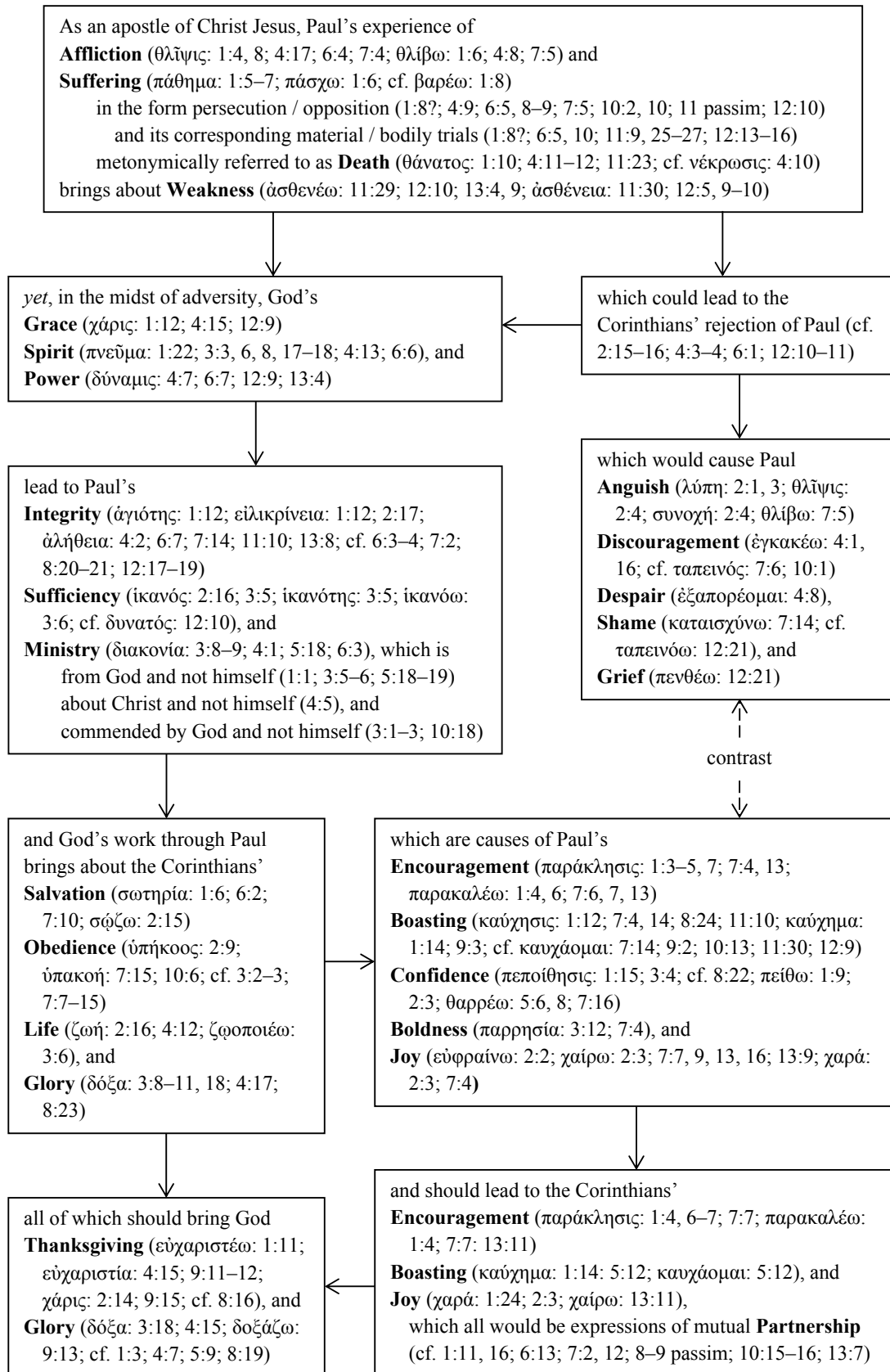
⁶ Likewise, German commentators tend to use the equivalent terms “Trost,” “Tröstung,” and “trösten” (see, e.g., Wolff 1989: 19; Schmeller 2010: 44).

⁷ So too Wolff 1989: 23: “Tröstung als helfendes Eingreifen Gottes ist für Paulus primär göttliche Stärkung im Leiden.” See also Harvey 1996: 17; Harris 2005: 143; Deibert 2005: 92. Contra Bieringer 2011: 4.

God (or *Berakah*; see esp. Deibert 2005: 89–96), few commentators have actually explained how παράκλησις ἐν θλίψει (“encouragement in affliction”) is developed in 2 Corinthians as its dominant theme.⁸ It is necessary to unfold this theme, however briefly, since the two key passages in 2 Corinthians in which Paul describes his approach to death and judgment—2 Cor 1:7–14 and 4:16–5:10—are punctuated with the language of hope, encouragement, confidence, and boasting, as well as suffering, affliction, despair, and losing heart. The diagram on the following page visually represents my understanding of the dynamics of encouragement within 2 Corinthians and is followed by a short commentary:

⁸ I view encouragement in affliction to be the dominant theme of *all* of 2 Corinthians (cf. Lim 2009: 39). Life in the midst of death is another important and related theme and, to a lesser degree, so are the themes of power in weakness and wealth in poverty.

Figure 7 – The Dynamics of Encouragement in 2 Corinthians



The diagram and flow of Paul's thought in 2 Corinthians starts with Paul's affliction and suffering as an apostle of Christ Jesus. This affliction and suffering took the form of persecution and opposition to his ministry, with all the attendant material deprivations and bodily hardships (see the references and Greek terms above). By referring to such affliction and suffering as "death," Paul strikes a chord that is hardly heard by modern ears but would have been loud and extremely dissonant to those living in ancient Corinth.⁹ In an unpublished dissertation Richard Deibert has correlated attitudes toward death in Plato's *Phaedo*, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, and Virgil's sixth book of the *Aeneid* with Roman funeral practices (2005: 35–77) and concludes the following:

The Corinthians' attitude toward Paul's bodily struggle with death in Asia (and thereafter) and their reception of Paul's theology of death (as he expresses it in 2 Corinthians) could not have been favorable. . . . The way Paul both carried death in his person and argued that this death was actually the *source of life* in his body would certainly have triggered grave suspicion that the apostle was somehow inhabiting (or desiring to inhabit) that polluting threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead. Both Paul's body and his theological self-defence had given the Graeco-Roman Corinthians more than they needed to recoil from their apostle and his ministry. (79)

Paul presented himself—and was likely viewed—as bearing a terminal condition; he was a "dead man walking." Paul's "weak" condition would not have naturally elicited pity among the Corinthians or others, but rather scorn, disgust, and even horror.

The deeply paradoxical and shocking claim that Paul made, however, was that in spite of *and even through* his wretched condition, the living God was at work. Paul describes God's "work" using different concepts, but the three most prominent in 2 Corinthians are God's grace, Spirit, and power—concepts that are not strictly synonymous but substantially overlap. Through these God fits Paul for his ministry, not only by making him a trustworthy messenger but also by empowering him to bring about actual change among those to whom he speaks. It is through Paul that God's grace, Spirit, and power bring about the Corinthians' salvation, obedience, life, and glory.

⁹ See Harvey 1996: 21–28 for a description of the economic, social, personal, and religious consequences of Paul's near-death experience.

This brings us to a consideration of *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω*. Outside of 2 Cor 1:3–7, the only place in 2 Corinthians where the two words intertwine is 7:4–13. Other instances of *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* in the letter have to do with appeal or exhortation.¹⁰ It is therefore quite reasonable to interpret 2 Cor 1:3–7 in light of 7:4–16, as Christian Wolff suggests: “Wie die Parallelität zwischen 1,4 und 7,6f. zeigt, besteht ein innerer Zusammenhang zwischen beiden Passagen; man wird also die in Kapitel 7 geschilderten Erfahrungen des Paulus in die Eulogie 1,3ff. einzubeziehen haben” (1989: 22; cf. Roetzel 2007: 127, 129). This seemingly obvious interpretive move is seldom made, but it indicates that while the ultimate source of Paul’s *παράκλησις* is God, its immediate cause is the Corinthians—specifically, in chapter 7, news of their repentance and zeal for Paul (see esp. 7:12). This suggests that in chapter 1, God’s encouragement of Paul in affliction consists neither in his deliverance of Paul from death (as the placement of 1:8–11 could imply) nor in some form of inner emotional support, but rather in allowing Paul to see the fruit of his labor. Paul is encouraged in affliction with the knowledge that his suffering is actually worthwhile; it is producing its intended effects in the lives of the Corinthians.

This way of construing the dynamics of encouragement in 2 Corinthians is reinforced by observing the nexus of terms Paul connects in 2 Cor 7:4: “I have great boldness (*παρρησία*) toward you; I have a great boast (*καύχησις*) concerning you; I have been filled with encouragement (*παράκλησις*), so that I am overflowing with joy (*χαρά*) in all my affliction.”¹¹ Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians the ground for Paul’s boldness and boasting

¹⁰ E.g., 2 Cor 5:20; 8:4; 10:1; 12:8. The concepts of appeal and exhortation sometimes shade into the concept of encouragement, but properly belong to different contexts.

¹¹ Ivar Vegge’s recent monograph, *2 Corinthians—a Letter about Reconciliation* (2008), devotes an entire chapter to expressions of confidence within 2 Corinthians. Though much of Vegge’s analysis overlaps with my own findings, Vegge emphasizes the rhetorical function of Paul’s expressions of confidence, arguing that these expressions are more hortatory than descriptive. Without wanting to discard the implicit appeal for solidarity in these expressions, I would shift the emphasis back to the descriptive side, based on Paul’s confidence in the work of God. As Vegge himself concedes, “One could ask if it is not correct to say that Paul reflects a basic confidence in God in his expressions of confidence in the Corinthians” (2008: 172). Thus I view the situation in Corinth somewhat differently than Vegge does, though I agree with him that 2 Corinthians is a unified composition.

is his ministry among the Corinthians (1:12; 3:12; 10:13; 11:10, 30; 12:9) or simply the Corinthians themselves (1:14; 7:14; 8:24; 9:2–3). Likewise, they are the proximate cause of Paul's confidence and joy (1:15; 2:2–3; 3:4; 7:7, 9, 16; 13:9; cf. 7:13; 8:22). That Paul's boldness, boasting, confidence, and joy derive ultimately from God but immediately from them suggests that his encouragement flows along similar lines.

Paul passionately beckons the Corinthians into this same experience of encouragement in affliction as they embrace Paul (7:7) and boast of him (1:14; 5:12), recognizing God's work through their apostle. Thus the whole of 2 Corinthians could be viewed as Paul's effort to secure, defend, and strengthen a mutual partnership between him and the Corinthians (cf. Bieringer and Lambrecht 1994: 251, 253; Vegge 2008). Since the entire process culminates in thanksgiving and glory to God, this confirms that God's grace, Spirit, and power are the fundamental, driving forces.

The foregoing diagram and discussion may initially seem tangential to the interpretation of 2 Cor 1:7–14 and 4:16–5:10, but I will propose novel interpretations of each passage that are rendered plausible by this broad, causative sequence.

9.3 Paul and the Corinthians, Partners to the End (2 Cor 1:7–14)

Exposition of 2 Cor 1:7–14 has suffered from artificial textual divisions between vv. 7 and 8, and especially vv. 11 and 12. However, there are good reasons for reading 1:7–14 together. First, vv. 8 and 12 both begin with γάρ, a conjunction that typically designates a logical connection to what precedes. Moreover, it is productive to read 2 Cor 1:7 as providing a rough outline for the paragraphs that follow:

7a And my hope for you is secure (cf. 1:15), since I know that

7b as you are partners in [my] sufferings (cf. 1:8–11),

7c thus you will also be partners in [my] encouragement (cf. 1:12–14).¹²

¹² Harris reads 2 Cor 1:7 as referring to *Christ's* suffering and *God's* comfort (2005: 150), but the thrust of the entire passage is to convey that Christ's suffering and God's comfort are mediated to the Corinthians through Paul. Likewise, the focus is on the Corinthians' partnership with Paul, not on the Corinthians' partnership with Christ directly.

9.3.1 Partners in Paul's Sufferings (2 Cor 1:8–11)

2 Corinthians 1:8–9 uses extraordinary language to describe an experience Paul had in Asia. C. H. Dodd believes that this experience was so pivotal in Paul's life and thought that it can be spoken of as "a sort of second conversion" (1953: 81).¹³ For Dodd, Paul's near-death experience changed his temperament so that "the traces of fanaticism and intolerance disappear, almost if not quite completely, along with all that anxious insistence on his own dignity" (81). In commenting upon Dodd's article, Steven Kraftchick astutely observes, "Despite its flaws and excessive claims, there is something refreshing about Dodd's article; especially when it is compared with technically more correct but certainly more arid studies of Paul's life. This Paul at least feels as well as thinks. He reacts as well as responds. In a word, he is human" (2002: 153). While Dodd and Kraftchick have recognized the importance of this experience, I would suggest that they should draw a different lesson from it.

To understand this experience rightly we must read 1:8–9 within 1:8–11 and in light of the process I presented in Figure 7. Here is a translation of the passage:

8 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, concerning the affliction that happened to me in Asia, in which I was burdened excessively, beyond my strength, so that I despaired even of living. **9** Yet I received the decision, "Death," in myself so that I might be confident not in myself but in the God who raises the dead, **10** who delivered me from such immense deadly perils and who will deliver me—that is, on whom I have hoped that he will deliver me yet again—**11** while you also join in helping me by prayer so that the gift granted to me through the many might result in thanks on my behalf from many faces.¹⁴

We must limit the discussion to the four issues that are most pertinent:

1. the nature of τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου (1:9);
2. the purpose of that ἀπόκριμα expressed in the ἵνα clause (1:9b);

¹³ Cf. Kraftchick 2002: 160–61: "At some level Paul the Jew had always known that human beings are dependent upon God for their existence. And, he knew, as all people do, that he must die. However, this experience transformed that knowledge into personal knowledge. The general truth becomes a personal reality."

¹⁴ This translation reflects my understanding of the grammatical structure of 1:11 (cf. Briones 2010: 550–51) and my decision to accept ὅς ἐκ τηλικούτων θανάτων ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ῥύσεται, εἰς ὃν ἠλπικαμεν ὅτι καὶ ἔτι ῥύσεται as the original text of 1:10 (cf. Thrall 1994: 120–22; Harris 2005: 151–52).

3. the relation of 1:10 to the letter's dynamics of encouragement; and
4. the significance of 1:11.

The affliction that befell Paul in Asia, whether severe persecution or a recurrent malady,¹⁵ confronted Paul, more acutely than ever before, with the prospect of his own death. For a man who frequently brushed up against death (cf. 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 11:23–26; Acts 14:19), the emphatic language of 1:8 is noteworthy: “I was burdened excessively, beyond my strength, so that I despaired even of living.”¹⁶ Paul thought he was going to die.

The highly unusual term ἀπόκριμα (a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and LXX) that follows in 2 Cor 1:9 is significant. As Colin Hemer demonstrated more than 40 years ago, “ἀπόκριμα became a technical term for an official decision in answer to the petition of an embassy” (1972: 104). The meaning of the term, the fact that Paul received this decision, and the language of 2 Cor 5:20 (“I am an ambassador of Christ”) in the same semantic domain, all imply that this was a decision that came from God (contra Schmeller 2010: 71). I think we are meant to imagine that Paul at the height of his affliction threw up a desperate plea, “Will I die from this, God?!” The divine response was, “You will die”—it was a “decision of death” (ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου).

It is evident, however, that Paul did not immediately die upon receiving this decision and, furthermore, that he expected God to deliver him from future deadly perils (1:10). This apparent inconsistency demands explanation. I would suggest that the divine decision informed Paul of his eventual and inevitable death. Whereas before this incident Paul could describe himself as one who was *like* a person sentenced to death (ὡς ἐπιθανάτιους; 1 Cor 4:9), he now *was* a person sentenced to death—by God! This

¹⁵ See Thrall 1994: 115–17 and Harris 2005: 166–72, respectively. I see merit in both options and Paul does not seem to draw a sharp dividing line between the two. Furthermore, as Harvey contends, scholarly preoccupation with the specific nature of Paul's affliction rather misses the point (1996: 11).

¹⁶ I do not see a contradiction between the uses of ἐξαπορέομαι (“to despair”) in 1:8 and 4:8. The former describes the surrender of Paul's hope of remaining alive, while the latter denies that he ever totally despaired of the effectiveness of his ministry. The object of despair in each verse is thus not the same (contra Deibert 2005: 111).

understanding is strengthened by 2 Cor 2:14 if the imagery of the Roman triumphal procession in that verse implies that God is leading Paul, as his captive, to death.¹⁷ It is also strengthened by the vivid imagery of 2 Cor 4:10 and 16. The “deadness (νέκρωσις) of Jesus” in Paul’s body (4:10) is causing his outer person to decay (4:16), the eventual outcome of which would be Paul’s death.¹⁸ If Paul formerly expected to survive until the Parousia, as I think is likely (see 1 Thess 4:15; 1 Cor 15:51), this divine decision of death would have slain any such hope. Paul’s certainty of his death may also be reflected in his declaration to the Ephesian elders at Miletus: “I *know* that all of you will no longer see my face” (Acts 20:25).

The purpose clause that follows in 1:9 is striking: “so that I might be confident not in myself but in the God who raises the dead” (ἵνα μὴ πεποιθότες ὦμεν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς). Harris gives expression to the way in which this statement is typically understood:

Apparently, self-reliance had sometimes or even often marked his experience as a Christian. The devastating θλίψις had the purpose—and the effect—of undermining Paul’s dependence on his own resources. . . . Paul’s earlier partial self-reliance on his own strength or charisma or education was now a thing of the past. . . . In the aftermath of his affliction Paul reposed his trust and hope only in God. He had learned the spiritual lesson that for the Christian self-reliance not only is inadequate to meet the demands of a life that is pleasing to the Lord but also constitutes an affront to God on whom we are totally dependent for our physical and spiritual well-being. (2005: 157)

This interpretation of 2 Cor 1:9b is suspect on several grounds. First, it is based on the assumption that prior to Paul’s affliction in Asia, he was confident in himself. Harris claims, “although ἵνα μηκέτι is not used, the sense of μή in conjunction with this periphrastic perfect is ‘no longer’ or ‘no more’: ‘so that we would no longer be reliant on ourselves’” (2005: 157; cf. Barrett 1973: 65). Yet Harris does not substantiate this claim

¹⁷ As argued by Hafemann 1986: 35. Hafemann’s interpretation is supported by the sacrificial terminology within the immediate context: ὁσμή (2:14) and εὐωδία (2:15). See my related discussion of Phil 2:17 in the next chapter.

¹⁸ Harris 2005: 155–56 reads τὸ ἀπόκριμα τοῦ θανάτου in 1:10 similarly to how I do. Nevertheless, one might question how, given his identification of Paul’s affliction as illness, Harris can argue that Paul would ultimately die from a θλίψις similar to the one he experienced in Asia (156). Did Paul die from a severe illness? One might also ask why Harris later writes as if Paul’s death was merely a probability (e.g., 365n2).

and the grammar could be understood in other ways. If Paul had wanted to communicate that he was no longer reliant on himself, he could have used the construction ἵνα μηκέτι, as he did in 2 Cor 5:15.¹⁹ Second, Harris and others have not come to grips with how negative it is to be self-reliant. Trusting in one's self, especially as opposed to trusting in God, is never a description that is applied to a believer (cf. Ps 48:7 LXX; Prov 14:16; 28:26; Ezek 16:15; 3 Macc. 2:4). It is telling that in a footnote (157n32) regarding 2 Cor 1:9b Harris asserts that there is "a similar movement of thought in Phil. 3:4–9." Yet this passage in Philippians describes Paul's *conversion*, not some event more than 20 years afterward! Third, it is hard to reconcile Harris's interpretation of 2 Cor 1:9b with statements Paul makes in earlier letters, such as 1 Cor 4:7 or 15:10. Finally, Harris writes as though the ἵνα clause was dependent on ἐβαρήθημεν (1:8) or ἐρρύσατο (1:10) and not ἐσχήκαμεν (1:9). In other words, Harris speaks of a spiritual lesson Paul learned *from his affliction*. Paul's harrowing experience supposedly taught him to rely on God alone. However, the text indicates that confidence in God was the purpose behind *the decision of death*. For these reasons we must seek out another interpretation of 2 Cor 1:9b.

A promising way forward is to ask the question, "The decision of death was intended so that Paul might rely on God *for what*?" Though the question, to my knowledge, has not been asked in precisely this way before, most commentators would probably answer, "Paul was intended to rely on God *for his own deliverance from death*" (cf. Lambrecht 1999: 21). By pushing him to the brink of death, God was essentially teaching Paul that he could not sustain his own life but must rely on the one who raises the dead. This understanding is possible, but two considerations weigh against it.

First, such a private revelation seems out of place in the context. After an opening stressing that Paul's experience—of both affliction and encouragement—is for the direct benefit of the Corinthians, why would Paul turn in 1:8–10 to a lesson in which he learned to place more complete trust in God for his own deliverance? The direct relevance of this to the Corinthians would be unclear. Furthermore, it is critical to notice that the phrase

¹⁹ Cf. also related constructions in Eph 4:14 (ἵνα μηκέτι ὤμεν), and Isa 10:20 (οὐκέτι μὴ πεποιθότες ὦσιν) and 32:3 (οὐκέτι ἔσονται πεποιθότες) LXX.

“so that I might not be confident in” includes the perfect participle *πεποιθότες*, which locates Paul’s thought in 1:9 within the theology of encouragement outlined above.²⁰ The participle *πεποιθότες* in 1:9 is related not only to the perfect participle *πεποιθώς* in 2:3, but also to the noun *πεποίθησις* in 1:15 and 3:4. This last cross-reference is noteworthy because the verse speaks of a confidence directed toward God (3:4) and God’s giving of life is mentioned twice in the immediate context (3:3, 6). These parallels suggest the intention was for Paul to rely on God *for the lasting effectiveness of his ministry* and not for his own deliverance from physical death.

Therefore, the designation of God as the one who raises the dead (1:9) does not refer to his ability to rescue Paul from a near-death experience, but to him as the one who brings life to the Corinthians out of death (cf. 2:16; 3:3, 6; 4:10–12; 13:4) and ultimately will raise Paul to be with the Corinthians (4:14). The focus here is not on Paul’s individual fate; rather, Paul’s resurrection hope assures him that his ministry is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor 15:14, 58). Furthermore, if 2 Cor 4:7 is indeed the truth that was communicated to Paul by his affliction in Asia, as commentators often suggest (e.g., Furnish 1984: 279), then my reading of 2 Cor 1:9 better accords with that verse: Paul’s body is marked for death (cf. 4:10–12) but he is confident that the living God will continue to bring about life to others through it. Thus Paul’s affliction was not intended to move him from partial self-reliance to total God-reliance, but the divine decision of death was intended to reinforce what he already knew: the enduring success of his ministry was not dependent on himself but on God.²¹

The typical interpretation of 2 Cor 1:9 seems to connect seamlessly with the following verse. Most commentators read “the God who raises the dead” (1:9) metaphorically as

²⁰ Though Vegge 2008, following the work of Stanley Olson, categorizes the perfect of *πείθω* as confidence terminology (141), his detailed study includes no discussion of *πεποιθότες* in 2 Cor 1:9.

²¹ Paul’s “lesson learned” (not for the first time) in 1:9 is thus of a piece with other statements throughout the letter that contrast “himself” (*ἑαυτοῦ*) with God (cf. 3:5; 4:5; 10:18). Schmeller also critiques the idea that Paul was self-reliant before his affliction: “Man wird kaum annehmen dürfen, dass Paulus bis zu der geschilderten Erfahrung auf sich selbst und von da an allein auf Gott vertraut habe. . . . Die extreme Bedrängnis führt Paulus zu radikalem Gottvertrauen” (2010: 72).

“the God who rescues his servants from near-death experiences” (cf. Harris 2005: 158) and thus the relative clauses in 1:10 would seem to describe further this divine activity. Yet upon closer inspection, gaps appear again.

If Paul’s focus were on a singular near-death experience and his confidence arising from how God delivered him from it, then we might expect to read in 1:10, “who delivered me from such an immense deadly peril” (ὃς ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς). This is the reading of many textual witnesses. Yet the more difficult and better reading is, “who delivered me from such immense deadly perils [plural].”²² This shifts the focus to God’s repeated past interventions to preserve Paul’s life. Paul’s hope for similar near-death deliverances in the future seems out of place if it arises from “the decision of death” (1:9). How could the decision “Death” inspire hope that God would continue to deliver Paul from bodily death? The verse rather indicates that Paul’s hope for a prolonged life is *indirectly* related to his confidence in the God who raises the dead.

The solution to this interpretive problem is in perceiving, once again, how the verse relates to the letter’s dynamics of encouragement. Most commentators see God’s deliverance of Paul from his affliction in Asia as a tangible example of “comfort” in affliction.²³ However, as argued, Paul’s encouragement in the letter does not derive from God’s deliverance of him from death but rather from God’s work through his affliction. Likewise, in 2 Corinthians the potential source of Paul’s anguish and discouragement is not the prospect of his own death but rather the possibility that his work among the Corinthians would prove to be futile. When this is grasped, it can be seen that the

²² The Greek is ὃς ἐκ τηλικούτων θανάτων ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς; see Thrall 1994: 120–21 and Harris 2005: 152. The translation “deadly peril” for θάνατος is suggested by the adjective and the context.

²³ E.g., Briones 2010: 544: “The ‘deliverance’ in v. 10 can be likened to a demonstration of God’s παράκλησις in a time of utter distress (cf. 1.8), a divine act of ‘comfort’”; and Bieringer 2011: 6: “Paul’s focus is on the saving intervention of God. παρακαλέω thus does not mean comfort in affliction, but comfort and thus deliverance from affliction.” This interpretation is also implied in the way commentators view the relationship between 2 Cor 1:3–7 and 8–11. See Deibert 2005: 87: “It is the testimony in 1.8–11 that provides the context for the opening pastoral insight of 1.3–7”; and Harris 2005: 150: “As a primary illustration of his theme (‘comfort in affliction’) Paul now informs the Corinthians of the dire nature of his recent brush with death in the province of Asia, an experience so devastating that only through God’s direct intervention was his life spared.”

preservation of Paul's life perpetuates the dynamics of encouragement but does not directly factor into them. In other words, the longer God allows Paul to live, the more his ministry will benefit the Corinthians and others, and the more this will produce encouragement and thanksgiving to God. This way of interpreting 2 Cor 1:10 places it in the same conceptual orbit as Phil 1:25–26. The preservation of Paul's life is for the promulgation of his ministry (cf. Garland 1999: 77–78). We have observed this perspective already in the book of Acts (cf. §3.2.1).

This leads to v. 11, which is in some ways the culmination of 1:8–11. The verse is an appeal for partnership.²⁴ Rather than rejecting Paul as an afflicted and death-riddled fraud, the Corinthians are urged to embrace the apostle and view his body as a vehicle for God's life and salvation. The Corinthians should pray for the preservation of Paul's life so that his ministry can extend to others (cf. 4:15; 9:11–15; 10:15–16). Paul does not want the Corinthians to be unaware of the extent or purpose of his affliction so that they can become full-fledged partners in his sufferings (1:7b). The Corinthians do not become Paul's partners primarily by suffering exactly in the ways he does, but by accepting God's design in Paul's affliction and praying for him.²⁵ This understanding answers Deibert's important question: "Why, at the very outset of a letter written to a community in no known distress, affliction, or persecution, does Paul begin with a pastoral discourse on God's strengthening in affliction?" (2005: 86). The Corinthians are to share in Paul's encouragement by sharing Paul's perspective on his own affliction.²⁶

²⁴ Briones (2010) has grasped the importance of mutuality in 1:3–11 but misses the mark in suggesting that Paul is dependent upon the Corinthians for his salvation (551) and that "Paul and the Corinthians operate *interchangeably* as brokers of one another" (553; italics added). Rather, Paul always remains the apostle in their partnership and the Corinthians his spiritual children (cf. Hafemann 1986: 75–76).

²⁵ Cf. Chrysostom: "For as ye consider our sufferings your own, so do ye also make our comfort your own" (*NPNF* 1.12.278). The fly in the ointment might be 2 Cor 1:6. However, in stating that the Corinthians endure the same sufferings that Paul does, this need not mean that the Corinthians are brought near to death and still less that Paul's deliverance from death would assure them of similar deliverances. Rather, if the Corinthians embraced Paul they would likely face some of the same opposition he did.

²⁶ Deibert states it well: "Here at the outset of his letter, Paul strategically disarms his readers by elucidating the linkage between his mortality and their well-being. And by construing this opening pericope providentially—as the sovereign way of God—Paul carefully leaves the Corinthians without theological

9.3.2 Partners in Paul's Encouragement (2 Cor 1:12–14)

If 2 Cor 1:8–11 fleshes out what it means for the Corinthians to be partners in Paul's sufferings (1:7b) then 1:12–14 describes partnership in Paul's encouragement (1:7c).

Here is my translation of these verses:

12 For my boast is this: the testimony of my conscience that I conducted myself in the world in the holiness²⁷ and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. **13** For I am not writing anything to you except that which you read and indeed understand. I hope that you will understand completely, **14** just as you did understand me in part, because I will be your boast on the day of our Lord Jesus just as you will be my boast.

We will ask two questions of this passage: What is Paul's boast and what is his hope?

It is apparent that Paul's boast in 2 Cor 1:12 is his aboveboard conduct, especially when he was among the Corinthians. Later in 2 Corinthians Paul boasts of his decision to preach the gospel free of charge (11:10). Paul's integrity and ministry practices are also the cause of boasting in other letters (1 Cor 9:15–16; cf. 1 Thess 2:1–12). Equally apparent, however, is that Paul's boast in 2 Cor 1:14 is the Corinthians themselves. This is seen later in 2 Corinthians (7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2–3; 10:13–16) and similarly in Paul's other letters (Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 15:31; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 2:19). Additionally, Paul claims in 2 Cor 1:12 that his conduct was “by the grace of God” (ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ). This points to yet another cause or object of Paul's boasting: God himself (2 Cor 10:17; see also 1 Cor 1:31; Gal 6:14; Phil 3:3). Rather than viewing these as three conflicting sources of boasting, it is better to perceive them in a causative sequence: God alone is Paul's boast, but particularly in how his grace leads to Paul's integrity and sufficiency in ministry, and especially as that leads to the transformation of the Corinthians or other converts.

Paul's hope is that the Corinthians will understand, or perhaps “recognize” (ἐπιγινώσκω), him completely (2 Cor 1:13; cf. 1 Cor 16:18). This is another appeal for partnership. The Corinthians need to comprehend that on the day of the Lord Jesus, Paul

recourse: dismissal of him because of near death undermines the purpose and power of the God who raises the dead” (2005: 89).

²⁷ I am reading ἀγιότητι instead of ἀπλότητι (cf. Thrall 1994: 133), though this textual decision has little exegetical consequence.

will be their boast; they will owe their salvation to Paul's work among them.

Comprehending this should prompt the Corinthians to boast in Paul at the present time (cf. 2 Cor 5:12). As Scott Hafemann presses,

It is not too much to conclude, therefore, that the Corinthians' acceptance of Paul becomes the criterion by which their own genuine conversion will be measured. If they boast in Paul as a genuine apostle, he will be able to boast in them as genuine believers. In both cases, however, the proof of their respective legitimacy is to be found in the manner of their lives. (2000: 83; cf. Lim 2009: 62)

Paul wants the Corinthians to be partners in his encouragement—that is, he wants them to boast of him as he boasts of them.

In summary, 2 Cor 1:7–14 and indeed 1:3–14 tightly intertwine the Corinthians with their afflicted apostle. Their partnership, the Corinthians' salvation, and Paul's boast are all bound up with how the Corinthians will respond to Paul's suffering and mortality (cf. the similar dynamics in Pol. *Phil.* 8.1–10.1). Yet Paul approaches his now certain death with a confidence in God that his labor among the Corinthians will not be in vain. Paul's near-fatal affliction and the divine decision of death was not intended to soften his fanaticism (C. H. Dodd 1953: 81), confront him with his own human finitude (Kraftchick 2002: 160), or dislodge partial self-reliance (Harris 2005: 157). The purpose was to reiterate to Paul and all others that the life-giving and sustaining power in his ministry came from God, so that God would get the glory (cf. 4:7).

9.4 Paul's Confidence in Departure (2 Cor 4:16–5:10)

The second extended passage in which Paul reflects on his death is 2 Cor 4:16–5:10. This passage has occasioned much consternation as the juxtaposition of 2 Cor 5:4 and 5:8 in particular presents a seemingly intractable problem.²⁸ In 2 Cor 5:4 Paul cries out that he does not want “to take off” (ἐκδύσασθαι) but “to put on” (ἐπενδύσασθαι)—that is, he does not want to be found “naked” (γυμνός; 5:3). This has often been interpreted either as

²⁸ Schmeller claims with regard to 2 Cor 5:1–10: “Der Text ist einer der schwierigsten im 2Kor und im ganzen Neuen Testament” (2010: 285).

a statement of Paul's desire not to die or not to be bodiless. In 2 Cor 5:8, however, Paul asserts that he would rather be "away from the body and going home to the Lord."

According to W. L. Craig, the tension between these two verses can be explained as a "Catch-22 situation":

Paul found himself in an inherently paradoxical situation: no matter what he chose seemed to have drawbacks. He longed to go and be with the Lord, but he recoiled from the state of nakedness. Hence, he wanted to live to the *Parousia*, but the prospect of continuing on in the earthly tent made him groan. Choosing the best meant choosing the worst. (1988: 147)

In other words, if having a resurrected body was better than the (bodiless) intermediate state, but the intermediate state was better than mere bodily existence, then "in order to thus attain the *optimal* state one must go on living in the *worst* state" (146). Other commentators resolve the tension in other ways, usually by reinterpreting either 2 Cor 5:4 or 5:8. Some even cease trying to make sense of Paul. In a 282-page published dissertation entitled *Paul's Line of Thought in 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10*, Fredrik Lindgård concludes, "Verses 4:16–5:10 do not form a neat train of thought," (2005: 102) and later states, "the section 4:16–5:10 gives a rather puzzling and confused impression which remains in spite of wrestling with the text" (202).²⁹

In what follows I will attempt to cut my own way through this Gordian Knot, contending once again that a recognition of the letter's theme of encouragement in affliction suggests fresh and compelling ways of reading the text.

9.4.1 Renewal within Decay as Encouragement in Affliction (2 Cor 4:16–17)

2 Corinthians 4:16 begins with another statement of Paul's confidence: "Therefore I do not become discouraged" (Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν; cf. 4:1). The conjunction διὸ indicates that his confidence is built upon a theological interpretation of his suffering. As Furnish writes, "The context here makes it certain that Paul is not referring to boldness in facing death, but to boldness in preaching the gospel despite all manner of afflictions and despite

²⁹ Cf. Lambrecht 1999: 85: "The flow of thought is not easy to follow . . . Paul's preference for 'putting on over' and not dying before the Parousia is, as it were, forgotten [in 5:6–8]." Other commentators seem to sidestep the issue (e.g., Matera 2003: 122–25).

the way some have falsely interpreted those” (1984: 288). Paul then provides additional support for this statement of confidence. The first section within 2 Cor 4:16–5:10 can be translated as follows:

16 Therefore I do not become discouraged. Even if my outer person is decaying, nevertheless my inner person is being renewed day by day. **17** For the momentary lightness of my affliction is producing for me to an utterly extraordinary degree an eternal weight of glory.

Among the pressing questions, three call out for special attention: 1) What are Paul’s outer and inner persons? 2) How is Paul’s inner person renewed? and 3) What precisely is the glory that Paul’s affliction is producing?

With regard to the first question, commentators are quick to acknowledge that the terms “outer person” (ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος) and “inner person” (ὁ ἔσω [ἄνθρωπος]) smack of commonplace Hellenistic anthropological dualism. Yet this almost invariably triggers the knee-jerk response that Paul himself did not hold to such a dualism. “Paul’s idiom is shaped by the exigencies of his polemic” (R. P. Martin 1986: 91) we are told, though one wonders why Paul would adopt the terminology of an anthropology he so thoroughly rejected.

The interpretation of ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος and ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is often clouded (sometimes unconsciously?) by what appear to be parallel phrases in Col 3:9–10: “the old person” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος; cf. Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22) and “the new person” (ὁ νέος ἄνθρωπος; cf. ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος in Eph 4:24). The outer and inner persons, however, are not consecutive, eschatological realities but simultaneous, anthropological realities.³⁰ The concessive logic of 2 Cor 4:16 would work most forcefully if, in Paul’s view, every person—believer and unbeliever alike—has an outer and inner person. The decay of the outer person must be a potential source of discouragement.

Within the immediate context, the outer person of 2 Cor 4:16 seems to be parallel to the “earthen vessel” (ὁ στράκιος σκεῦος; 4:7), the “body” (σῶμα; 4:10), and the “mortal flesh” (ὁ θνητὸς σὰρξ; 4:11). If anything can be set in contrast to these it is the “heart”

³⁰ Contra Barrett 1973: 146–47; Barnett 1997: 250; Hafemann 2000: 189; Harris 2005: 360–61 and many others.

(καρδία) and “mind” (νόημα), which are the sites of moral transformation.³¹ The mind and the heart are parallel to “the inner person” in Rom 7:22–23 and Eph 3:16–17.

Furthermore it seems that when Paul uses the term πνεῦμα to refer to the human spirit, it is also a synonym for the inner person (cf. 2 Cor 2:13; 7:1, 13; and probably 4:13; 12:18).

This suggests that Paul did hold to some form of anthropological dualism, though “dualism” may not be the most appropriate term.³² Paul did not set the body and the “soul” (ψυχή) in opposition; neither did he denigrate material existence. Nevertheless, while the body functioned holistically with the spirit/heart/mind in Paul’s view, the two were conceptually distinct and the latter could survive without the former in death, as we will argue below.³³

On this understanding, what does it mean for Paul’s inner person to be renewed even while his outer person is decaying (2 Cor 4:16)? It appears as if Paul’s statement “my outer person is decaying” is yet another vivid way to express the apostolic affliction Paul experiences in his body.³⁴ It is as though the “deadness” (νέκρωσις) of Jesus in Paul’s

³¹ See 2 Cor 1:22; 3:3, 14–15; 4:4, 6. Cf. Jewett 1971: 399; Lindgård 2005: 109; and Schmeller 2010: 277n642. Contra Betz 2000: 334. The contrast between the heart and the earthen vessel in 4:6–7 is noteworthy, as is the contrasting pair of “face” and “heart” in 2 Cor 5:12 (see Nguyen 2008: 152–73).

³² See Thrall 1994: 348–51 for a discussion of this issue and similar hesitations concerning the use of the term “dualism.” Cf. J. W. Cooper 2009a: 35: “I remained convinced, however, that *dualistic holism* best describes the presentation of Scripture as a whole. *Holism* means that humans are created and redeemed by God as integral personal-spiritual-physical wholes—single beings consisting of different parts, aspects, dimensions, and abilities that are not naturally independent or separable. *Dualism* means that our core personalities—whether we label them *souls*, *spirits*, *persons*, *selves*, or *egos*—are distinct and, by God’s supernatural providence, can exist apart from our physical bodies after death.”

³³ In addition, Paul considered it possible that he was caught up to the third heaven without his body (2 Cor 12:2–4). For a defense of some form of anthropological dualism in Paul, see Gundry 1976; Osei-Bonsu 1987; J. W. Cooper 2000; Lambrecht 2003; Nichols 2010; Levering 2012; and Wasserman 2013. As Wasserman claims, “Platonic ideas and images explain much about the way the text [2 Cor 4:16–5:5] depicts alienation and conflict between the inner and outer person, the temporary and the eternal, the earthly and the heavenly . . .” (2013: 273). For various monistic views of biblical anthropology—views that seem to be on the ascendant—see Corcoran 2006; Murphy 2006; and Green 2008; 2010 (but see J. W. Cooper 2007; 2009a; 2009b in response). For a trichotomous view of Philo and Paul, see van Kooten 2008. For a brief history of recent research (from Bultmann on) see Rothschild and Thompson 2011: 4–13.

³⁴ Cf. Furnish 1984: 284: “Paul . . . is not thinking of the natural process of aging, but of the adversities which apostles must bear by reason of their serving the gospel, *on account of Jesus*”; and Schmeller 2010:

body (2 Cor 4:10) is spreading like gangrene, causing decay, and will eventually result in his death. Nevertheless, Paul is not “discouraged” (ἐγκακέω; 4:16). The transformative efficacy of his ministry encourages Paul to continue his open statement of the truth (cf. ἐγκακέω in 4:1) despite the personal cost and bodily toll. The thrust of 4:16 thus suggests that Paul’s inner person “being renewed” (ἀνακαινόω) is God’s encouragement of his heart, akin to Titus’s spirit being “refreshed” (ἀναπαύω) by the obedience of the Corinthians (7:13; cf. 1 Cor 16:18). Such renewal is needed every day since Paul’s suffering (1 Cor 15:31) and especially his concern for the churches (2 Cor 11:28) was a daily reality.

Therefore we see that 2 Cor 4:16 has returned to familiar territory: the theme of encouragement in affliction. Discerning this theme invites us to put a different spin on 4:17 than has typically been given. Commentators often do not specify the nature of the glory that Paul’s affliction produces in 4:17. If anything they imply that the glory here is the “eternal reward” (an underdeveloped concept) Paul can expect to receive for the hardships he endured during his life. When one looks at the way in which the term “glory” (δόξα) is employed throughout the letter, however, one observes that it is often used in conjunction with the moral transformation that Paul’s ministry produces in the lives of others (see 2 Cor 3:8–11, 18; cf. 8:23). If 4:17 is in line with these other texts, then it would simply be another variation on the theme of Paul’s encouragement in affliction because he knows that it is producing lasting spiritual effects among the Corinthians.³⁵ This glory is “for” Paul (ἡμῖν; 4:17) in the sense that he viewed his converts or spiritual children as “his” glory and joy (see 1 Thess 2:20; cf. Eph 3:13).

273: “Vom Kontext her kann die 1. Person Plural in οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν nur Paulus allein bezeichnen (vgl. bes. 4,1). Das bedeutet, dass auch die Aussage über den äußeren und inneren Menschen eine Aussage über Paulus ist.” Likewise, by calling his own body an “earthen vessel” (4:7) Paul is connoting his frailty *as an afflicted apostle*. The phrase is not intended to characterize the human condition as such (contra Barnett 1997: 230–31).

³⁵ Cf. esp. 2 Cor 4:12. Note also the present tense of the verb κατεργάζεται (“is producing”). Paul could have chosen a verb like θησαυρίζω if he intended to describe a purely future reward for present suffering. Furthermore, if “renewal” comes through knowledge, as Col 3:10 indicates, then 4:17 grounds 4:16 as the knowledge that God uses to encourage Paul in the midst of bodily decay.

Another possible interpretation is that Paul is referring to the glory of the resurrection body (cf. 1 Cor 15:40–43). This interpretation is related to the previous one because the resurrection of the dead for Paul should not be understood as a narrow and individual hope, but rather as a corporate one. Indeed, in the immediately preceding context Paul frames his hope for resurrection as a hope to be with the Corinthians (σὺν ὑμῖν; 4:14) and as a reason to continue his apostolic ministry of speaking (4:13).³⁶

This reading of 2 Cor 4:16–17 indicates that Paul’s reflections on death in these verses have a decidedly apostolic bent, rather than a universally Christian one. In other words, Paul is not speaking generically as a Christian; these thoughts are flowing from his apostolic calling and experience. This is important to keep in mind because, even though 2 Cor 4:18–5:5 represents something of a digression in Paul’s thought (as I will argue), Paul’s statement in 5:8 must be read as the stated preference of a confident *apostle*.

9.4.2 *The Ultimate Christian Hope: Bodily Resurrection (2 Cor 4:18–5:5)*

In my understanding, Paul engages in a slight digression in 2 Cor 4:18–5:5 in order to address a potential Corinthian misconstrual of his remarks about his body. Paul has spoken so negatively about his experience in the body in 4:7–17 that one could easily infer that Paul’s future hope must be to rid himself of his mortal flesh, breaking free from it as if it were an anchor, so that his soul might soar heavenward. Such a view of the body and the afterlife was prevalent in Greco-Roman thought and there are indications in 1 Corinthians that such thinking was not completely uprooted from the Corinthian church (see 15:12, 35). Thus 2 Cor 4:18–5:5 continues Paul’s polemics from 1 Cor 15. Paul twice concedes that his current embodiment is a cause for groaning and a burden (5:2, 4), but he makes it plain that his longing is directed ultimately toward a future (re-)embodiment and not a permanent disembodiment.

Before defending this understanding through a selective exegetical engagement with the text, it is helpful to offer a translation:

³⁶ The causal participle εἰδότες in 4:14 connects it to the preceding verse.

4:18 . . . while I look not to what is seen but to what is unseen, for what is seen is transient but what is unseen is eternal. **5:1** For I know that if my earthly dwelling of a tent is destroyed, I have a building from God, a dwelling not made by hands, eternal, in the heavens. **2** For in this tent I am indeed groaning, so that I long to put on my habitation that is from heaven, **3** presuming that by clothing with it³⁷ I will not be found naked. **4** For indeed being in this tent I am groaning, being burdened, on account of which³⁸ I do not want to be unclothed but clothed, in order that the mortal might be swallowed by life. **5** The one preparing me for this very thing is God, who has given to me the deposit of the Spirit.

The section begins with a genitive absolute *μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα* (4:18). Although commentators and translations sometimes attempt to connect this by a tighter logic to what proceeds, Paul's choice of this construction suggests that 4:18 is independent.³⁹ The independence of the entire section is suggested by the total lack of language concerning encouragement or discouragement. Furthermore, the suffering in this section, in the form of groaning (5:2, 4), does not arise from opposition to Paul's ministry or voluntary deprivations as it does everywhere else in the letter, but simply from being in the "tent" of the earthly body.⁴⁰ The section has nothing to do with Paul's ministry or his relationship to the Corinthians; rather, it is Paul's articulation of the common Christian hope.⁴¹ In *these* verses, Paul *is* speaking as a

³⁷ With the majority of textual witnesses and commentators, I read ἐνδυσάμενοι rather than ἐκδυσάμενοι here.

³⁸ I am translating ἐφ' ᾧ with the so-called "consecutive" meaning that Joseph Fitzmyer (1993) persuasively argues for in the case of Rom 5:12. Thus the verse depicts Paul's desire to be clothed as the result of his groaning rather than vice versa. Although a believer can groan in view of a better future reality, such groaning is directly an expression of the pain of a present reality (see Rom 8:22–23). Likewise, in 5:2 I have translated the participle ἐπιποθοῦντες as though it were the result and not the cause of στενάζομεν. The present tense of the participle and the fact that it follows the main verb support this decision (see Wallace 1996: 631, 638).

³⁹ Cf. similar constructions in 2 Cor 1:11; 9:14. As Lindgård notes, "Scholars commonly agree that the genitive absolute gives the first half of 4:18 a rather independent character. . . . The conditional, causal and consecutive interpretations of the participle do not give the clause enough independence since the connection to the previous verse becomes too tight" (2005: 95). Cf. Thrall 1994: 355.

⁴⁰ Though Harris reads both ἐπιποθοῦντες (5:2) and ἐφ' ᾧ (5:4) as causal, he nevertheless declares that the Christian's groaning in this section "expresses their profound dissatisfaction or frustration with the limitations and disabilities of bodily existence on earth when compared with the glories of the new age" (2005: 388).

⁴¹ Contra Sumney (2009: 22–25), who believes that Paul reserved the reward of a conscious intermediate state only for martyrs and those within the apostolic company. This view is contradicted by Paul's early effective history. In particular, see §4.2.3 and §6.2.3.

Christian and not as an apostle per se. This universal hope informs the Christian practice of looking to what is unseen (4:18a), which is supported by everything else in the section. Hence, in my view 4:18 begins a description of Paul the Christian's approach to death and his hope for beyond death—a description that is tangential to the preceding and subsequent reflections (2 Cor 4:16–17; 5:6–10).

The first and most basic support for the Christian practice of looking to what is unseen is found in 4:18b: what is unseen is eternal. The rest of the section (5:1–5) explicates what this unseen, eternal hope is. It is the resurrection body.⁴² In contrast to the present body, which is an “earthly dwelling of a tent,” the resurrection body according to 5:1 is directly divine in origin (“a dwelling not made by hands”), “eternal,” and presently unseen (as it is “in the heavens”).

Students of Pauline eschatology have long grappled with 2 Cor 5:1 and its the troublesome present-tense verb ἔχομεν. A straightforward reading of the verse may suggest that believers receive the resurrection body immediately upon death. However, this would flatly contradict both 1 Thess 4:16 and 1 Cor 15:52, which present the resurrection of the body in conjunction with the sounding of God's trumpet on the last day. In response to this apparent inconsistency some commentators insist that the nettle must be grasped. 2 Corinthians 5:1 then becomes a launching pad for theories concerning the development of Paul's eschatology (see, e.g., Boismard 1999). Other commentators attempt to navigate the problem by offering ingenious—but in my view, implausible—interpretations of the “building from God.” Margaret Thrall, in her commentary on this verse, lists nine different interpretations of the phrase (1994: 363–67). Yet the majority of commentators understand the building from God to refer to the resurrection body and thus

⁴² I cannot here interact with Furnish's view that the heavenly dwelling of 2 Cor 5:1 is an image for the new age (1984: 294–95; cf. Ellis 1960: 217–18) nor with Marvin Pate's view that 2 Cor 4:16–5:10 should be read against the backdrop of Paul's Adam Christology (1991: 107–36; cf. Ellis 1960: 223–24). Neither view has garnered much scholarly support. I do agree with Furnish that Rom 8:18–27 provides useful commentary on 2 Cor 4:18–5:5, but Furnish's discussion of this parallel tellingly omits the reality for which Paul groans: the redemption of his body (Rom 8:23).

turn their attention to ἔχομεν itself, often arguing that the verb represents a futuristic present or that it has no specific temporal force.

In my view, the best exposition of this verse has been set forth by Murray Harris. After laying out a helpful taxonomy of interpretive options (2005: 374–80), Harris argues for his option B.1.b, “Future acquisition of the spiritual body at death as an ideal possession actualized at the parousia.” Basically Harris means that a believer, at death, comes to have the resurrection body as an entitled possession rather than as an actual one. As Harris points out, it is common and intelligible to speak of an heir *having* an inheritance even before it is actually acquired (379). Likewise, it is reasonable for Paul to claim, on the basis of promise, that he *has* a resurrection body.⁴³ Harris then registers an important potential objection: “It could be objected that Paul would have dated any ideal possession of the spiritual body from the time of the believer’s election or regeneration, not simply from the time of death” (2005: 379).⁴⁴ Harris meets this with only a brief reply: “There could not, however, be ‘possession’ of a spiritual body—whether real or ideal—as long as a believer possessed a physical body” (379). Yet could not a believer inhabit a physical body while at the same time “possessing” a spiritual body *by promise*? Moreover, Harris’s reply does not directly answer the question of why precisely *at death* the believer has a spiritual body.

A more compelling response to this objection may be to contend that, for Paul, a believer’s future eschatological blessings are only secured at death because it is only at death that a person’s life may be finally evaluated. A judge may make a final decision about a person’s life only after all the evidence is in, even if that decision is announced publicly much later; an athlete’s crown is won only when he crosses the finish line, even if that crown is awarded at a later ceremony.⁴⁵ I therefore read 2 Cor 5:1 as implying that

⁴³ The thought in 2 Cor 5:1 could almost be axiomatic along the lines of 1 Cor 15:44b: “If there is a natural body, there is [for the believer] also a spiritual body.” Note that the apodosis is presented in the present tense (ἔστιν), not the future.

⁴⁴ This objection is not adequately addressed by those who read ἔχομεν as a futuristic present (e.g., Woodbridge 2003).

⁴⁵ For a more thorough discussion of this logic, see §10.4.1 and §11.2.3, below.

the resurrection body will be laid up or reserved for Paul once he faithfully finishes the course of his life and ministry.

The last issue to consider in this section is the meaning of “naked” (γυμνός) in 5:3 and Paul’s desire to be clothed in 5:4. While some have read γυμνός in an ethical sense (i.e., devoid of good works at the judgment), the immediate context, which repeatedly refers to human bodies using building and clothing imagery, strongly points to the traditional interpretation that being “naked” is being without a body.⁴⁶ Far from indicating that Paul was fearful of death or abhorred the intermediate state, the critical supposition to make is that “γυμνοί and ἐκδύσασθαι together form an allusion to some aberrant view of which Paul disapproves” (Harris 2005: 388).⁴⁷ Judging from 1 Cor 15, it seems as if Paul is in implicit dialogue with (proto-Gnostic?) detractors who questioned the resurrection and advocated for a permanent state of bodilessness. Against this view Paul asserts that his groaning in the earthly body does not prompt a desire for disembodiment but for re-embodiment—a clothing with a better body.⁴⁸ Paul’s reference to the Holy Spirit in 5:5 may be another nod to 1 Cor 15, in which he argued that the believer’s hope was for a body animated by and fully responsive to the Holy Spirit. As Paul writes, “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν)” (1 Cor 15:44b). As Israel’s tabernacle or “tent” was a precursor to the temple, so the earthly body is intended to foreshadow the heavenly one. The thought in 2 Cor 4:18–5:5 runs along lines similar to 1 Cor 15 (cf. Gillman 1988) and may be Paul’s (abbreviated) second run at a persistent and deviant eschatological view in Corinth.

⁴⁶ Cf. γυμνός in 1 Cor 15:37, the only other occurrence of this noun in Paul. Clement appears to use γυμνός in a similar way in *1 Clem.* 24.5 as he develops a Pauline metaphor to defend the concept of bodily resurrection. See also the numerous Jewish and Greco-Roman texts mentioned by Thrall 1994: 374–77. I am not persuaded by Lindgård 2005:164–73 and Vogel 2006: 270–79 that nakedness has reference to social status in this passage.

⁴⁷ See Lindgård 2005: 15n24 for a list of commentators who espouse some variation of this view.

⁴⁸ I read ἐπενδύω (2 Cor 5:2, 4) and ἐνδύω (1 Cor 15:53–54) as synonyms. See Harris 2005: 382–84 for a discussion and competent defense of this view.

9.4.3 Paul's Penultimate Hope: Being Away from the Body (2 Cor 5:6–10)

My reading of 2 Cor 4:18–5:5 still leaves us with the conundrum of how to relate 2 Cor 5:4 and 5:8. Here is the entire passage:

6 Therefore, always being confident and knowing that by being at home in the body I am away from the Lord— **7** for I am walking by faith and not by visible form— **8** I am confident and would rather go away from the body and go home to the Lord. **9** Therefore I indeed aspire, whether at home or going away, to be pleasing to him. **10** For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one might receive recompense for that which is through the body, that which each has done, whether good or bad.

The first features of this passage to notice are the anacoluthon in vv. 6 and 8, and the insertion of v. 7, both of which disrupt Paul's flow of thought. A clean and simplified articulation of Paul's thought in vv. 6 and 8 would probably run like this: "Since I am confident and since I know that by being at home in the body I am away from the Lord, I would rather go away from the body and go home to the Lord." *Θαποῶντες* (5:6) is a present participle while *εἰδότες* (5:6) is a perfect participle, but the repetition of the verb *θαρπέω* at the start of v. 8 indicates that Paul's confidence is directly related to his preference to leave the body, and so I think it reasonable to read both participles as causal.⁴⁹ Therefore, as I read it, Paul provides two reasons for why he prefers to depart from the body to go to the Lord: his confidence and his view of the intermediate state.

The insertion of v. 7, introduced with the conjunction *γάρ*, provides support for what Paul knows in v. 6b (cf. Thrall 1994: 338; Schmeller 2010: 302). To be at home in the body is to live in the realm of faith, where many of the blessings promised to the believer remain yet unrealized and therefore "unseen" (cf. 2 Cor 4:18; 1 Cor 13:12). The realm of faith is contrasted with the realm of "sight" (or "visible form" if the noun is to be understood in a passive sense). The parallels imply that to be at home with the Lord would be to live in this realm, where fellowship with the ascended Christ is more direct and immediate. This understanding is repeatedly assumed and expressed in the early

⁴⁹ Calvin 1996 [1547]: 69, 70 reads the *καί* in 5:6 and the first *καί* in 5:8 as causal, making Paul's hope to be with the Lord the basis for his confidence. Although this has become the default reading of the logic, it strains the grammar and contravenes the dynamics of encouragement in the letter as a whole.

Christian writings we studied in Part II. In particular, recall Pol *Phil.* 9.2 in which Paul among others, after death, was “in the place owed to them, *with the Lord*” (see also *I Clem.* 5.7; Ign. *Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 4.3; and *MPI* 4). This makes sense of why Paul would want to leave the body: it would entail a more intimate experience of the Lord.⁵⁰ But again, how can this preference be reconciled with Paul’s statement in 2 Cor 5:4 that he did not want to be unclothed (i.e., disembodied)?

The most common solution is that Paul was of “two minds” about death.⁵¹ Ralph Martin expresses this solution well: “Paul could easily have two minds about death. On the one hand, he could shrink from death, for it held possibilities that he would like to avoid. On the other hand, to be free from this body would lead to a greater level of fellowship with Christ” (1986: 112). I think that this is a misleading way to think about Paul’s approach to his death. The combination of 2 Cor 5:4 and 5:8 is better explained with an analogy:

Imagine a young man who is in love and intends to be married. Such a man could naturally express a preference for engagement over his current state of singleness. Engagement, after all, brings a depth of relationship that is not possible in singleness. At the same time, however, such a man could also state, without contradiction, that he does not want to be engaged forever—he wants to be married. This situation would not necessitate that the young man is of “two minds” about engagement, as though engagement were an undesirable state in itself. What would be undesirable is if the engagement was never fulfilled in marriage. So the period of engagement could be eagerly anticipated if it were viewed as a *necessary* but *temporary* prelude to marriage.

I would submit that this analogy applies *mutatis mutandis* to Paul’s reflections in 2 Cor 5:3–8. Paul did not articulate any fear of death or any hesitation in leaving his body to be with the Lord (and neither did his earliest followers, such as Ignatius, who was expressly following in Paul’s footsteps). However, Paul (and Ignatius) firmly believed that this state of “nakedness” was only a transitional phase to a much better and permanent state of resurrected embodiedness.⁵² To ask whether Paul favored remaining alive until the

⁵⁰ Cf. Phil 1:23 and the discussion of it in the next chapter. This is a more natural reading than positing, as Murphy-O’Connor does (2010: 105–15), that 2 Cor 5:6b is a Corinthian slogan that Paul rejected.

⁵¹ It is also common to read that Paul viewed death as a “paradox” (e.g., Woodbridge 2003: 257).

⁵² Some commentators (e.g., Garland 1999: 260) insist that believers receive resurrected bodies immediately upon death and therefore never experience a bodiless state. This view necessitates radical and

Parousia above the intermediate state is a moot question since Paul had already received the decision of death—he knew he was going to die (see §9.3.1 above). If Paul exhibited “two minds” about anything it was not about the advantages of the intermediate state compared to its disadvantages, but rather the advantages of the intermediate state compared to the advantages of remaining alive for ministry (for which, see the discussion of Phil 1:18d–26 in the next chapter).

What this account of 2 Cor 5:6–8 has omitted thus far is any discussion of the significance of the repeated verb *θαρρέω*. Most commentaries gloss over this verb. Yet the question to be asked here is similar to the question we asked of 2 Cor 1:9: “Paul’s confidence *in what* leads to his preference to leave the body?” The fleeting attention paid to this question by most scholars usually assumes that it is Paul’s confidence in the mortal being swallowed by life (5:4), or God’s preparation of him for this (5:5), that drives his desire to leave his body. Yet if 4:18–5:5 really does represent a slight digression in Paul’s argument, as I have argued, then we would be surprised if 5:6 was directly building upon that passage.

The key, one more time, is to identify *θαρρέω* as a term within the framework of the letter’s theology of encouragement.⁵³ Outside of 2 Cor 5:6 and 8, *θαρρέω* occurs only three times in 2 Corinthians and nowhere else in Paul’s letters. In 2 Cor 10:1–2 it seems to bear the nuance “to be bold” since it is contrasted with *ταπεινός* (“meek” or “diffident”). Yet even here it is related to the concept of “confidence” as it is modified by *πεποιθήσις* (10:2). The most relevant use of *θαρρέω* is in 2 Cor 7:16, “I rejoice because in everything I have confidence in you [Corinthians]” (*χαίρω ὅτι ἐν παντὶ θαρρῶ ἐν ὑμῖν*). Paul’s confidence in the Corinthians arises from Titus’s report of the Corinthians’ obedience (7:15). This places 2 Cor 7:16 squarely within the dynamics of encouragement outlined above. Nowhere in 2 Corinthians does encouragement, boasting, confidence,

inexplicable oscillations in Paul’s eschatology and it flexes 2 Cor 5:6 and 8 to the breaking point. Could Paul really describe resurrection embodiedness as being away from the body?

⁵³ Though Vegge categorizes the verb *θαρρέω* as confidence terminology (2008: 141), he never discusses 2 Cor 5:6, 8.

boldness, or joy arise directly from Paul's assurance of his own individual resurrection. Such terms always stand in relationship to Paul's perception of God's work through his ministry to bring about the salvation, obedience, life, and glory of the Corinthians.

Recognizing this prompts us to consider a new interpretation of 2 Cor 5:8. The verb *θαππέω* in this verse could indicate that Paul prefers to take leave of his body because he is confident that God will sustain and complete his work among the Corinthians even in his absence (cf. Phil 1:6; Acts 20:32). If Paul was not assured of the Corinthians' spiritual well-being, he might not prefer to leave his body but to stay and labor among them. When read in this way one immediately notices the striking similarities between 2 Cor 5:8 and Phil 1:23–26. Both passages include reflections on whether it is better to stay or to go.⁵⁴

The parallels between 2 Cor 5 and Phil 1 also suggest an intriguing interpretation for 2 Cor 5:9: “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him” (NRSV). Commentators have long wrung their hands over this verse because it might suggest that Paul envisioned a scenario in which he was at home with the Lord and yet not pleasing to him.⁵⁵ Yet when *ἐκδημοῦντες* in 5:9 is properly translated as “going away [from the body],” describing motion and not residence,⁵⁶ the parallel to Phil 1:20 emerges clearly:

2 Cor 5:9: “Therefore I indeed aspire, whether at home [in the body] or going away [from the body], to be pleasing to him.”

Phil 1:20: “[It is] according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but in all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.”

The last verse of this section, 2 Cor 5:10, grounds Paul's aspiration to please the Lord (5:9) by reference to Christ's future judgment of works. The phrase *τοὺς πάντας ἡμᾶς* (“all of us”) widens Paul's scope of reference to include the Corinthian believers

⁵⁴ One may feel some tension between Paul's stated preference to depart in 2 Cor 5:8 and his eventual decision to stay in Phil 1:25. This will be addressed in §12.1.3.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., R. P. Martin 1986: 113–14; Thrall 1994: 393; Barnett 1997: 273; Harris 2005: 405; and Lindgård 2005: 206.

⁵⁶ Cf. the ingressive aorist *ἐνδημῆσαι* in 2 Cor 5:8. See Furnish 1984: 274.

explicitly, much as 2 Cor 3:18 did (cf. ἡμεῖς πάντες) earlier in the letter (cf. Schmeller 2010: 286). This does not necessitate, however, that the judgment described in 2 Cor 5:10 is restricted to Paul and the Corinthian believers, or even to Christians in general. If someone today were to write a letter to his church, asserting “All of us must pay taxes to the government,” this hardly implies that only people at that particular church must pay taxes or that only Christians pay taxes. Taxes, like judgment, are universal in scope. This broad scope of reference is signaled when Paul writes “each one [i.e., each human being]” (ἕκαστος) must receive recompense for what they have done (cf. the use of ἕκαστος in Rom 2:6; 14:12). The universality of this judgment explains the subsequent inference in 2 Cor 5:11: “Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we persuade [all] *people* (ἀνθρώπους; cf. 3:2; 4:2; 8:21).

The universality of Christ’s judgment also makes sense of the singular adjectives ἀγαθόν and φαῦλον. The shift from the plural τὰ and ἃ to the singular adjectives suggests that a person’s deeds will be judged as a whole, either as good or as bad. However uncomfortable Paul’s stark, binary terms might make modern readers, in his thought a person either sows to their own flesh or to the Spirit (Gal 6:8), either does good or disobeys (Rom 2:7–8). Where we may want to see shades of gray, Paul writes in black and white. Thus Paul would have anticipated that he and the Corinthian believers would receive recompense for the good that they did in the body; Paul’s opponents (see 2 Cor 11:15) and unbelievers would receive recompense for the bad they did. The typical interpretation of 2 Cor 5:10, which restricts the judgment to Christians alone, assumes that Christians do both good *and* bad (cf. εἴτε ἀγαθόν εἴτε φαῦλον), and thus associates the judgment with “rewards” and “punishments” but not salvation and condemnation, is therefore wrong on all three counts.⁵⁷ The logic of 2 Cor 5:9–10 is similar to Gal 6:7–10: earthly conduct is indicative of eternal destiny, which motivates the doing of good. This simple binary perspective is also present in Paul’s early effective history, in which the conduct of Paul and other saints is presented in a consistently positive terms.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Hughes 1962: 181–83; Thrall 1994: 394–95; Harris 2005: 406–9.

9.5 Conclusion: Paul's Reevaluation of His Life, Death, and Body

Our investigation of 2 Corinthians has suggested that Paul's affliction in Asia (1:8) and the concurrent divine decision of death (1:9) goaded Paul for the first time to formulate his approach to his own death. However, his resulting reflections were not cut from whole cloth but were rather re-stitched from fundamental theological convictions. In 2 Corinthians Paul's perspective on his own suffering had not changed; neither had his anthropology nor his understanding of the timing of bodily resurrection. Paul had not moved from a partial self-reliance to a total God-reliance. In my reading, these aspects of Paul's theology and experience are not discernibly different in 2 Corinthians from what they had been in earlier letters.

What evidently had changed was that previously Paul anticipated surviving until the Parousia, while afterwards he knew he would not. This occasioned another change: Paul came to view his body as marked for death; he realized that "deadness" (νέκρωσις; 2 Cor 4:10) had set in; mortification and decay (4:16) were underway. This caused Paul to emphasize that his body was only temporary accommodation, a "tent" (σκήνος; 2 Cor 5:1, 4), and that soon he would be without it. While Paul's hope was *not* for permanent disembodiment—he was promised an eternal and heavenly dwelling—at the same time he did not fear dying or abhor the so-called intermediate state. Rather, confident that God was at work among the Corinthians, Paul preferred to leave his body for the intimacy with the Lord that this would afford.

The two stages of Paul's future hope render his approach to death in 2 Corinthians complex but not muddled or hopelessly conflicted. Even though further clarity on the relevant passages should be sought, this much is clear: in approaching death, Paul's thoughts were not bent inward in existential anxiety but outward toward his fellow believers and upward toward his God.

Chapter 10

Paul the Drink Offering: Paul Approaches Death in Philippians

10.1 Introduction: Facing Death in Rome

If it can be said that the stench of death pervades 2 Corinthians, then Paul's letter to the Philippians must be written in death's shadow. Paul most likely writes this letter from an imprisonment in Rome (ca. A.D. 62), awaiting there the resolution of his trial on capital charges.¹ Furthermore, as James Ware has noted, "The importance of Paul's life or death struggle in prison in behalf of the gospel as the backdrop to the entire letter, while often unappreciated, can hardly be overstated" (2005: 172).² These circumstances, rather than producing a glum or introspective letter, have occasioned one of the most radiantly joyful and mission-focused letters in all of early Christianity. This is remarkable since Philippians contains the Apostle Paul's most personal and transparent contemplations of his own death.³

¹ I am aware that Ephesus, Caesarea, and even Corinth have been proposed as places of composition for the letter(s). Nevertheless, reference to the *praetorium* and Caesar's household (1:13; 4:22), the real threat of execution (1:20; 2:23), the omission of any reference to the Jerusalem collection, and the uniform testimony of early Christian tradition, among other considerations, are in my view best explained by a Roman provenance. These considerations aside, Paul's reflections on his own death in this letter do not appear to be his first reflections on the subject (as they do in 2 Corinthians). Regarding the canonical letter's compositional history, the various partition theories hardly offer a better explanation of the letter's "final" form than Pauline authorship does. Thus this chapter will proceed on the assumption of the letter's integrity and a setting in Rome.

² While Craig Wansink is careful not to draw undue inferences, anyone who reads his long description of prisons in the ancient Roman world (1996: 27–95) will likely gain the conviction that Paul's imprisonments must have had a palpable effect on any letters written in that setting. If the setting of this letter is to be correlated with Acts 28, it seems as if Philippians was written after the two years mentioned in 28:30 since the conditions of Paul's imprisonment have apparently worsened.

³ Ernst Lohmeyer (1928) underlined this by positing that the letter is a treatise written on martyrdom.

In the previous chapter we have argued that in the midst of a severe affliction in Asia, probably sometime around A.D. 56, Paul learned that he was going to die—he received the divine decision of death (2 Cor 1:9). This caused him to view his ministry (2 Cor 2:14–16) and body (2 Cor 4:10–12, 16) as death-bound. Nevertheless, he did hold out hope for future deliverances (2 Cor 1:10). He thought he would die, but not yet.

In coming to Rome about four years later Paul may have sensed that circumstances were now aligning for his death. In any case, being bound in chains and under constant surveillance must have been a daily reminder that his situation was dire. Forebodings of death would have been all the more poignant if Paul was convinced that his journeys would extend at least as far as Rome but perhaps not beyond (see Acts 23:11 and §3.2.2).

This chapter will examine Paul's approach to his death as expressed in the letter to the Philippians. In particular, we will focus on Phil 1:18d–26, with attention also given to 2:16b–18 and 3:7–14. We will observe that Paul's contemplation of his own death revolves around a concern for his spiritual children and a desire to be with the Lord. This double axis has already been perceived in 2 Corinthians, but tracing it in Philippians will inform our reading of the text.

10.2 The Advance of the Gospel in Paul's Life and Death (Phil 1:18d–26)

The first section of the body of the letter (1:12–26) has two explicit purposes: to demonstrate how the gospel is progressing despite Paul's imprisonment and to disclose Paul's contemplation of the potential outcomes of his pending trial. These two explicit purposes correspond to two implicit ones: Paul's narration of the gospel's advance is designed to inculcate a similar overriding concern for the gospel among the Philippians with the attendant conviction that the gospel can advance despite suffering and opposition; and Paul's musing on possible life or death provides the Philippians with a model of looking out for the interests of others (cf. Phil 2:4). Thus, as many commentators have suggested, the passage is overtly apologetic and informative but implicitly paraenetic (see e.g., Fee 1995: 107).

While these proposals are not particularly controversial, commentators have not sufficiently appreciated how these explicit and implicit purposes interweave throughout the *whole* of the section. Many commentators write as if vv. 12–18c depict the gospel’s progress, while vv. 18d–26 (or at least vv. 18d–24) more narrowly concern Paul’s individual fate. Comprehending the public and “gospel” dimension to vv. 18d–24 leads to a different reading of σωτηρία (v. 19), μεγαλύνω (v. 20), and the epigrammatic statement Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος (v. 21). In examining these verses we will see again that Paul’s approach to death (at least as it is expressed in his letters) was born from and nurtured by his apostolic calling and pastoral concern.

10.2.1 Setting the Stage for Paul’s Soliloquy: From What Would Paul Be Delivered? (Phil 1:12–18c)

The meaning of the term σωτηρία in Phil 1:19 presents a fork in the road for interpreters. Most interpreters understand σωτηρία here in its usual Pauline sense: eternal or transcendent salvation. A few interpreters understand the term to refer to Paul’s imminent deliverance from physical imprisonment (e.g., Hawthorne 1983: 40; Thurston and Ryan 2005: 62; Reumann 2008: 243). Others believe that the term deliberately encompasses both aspects (e.g., Schenk 1984: 145; Fowl 2005: 45; Ware 2005: 209; Giesen 2006: 241). What all of these understandings have in common is that they chart a course for interpreting 1:18d–20 in a very individualistic manner. Paul’s subsequent statement concerning life and death in 1:21 then becomes myopically focused on Paul’s self-concern. This often leads to an abstraction of 1:21 and its generic application to all Christians. It is assumed that every Christian ought to be able to say “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

As Luke Timothy Johnson reminds us, however, the “historical and theological paradigms—at least as usually practiced—tend toward the general and the abstract” whereas the language of religious experience remains “specific and concrete” (1998: 182). We must resist the impulse to read Paul’s personal reflections here as generic

statements of Christian piety. This is best accomplished by first appreciating the literary (and historical) setting for Paul's reflections (1:12–18c).

The grammar of Phil 1:12 implies that the progress of the gospel in Paul's imprisonment contravenes prevailing expectations. Paul is enchained and severely restricted in his ability to preach. Yet it has become widely known that his bonds are in Christ (1:13) and this has led other Christians to speak more boldly and fearlessly as well (1:14). The progress of the gospel can thus be seen in the spread of knowledge about Christ among unbelievers (1:13) *and* in the growth of Christians (1:14).

Philippians 1:15–17 then adds an important clarification to Paul's positive report of the progress of the gospel among Christians. He concedes that while some of those emboldened to preach Christ do so out of love, others do so out of jealousy (φθόνος; 1:15), rivalry (ἔρις; 1:15), and selfish ambition (ἐριθεία; 1:17). Apparently the latter were threatened by Paul's presence in Rome. They did not view his imprisonment as a defense of the gospel (1:16) but as potentially undermining their own reputations and influence.⁴ In 1:17b Paul communicates (one of?) their intentions in preaching Christ: they do so supposing to stir up θλῖψις for Paul while he is in chains.⁵

The language in v. 17b is very unusual but commentators frequently treat it as a throw-away line. The noun θλῖψις often denotes external afflictions and this might suggest that Paul's rivals in Rome were somehow seeking to make the physical conditions of Paul's imprisonment harsher. Yet this interpretation is problematic. If it was already known that Paul was in prison for preaching Christ (1:13), how would the preaching of Christ by *others* induce Paul's Roman captors to make *his* physical suffering worse? This seems historically implausible. Furthermore, this makes Paul's rivals out to be truly cruel whereas the text merely suggests that they are petty and competitive.

⁴ Christfried Böttrich describes the envy they had for Paul's status in the church: "Neid, vom Ehrgeiz ausgelöst, motiviert und bestärkt das Begehren auf die Position des Paulus in der Gemeinde" (2004: 97).

⁵ The Greek is οἰόμενοι θλῖψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου. This is an odd use of ἐγείρω (though cf. Prov 17:11) and later scribes ostensibly sought to clarify the meaning by replacing it with the verb ἐπιφέρω (see Fee 1995: 117n3).

Therefore, as many commentators conclude, θλίψις in this instance probably describes mental anguish (cf. 2 Cor 2:4).

It seems reasonable, then, to picture these “impure” preachers as vaunting their freedom to move about and preach so as to highlight Paul’s present constraints.⁶ The anguish that Paul could have felt in this situation would stem from the same doubts that other Christians and even the Philippians might have been tempted to hold: Had Paul’s imprisonment rendered his ministry useless? Could the gospel no longer advance through him and his circumstances? Did chaining Paul effectively chain his preaching of the word of God (cf. 2 Tim 2:9)?

The attempts of these impure preachers did not rattle Paul, however. He did not give in to anguish but was rather filled with joy. Paul indicates that despite their pretense, they were actually preaching Christ, and Paul could rejoice in the progress of the gospel independent of—or perhaps, only indirectly related to—his own labors (1:18). If Christians were spurred on by his example to preach the gospel, he could rejoice in this regardless of whatever personal animosity some might have harbored toward him. Starting as it does with the question “What then?” (Τί γάρ), Philippians 1:18a–c describes the *first* way in which Paul counters the affliction that the impure preachers are seeking to inflict upon him (1:17b).

10.2.2 *The Magnification of Christ in Paul’s Body as His Deliverance (Phil 1:18d–21)*

This brings us to Phil 1:18d. The conjunctions and the repetition of the verb χαίρω suggest that Paul is pivoting to another source of his joy *but* that he is basically continuing his discourse.⁷ I do not see a harsh break in Paul’s flow of thought here as

⁶ Cf. O’Brien 1991: 102: “The meaning here is not that they deliberately set themselves to aggravate Paul’s sufferings or to cause him physical harm and injury, but rather to stir up some inward annoyance, some trouble of spirit, perhaps by bringing home to him the limitations and restraints of his condition (which they misunderstood) as contrasted with their own unfettered freedom.” See also Marshall 1991: 23–24; Thielman 1995: 62; Fowl 2005: 41; Ware 2005: 195; Giesen 2006: 237.

⁷ The Greek of Phil 1:18d is Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι, which I would paraphrase, “Moreover, in view of the anguish the impure preachers intend to stir up for me, I will continue to rejoice [for I know]”

many commentators do.⁸ This opens up the possibility that when Paul speaks of σωτηρία in Phil 1:19 he is neither referring to eternal salvation nor to deliverance from prison but rather deliverance from the threat of θλίψις (“anguish”) that he had described in Phil 1:17b. To my knowledge, this has never been suggested as a possibility.⁹ It will therefore require significant substantiation. Consider first a translation of 1:18d–21:

18 . . . Moreover, I will continue to rejoice, **19** for I know that this will turn out for deliverance (σωτηρία) for me, through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, **20** according to my eager expectation and hope, that I will be ashamed in nothing but that by all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

First, it could be said purely from a lexicographical perspective that σωτηρία can be paired with θλίψις.¹⁰ It is true that the terms are separated by some distance, but if v. 18a–c is written to respond to v. 17b, and v. 18d continues the theme of v. 18a–c, then perhaps the conceptual distance is not that far.

More importantly, it is clear that knowledge of his eventual σωτηρία is the basis for Paul’s joy in v. 18d: “I will continue to rejoice for (γάρ) I know that this will turn out for deliverance for me.” Hence the standard interpretations of σωτηρία must make the prospect of his individual salvation or his deliverance from prison the basis for Paul’s joy. This is unlikely.

The theme of joy is widely recognized in Philippians as forms of χαρά, χαίρω, and συγχαίρω occur 16 times.¹¹ However, in every other instance of these forms the basis for joy and rejoicing, where specified, is not future, individual salvation but present gospel ministry or gospel ministers (i.e., fellow Christians). This completely accords with what we saw in 2 Corinthians, where the source of Paul’s joy was consistently identified as

⁸ E.g., Giesen 2006: 240: “In v. 18b [= v. 18d] Paul moves on to a new topic. Now he reflects upon how his future will be and deals with questions of his addressees connected with his future.” Cf. Hawthorne 1983: 39; Müller 1993: 57; Schadick 2011: 154.

⁹ Although possibly no one has understood σωτηρία quite as I do, my overall perspective on the passage is shared by Holloway 2001: 108–9 and Hansen 2009: 77–81; and possibly by R. P. Martin 1987: 77; Marshall 1991: 24–25; and Silva 2005: 72.

¹⁰ See e.g., 4 Kgdms 13:4–5; Ps 36:39; 59:13; 107:13; Isa 33:2; 63:8–9.

¹¹ Cf. also εὐψυχέω in 2:19 and αὐτάρκης in 4:11.

God's work in and through the Corinthian believers.¹² It is possible that Paul rejoices at the prospect of his own eternal salvation or release from captivity, but Phil 1:18d would more naturally integrate with the theme of joy throughout the letter if it referred to Paul's deliverance from anguish over the possibility of his ministry ending with a whimper (as the impure preachers would have it). Paul will continue to rejoice because he knows that his ministry will not end in disgraceful impotence.

This understanding of σωτηρία strongly resonates with the echo of Job 13:16 in Phil 1:19.¹³ Commentators are quick to note this echo but they usually conclude that the significance of this embedded phrase—whether or not the Philippians would have caught it—was to align Paul with Job as a righteous sufferer who would be vindicated in God's heavenly court (see e.g., O'Brien 1991: 110; Croy 2003: 519). Yet this is somewhat misleading because in the book of Job God had already declared in heaven that Job was righteous (1:8). Job does not need to be vindicated in heaven but by God *on earth*. Furthermore, though Job's external afflictions and physical plight is narrated at the beginning of the book, much of the drama in the book exists between Job and his supposed "friends." These friends come to comfort Job (2:11) and yet as the dialogue proceeds we observe that their comfort turns to accusation. Part of the anguish that Job experiences is in bearing up under the insinuations and allegations of those who were meant to sympathize with him (cf. Phil 1:15–17).¹⁴

Job's declaration, "this will turn out for deliverance for me," in 13:16a is set within an extended speech stretching from Job 12–14. Significantly, this is the first time that Job speaks after all three friends have fired their opening salvos. He begins with a direct retort, "Shall wisdom come to end with you [pl.]?" (Job 12:2b).¹⁵ He then declares, "A

¹² See "Figure 7 – The Dynamics of Encouragement in 2 Corinthians" for the references.

¹³ Job 13:16 LXX and Phil 1:19 both include the identical phrase τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν. The verb ἀποβαίνω occurs nowhere else in the Pauline letters.

¹⁴ As Richard Hays claims, if "Paul tacitly likens himself to Job, the echo whispers a suggestion that the rival preachers have assumed the mantle of Job's hollow comforters; the falsehood of both will be exposed" (1989: 23).

¹⁵ It is also possible to translate Job 12:2 as the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) does, "So you alone are human beings; surely wisdom will die with you," in which case the verse should be

righteous and blameless man has become an object of mockery!” (12:4). Later on Job claims, “I am not more senseless than you [pl.]” (13:2). Job continues his harangue: “All of you are unrighteous physicians and healers of diseases. Oh, that you would be silent and it would turn out for wisdom for you (ἀποβήσεται ὑμῖν [εἰς σοφίαν]). . . . Are you not speaking before the Lord and uttering deceit (δόλος) before him or will you shrink back?” (13:4–5, 7–8a). In warning his friends of the perils of speaking before the Lord Job predicts, “He will convict (ἐλέγχω) you . . . Your pride will turn out (ἀποβήσεται) equal to ashes, your body, a body of clay” (13:10, 12). The verses that come next (Job 13:13–18) warrant a translation in full:

13 Be silent so that I may speak and cease from my anger, **14** having taken up my flesh in my teeth. I will place my life in my hand, **15** even if the Mighty One puts his hands upon me, as he already has begun to. Truly, I will speak and convict (ἐλέγχω) before him **16** and this will turn out for deliverance for me (τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν), for deceit (δόλος) will not enter in before him. **17** You [pl.] hear, hear my words! For I will declare while you [pl.] listen. **18** Behold, I myself am near to my judgment. I know that I will appear righteous.

When Job’s declaration in 13:16a is seen within its literary context, the deliverance or “salvation” that Job envisions could very well be deliverance from the false accusations and pride (13:12) of his supposed friends. Job’s bold, risk-taking speech before the judge—in this case, God¹⁶—will exonerate him but convict them. It is therefore too mild and ambiguous to translate v. 15b as “I will speak and argue my case before him” (NETS). Rather, the verb ἐλέγχω is better rendered as “convict.” Job is prosecuting his case before God and *against those who question him*. This, not incidentally, is how Eliphaz understands Job. Immediately after Job’s speech in chapters 12–14 Eliphaz contends that Job’s accusations will backfire: “May your own mouth convict (ἐλέγχω) you, and not I; your own lips will testify against (καταμαρτυρέω) you” (15:6; cf. 15:3).

read sarcastically. My translations of Job are from the LXX. As Ware says, “Paul’s citation is from the Old Greek (LXX) version, not the MT, and thus draws upon the conceptual background of this passage in the LXX, which is very different from the MT” (2005: 203).

¹⁶ While the noun δυνάστης often refers to mighty ones among men in the book of Job, the singular articular form in Job 13:15 (ὁ δυνάστης) indicates that the title is being used to refer to God (cf. Job 36:22); contra Ware 2005: 203. Furthermore, the context makes it plain that Job is seeking an audience with God (see Job 13:3, 7).

That Job 13:16a should be paraphrased “This bold speech of mine will turn out for my deliverance from my friends’ accusations” may also be indicated by 13:16b, which provides the ground for Job’s assurance of vindication. When Job declares that “deceit” (δόλος) will not enter in before God, he could have in mind the δόλος of his friends that he had mentioned in 13:7.

The narrator concludes Job’s dispute with his friends, after Job gets in the last word, with this telling statement: “Then his three friends ceased any longer to speak against Job, for Job was righteous before them” (32:1). This puts an interpretive spin on the entire dispute of chapters 3–31. Whether Job was righteous before God is another matter, but this much is clear: Job is righteous before his friends. Their accusations against him will be turned on their own heads (see Job 42:7–8).

In turning back to Phil 1:19 and its immediate context we see more clearly just how apposite Paul’s appropriation of Job’s phrase is. Paul anticipates that his bold speech at his upcoming trial (1:20) will vindicate his ministry. He will be delivered from the anguish that those who should have been his supporters were seeking to stir up for him. Paul’s echo of Job 13:16a also explains why his use of σωτηρία is so atypical. Paul does not use σωτηρία in 1:19 as he normally does (to denote eternal salvation) because he is intentionally preserving the wording and meaning of Job 13:16a.¹⁷

Another puzzle that this reading of σωτηρία solves is how the Philippians’ prayers and the provision of the Spirit are related to Paul’s deliverance. Commentators sometimes admit that it is a little theologically unsettling to think of Paul’s eternal salvation being accomplished through the prayers of the Philippians. If Paul’s σωτηρία refers to his deliverance from insinuations of his inefficacy in prison, however, then the relation of their prayers to his “deliverance” becomes apparent and unproblematic: the Philippians were to pray for Paul to have opportunity, boldness, and clarity in proclaiming the gospel,

¹⁷ As Hays points out, though, there are important differences as well: “For Job, God appears to be the adversary in the litigation, the party inflicting injustice, at least temporarily. Paul, however, sees God as his own defender and vindicator, not as his adversary” (1989: 22). What remains constant is that both Job and Paul are blameless yet suffering, and both are victims of “friendly fire.”

as Christians are instructed to pray elsewhere in the Pauline letters.¹⁸ Paul would be delivered by his continued boldness, as God fulfilled his purposes through his suffering.

God's provision of the Spirit (reading τοῦ πνεύματος as an epexegetical genitive; cf. Gal 3:5) is also related to bold speech, most clearly in the canonical Acts (e.g., 1:8; 4:29–31; 6:10) but also here in Phil 1:19–20 and somewhat obliquely elsewhere in the Pauline letters (e.g., 2 Cor 3:8–12; 2 Tim 1:6–8). The designation of the Spirit as “of Jesus Christ” is highly unusual but perhaps may be explained by a striking parallel in 2 Tim 4:17. There Paul is deserted at his first defense, “but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.” In Phil 1:19 Paul may view the provision of the Spirit as the means by which Christ's presence will be mediated to him at his trial, as Paul courageously speaks before hostile authorities as Jesus did before the Jewish council and Pilate (cf. 1 Tim 6:13). This all points to a deliverance effected during his trial and not in his release or at his execution.¹⁹

In the next verse, Phil 1:20, Paul claims that his deliverance will be “according to my eager expectation and hope, that I will be ashamed in nothing but that by all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.” It is imperative to read this expectation and hope, as most commentators have, against the concrete backdrop of Paul's upcoming trial. He will be given an opportunity to speak and he wants to speak boldly as he has been doing in his imprisonment thus far.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. the comments of Frank Thielman, who unwittingly makes my case: “Paul frequently asked the churches to which he wrote for their prayers that he would be kept safe (Rom. 15:30–31a; 2 Cor 1:10–11; 2 Thess. 3:2; cf. Philem. 22), that his apostolic labor would progress unhindered (Rom. 15:31b–32; 2 Thess. 3:1; cf. 1 Thess. 5:25), and that he would proclaim the gospel clearly (Col. 4:3–4) and fearlessly (Eph. 6:19). Only in Philippians 1:19, however, does he speak of prayer for his ultimate salvation” (1995: 81). Ben Witherington contends that the Philippians would be praying for Paul's release, “not for Paul to hold on to the faith until death” (2011: 84; but cf. page 85). This view does not explain why the Philippians' prayers are conjoined with the provision of the Spirit and it overlooks texts such as Col 4:3–4 and Eph 6:19.

¹⁹ Cf. Hansen 2009: 79: “Paul's focus in verse 20 is neither temporal, physical release from prison and execution nor eschatological salvation and ultimate vindication before God in heaven. As verse 20 will show, Paul expects a deliverance that will happen *now as always*, a deliverance that will happen when *Christ will be exalted in my body*.”

²⁰ This is an implication of Phil 1:12–14. Note also the phrase ὡς πάντοτε καὶ νῦν (1:20).

This is confirmed by the word *παρρησία*, which as Ware declares, “in ancient literature is always connected with boldness or openness in *speech*, and in the New Testament it is frequently associated, as here, with the fearless *proclamation* of the gospel” (2005: 204–5). The alternative to Paul’s bold speech is being ashamed. This does not refer to eschatological shame but to the shame Paul could experience at his trial if he failed to maintain his witness to Christ.²¹ If Paul did keep silent or compromised his witness by what he said, then he would be ashamed and the anguish of an impotent ministry would be realized—his chains *would* impede the progress of the gospel. Paul is confident, however, that through the prayers of the Philippians and the provision of the Spirit, this will not happen.

When reading the phrase *μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστὸς ἐν τῷ σώματί μου* (“Christ will be magnified in my body”) it is important to note that Paul did *not* write *δοξασθήσεται Χριστός* (“Christ will be glorified”) or *τιμηθήσεται Χριστός* (“Christ will be honored”).²² It must be assumed that in choosing a more uncommon verb, which he employs only once in his other extant letters (2 Cor 10:15), Paul deliberately wanted to connote the idea of extension. This nuance is clear in 2 Cor 10:15. The English word “magnify” captures the sense of *μεγαλύνω* well: Paul did want Christ to be glorified in his body but he also wanted Christ to become known in a wider sphere through his testimony at the trial. Perceiving this dimension to the word *μεγαλύνω* immediately connects it to the theme of the progress—or perhaps, “expansion” (*προκοπή*)—of the gospel, which forms an *inclusio* for Phil 1:12–26 and serves as the *entire* section’s theme.²³ As developed in

²¹ Cf. Hansen 2009: 80 and Ware 2005: 204: “Elsewhere in the New Testament *αἰσχύνομαι* uniformly expresses the subject’s own sense of disgrace or humiliation, and means to ‘be ashamed.’ . . . Paul’s expectation and hope is that he will not be ashamed of the gospel, but rather that through his bold testimony Christ will be magnified.” Cf. the use of *παρρησία* in *Mart. Pol.* 10.1.

²² Nijay Gupta (2008) attempts to read Phil 1:18d–26 within the honor-shame culture of the first century and the Jewish literary tradition of the “honorable wish for death.” It seems to me, however, that Gupta essentially transforms Phil 1:20–21 into a reflection of how Paul—not Christ—will be “honored,” whether by life or death.

²³ Cf. Schenk 1984: 148–49. He argues that the context demands “eine Synonymentsprechung” (149) between the *προκοπή τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* of 1:12 and *μεγαλυνθήσεται Χριστός* of 1:20. In addition Müller

chapter 13, this reading of Phil 1:12–26 offers an intriguing explanation for why Paul the herald became an important image for the departed Paul in his early effective history.

At this point we may note again that an expression of Paul's joy (1:18d) over the prospect of his individual salvation (1:19) could be in accord with the hope that Christ would be *glorified* in his person throughout his whole life, irrespective of others. I would argue that the very particular setting for these verses suggests instead that Paul's joy over the prospect of the vindication of his ministry would more naturally be in accord with his hope that Christ would be *magnified* during his trial as Christ was made known to others (cf. Phil 1:13). In other words, Paul's choice of the verb *μεγαλύνω* is more readily assimilated into my reading of *σωτηρία* in 1:19 than into the reading of 1:19 that is typically given.

Verse 20 ends with Paul's expectation that Christ will be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death." The corporeal emphasis again fits with the very public nature of his testimony. It is not that Paul will glorify Christ by his own subjective, internal—and thus unobservable—beliefs or emotions (though certainly Christ would be pleased with these) but that Paul will magnify Christ in ways that could be observed by others, even unbelievers. As G. Walter Hansen contends,

[Paul] knows that the prayers of his partners and the presence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will empower him to speak with such boldness before the Roman tribunal that Christ will be exalted. That is the *deliverance* that Paul expects. God's salvation will be experienced in the *now* and in the *body*. What Paul is talking about in this context is neither a salvation from execution nor a salvation in heaven, but a salvation of the Spirit of Christ in the present, an empowering to be a bold witness for Christ his Lord. (2009: 81)

This magnification of Christ will happen irrespective of the outcome of Paul's trial, whether he was released or executed, as the next verse (1:21) explains.²⁴

states, "Die passivischen Aussagen über Christus in V. 18 ['verkündigt werden'] und 20 ['verherrlicht werden'] stehen durchaus parallel" (1993: 58). See also Giesen 2006: 243; Reumann 2008: 215.

²⁴ John Reumann has a very different take on this section: "In 1:18d–26 Paul touches on his inner feelings about what he has done in asserting citizenship, an action controversial in Ephesus, needing explanation to the Philippians" (2008: 238; cf. Collange 1979 [1973]: 62). As Reumann acknowledges, this reading is dependent on an imprisonment in Ephesus. It also involves a great deal of speculation. Another peculiar reading of this section is presented by Rodney Reeves: "Perhaps Paul's choice was not between life

We now approach a sentence that may be even more memorable in Greek than it is in English: Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος (“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”). The carefully balanced construction has the ring of a Pauline maxim. One must recognize, however, that it has been integrated into Paul’s argument with a γάρ. Despite those who do not grapple with the force of his conjunction (e.g., Hawthorne 1983: 44; O’Brien 1991: 117; Fee 1995: 139), a straightforward reading would take v. 21 as support for v. 20. Paul is explaining how it is that Christ will be magnified in *his* body during and after *his* trial. Thus the pronoun Ἐμοί with which the sentence starts reminds us that this language is very specific and concrete. Moving too quickly to generalization or abstraction will distort the interpretation.

In explicating what it means for Paul’s life to be “Christ,” most commentators suggest that the person of Christ is the organizing principle or chief motivating factor of Paul’s life. For example, Peter O’Brien claims, “Paul asserts that living has no meaning apart from Christ; he is the object, motive, inspiration, and goal of all that the apostle does” (1991: 120; cf. Hawthorne 1983: 45). Hansen states, “The foundation, center, purpose, direction, power, and meaning of Paul’s life is Christ. . . . For Paul the reality that living is Christ meant that he considered *everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ*, and, in fact, Paul had lost all things and considered them rubbish, in order that he might *gain Christ*” (2009: 82). It appears to me that such commentary needlessly imports concepts from Phil 3:7–8 to fill out the interpretation. A reading that is more sensitive to the immediate context would be to understand Paul’s statement “to live is Christ” as a distillation of his ministry. His life in the flesh is entirely consumed with preaching Christ and teaching about Christ. This is how Christ is to be made known—or “magnified”—if the decision is in his favor and he is released. The preservation of his life would be for the promulgation of the gospel (cf. Phil 1:22; 2 Cor 1:10–11).

and death but between freedom and imprisonment. Paul was unwilling to use the Philippian gift as it was intended: to buy his freedom. Hence, Paul was required to explain to his beloved congregation why he would rather endure the shame of imprisonment, risk an unfavorable verdict, and remain absent in their time of need” (1992: 274). Rather than responding to Reumann’s or Reeves’s interpretations point-for-point, the reader must decide whether my overall construal of Phil 1:12–26 makes better sense of the text.

Yet what if the decision is against him and Paul is put to death? How will *this* magnify Christ? The statement “to die is gain” is admittedly cryptic, but my understanding of the context suggests that an obedience to the point of death (cf. 2:8) would be “gain” for the progress of the gospel in at least two ways. First, such a martyr’s death would be a powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel.²⁵ If Paul’s imprisonment could serve as a confirmation of the gospel (1:7) and if Christ was made known through his chains (1:13), then how much more so through his death? In addition, Paul’s faithfulness unto death would leave behind an inspiring example to those who were engaged in the same struggle and were suffering as he was (cf. 1:27–30). That Christians could derive encouragement and understanding from models of obedience under the threat of death is clear in the examples of Jesus (2:8) and Epaphroditus (2:29–30), but also in the example of Paul (1:14; 2:17–18; 4:9). The exemplary nature of Paul’s death is also highlighted and commended in his early effective history, as we have observed repeatedly (see esp. §8.2.6).

“To die is gain” is thus the ultimate response to the impure preachers who were crowing over Paul in his imprisonment. Even if the worst happened—even if Paul *was* put to death—Christ would nevertheless be magnified, the gospel would go forward, and Paul’s imprisonment would not be in vain.²⁶

Reading Phil 1:21 in the way I have suggested retains the specificity and concreteness of Paul’s experiential language. It also retains the link between Phil 1:21 and 1:20 signaled by the conjunction γάρ. The way in which Phil 1:21 has typically been interpreted severs or at least attenuates its connection to Phil 1:20. It then flattens and broadens the meaning so that Paul is disclosing a subjective orientation that should

²⁵ Cf. Bockmuehl 1997: 86, 89; Hansen 2009: 83; and the Jewish parallels they cite.

²⁶ Cf. Bruce 1989: 50: “The death that he has specially in mind for himself in the present situation is execution in consequence of an adverse judgment in the imperial court. If such a death in the service of Christ crowned a life spent in the service of Christ, it would be gain not to Paul alone but to the cause of Christ throughout the world.” This interpretation is the polar opposite of the one suggested by Palmer 1975: 218: “Death is a gain, as in the commonplace of Greek literature, because it brings release from earthly troubles.” Cf. Hawthorne 1983: 45; Droge and Tabor 1992: 121–22. Paul did not desire death as an escape from bodily suffering; neither did the earliest Christians influenced by him, as far as we can tell.

characterize every Christian, which could be paraphrased as, “In my earthly life Christ is the organizing principle and chief motivating factor; even my death would be gain for me because that would result in my departure to be with Christ, which is far better than earthly life.” I would submit that this understanding is not incorrect, but is derivative or implied.²⁷ It is true that Christ’s humility, service, and death can only serve as a positive example for Christians because God vindicated and exalted him (2:9–11). Likewise, Paul’s death for the sake of Christ could be a powerful testimony or inspiring example only if it too were followed by vindication and exaltation (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.5–7; *Pol. Phil.* 9.1–2). If it were not, then Paul’s death would be foolish or tragic: “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are more pitiful than all people” (1 Cor 15:19). Therefore, while the word “gain” (κέρδος) in Phil 1:21 speaks primarily of the potential for the gospel to gain ground, it does also *imply* added postmortem benefit for Paul, which transitions well into the cost-benefit analysis that follows in Phil 1:22–26.

10.2.3 Paul’s Soliloquy: Life is Fruit and Death is Fellowship (Phil 1:22–26)

If Paul’s cogitation on his upcoming trial ended with v. 21, then the Philippians would have no way of knowing which verdict Paul preferred. They might assume that Paul wanted to be released but could have inferred this for the wrong reasons. Therefore, in Phil 1:22–26 Paul seizes the opportunity to make known the “mind of Paul,” which, like the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5–8), looks out for the interests of others (2:4). The hortatory upshot of this passage is clear: “Brothers and sisters, become fellow imitators of me” (Phil 3:17).²⁸ Here is my translation:

²⁷ Cf. R. P. Martin 1987: 79: “Too often the apostle’s words have been narrowly interpreted as an individual and pietistical hope as in verse 23. . . . But in the context of this section we must emphasize equally the thought that death is *gain* because, as Barth puts it, it is a gain for the proclamation of the gospel.”

²⁸ Cf. Ware 2005: 212: “Paul in 1:21–24 presents himself as a model of Christian decision-making, as one who, like Timothy (2:20–22) and Epaphroditus (2:30), subordinates his own interests to those of Christ and the work of the gospel.”

22 Now if I continue living in the flesh, this means fruitful labor for me—and what I prefer I cannot say! **23** I am pressured by the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is by far much better. **24** Yet to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. **25** So being convinced of this I know that I will remain and stay on with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, **26** in order that your boasting in me might abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

Sound commentary has long intuited that vv. 22–26 represents Paul’s internal deliberation, but the relatively recent work of Samuel Vollenweider (1994: 93–102) and N. Clayton Croy (2003: 525–30) has established that Paul’s discourse here is an example of *synkrisis* (“comparison”) or, perhaps more precisely, *aporia* (“perplexity”). As Croy states, “It has not been adequately appreciated that Paul in Phil 1:19–26 uses a rhetorical trope known as ἀπορία or διαπόρησις, ‘feigned perplexity.’ The Latin term is *dubitatio* or *addubitatio*. This technique involves a rhetorical pretense of uncertainty and the posing of a question as a way of strengthening or dramatizing an argument” (525).²⁹ It is therefore misguided to speculate whether Paul contemplated committing suicide (before the trial? after the trial?) or remaining silent at the trial to force his condemnation.³⁰ Paul’s admission in 1:22c “what I shall choose I do not make known” (τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω) does not imply that the legal proceedings are within Paul’s control or that it is Paul’s choice to live or die. Theoretically, of course, Paul could have influenced the decision by what he said in court, but it was Paul’s resolve to speak boldly and openly in a way that magnified Christ (1:20) and it does not seem that he gave serious consideration to any alternative. Therefore, when 1:22c is read within the form of an *aporia*, the meaning of the phrase is better communicated by the translation, “what I prefer I cannot say.”

Philippians 1:22 begins Paul’s analysis of the benefits of the two potential outcomes at his trial. If he continues living in the flesh (i.e., if he is exonerated and released) this means fruitful labor for Paul—quite an optimistic statement, but one based on Paul’s past experience and his confidence in God’s work through his ministry. Given the natural human inclination toward self-preservation and Paul’s declaration that continued life

²⁹ Witherington 2011: 90 adds that this rhetorical device would have been well-known in a Roman colony such as Philippi.

³⁰ For these views see, e.g., Droge and Tabor 1992: 119–25 and Wansink 1996: 120–25.

would result in continued fruit, Paul's profession of indecision in 1:22c is unexpected. This is only heightened in 1:23a where Paul speaks of being hard-pressed between the alternatives of life and death. It prompts the readers to wonder what it is that is making this a hard decision.

The reason is stated in the ensuing participial clause, "having the desire to depart and be with Christ" (τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι). This clause has been the object of much scrutiny, though I wonder if the voluminous commentary has tended to obscure rather than elucidate its meaning. A full rehearsal of the interpretive options is not possible here.³¹ The three basic options (cf. Hansen 2009: 87) are that this phrase refers to 1) conscious fellowship with Christ in a bodiless, intermediate state; 2) unconscious "soul-sleep" with Christ (or non-existence) until the resurrection; or 3) immediate resurrection of the body in the transcendent realm. Influential proponents of the second option include F. F. Bruce (1977: 312), Joel Green (2008: 140–80), and Anthony Thiselton (2012: 68–79). Historically, this second option was the view of Martin Luther as well, at least for most of his life (see O'Reggio 2011), and it seems to be gaining ground in recent biblical scholarship. (Few argue for the third option.) Nevertheless, I will argue for the first option, that departing to be with Christ entailed conscious fellowship with Christ apart from the body.

The reality of being "with Christ" means something different than being "in Christ," because apparently the former can only be achieved in Paul's "departure" (i.e., death). Being with Christ also seems to refer to a reality experienced before the day of Christ and Paul's bodily transfiguration because it is set against being with the Philippians. Paul has to choose with whom he prefers to be—the two are presented as simultaneous but mutually exclusive alternatives. Furthermore, to be with Christ is the alternative to being "in the flesh" (1:22). Thus, Paul's departure is a departure from this world, including his flesh or body. The clear parallel in 2 Cor 5:6–8 makes this certain.

³¹ See the extensive discussion in Schreiber 2003 and Schapdick 2011: 163–74.

The term that Paul uses for his departure is ἀναλύω, a verb that often functions as a euphemism for death.³² Used literally, the verb can refer to a number of activities, including breaking up a military encampment or setting sail. It is probable that Paul did not have any of these specific connotations in mind since they are not suggested by the context and Paul nowhere else uses the verb. What is significant, though, is that ἀναλύω almost always refers to the intentional movements of human beings. This suggests that in death, Paul would leave one place behind in order to travel to another. Although the starting point and destination of this journey are not spelled out, it can be reasonably inferred that Paul envisions leaving the Philippians—or this world, or his body—to go to Christ, who is not in this world and whose presence cannot be enjoyed in the body (yet).

By deliberately employing the evocative term ἀναλύω, Paul implies the same *qualified* endorsement of Hellenistic anthropological dualism that he previously gave in 2 Cor 4:16 and throughout 2 Corinthians. Again, it is not that embodiment is evil or undesirable—far from it. Philippians 3:11 and 21, like 2 Cor 5:1–5 (and 1 Cor 15:35–53 before it), unambiguously affirm Paul’s ultimate resurrection hope. For Paul, death creates a *temporary* division between himself and his body, a division that can be eagerly anticipated because it involves a more intimate communion with Christ³³ and will be concluded one day with the gift of a better, resurrected, spiritual body. Hence it is right to infer from Phil 1:23 that Paul believed in an “intermediate state.” In spite of the criticism to which this term has been subjected, I think it helpfully captures the provisional nature of Christian disembodiment.

What can be said of the believer’s experience of the intermediate state? Despite limited data, one would presume that when Paul died he would be with Christ where Christ is—that is, in heaven. Christ’s present residence in heaven was a common early

³² A sample of references can be found in the BDAG entry for ἀναλύω.

³³ See again Phil 1:23 and 2 Cor 5:6–8. Paul Middleton goes too far in claiming that for Paul “death is the goal of the Christian life. . . . The distinction . . . between a lack of desire in Paul for death to be contrasted with a desire to be with Christ is impossible to maintain. To die is to be with Christ, and to be with Christ, Paul must die; they are one and the same desire” (2009: 90, 91). This claim conflates the end with the means.

Christian confession and is articulated in Phil 3:20. Given that heaven is consistently associated with the presence and glory of God, it would seem extremely odd if Paul envisioned himself in heaven and with Christ and yet unconscious of God's presence or glory. Indeed, in Paul's recounting of his visit to heaven—whether in the body or out of the body, he did not know—he describes it as the paradise and mentions hearing words (2 Cor 12:4). So on this former visit, at least, Paul appears to have been fully conscious. It seems likely that this experience of heaven shaped his expectations as to what the intermediate state would be like.

One must also say that whatever Paul's conception of the intermediate state, it was something to be desired intensely since it was “by far much better.”³⁴ This too is hard to explain if Paul conceived of the intermediate state as “soul sleep.” While it is true that Paul sometimes describes the death of *Christians* by using the metaphor of sleep, the rhetorical effect is only ever to stress that for them death is not permanent (see esp. 1 Cor 15:18; 1 Thess 4:13–15; cf. John 11:1–15). Those sleeping can be “awakened” at the resurrection. It simply presses the metaphor too far to infer that a Christian's sleep must be completely devoid of thought or sensation. Even if the metaphor were to imply that the body remained inert and insensible, this says nothing of what may be experienced apart from the body when the body is left behind.

Finally, Paul's early effective history must be brought to bear at this point. We have noted in previous chapters that the earliest Christian writers who were influenced by and connected to Paul imply that the intermediate state is one of conscious fellowship with Christ (see esp. §8.2.5). Paul was said to be “carried away from the world” and “taken up to the holy place” (*1 Clem.* 5.7); Paul rose to God (*Ign. Eph.* 11.2–12.2) and is now “free” (*Ign. Rom.* 4.3); he with others are “in the place owed to them, with the Lord” (*Pol. Phil.* 9.2). Significantly, these early Christian authors who point toward a conscious intermediate state can also employ the language of Christians “sleeping” in death (see *1 Clem.* 26.2; 44.2; *Ign. Rom.* 4.2). It is theoretically possible that all of these early

³⁴ The Greek, πολλῶ μᾶλλον κρείσσον, is doubly emphatic.

Christian authors and the communities spread across the Mediterranean world with which they interacted were uniformly contradicting Paul's teaching, if Paul did in fact advocate against a heavenly intermediate state. Yet it is much more reasonable to suggest that these authors, who made explicit links to Paul and quoted from his letters, writing to Christian communities, many of which were founded by Paul, are in continuity with Paul in his view of the intermediate state. Admittedly this is an argument based on probabilities, but the strength—and in my view, near certainty—of these probabilities indicates that we are on solid footing in saying that Paul approached death as the gateway to a heightened, pre-resurrection fellowship with his ascended Lord.³⁵

In Phil 1:22–23 Paul puts the prospect of his release on the scales with the prospect of his execution and departure and he finds that the scales are . . . even! He cannot choose; he can discern benefit in both options. Commentators often speak as if the scales are tipped decisively toward death but then shift back to “fruitful labor” upon second thought. This interpretation mistakenly conflates Phil 1:22a–b with 1:24, and diminishes Paul's indecision as expressed in 1:22c and 1:23a. What lifts his paralysis, so to speak, is not weighing the options again. Rather in 1:24 Paul adds a new and heavy consideration. He had been approaching the dilemma from the perspective of what would benefit himself (note especially the *μοι* in *τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου*; 1:22b). He now considers what would be most beneficial, even “more necessary” (*ἀναγκαιότερον*), for the Philippians.³⁶ In other words, the deadlock is broken when the Philippians enter stage right.

³⁵ For a wide-ranging but concise effective history of Phil 1:21–23, see Bockmuehl 1995: 72–75.

³⁶ One might ask why it is *necessary* for Paul to remain with the Philippians (1:24) when in Phil 1:6 Paul confidently declares that the one who began a good work in them will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus. Do the Philippians need Paul to come to them, or is God capable of completing his good work in them without Paul? It could be that Paul is necessary to the Philippians' progress in faith but not necessary to their salvation. More likely is that God will bring his work to completion through human agency—even Paul's. Apparently Paul thought the Philippians needed him enough to plan another visit to them even though, presumably, the gospel still needed to be preached in Spain (cf. Rom 15:18–29).

With his internal (feigned) dilemma thus resolved,³⁷ Paul can go on to express his hopes for another visit with the Philippians. Once again, the declaration “I know that I will remain and stay on with all of you” (1:25) does not present Paul’s prescience of his trial’s outcome but rather concludes the *aporia* form by indicating that his preference is settled. Paul wants to visit the Philippians again for their “progress (προκοπή) and joy in faith” (1:25). As mentioned above, the reappearance of the term προκοπή creates an *inclusio* for 1:12–26. It also suggests that all of Paul’s appraisals—whether of his current circumstances or future prospects—pass through the grid of the gospel. There is gospel depth to *all* of Paul’s reflections in this section. Furthermore, the reappearance of the theme of joy at this point suggests that for the Philippians to grow in the gospel they must grow in their joy. They, like Paul (1:18), should rejoice at the inexorable march of the gospel through Paul’s freedom or imprisonment, through Paul’s supporters or rivals, through Paul’s life or his death. The linking of Paul’s joy (1:18) and the Philippians’ joy (1:25) foreshadows 2:17–18.

Likewise, the final verse in this section (1:26) foreshadows 2:16b. Whereas the Philippians will be Paul’s boast in 2:16, in 1:26 Paul will be the Philippians’ boast when he comes to them again. It is no contradiction to claim that the Philippians could boast in Paul while boasting only in Christ Jesus, as noted in the previous chapter (see §9.3.2). What Paul anticipates in this happy reunion is probably similar to what he anticipates in the reunion of Epaphroditus and the Philippian church: to boast in Paul at his coming would be to receive him with joy and honor him appropriately (cf. 2:29).

10.3 Paul the Exuberant Drink Offering (Phil 2:16b–18)

As just mentioned, Phil 2:16b–18 has several connections to Phil 1:18d–26. In fact, Paul Holloway has recently renewed the argument that Phil 2:17 picks up the thread of thought that Paul puts down in Phil 1:26. In his view Phil 1:27–2:16 is essentially an

³⁷ Cf. Croy 2003: 529: “Paul’s dilemma is chiefly to be located in his rhetoric, not in his legal predicament or his psychological state.”

intentional digression (2008: 553). In any case, Phil 2:16b–18 warrants an inspection because it articulates Paul’s approach to suffering, judgment, and (as I will argue) his death. The passage may be translated as follows:

16 . . . so that I may have a boast for the day of Christ that I neither ran in vain nor labored in vain. **17** Yet even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial service of your faith, I rejoice and rejoice with all of you. **18** In the same way you also must rejoice and rejoice with me.

In urging the Philippians to be blameless (2:15) so that Paul might have a boast for the day of Christ (2:16), Paul composes a variation on one of his common eschatological themes. In 1 Thess 2:19–20 Paul describes the Thessalonian believers as his hope, joy, crown of boasting, and glory (cf. Phil 4:1) before the Lord at his coming. A few verses later in 1 Thess 3:5 Paul writes concerning his dispatch of Timothy, “I sent [him] in order to know about your faith, lest somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain (εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν).” These texts confirm the plain implication of Phil 2:16: if the Philippians remain blameless until the day of Christ, Paul will have a boast; if they do not, Paul will lose his boast.³⁸ Paul’s boast is therefore dependent on their perseverance, but ultimately on the work of God (cf. Phil 1:6; 2:12). Paul wants to know that his labor has not been and will not be in vain. It is this same concern that is animating Phil 1:12–26, as seen above.

This line of reasoning is further supported by echoes of the OT in 2:16c. Commentators sometimes note that the language of “laboring” (κοπιᾷ; cf. κόπος) in “vain” (κενός; cf. κενόω; κενῶς) appears in Isaiah (see esp. 49:4; 65:23). It can also be observed in Job (2:9; 20:18; 39:16; cf. 7:16; 15:31). Intriguingly, this language often applies to the failure of childbirth—not that children fail to be born but that they die prematurely (see Job 2:9; 39:16; Isa 65:23; cf. *4 Macc.* 16.6–11; Gal 4:11, 19). Since Paul

³⁸ The same interrelationship between Paul and his converts can be seen in Gal 4:11; 1 Cor 3:10–15; and 2 Cor 1:14. See Kirk 2012d. Cf. Fee 1995: 250: “At issue for [Paul] is not his own personal ‘prize’; for him that prize will consist primarily in having his ‘beloved’ Philippians (and others) there with him (cf. [Phil] 4:1).”

frequently employs parental language to describe his relationship to his converts,³⁹ it is conceivable that such OT resonances could be heard in the phrase “labor in vain.”⁴⁰

The transition into v. 17, accomplished by the string Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ (“Yet even if”), prompts the question of what is being contrasted. Holloway contends that the contrast is with Paul’s stated desire in Phil 1:25–26 to visit with the Philippians again (2008: 554). With most commentators I read the verse as contrasting with the immediately preceding verse.⁴¹ Paul does not want to run or labor in vain, *yet* he does not view being poured out as a drink offering as spending himself in vain (as some perhaps would).

The verb σπένδω (“I pour out a drink offering”) occurs in only one other place in the NT (2 Tim 4:6) and only 20 times in the LXX. In all 20 occurrences in the LXX it is in the active voice and is used to describe the pouring out of ritual sacrifices, whether to the God of Israel or other gods. The liquid that was poured out was usually wine but never blood.⁴² The fact that the LXX uses the verb to describe Israelite *and* pagan rituals suggests that drink offerings were a commonplace in the ancient Near East, and evidence suggests that they were also common in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. So Paul appears to be employing stock religious imagery to picture his self-offering (cf. Bockmuehl 1997: 160).

Since Phil 2:17 is set in contrast to 2:16 and is followed by a command to rejoice in 2:18, it seems as if this pouring out of Paul is a figurative way of speaking about his suffering. The verse states that Paul is being poured out as a drink offering “upon the sacrificial service of your faith.”⁴³ It appears as if drink offerings were commonly poured out upon the sacrifice or alongside it by a priest. The evocative imagery of Phil 2:16 suggests that Paul’s life is being poured out over the sacrifice of faith that the Philippians

³⁹ E.g., 1 Cor 4:14–15; 2 Cor 6:13; 12:14; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22; 1 Thess 2:7, 11; Philm 1:10.

⁴⁰ The language of running in vain occurs nowhere in the LXX and thus was either coined by Paul or drawn from another source. Cf. Gal 2:2.

⁴¹ O’Brien captures the function of ἁλλά well in saying that it has an “ascensive force” (1991: 303).

⁴² Bloomquist 1993: 171–72 speaks of Paul’s blood being poured out upon the altar. There is no basis for this in the usage of the verb.

⁴³ The Greek of 2:17 is ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν. I am translating τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ as a hendiadys.

are bringing to God. The language should not be read as implying that the Philippians' service is somehow incomplete without Paul's suffering. More than likely this is yet another colorful way for Paul to stress that his suffering is for the sake of the Philippians.

While suffering appears to be the primary thrust of the metaphor, commentators often ask whether Paul's death is implied by the imagery as well. I would contend that it is, for four reasons. First, the way in which Paul has already applied sacrificial language to himself in 2 Cor 2:14–15 points toward his death (cf. Eph 5:2). Second, according to my reading of the “decision of death” that Paul received (2 Cor 1:9), Paul would have been keenly aware in writing this letter to the Philippians that he was destined to die in service to the gospel. Third, the use of this language in 2 Tim 4:6 and Ign. *Rom.* 2.2 (σπονδίζω) clearly refers to death. This is strong evidence, especially if 2 Timothy bears the authentic mark of Paul, as I will argue in the next chapter. Fourth, a drink offering was only of limited volume. Therefore, in describing himself as being poured out like a drink offering, Paul may be hinting that he cannot be poured out indefinitely. The time would come when he had no more left to give.

If Paul's death is implied by σπένδομαι, it would make more sense of the redoubled language of rejoicing in Phil 2:17–18. If the Philippians were distressed by the imprisonment of their apostle and partner in the gospel, how much greater might their distress be at his death? Yet Paul's faithful service unto death is of benefit to the Philippians, provides clear witness to Christ (Phil 1:21; cf. 2:8), confirms his own salvation (cf. 1:28), and ushers him into the presence of the ascended Christ (1:23). How should that not be a source of joy to both Paul and the Philippians?

In summary, Phil 2:16b–18 demonstrates that Paul approaches his death by willingly and joyfully laying down his life for others.⁴⁴ The Philippians are invited to join Paul in this joy because Paul's “death” is for their life. Thus Phil 2:18 is not a call to delight in Paul's suffering per se, as though Paul was a masochist or the Corinthians were to be

⁴⁴ Cf. Bockmuehl 1997: 162: “It is intriguing to note that Paul sees himself as an addition to *their* sacrifice, rather than vice versa—a perspective on the ‘mind of Christ’ which not all subsequent Christian leaders have taken to heart.”

sadists. Rather, it was a call to recognize God's good and sovereign purposes in Paul's apostolic suffering. The Philippians were to discern that his life and death was for the advancement of their faith (cf. Phil 1:12–26; 2 Cor 4:7–17).

10.4 Pursuit of the Resurrection, Into and Out of Death (Phil 3:7–14)

The phrase “being conformed to his [Christ's] death” in Phil 3:10 presents to the interpreter a similar problem to the one presented by Phil 2:17: does this phrase include or imply Paul's literal death or only his suffering? In what follows I will argue that Phil 3:10–11 expresses Paul's conviction that he would attain the resurrection only through a physical—and obedient—death. Since Phil 3:10–11 is deeply embedded in its immediate context (3:7–14), I will provide a brief interpretation of this entire passage.

10.4.1 Knowing Christ in Life and Death (Phil 3:7–11)

In reading through Philippians, one steps into a quagmire in 3:9 with the scholarly debate concerning Paul's doctrine of justification. This debate has generated a morass of secondary literature.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, I will offer an exegesis of 3:7–11 that aims to circumvent some of the issues that typically bog down interpreters. Here is a translation of the passage:

7 Yet whatever were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be a loss on account of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I forfeit all things as loss and count them as crap in order that I might gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that is from the Law but a righteousness that is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness from God, based on faith— **10** so that I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and the partnership of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, **11** if perhaps I might attain to the resurrection from out of the dead.

The dominant theme in this passage is the knowledge of Christ. Paul introduces knowledge of Christ as the reason that he counts all things as loss in 3:7. He foregrounds the theme again in 3:10a with the purpose clause, “so that I might know him” (τοῦ γινῶναι

⁴⁵ For an exhaustive though now dated treatment of Phil 3:7–11, which includes a survey of secondary literature on these verses, see Koperski 1996.

αὐτὸν). What follows in 3:10b–d explicates what this knowledge of Christ in 3:10a is. It is imperative to realize that, for Paul, knowledge of Christ is not merely cognitive apprehension of information about Christ; nor does the language merely connote the affectional warmth of a personal relationship. Rather, as in the OT, to know God is to have an intimate acquaintance with him that inevitably manifests itself in obedience.⁴⁶ Knowledge of God implies more than obedience but certainly not less. Recognizing this theme leads us to posit that all of Phil 3:7–10 could be summarized as an expression of Paul’s desire to become obedient (to the point of death?) as Christ was (Phil 2:8).

The passage begins in 3:7 with a calculation that Paul had made in the past (note the perfect-tense verb, ἤγημαι). He had come to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and the risen Lord, most likely at or immediately after his vision on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9:3–22). This recognition involved a profound reappraisal of his former life and theology. In comparative terms, those things he had once counted as gain he now counted as loss. Yet this calculation was not simply a one-time reckoning at his “conversion.” As Phil 3:8 explains, this reappraisal of things now characterized his entire life. He considers all things as loss and even “crap” (σκύβαλον) *in comparative terms*.⁴⁷ It was necessary to do so “for the sake of Christ” (3:7) and in order to “gain Christ” (3:8).

One might be inclined to understand that Paul would “gain Christ” either at his death (cf. κέρδος in Phil 1:21) or on the day of Christ. However, the immediate context strongly suggests that Paul would “gain Christ” in knowing him. Christ is gained at the same time and in conjunction with all other things being counted as loss. Paul’s use of the imagery of financial exchange would be strained if one half of the exchange was delayed indefinitely. In other words, the decision Paul made at the beginning of his Christian life (3:7) is mapped onto his entire new life: Christ is continually gained as all other things are continually counted as loss.

⁴⁶ Cf. Fee 1995: 318n21. See esp. Jer 9:23–24; 38:34 LXX (31:34 MT). Cf. Phil 1:9–11!

⁴⁷ Given Paul’s evaluation of circumcision in Rom 3:1–2, for example, I do not think Paul would have considered all the things of his former life to be *inherently* negative or repulsive. However, when such things were pitted against knowing Christ or the two were presented as mutually exclusive sources of boasting or confidence, Paul forcefully rejected them. See the excellent discussion in Campbell 2011.

This becomes important as we proceed to the phrase “and be found in him” (καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ) in 3:9. As the verb εὑρεθῶ (3:9) is connected to the verb κερδήσω (3:8) by the conjunction καί, one would presume that they operate within the same time frame.⁴⁸ Yet commentators typically read εὑρεθῶ as describing God’s judicial act of “finding” Paul on the last day.⁴⁹ In my opinion this interpretive move confuses εὐρίσκω for δικαιώω, and commentators often read Phil 3:9 as if it read καὶ δικαιωθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ instead of καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ. It is interesting to note that when Paul uses δικαιώω to refer to the final, eschatological justification of Christians, it never appears in the singular, except in grammatical constructions that imply a plurality.⁵⁰ This suggests that Paul viewed future justification as an inescapably corporate event. If so, then it would seem inappropriate or at least abnormal if Phil 3:9 referred to Paul’s individual justification on the day of Christ.

More importantly the verb εὐρίσκω in Paul’s letters (even in its passive forms) does not necessarily refer to God’s judgment on the last day.⁵¹ The action described by the verb is generic and its time referent must be determined from each distinct context. The closest parallel to Phil 3:9 is probably 1 Cor 4:2, “it is demanded of household managers that they be found faithful (ἵνα πιστός τις εὑρεθῇ).” The verb εὐρίσκω here probably does not refer to a definitive end-time verdict but to the ongoing divine evaluation to which Paul’s life and ministry are subject (cf. 2 Cor 4:2; 5:11; 1 Thess 2:4). Moreover, in a

⁴⁸ Ulrich Müller describes the close connection between these two verbs: “Wie nun κερδήσω den Beginn der Gemeinschaft mit Christus meint, so bezeichnet das folgende εὑρεθῶ die Fortsetzung” (1993: 154).

⁴⁹ E.g., Collange 1979 [1973]: 130; Hawthorne 1983: 140; R. P. Martin 1987: 151; O’Brien 1991: 391; Koperski 1996: 163–64; and Bockmuehl 1997: 208–9. Others see Paul’s inaugurated eschatology here: “[Paul] expects to ‘gain Christ and be found in him’ on the day of Christ, precisely because this is *already* his experience of Christ” (Fee 1995: 321). Cf. Reumann 2008: 520; Hansen 2009: 237.

⁵⁰ E.g., Rom 3:20: ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.

⁵¹ See Rom 7:10; 1 Cor 4:2; 15:15; 2 Cor 5:3; 11:12; 12:20; Gal 2:17; Phil 2:7. I would contend that possibly none of these occurrences refer to God’s final judgment. The sole exception might be 2 Cor 5:3, which *could* be interpreted with the nuance most commentators read in Phil 3:9. Even so, I wonder if the unexpressed agent of the verb εὑρεθῶμεθα is generically inclusive.

number of instances (e.g., 1 Cor 15:15; 2 Cor 11:12; Gal 2:17; Phil 2:7) it is extremely difficult to discern whether God or others or both do the “finding.”

All of this indicates that by speaking of “being found” in Christ Paul does not intend to communicate his desire to be found (i.e., justified) in Christ on the day of judgment, but rather to be found in Christ during the course of his earthly life.⁵² This places the verb εὐρίσκω (3:9) in the same time frame as κερδαίνω (3:8) and γινώσκω (3:10).

This understanding of Phil 3:9 is confirmed—at least as a plausible option—by the way in which *1 Clement* and the Ignatian letters use the term εὐρίσκω. In *1 Clem.* 9.3–10.1 the author introduces the examples of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, who are “found” righteous in obedience (9.3) and “found” faithful (9.4–10.1), all during the course of their earthly lives.⁵³ Furthermore, in *1 Clem.* 35.4 the author exhorts his audience, “Therefore let us compete to be found (εὐρεθῆναι) among the number of those who are enduring (τῶν ὑπομενόντων).” The present participle ὑπομενόντων could indicate that this is a finding that occurs during life.

Ignatius writes in *Eph.* 11.1, even more strikingly, “Let us fear the patience of God lest it become for us unto judgment. For let us fear either the coming wrath or let us love the grace that is present—one of the two. Only let us be found in Christ Jesus unto true life (μόνον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εὐρεθῆναι εἰς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ζῆν).” This text is a significant parallel to Phil 3:9 because it speaks of being found in Christ Jesus.⁵⁴ Since being found in Christ is parallel to fearing wrath or loving grace—activities in the present—the

⁵² There may be particular application of this desire to the time of his trial or death. Cf. Otto 1995: 333: “‘That I may gain Christ’ and ‘be found in him’ both indicate a point or event which, historically and contextually, must be the impending crisis of faith which Paul faces. ‘The idea [involves] a revelation of real character,’ not eschatologically, as in the last judgment, but existentially, in the crisis of deciding to die a death in conformity to Christ’s. This crisis will demonstrate to all who and what Paul *really* is, by a martyrdom which, rather than meriting justification, manifests justification in his union with Christ.”

⁵³ Interestingly, these men are introduced in a very similar way to how Paul and Peter are introduced (cf. *1 Clem.* 9.2–3 with 5.3).

⁵⁴ In fact, *Eph.* 11.1 is one of only three passages in all of the so-called Apostolic Fathers where a form of εὐρίσκω is used with ἐν and the person of Christ. The other two passages, *Trall.* 2.2 and 13.3, are noteworthy because *Trall.* 2.2 makes being found in Christ contingent upon the life lived and *Trall.* 13.3 speaks of being found “blameless” (ἄμωμος; cf. Phil 2:15) in Christ.

finding described here is again within the timeframe of an earthly life and not at the final judgment. Later in the letter (14.2) Ignatius writes that being “of Christ” is a matter of being “found” in the power of faith “until the end” (εἰς τέλος). Likewise, in *Rom.* 3.2 Ignatius speaks of being found as a Christian by being faithful unto death (cf. the use of εὐρίσκω in *Rom.* 4.1–2; *Smyrn.* 3.2). Hence it could be said that Ignatius desired to be found obedient unto death (cf. Phil 2:8). The use of εὐρίσκω throughout *1 Clement* and the Ignatian letters strengthens my reading of Phil 3:9 as referring to Paul being found in Christ during his earthly life.⁵⁵

This interpretation of Phil 3:9 may receive additional support from the peculiar construction Paul employs in which δικαιοσύνη is the object of ἔχω. Though one might suppose that δικαιοσύνη is frequently the object of ἔχω, I could find only one other instance of this in the entire NT and LXX, in Prov 1:22. In that verse Wisdom personified boldly proclaims, “As long as the innocent are having righteousness, they will not be ashamed.”⁵⁶ In this case to “have” righteousness seems synonymous with the more common concepts of “walking” (περιπατέω) in the ways of righteousness, “sowing” (σπείρω) righteousness, speaking righteousness, or “pursuing” (διώκω) righteousness—concepts found repeatedly in the book of Proverbs. Thus “having righteousness” in Prov 1:22 almost certainly refers to the everyday conduct of an upright life.⁵⁷

It is possible that “having righteousness” means much the same in Phil 3:9.⁵⁸ The noun δικαιοσύνη occurs only three times in Philippians. In 3:6 it refers to the righteous character of Paul’s life in the Law. In 1:10–11 Paul prays that the Philippians would be

⁵⁵ In addition to the texts cited above, see also *1 Clem.* 16.10; 18.1; 50.2; *Ign. Eph.* 10.3; *Trall.* 1.2; *Phld.* 3.1; *Pol.* 4.3; 6.2; and *Pol. Phil.* 8.1, all of which describe a “finding” of human character during earthly life. Occurrences of εὐρίσκω that are ambiguous, either referring to an evaluation during life, at death, or (conceivably) in the final judgment include *1 Clem.* 57.2; *Ign. Magn.* 9.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 12.3; 13.3; and *Pol.* 7.1.

⁵⁶ Cf. θαρσέω in Prov 1:21 and αἰσχύνομαι in Prov 1:22 with παρησία and αἰσχύνομαι in Phil 1:20.

⁵⁷ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 6.290: “Today you have shown yourself to have the righteousness of the ancients (ἐπεδείξω δὲ σήμερον τὴν ἀρχαίων ἔχοντα σαυτὸν δικαιοσύνην), who instructed those who caught their enemies in the desert to save them.”

⁵⁸ Cf. “having love” (τὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες) in Phil 2:2.

“pure and faultless for the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness (καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης) that is through Jesus Christ.” I agree with the many commentators who read δικαιοσύνης in Phil 1:11 as an epexegetical genitive, “the fruit that is righteousness.” Paul is thus praying that the Philippians would *produce* a righteousness that is made possible only through Jesus Christ. So in Phil 3:9 it seems eminently possible that the contrast between the two types of righteousness is simply the contrast between the righteousness of Phil 3:6 and that of Phil 1:11. One is a righteousness lived in obedience to the Law and one is a righteousness that is engendered by Jesus (cf. Phil 2:12–13). In each case the righteousness is Paul’s own in the sense that he is the one embodying it,⁵⁹ but it is only the righteousness τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ that is “from God” in the sense that God is directly actualizing it in Paul through the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ To summarize, then, I read Phil 3:9 as an expression of Paul’s desire to be found—by God and potentially by all others—enacting righteousness for the remainder of his earthly life.

This interpretation accords well with the image of Paul as a teacher of righteousness that we have discerned in early Pauline effective history (§8.2.2). Rather than assuming that Polycarp, among others, was spectacularly wrong about Paul’s righteousness in relation to his death or even that Polycarp’s position was “opposed to grace,” my reading of Phil 3:9 suggests that Polycarp is in continuity with Paul’s teaching on embodied righteousness, as Polycarp himself implicitly maintains (Pol. *Phil.* 3.1–3). To my mind, this view is much more plausible than to posit a fundamental discontinuity between Paul and Polycarp. We should expect that the early Christian image of Paul as a teacher of a lived-out righteousness in view of death would have at least some resonance in Paul’s letters or earthly ministry.

When Paul continues his thought in Phil 3:10a with an articular infinitive of purpose, “so that I might know him” (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν), he is essentially restating his desire to

⁵⁹ This would clearly be so if the entire phrase ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην were implied in Phil 3:9c, as Scott Hafemann has suggested to me—i.e., μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ (ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην) τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ.

⁶⁰ I have deliberately left τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ untranslated, being undecided as to what kind of genitive Χριστοῦ represents.

gain Christ and to be found in him *in the present*. This is followed by an explication of what it means to know Christ, starting with knowledge of the power of his resurrection. I do not perceive a chiasmic structure in Phil 3:10b,c,d–11, but even if Phil 3:10b were loosely parallel to 3:11, this would not necessitate that the two had the same time referent (cf. Schenk 1984: 321–22). Rather, I see Paul’s knowledge of the power of Christ’s resurrection as referring to a concept Paul expresses in Rom 6:4–5: the present and transformative power of being united to Christ’s resurrection. Such a union with Christ in life flows naturally into Paul’s next phrase, “and [to know] the partnership of his sufferings” (3:10c), which articulates a notion common to Paul’s letters that he, as an apostle, is joined to Christ in his suffering in a special way (e.g., 2 Cor 4:7–12).

Philippians 3:10c is then modified by the participial phrase “being conformed to his death” (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ; Phil 3:10d). In this case I think the logic of the adverbial participle is modal: Paul will know partnership in the sufferings of Christ *by* being conformed to Christ’s death. Again, commentators have interpreted this phrase in different ways (see Koperski 1996: 265–75). In my view “conforming” (συμμορφίζω) to Christ’s death must relate to the μορφή of Christ in Phil 2:7. What is essential to the form of Christ’s death is not the instrument of death—a cross (θάνατος σταυροῦ; 2:8)—but that Christ died as a humble servant and one who was obedient all the way to death (ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου; 2:8). God exalted Christ (2:9) not because he died on a cross but because he was obedient unto death, looking out for the interests of others (2:4). Therefore Paul will be conformed to Christ’s death by dying in the way that Christ did: in obedience to God and in the service of others (cf. Bockmuehl 1997: 216). This is how he becomes a partner in Christ’s sufferings. This interpretation ties Phil 3:10d to Paul’s approach to death as expressed in Phil 2:17.

The section running from Phil 3:7–11 is concluded with a conditional clause: “if perhaps I might attain to the resurrection out of the dead.” The contingency expressed by this construction has given some commentators pause. It has been explained as conveying modesty or even real doubt, as implying uncertainty as to the manner of death or as to

whether Paul would die before the Parousia at all.⁶¹ In my reading this clause simply expresses the logic of 1 Cor 9:23–27, or that which follows in Phil 3:12–14. Paul will not attain to the resurrection unless he perseveres in faith.⁶² Significantly, Phil 3:11 seems to be the climax of 3:7–11 in such a way that 3:7–10 are means to an end. If resurrection is a future reality to be realized on the day of Christ, then it would seem natural to read all of 3:7–10 as realities prior to this time. In other words, the future-oriented contingency of 3:11 frames all of 3:7–10 as realities that Paul desires *in the present*.

It is also worth noting the highly unusual noun ἐξανάστασις. This is a *hapax legomenon* in Paul and the NT. Its use in Phil 3:11 is doubly odd because of the presence of the preposition ἐκ (τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν). Scribes who encountered this redundancy were evidently uncomfortable with it, as emendations in the textual history make clear. Moreover, Paul has already used the noun ἀνάστασις without a prefix in the previous verse. Why would Paul choose a different noun in 3:11, stressing that he was aiming at a resurrection *from out of* the dead? Here I would reiterate my interpretation of Phil 3:10d and 2 Cor 1:9. Paul received a decision of death that sealed his fate: he would die before the Parousia. Furthermore, he came to believe that his death would be like Christ's in that he would die in obedience to God and in service to others. Therefore, his attainment of the resurrection would be as one whose body would die and be among the dead. This demonstrates that in addition to his postmortem hope of being with Christ (Phil 1:23), Paul's eventual hope was of being raised from the dead with a new body (cf. Phil 3:20–21).

10.4.2 In Pursuit of the Prize (Phil 3:12–14)

In some ways Phil 3:12–14 reflects what we have seen in Phil 3:7–11. The same single-minded focus Paul demonstrates in counting all things as loss for the sake of

⁶¹ For these various options see Bruce 1989: 117; Marshall 1991: 93; O'Brien 1991: 413; Perriman 1991; Otto 1995; Osiek 2000: 95; and Hansen 2009: 248–49.

⁶² Cf. Bockmuehl 1997: 217: "Paul's own resurrection is his earnest desire, rather than a *fait accompli*. While his future hope is not in 'real doubt', Paul's whole point here is to insist that for the Christian there is still a race to be run and a prize to be won." See also Fee 1995: 335–36; Fowl 2005: 157.

knowing Christ is here expressed with athletic imagery. However, whereas the emphasis in 3:7–11 is on the nature of the present relationship with Christ that Paul desires, the emphasis in 3:12–14 is on the future reality that is energizing his pursuit of Christ. The resurrection goal articulated in 3:11 colors all of Paul’s reflection in 3:12–14. Here is a translation:

12 Not that I have already seized [this] or already have been made perfect, but I press on so that I might indeed grasp that for which I also was grasped by Christ Jesus. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have grasped [it]. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what lies ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What is immediately apparent in this section is that Paul never actually states what it is that he strives to obtain. The object set before him is described as “that for which I also was grasped by Christ Jesus” (v. 12), “the goal” (v. 14), and “the prize” (v. 14), but this does not make explicit what the object is. This suggests that the object must be supplied by what precedes in the immediate context and there is only one clear *future* goal in Phil 3:7–11: “the resurrection from out of the dead” (τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν; 3:11). Paul likely does not repeat this phrase in vv. 12–14 because it would be unwieldy to do so and because it does not fit naturally with the athletic metaphor he is developing. Nevertheless, the fact that seizing “it” is alternatively described as “being made perfect” (τελειόω; v. 12) indicates that Paul is thinking of a process of some kind that he will undergo. This process is best understood as the process of bodily transfiguration (or resurrection) mentioned in Phil 3:21.

This identification of the implicit object in 3:12–14 may receive slight and indirect support from the cryptic phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (3:12). The prepositional phrase ἐφ’ ᾧ occurs four times in Paul and two of its occurrences (in Rom 5:12 and here) are heavily debated. It would be curious if Paul used this construction simply to express a ground (i.e., “because”) since there are other options ready at hand for this (e.g., a clause starting with ὅτι or a prepositional phrase starting with διὰ). Furthermore, Joseph Fitzmyer has shown that “there are almost no certain instances in Greek literature where ἐφ’ ᾧ is used as the equivalent of causal διότι” (1993: 326).

Therefore, on grammatical grounds alone, it seems better to translate ἐφ' ᾧ as “that for which.” Additionally, the preposition ἐπί can be used with the dative case to express purpose, as Gal 5:13 and 1 Thess 4:7 demonstrate (cf. BDAG §16). Intriguingly, both Gal 5:13 and 1 Thess 4:7 use ἐπί in conjunction with the verb καλέω, which would seem to make good sense in Phil 3:12 (cf. κλήσις in 3:14), only in 3:12 the subject of the verb is Christ (not the Father) and the verb is καταλαμβάνω. The verb καταλαμβάνω fits the athletic imagery (cf. Rom 9:30; 1 Cor 9:24) but it is often used in the sense of forceful seizure (cf. Mark 9:18; John 8:3–4; 1 Thess 5:4). If the second occurrence of the verb in 3:12 retains any of the connotations of forceful seizure, then again Phil 3:21 forms a fitting parallel. The idea would be that Christ has forcibly “grasped” Paul in order to display in the resurrection of Paul’s body his own transfiguring “power” (ἐνέργεια).

Paul’s repeated denials that he has seized or grasped the resurrection could be read as countering a doctrine of spiritual perfectionism or “over-realized eschatology.” Indeed, in 2 Tim 2:18 opponents of Paul claim that the resurrection has already happened. While it is possible that Paul is refuting such a notion in Phil 3:12–13, it is also possible that he is simply countering the temptation to “coast” in the race of faith.⁶³ The emphasis that he has not reached his destination could serve his implicit exhortation, “Press on!” This understanding, which avoids a potential pitfall of “mirror-reading,” also flows more naturally into the second half of v. 13 in which Paul puts out of his mind the things that lie behind and strains toward the things ahead. The balanced pair of verbs, ἐπιλανθανόμενος and ἐπεκτεινόμενος, broadly indicate that Paul has set his sights not on anything in his past (including the “gains” of his former life) but is pursuing Christ with all moral exertion.

Paul presses on toward the goal “for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ; 3:14). This long and complicated prepositional phrase involves at least two tricky exegetical decisions: the type of genitive that κλήσεως represents and the function and significance of the adverb

⁶³ Cf. Oakes 2001: 120: “This could fit a problem with a heresy of perfectionism but I think it is more likely to be addressing a problem of Christian inertia.”

ἄνω. With regard to the first decision, Fee is undoubtedly right that the sense is easier to sort out than the grammar (1995: 349). Paul typically uses the noun κλήσις and the related verb καλέω to refer to God’s initial summons to faith. This summons includes a call to a holy life and promises hope, glory, and eternal life.⁶⁴ This Pauline usage suggests that the genitive is not one of apposition—i.e., the prize that is the calling—which in any case would distort the metaphor Paul is developing. Pauline usage also suggests that “the prize of the upward call” is not drawing on imagery from the Hellenistic games in which a victor is called up onto a platform to receive his prize.⁶⁵ Therefore, most commentators have labeled τῆς κλήσεως as a subjective genitive—i.e., “the prize which *pertains* to the calling” or the prize “to which the divine call invites and which it promises” (Bockmuehl 1997: 223).

The adverb ἄνω sometimes functions like a substantival adjective, as in Col 3:1–2, “Seek the things above (τὰ ἄνω), where Christ is seated at the right hand of God; set your minds on things above (τὰ ἄνω), not on things upon the earth.” In these verses the contrast is clearly between earthly and “heavenly” things. A similar meaning is probably present in the phrase ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ (“the above Jerusalem” or “the heavenly Jerusalem”) of Gal 4:26, in which the adverb is in the first attributive position, as it is in Phil 3:14. If this is the sense of Phil 3:14, then the phrase could be rendered, “the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Heaven would be the place from which the call originates or the place to which the call beckons or both. The prize of such a heavenly calling would likely be a share in the glory of heaven.

At the risk of over-interpretation, one may mention another possibility for the adverb ἄνω. When functioning like a true adverb ἄνω can mean “upward,” as in John 11:41 and Heb 12:15. If the verbal idea implicit in the noun κλήσις is given prominence, then the phrase could be rendered, “the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

⁶⁴ For the call to a holy life, see 1 Cor 7:15, 22; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:1; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:23–24; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9. For what the call promises, see Eph 1:18; 4:4; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 6:12.

⁶⁵ See Collange 1979 [1973]: 134; Hawthorne 1983: 154; Thurston and Ryan 2005: 127. There is no linguistic evidence that the language of an “upward calling” was ever applied to this kind of coronation.

Furthermore, if the phrase τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν (3:11) is the implied object throughout 3:12–14 as I am inclined to view it, then perhaps this “upward calling” is actually God’s calling of Paul—or Paul’s body—out from among the dead. In this case ἡ ἄνω κλήσις would be parallel to the “cry of command” (τὸ κέλευσμα) in 1 Thess 4:16: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise (ἀνίστημι) first” (cf. Eph 5:14).⁶⁶ If this interpretive reasoning can hold, Phil 3:14 would represent a significant shift in Paul’s perspective. Rather than anticipating being among those who remained alive (1 Thess 4:15), Paul now counted himself among those who would be dead at the coming of the Lord. Nevertheless, for both those alive and those “asleep” the coming of the Lord would involve an “upward” call (cf. 1 Thess 4:17) and a resurrection transfiguration (cf. 1 Cor 15:51–52; Phil 3:20–21). Paul’s pursuit of the prize of resurrection would be one that would lead into, and then out of, death.

10.5 Conclusion: Paul’s Double Gain

Philippians was written by Paul as he confronted the real prospect of his own bodily death. Nevertheless, if the letter is written in death’s shadow, it is written also in the brilliant light of Christ’s resurrection. As commentators are wont to say, Phil 2:6–11 is the conceptual node and nerve center for the entire letter. Therefore, Paul’s approach to his own death must be framed with respect to this ultimate paradigm.⁶⁷

Paul’s original readers in Philippi would have been familiar with reflections on death. Greco-Roman authors embraced death as a release from earthly troubles (see Palmer 1975: 208–17). This prevailing mindset would have cast Paul’s reflections in sharp relief. Rather than seeking to avoid suffering out of a narrow self-concern, Paul’s thoughts, like Christ’s, stretched in two directions when contemplating his own death: outward and

⁶⁶ In this way Paul would follow Christ into the grave, as it were, but then his call upward would resemble God’s “super-exaltation” of Christ (see Phil 2:8–9).

⁶⁷ Cf. Kraftchick 2007: 199. Kraftchick’s essay helpfully relates Paul’s presentation of himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus to the pattern of Christ.

upward. Throughout Philippians Paul portrays his remaining life as an offering to others. This is most clearly seen in Phil 1:18d–26 and 2:16b–18. His suffering and even his death would be a “gain” for the advance of the gospel and the Philippians’ faith.

Yet we would be mistaken in thinking that Paul had no regard for his own reward. Woven into the letter are also threads of self-interest. Paul’s remaining life is a pursuit of his own resurrection “prize.” This is most clearly seen in Phil 3:7–14, where Paul’s attention is almost entirely vertical rather than horizontal. Faithfulness unto death would be “gain” for him too.

This double orientation and double gain should not be forced apart. Pouring out his remaining life would not only complement the Philippians’ sacrifice but would also bring Paul much joy and boasting. Likewise, Paul’s courageous death would not only magnify Christ and embolden Christians but would also entail his “departure” (ἀναλύω; 1:23) to be with Christ and his “arrival” (καταντάω; 3:11) at the resurrection from out of the dead. Paul’s approach to death in his letter to the Philippians thus held self-interest, other-regard, the spread of the gospel, and the glory of God in complete harmony.

Chapter 11

Paul the Victor: Paul Approaches Death in 2 Timothy

11.1 Introduction: The Paul We Encounter in 2 Timothy

The letter of 2 Timothy is attributed to Paul (1:1) and communicates, at least on a surface reading of the text, details from Paul's personal history, his affection for a close friend and colleague, and some concrete directives for ministry. Stemming from the work of J. G. Eichhorn, F. C. Baur, and Heinrich Julius Holtzmann in nineteenth-century Germany, however, it has become the majority position in (Western) NT scholarship that 2 Timothy was not written by Paul.¹ One limited barometer of current scholarly opinion to support this assertion has been provided by Foster 2012. Foster published the results of an informal survey conducted at the 2011 British New Testament Conference. In response to the question of whether Paul was the author of 2 Timothy approximately 24% of the 108 scholars participating indicated "Yes," 54% indicated "No," and a further 22% indicated "Uncertain" (2012: 171). One may speculate that a similar survey conducted among contemporary NT scholars in Germany would indicate even less support for Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy, while support for it would be much stronger in conservative American institutions.²

The widespread debate concerning the authorship of 2 Timothy demands that some reflection on the question be offered in this chapter. While the letter could be studied

¹ For an animated retelling of the history of scholarship from the nineteenth century to the present, see esp. Johnson 2001: 42–54.

² Another such barometer would be to survey technical commentaries written on 2 Timothy in the last 20 years. It appears as if the majority of such commentaries written in English would view 2 Timothy as "authentically Pauline." Whether this will eventually result in a corresponding shift in broader scholarly opinion remains to be seen.

from a textual perspective that largely bypasses the question of authorship, the intention and function of the text will change significantly depending upon where the hermeneutical camera is placed. Therefore, before attending to the key passages in 2 Timothy that articulate Paul's approach to his death (1:12; 4:6–8, 17–18), we will explore the historical and textual identity of the "Paul" whom we encounter in the letter.

11.1.1 The "Authorship" of 2 Timothy

The survey mentioned above poses the question of Pauline authorship in black-and-white terms: either Paul was the author or he was not. The restraints of such a survey question render it reductionistic. A spectrum would be a better way of conceptualizing the range of possible views on authorship. At one end of the spectrum would be the view that Paul wrote 2 Timothy by his own hand, without any input from others, and that his original letter did not undergo any editorial activity whatsoever. At the other end would be the view that 2 Timothy is a late second-century composition, written by an author with no organic link to the earthly Paul and with intent to deceive his readership about the letter's true origin. Any number of scenarios might occupy points on the spectrum between these two extremes. For instance, what if Paul directed the composition of the letter but gave the amanuensis (sometimes identified as Luke) a freer hand than he had given to previous amanuenses whom he had employed? What if Paul commissioned someone to write the letter of 2 Timothy in his name and approved (or did not approve) its final contents? What if 2 Timothy was based to a greater or lesser extent on an authentic letter (or letters) of Paul but bears the marks of a later editor (cf. Miller 1997)? What if a member of Paul's "school" (if there was such a thing) wrote the kind of letter in Paul's name that he knew Paul would write if Paul were alive? Given all these possible scenarios, the decision of where one is to draw the dividing line of "authenticity"

becomes problematic. Would it be possible for Paul *not* to be the “author” of 2 Timothy but for the letter still to be genuinely “Pauline” rather than “deuteropauline”?³

To complicate the issue further, the authorship of 2 Timothy is wrapped up in the question of how 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are related. Should these letters be read as a three-letter corpus (see, e.g., Trummer 1981; Häfner 2007)? Is there a canonical basis for grouping these letters together (e.g., Wall 2004; Childs 2008: 97)? Should the letters be read as sharing lexical, stylistic, argumentative, or theological features that distinguish them from the other canonical Pauline letters (e.g., Collins 2002:9; Fiore 2007: 6)?⁴ Is it more appropriate to conceive of the letters as a cluster, perhaps on the analogy of the Corinthian correspondence (e.g., Towner 2006: 30)? Or is the designation “Pastoral Epistles” a completely unhelpful scholarly convention that should be jettisoned so that the letters can be read as truly distinct and independent documents (e.g., Richards 2002; Herzer 2004; 2008)?⁵ It is undeniable that the way in which the relationships between 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are construed will have a profound effect on the question of the authorship of 2 Timothy.

It is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter to explore these questions in greater detail. For various reasons I favor reading these three letters (first) as discrete compositions. Incidentally, this uncouples 2 Timothy from 1 Timothy and Titus, which allows an easier case to be made within the academic guild for its authenticity.⁶ Furthermore, I agree with those who argue that the alleged differences between 2 Timothy and the undisputed Pauline letters have either been exaggerated or can plausibly

³ Terms such as “genuine,” “authentic,” and “Pauline” are undoubtedly slippery and subjective. By “genuinely Pauline” I mean evincing a form and content that originated from and reflected the style and thought of Paul of Tarsus.

⁴ Most of the features thought to be distinctive to the Pastoral Epistles are generally less pronounced in 2 Timothy than in 1 Timothy or Titus.

⁵ The recent trend of dismantling the three-letter corpus view is given its most thorough expression in Engelmann 2012.

⁶ James Aageson is one of many scholars who conjectures that 2 Timothy is written by a different author than the author(s) of 1 Timothy and Titus, and who thinks it possible that Paul wrote 2 Timothy (2008: 87).

be explained by the setting in which the letter was written. Thus, I have placed 2 Timothy within Part III of the present work, considering it to set forth a Pauline *self*-portrait.⁷ Even if Paul did not directly dictate the letter of 2 Timothy, my analysis will demonstrate that the number and strength of the lexical, metaphorical, and conceptual parallels to Paul's letters support viewing the passages in question as genuinely "Pauline."⁸ Therefore, without defending a specific view of how 2 Timothy was composed, I consider the passages here examined to represent Paul's own perspective, if not his literal words.

11.1.2 The Portrait of Paul in 2 Timothy and the Letter's Legal Setting

It is apparent from the letter that Paul is imprisoned (1:8, 16; 2:9), almost certainly in Rome (1:17). The dominant characterization of Paul in the letter is of him as one who is suffering for the gospel.⁹ 2 Timothy has a sober, almost broody, tone, as Paul frequently casts long looks back over his life and makes preparations for the transfer of his ministry.¹⁰ In particular, 2 Tim 4:6–8 has typically been read as Paul's last words, indicating that he expected an imminent or even immediate death. In a study of Paul's approach to his own death, this letter would appear to present some of the most pertinent passages for consideration.

This traditional reading of 2 Timothy has recently received a stiff challenge, first in the work of Michael Prior (1989). Prior writes, "We suggest that at the moment of writing to Timothy Paul did not at all consider himself to be either on the brink of death, as most

⁷ This decision is supported by the probable, early use of 1 and 2 Timothy in Ignatius's letters (see Foster 2005: 170–72) and Polycarp's letter (see Holmes 2005b: 215–18), especially if Polycarp implicitly attributed these letters to Paul (for which, see Berding 1999).

⁸ David Cook, while arguing that 2 Tim 4:6–8 was written by "the Pastor" and not Paul, nevertheless argues that 2 Tim 4:6–8 knew "at least substantial parts of our Philippians" (1982: 171). James Miller considers 2 Timothy to be a composite document, but he views 2 Tim 4:6–8 to be a genuine note from Paul written shortly before his execution (1997: 149) and 4:17–18 to be a part of another genuine note from Paul (150). James Dunn views all of 2 Tim 4:6–18 as an authentic note smuggled from prison (2009a: 1059). However, Miller among others judges 2 Tim 1:12 to be outside of the letter's "authentic core" (1997: 149).

⁹ See 2 Tim 1:8–12, 15–16; 2:8–10; 3:10–13; 4:6, 14–18. Cf. Towner 1999: 170; and S. C. Martin 1997: 196: "All the other dimensions of the Pastor's presentation of Paul are subordinated to his suffering."

¹⁰ See 2 Tim 1:12–14; 2:1–2; 3:10–11, 14–17; 4:1–8. Seán Martin makes the argument that in 2 Timothy Paul is portrayed as the dying Moses was (1997 *passim*).

of the commentators read the text, nor to be living a stay of execution that could last up to several months, as a small number allows. On the contrary, Paul was very confident about a favourable outcome to his present difficulties” (106).¹¹ For Prior, the time of Paul’s “departure” (ἀνάλυσις; 4:6) refers not to his death but to his release from prison for continued ministry (109). If this were true, then the relevance of 2 Timothy to the present study would have to be seriously questioned.

Prior’s reading has been expanded into a formidable monograph-length argument by Craig A. Smith in his published dissertation, *Timothy’s Task, Paul’s Prospect: A New Reading of 2 Timothy* (2006). Smith’s reading of 2 Tim 4 offers a useful foil to my own. Most of Smith’s focus is on 2 Tim 4:1–8, but in addition Smith argues with regard to Paul’s instructions in 2 Tim 4:9–21 that “surely these are the words of a man who expects to be released not executed” (129). Paul’s directives to Timothy in 4:9 (“Make every effort to come to me soon”) and 4:21 (“Make every effort to come before winter”) do suggest that Paul’s execution would not be immediate. Conversely, this repeated and urgent request also suggests that time was of the essence, which would be less explicable if Paul anticipated a release from prison and a subsequent stay in Rome of indefinite length.¹² I will respond in detail to Smith’s exegesis of 2 Tim 4:6–8, 17–18 below, but there is an initial consideration that weighs heavily against Prior and Smith’s proposal: the legal setting of the letter.

In 2 Tim 4:16 Paul drops a tantalizing clue to his situation. He claims that at his “first defense” (ἡ πρώτη ἀπολογία) no one stood by him. Prior 1989 and Smith 2006 do not explore this phrase in any detail, but as Marshall 1999: 823 and Towner 2006: 645 suggest, this phrase could refer to a *prima actio*, a preliminary hearing in Roman law that was conducted to determine whether there were sufficient grounds for the trial to proceed.¹³ At the end of this hearing a verdict of either *Non liquet* (“it is not evident”) or

¹¹ For his entire argument to this effect, see pages 91–112.

¹² In any case, 2 Tim 4:21 hardly implies that “Timothy could postpone his trip provided he arrived before winter,” as Smith suggests (2006: 129).

¹³ Cf. Kelly 1963: 218; Tajra 1994: 18–19, 86–89. Jill Harries, Professor of Ancient History at the University of St. Andrews, suggested to me via email on 19 April 2013 that Paul’s preliminary hearing may

Amplius (“further”) would have continued the trial.¹⁴ Since Paul remained in chains after this preliminary hearing and since he refers to it as his first defense (thereby implying a second), it can only be concluded that sufficient grounds *were* found for the trial to proceed. Furthermore, Paul’s claim that all deserted him (4:16) implies that even some of his closest companions sensed that his preliminary hearing would not lead to a dismissal of the charges against him and that they could be in real danger if they accompanied Paul.¹⁵ Paul also claims that he is in chains like a “criminal” (κακοῦργος; 2:9), a potent term suggesting that Paul is being viewed as one worthy of death.¹⁶ Finally, if the formal charge against Paul was treason (*crimen laesae maiestatis*), as it seems best to conclude,¹⁷ then Paul’s proclamation of the gospel message at his trial in a way that required divine strengthening and led to clear Gentile understanding (4:17), probably would not have been favorably received. All of this indicates that the continuance of Paul’s trial was likely to end in his execution.

In light of this, it is surprising to note Smith’s contention that 2 Tim 4:6b (“the time of my departure has drawn near”) reveals Paul’s confidence that “his presentation before those at his trial *will* lead to his release even though he *may* have to make another presentation of his Gospel” (2006: 127; italics added). Moreover, Smith declares that 2 Tim 4:16–18 presents Paul’s “optimistic evaluation of his first trial” (130) and that “*even if* there were a further trial” (127; italics added) Paul is confident he will be released.¹⁸ On

not have been the *prima actio* of a *formal* two-stage legal process. Nevertheless, an informal criminal hearing would function in a similar way to a *prima actio*. Harries wrote, “Any criminal trial would involve some kind of preliminary investigation.”

¹⁴ Cf. Kelly 1963: 218; Tajra 1994: 89; Marshall 1999: 823.

¹⁵ Cf. Tajra 1994: 89: “Perhaps the abandonment can be partly explained by the very nature of the indictment itself. Paul was charged under the majesty laws, which, as we have seen, were rigorously enforced. It would have been exceedingly dangerous for the Apostle’s co-religionists to have shown themselves as his supporters at the trial”

¹⁶ As Towner states, the term κακοῦργος “is used only here outside of Luke’s references to the criminals crucified alongside of Jesus (Luke 23:32, 33, 39). It often designates the worst sort of criminals, those headed for crucifixion” (1999: 159).

¹⁷ Cf. Tajra 1994: 4–12. For an overview of the crime against *maiestas* see Harries 2007: 72–85.

¹⁸ Cf. Prior 1989: 106: “Paul was very confident about a favourable outcome to his present difficulties,” by which Prior means that Paul anticipated a release from imprisonment.

the contrary, the text presents a further trial as expected, not just possible, and one wonders how Paul could be so optimistic about his release if the first hearing must have expressly decided against it—at least for the time being.

Thus the legal setting of the letter, neglected by Prior and Smith, shapes our encounter with the Paul of 2 Timothy. We meet Paul as one awaiting a further trial that we have every reason to believe will result in his execution.¹⁹ As one who suffers for the gospel, Paul will be called upon to make his final and total sacrifice.

11.2 Paul at the Finish Line (2 Tim 4:6–8)

With only about 200 meters left in the 2012 Olympic marathon, Stephen Kiprotich looked back over his shoulder to check the competition and then ran over to the crowd of onlookers to grab a Ugandan flag. He draped the flag over his shoulders and sprinted on. At that point he had effectively won the race, securing the second gold medal in his country's history.

The same spirit of assurance and celebration imbues 2 Tim 4:6–8. Paul, nearing the end of a grueling competition, casts a glance backward over his race of faith. Assured of his imminent victory, he begins to celebrate what is in store for him beyond the finish line. Of all the texts we have surveyed thus far, 2 Tim 4:6–8 presents us with Paul's most direct look into the face of death. The text can be translated as follows:

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has drawn near. **7** I have contended in the good competition; I have completed the race; I have guarded the faith. **8** Henceforth the crown of righteousness is reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me but to all those who have loved his appearing.

¹⁹ It was common for there to be a considerable time interval between a *prima actio* and a *secunda actio*, so even if the text implies that Paul would be waiting for months before his second trial, this does not undermine my reading. Cf. Tajra 1994: 89. See also Sherwin-White 1963: 118, which speaks of “the congestion of the [imperial] court list.” Georgy Kantor, Tutorial Fellow in Ancient History at St. John's College, Oxford, wrote me regarding this issue via email on 20 April 2013: “The delay of months was perfectly possible if public games and court vacations intervened.” For example, see Lintott 2008: 88 for the potential of considerable delays in the trial of Verres.

11.2.1 Identifying the Genre of 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Craig Smith's 2006 monograph devotes an 81-page chapter to the argument that 2 Tim 4:1–8 does not follow the formulaic structures of either a farewell speech or a testament. To my mind Smith has not argued his case persuasively,²⁰ but his work will need to be reckoned with by those who would form simplistic arguments for pseudepigraphy based on the assumption that the form of 2 Tim 4:6–8 points to a date well after Paul's death. Furthermore, I do not see how the identification of 2 Tim 4:1–8 as a "charge"²¹ excludes the possibility that it was given in view of Paul's imminent death. As Smith concedes, the author has modified the charge form with the insertion of the γάρ clauses in 4.3–4 and 4.6–7 (73) and there is shared content between 2 Timothy and ancient Jewish testaments (89). In my view, the form of 2 Tim 4:6–8 tells us nothing definitive about when it was composed or how it should be interpreted.²² Even if 2 Tim 4:1–8 is helpfully described as a "charge," my interpretation of 4:6–8 will proceed on the assumption that only the content of these verses can determine whether the charge was issued in view of Paul's death or his release.

11.2.2 Paul's Glances to the Past at the Finish Line (2 Tim 4:6–7)

The section begins with a γάρ, which probably ties it most closely to the immediately preceding exhortation Paul gives to Timothy: "Carry out your ministry fully" or "Completely fulfill your ministry" (τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον; 4:5d). The logic of this transition may be multifaceted: Paul's imminent fulfillment of his own ministry provides *motivation* and a *model* for Timothy while also providing the *occasion* for Timothy to receive the baton from Paul. In this way, Paul's contest may be conceived of as a relay race rather than a solo marathon. The same note of finality is struck with the

²⁰ See the incisive critique of Zamfir 2009.

²¹ See Smith 2006: 67. According to Smith a charge is a specific literary form consisting of four necessary elements: charge verb, person charged, authority phrase, and content of the charge (64).

²² Jens Herzer, in a review of Smith's book, rightly questions whether Smith's methodology involves an undue prioritization of structure: "Darf man tatsächlich Struktur und Inhalt eines Textes so scharf trennen, um einer auf die Struktur abhebenden literarkritischen These gerecht zu werden, die dann wiederum das inhaltliche Verständnis des Textes bestimmt?" (Herzer 2010; accessed online).

verb πληροφορέω in 2 Tim 4:17, discussed below. In both instances the unusual verb indicates that the entirety *and* finality of ministry is envisioned. The transition from 4:5 to 4:6 thus indicates that Paul is showing Timothy how a God-given ministry is to be finished well.

In the first clause of 2 Tim 4:6 the verb σπένδω reappears, which I have already noted and discussed in Phil 2:17 (§10.3), arguing that while suffering appears to be the primary thrust of the metaphor, Paul's death is implied by the imagery as well. According to Prior and Smith's reading, the verb cannot imply Paul's death. Smith claims, "It is Fee who has proved that Phil. 2.17 cannot be a metaphor for a possible death and therefore cannot be used by traditionalists as support for 2 Tim. 4.6a as a metaphor for probable death" (2006: 114). Yet Fee has not *proven* any such thing. There are many commentators who agree that Phil 2:17 refers to or at least implies Paul's death. While it is a circular argument to cite Phil 2:17 in support of one's interpretation of 2 Tim 4:6 and vice versa, I would contend that the highly unusual metaphor is likely to evoke the same associations in both passages and that it is more natural to read death in both passages than in neither (cf. σπονδίζω in Ign. Rom. 2.2). In any case, Smith's counterproposal that "instead of death ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι is referring to his costly preaching and witness during his trial and imprisonment" (121) fails to convince. It is unclear how Paul's preaching would be "costly" on Smith's reading, in which Paul anticipated that it was precisely his preaching that would lead to his release. By making preaching the primary referent of σπένδω (cf. 119) Smith misses the Pauline logic that preaching in itself is not suffering but leads to suffering. Smith's interpretation of 2 Tim 4:6a strips σπένδω of any sacrificial (in the sense of suffering) overtones whatsoever.²³

Furthermore, Smith cannot adequately account for the present tense of the verb. He writes, "The clause '*I have been poured out* like a drink offering' refers to Paul's costly preaching and witness during his trial, which were like a sweet-smelling wine drink offering before God" (228; italics added). In this citation Smith has substituted the perfect

²³ I cannot here interact with Smith's reading of Rom 15:16–17, which he considers to be a "key text" (118), but I think Smith unhelpfully conflates Rom 15:16–17 with Phil 2:17.

tense for the present tense. By interpreting σπένδω as referring to Paul's preaching in the past, he cannot explain why the present tense is employed. In my view "I am already being poured out as a drink offering" in 2 Tim 4:6a makes the same claim as Phil 2:17 and 2 Cor 2:14: Paul's apostolic suffering in the present puts him on the road to Calvary; his suffering was of one piece with, and would culminate in, his inevitable death.

In the next clause Paul declares, "the time of my departure has drawn near" (ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀναλύσεώς μου ἐφέστηκεν; 4:6b). Everything in the clause hinges upon the meaning and referent of the noun ἀνάλυσις. Smith concedes that it is possible for the term to mean "departure" (though "release" may be a more common meaning) and for ἀνάλυσις to refer to death when the context indicates (2006: 124–25). Moreover, Smith also concedes that "Paul uses ἀναλύω in Phil. 1.23 because he is drawing from his understanding of death in terms of being released from the body in order to enter the intermediate state" (126).²⁴ Nevertheless, and even though Smith finds the "traditional" position "attractive" (123), Smith contends that 2 Tim 4:6b refers to Paul's imminent release from prison.

Lexically speaking, Smith's proposal is possible. However, it meets challenges from the legal setting of the letter and the immediate context. In addition, the most significant parallel to the use of ἀνάλυσις in 2 Tim 4:6 must be *1 Clem.* 44.5. The context of this verse concerns the office of the "overseer" (ἐπισκοπή). According to Clement, overseers could only be legitimately succeeded at death (44.2). To remove them from their positions before death—provided that they have served blamelessly—is unjust (44.3) and no small sin (44.4). In contrast to those unjustly and prematurely removed from office, Clement writes, "Blessed are those elders who have gone on before, who had a fruitful and mature departure (οἵτινες ἔγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν). For they are not anxious that someone will remove them from the place established for them" (44.5). In this verse ἀνάλυσις clearly refers to death. The elders who have already died are blessed

²⁴ This is no small concession since it neutralizes Smith's argument that the primary meaning of ἀνάλυσις ("release") inclines toward his interpretation. Furthermore, the tight connection between 2 Tim 4:6a and Phil 2:17 in the use of the unusual term σπένδω suggests that an additional connection between 2 Tim 4:6b and Phil 1:23 in their use of ἀνάλυσις and ἀναλύω is not unreasonable. Cf. Weiser 2003: 306.

because they cannot be improperly deposed (44.6) and they enjoy a secure place in heaven (44.5). Furthermore, it is right to translate ἀνάλυσις here as “departure” and not “release.” Not only are the elders’ deaths euphemistically described as “going on before” (προοδοιοπορέω) to the “place” (τόπος) established for them, but in *1 Clement* the archetypal examples of those who have gone on before are Peter, who “departed to the place of glory that was owed to him” (5.4), and Paul, who “was carried away from the world and was taken up to the holy place” (5.7). In each verse travel imagery and spatial terms abound. While *1 Clement* displays little to no knowledge of 2 Timothy (see Gregory 2005: 143, 151), it is possible—given that 2 Timothy was almost certainly written in Rome—that Clement’s understanding and description of death was influenced by the earthly Paul. Alternatively, it could be that both 2 Timothy and *1 Clement* draw on a common and perhaps widespread understanding of death as “departure” among Christians in Rome.²⁵

In the next verse, 2 Tim 4:7, Paul presents a compact and stylized summary of his apostolic ministry and Christian life. He employs three perfect-tense verbs: “I have contended in the good competition; I have completed the race; I have guarded the faith.” In order to maintain his thesis that 2 Tim 4:6–7 is not written in view of Paul’s imminent death, Smith must argue that this verse makes reference only to his first trial (cf. 2 Tim 4:16). In this reading, Paul is reflecting back on the faithfulness he displayed in preaching at this trial, and since “this particular fight and race is over” Paul “expects to be released” (Smith 2006: 133). The sweeping statements that Paul makes and the generalized tone seem ill-suited to Smith’s interpretation. Furthermore, a careful exegesis of these phrases tells against Smith’s view.

In the first phrase, “I have contended in the good competition” (τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἡγωνίσμαι; 4:7a), Paul draws on athletic imagery that he has used elsewhere to describe his life and ministry in view of his death and final judgment (see 1 Cor 9:24–27; Phil 3:12–14). Perhaps even more significant is the parallel in 1 Tim 6:12a, “Contend in the

²⁵ The understanding of death as departure resonated in Jewish and Greco-Roman thinking as well. See, e.g., the references listed in Weiser 2003: 305.

good competition of faith” (ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως).²⁶ Smith recognizes this parallel but argues that 1 Tim 6:12 has limited reference to Timothy’s task in Ephesus. Moreover, Smith contends, “Faith is not mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:7. Therefore it does not necessarily or logically follow that the fight Paul is experiencing is the same one which Timothy is being exhorted to fight. I propose that the two texts have different referents” (2006: 136). Both of these contentions may be challenged.

First, the generalized exhortation in 1 Tim 6:11 that precedes 6:12a makes it likely that Timothy’s entire life of faith is in view. This is confirmed by what follows in 1 Tim 6:12b, which speaks of taking hold of eternal life, an exhortation that would not naturally follow if 6:12a was confined to one specific, pastoral situation. While 1 Tim 6:12–16 may have particular application to Timothy’s situation in Ephesus, that need not restrict the broad exhortations in this passage to the concrete situation in Ephesus *alone*.

Second, Smith is obviously correct that faith is not explicitly mentioned in 2 Tim 4:7a, probably because that would ruin the staccato-like effect of the verse and cause a redundancy with 4:7c. However, the insertion of the adjective καλός must be significant because it is unparalleled in the other clauses of 4:7 and slightly imbalances the construction. It is interesting to note that καλός is never used as an attributive adjective in the undisputed Pauline letters but the adjective is used frequently in the so-called Pastoral Epistles, and often as an attributive adjective. In the relevant cross-references, phrases in which καλός appears seem to have a generalized reference that cannot be restricted to very particular and specific circumstances.²⁷ All this suggests that 2 Tim 4:7a refers to Paul’s Christian life and ministry, not just to his preaching at his first trial.²⁸

²⁶ This is a significant parallel regardless of who wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and the order in which they were written.

²⁷ For example, consider the phrases “the good warfare” (1 Tim 1:18), “good teaching” (1 Tim 4:6), “good works” (1 Tim 5:10, 25; 6:18; Tit 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14), “good foundation” (1 Tim 6:19), and “the good deposit” (2 Tim 1:14). In each instance the adjective καλός seems to broaden the reference so that the phrases refer to universal goods.

²⁸ Moreover, the perfect participle ἡγαπηκόσι in 4:8 matches the perfect-tense verbs of 4:7 and probably describes parallel activity. Love for the Lord’s appearance is a generalized description of faithful Christian life, not an activity restricted to a particular historical event.

The second phrase, “I have completed the race” (τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα; 4:7b), also has a very natural parallel—in this case, Acts 20:24.²⁹ Smith underestimates the importance of this parallel. His interpretation of 4:7b largely rests on his interpretation of 2 Tim 4:11 and 17, which we will consider in reverse order.

Paul viewed his preaching of the gospel during his first defense (4:17) as a significant and highly symbolic act. With this Smith concurs:

By preaching in Rome before Nero, Paul has reached a decisive climactic moment. It has been Paul’s goal and calling to preach before kings and leaders and now that he has preached before Nero, the emperor, the king of the world, he feels that he has reached a milestone. But it does not mean that he has finished his ministry. It is simply a decisive moment that is over. (2006: 140)

It is highly unlikely that Nero would have been present at Paul’s *prima actio* (cf. Sherwin-White 1963: 110–12; Tajra 1994: 14–17), but I agree with Smith that Paul probably viewed his preaching before “all the Gentiles” as an eschatologically-charged moment. Yet in this regard, Smith’s citation of Rom 15:19 (on pages 138–39) works against him. If Paul thought it possible for the gospel to “be fulfilled” (πεπληρωκέναι) in a certain region so that Paul no longer feels compelled to preach there anymore (see Rom 15:18–21), then why could Paul not have a similar sense that his task was not only finished in one region of the world but throughout the entire world once he had rendered decisive testimony to Christ in the capital city? Throughout the book of Acts one may observe the drive of the gospel toward Rome and even Paul’s sense that he too must make his way there (cf. Acts 19:21; 23:11; 27:24). It seems entirely possible that the milestone Paul reached in preaching at his trial was not the literal end of his race but the last hurdle to clear before Paul could sprint to the finish. It is noteworthy that the last participial clause in *1 Clem.* 5.7 before Paul’s death is implied is “having witnessed before the (Roman) leaders.” All of this suggests that Paul’s public preaching of the gospel at his first trial (2 Tim 4:17) was in a meaningful sense the consummation of his ministry and the completion of his race.

²⁹ My translation of Acts 20:24 is “Yet I do not give any account for life as precious to myself in order that I might finish my course (ὡς τελειῶσαι τὸν δρόμον μου) and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God’s grace.”

This raises the question of why Paul directed Timothy to bring Mark, who is “useful to me for ministry” (2 Tim 4:11). I agree with Smith that this directive implies that “Paul is expecting to continue his ministry” (2006: 139), but the critical question is, To continue in what way? Smith assumes that Paul may only continue his ministry if he is released from prison. However, the description of Paul’s “delegates” and their movements (2 Tim 4:9–21) and the impression one receives from his other letters suggest that Paul’s ministry could remain alive and active as he coordinated this network of gospel laborers from prison through oral and written means. Paul could be calling for Mark so that he could be entrusted with a special dispatch (cf. Tychicus in 2 Tim 4:12) or perhaps Mark had resources for Paul’s study or writing in prison. The text does not supply us with information on *how* Paul planned to utilize Mark, but nothing in 2 Tim 4:11 necessitates that Paul thought his ministry would continue out of prison and after his release.

With these objections cleared away, the most natural reading of “I have completed the race” remains to read it in the vein of Acts 20:24.³⁰ Paul has run the course that the Lord Jesus laid out for him: to preach the gospel (cf. 2 Tim 1:11). As in 2 Tim 4:7a and c, Paul can make this claim in the perfect tense not because he is anticipating an immediate death but because the last part of his commission has been fulfilled: he has preached the gospel to all the Gentiles in Rome.

The third and final clause in 2 Tim 4:7 evokes different imagery. In saying “I have guarded the faith” (τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα), Paul is likely recalling stewardship language he had used earlier in 1:14. On this view “to guard the faith” (τηρεῖν τὴν πίστιν) would be synonymous with “to protect the deposit” (φυλάσσειν τὴν παραθήκην; 1:14) and πίστις would refer to the body of Christian teaching, which requires a corresponding lifestyle.³¹ It would strain the grammar excessively to interpret this clause as meaning “I have remained faithful in the midst of my first trial” (cf. Smith 2006: 142). Rather, Paul is

³⁰ Cf. also Seneca’s statement in *Ep.* 12.9 (as translated by Elaine Fantham), “I have lived and run the course that Fortune gave.” Seneca here appropriates Dido’s last words (Virgil, *Aen.* 4.653).

³¹ Cf. 2 Tim 3:8; 1 Tim 4:1, 6; 6:21; see also 2 Tim 4:3–4. Faithfully preserving the true Christian teaching necessarily involves the maintenance of personal belief and integrity. Nevertheless, I see guarding the faith to be a task particularly given to the leaders of the church; contra Mutschler 2010: 378.

operating on the assumption that household managers must be found faithfully handling the gospel of God (1 Cor 4:2)—and he has done so (cf. Stepp 2005: 157).

11.2.3 Paul's Sight of the Future beyond His Death (2 Tim 4:8)

We have argued that the relationship between 2 Tim 4:5d and 4:6–8, the terms σπένδω and ἀνάλυσις in 4:6, and a right understanding of 4:7 all point to the conclusion that these verses present Paul's approach to his death. This receives powerful confirmation in 2 Tim 4:8 and the word with which the verse begins, λοιπόν.

When used adverbially the adjective λοιπός has two main meanings and functions (cf. BDAG §3.a, b). When bearing the first meaning, λοιπός is typically translated “from now on.” The prime Pauline example is 1 Cor 7:29: “The appointed time has been shortened. From now on (τὸ λοιπόν), let those having wives live as though they did not have wives.” As this example reveals, λοιπόν has both a temporal *and* a logical nuance. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 7:29b–31a is *subsequent* to the time being shortened but also a *consequence* of it (cf. 7:31b). This same dual nuance can be seen in Acts 27:20: “When neither sun nor stars shone forth for many days, and no small storm pressed upon us, from then on (λοιπόν) all hope of our being saved was being taken away” (cf. Heb 10:12–13). It is clear that the loss of hope occurred *after* days of darkness but also *because* of them. It is difficult to capture both nuances with a single English word. Perhaps the best candidate would be “thereupon.”

When bearing the second adverbial meaning, λοιπός can be translated “finally.” Examples of this usage in the Pauline letters include 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 6:10; Phil 3:1; 4:8; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:1.³² This is the meaning that Smith argues for in 2 Tim 4:8 (2006: 145). Smith is right to point out that this is the more common usage in Paul (145), yet in each of these instances λοιπός clearly marks a major transitional seam or, as Smith writes, “a transition to a new thought” (144). Apparently Smith does not realize that this creates a

³² 1 Corinthians 4:2 may also broadly fall within this category, though the conjunction of λοιπός with the adverb ὥδε affects the meaning. It is difficult to discern which of the two meanings λοιπός bears in Gal 6:17. The use of λοιπός in 1 Cor 1:16 does not seem to fit either of the two main meanings but is readily understandable.

major inconsistency in his argument. Earlier in his monograph Smith claims that 2 Tim 4:9–18 “constitutes the hortatory section of the ‘closing’ section of the letter and thus marks the beginning of a new section” (74). He then writes, “The ‘charge’ ends at 4.8 not 4.5, because 4.6–8 is clearly connected to 4.1–5 through the use of γάρ. 4.6–8 gives the reason why Timothy should follow the commands given in 4.2 and 4.5, namely, Timothy will receive a final reward if he follows the paradigm of Paul’s life” (75). He also adds that 4:1 and 4:8 form an *inclusio* that demarcates the charge (75). The more tightly Smith integrates 2 Tim 4:1–5 and 4:6–8, the more he undermines his suggestion that λοιπός transitions to a new thought. In any case, a careful examination of the examples listed above shows that the use of λοιπός in 2 Tim 4:8 cannot be placed in the same category.

Hence, I would contend that λοιπός in 2 Tim 4:8 bears the first meaning and function. Translating it with “thereupon” sounds awkward to modern ears, so I have used “henceforth.” Yet it is imperative to remember that λοιπός with this meaning denotes a temporal *and* a logical sequence. For Smith, the temporal nuance is nonsensical: “Certainly the crown of righteousness has always been stored away for Paul and every believer since the death of Christ and not since the certainty of Paul’s death” (144). For William Mounce, the logical nuance is inappropriate since “it would suggest that Paul’s crown of righteousness has been earned by his life of obedience” (2000: 582). My exegesis of 2 Tim 4:8 will meet both these objections.

The phrase “the crown of righteousness” (ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος) can be construed in different ways. The noun δικαιοσύνη occurs two other times in 2 Timothy, denoting a human moral quality: “Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith(fulness), love, peace . . .” (2 Tim 2:22; cf. 1 Tim 6:11); “All Scripture is God-exhaled and useful for . . . training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, in view of these occurrences and the logical relationship between 4:7 and 4:8, it is best to paraphrase ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος as “the crown properly given to those who maintain righteousness.” In this way, the crown is both the reward for and the public recognition of the righteousness that Paul and others have pursued and exhibited in their Christian lives. Once again it is appropriate to recognize that this interpretation receives support from the

early Christian texts that we have examined in Part II. Both the images of Paul as athlete (see esp. *1 Clem.* 5.5–7) and Paul as an exemplar of righteous endurance unto death (see esp. *Pol. Phil.* 9.1–2) would suggest that the connection between Christian embodied righteousness and postmortem reward was forged by Paul himself, whether in his oral teaching or letters or both. If Paul had not forged this connection and was in fact opposed to it, then it becomes very difficult to explain how it became so widely accepted in early Christian tradition that is consciously indebted to Paul.

Nevertheless, while it might be appropriate to speak of an athlete earning a crown for winning an earthly race, it does seem improper to speak of Paul “earning” this crown of righteousness. In 2 Timothy it is clear that Paul was entered into the race of faith only because of God’s grace (cf. 1:8–10) and that it is only God’s Spirit that enables any Christian to run well (cf. 1:14). As Calvin writes, God “gives his promised reward not because we first take the initiative with any of our own obedience but because with the same generosity that he shows us at the beginning, God adds to his first gifts others that are bestowed later” (1998 [1556]: 163).³³

In Paul’s reception of this crown it is critical to note the distinction (and time gap implied) between the crown being “reserved” (ἀπόκειμαι) for Paul and the crown being “awarded” (ἀποδίδωμι) to Paul. It is clear that the Lord “will award” (ἀποδώσει; future tense) the crown on the final day of judgment (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ; 4:8) but the crown “is reserved” (ἀπόκειται; present tense) for Paul “henceforth” (λοιπόν). This suggests that at the moment of Paul’s successful completion of the course, the crown is reserved for him. Though this seems nonsensical to Smith, it is only natural: the victor is determined only at the end of the race. Likewise, the crown can be laid up for Paul only after he has finished his course; if it were set aside earlier, this would deny the necessity of his perseverance. Until Paul has completed his ministry, there is always the possibility that he will be disqualified (cf. 1 Cor 9:27). However, the result of a marathon may be *effectively determined* at a late stage in the race even if it is not *formally decided* until the winner

³³ Cf. Aquinas’s view in Levering 2012: 90–91.

crosses the finish line or *publicly recognized* until the awards ceremony much later. This three-part sequence explicates the logic of 2 Tim 4:6–8. It must be stressed that Paul conceptualizes a gap between his death (when the crown is formally reserved for him) and the final day (when the crown is awarded to him).

2 Timothy 4:8 concludes with a couple hints that his death will be at the hands of the Romans. The designation of the Lord as “the righteous judge” (ὁ δίκαιος κριτής) may be an indirect criticism of the unrighteous Roman judge who is poised to condemn Paul.³⁴ Paul’s use of the loaded term “appearance” (ἐπιφάνεια) might also contain a subtle anti-imperial thrust (cf. Towner 2006: 417–18). It is important to note, however, that any critique of the Roman authorities remains a muted implication.

In interpreting 2 Tim 4:6–8 I have built a cumulative case defending and strengthening the traditional perspective that these verses were composed in view of Paul’s imminent—but not immediate—death. There are clues in the passage revealing Paul’s assumption of an intermediate state. For Paul death is a departure, although *to where* or *to whom* is not specified here (cf. Phil 1:23). The implied time gap between Paul’s death and the final day is also suggestive. Furthermore, in approaching death Paul does not disparage himself, despair of his own post-conversion works, or cast himself entirely upon the mercy of God as a wretched sinner. For Paul there are no deathbed confessions or regrets. Rather, this passage evinces a robust view of Christian good works. A crown will be awarded to all who have loved the Lord’s appearing (4:8). As death draws near Paul displays confidence not only in what God has done *for* him but also in what God has done *in* and *through* him.³⁵ The latter is undoubtedly based upon the former but it is the latter—Paul’s moral conduct—that is the focus of his reflections and the immediate ground for his enthusiasm.

³⁴ With regard to 2 Tim 4:8b Towner remarks, “A possible polemical challenge to the imperial judgment handed down against Paul should not be discounted” (2006: 616). Cf. Tajra 1994: 98.

³⁵ For Dibelius and Conzelmann, this is a reason to question the authenticity of 2 Tim 4:8: “One may still ask (without claiming that the answer decides the question of authenticity) whether Paul himself in such a situation would have spoken only of his success and not also of his weakness, whether he would have praised only *his* actions and not much rather *God’s* action” (1972: 121).

11.3 God the Guardian of Paul and His Legacy (2 Tim 1:12; 4:17–18)

We have not yet exhausted the contribution that 2 Timothy offers to a study of Paul's posture toward death. Two additional passages round out the portrait of the departing Paul: 2 Tim 1:12 and 4:17–18. We will consider them in reverse order.

11.3.1 *The Lord Who Strengthens, Delivers, and Saves Paul (2 Tim 4:17–18)*

In what may be the letter's climax (4:16–18), Paul gives an account of his first defense, which resulted in his continued imprisonment. With surprising equanimity Paul tells Timothy how all abandoned him at his trial, but how he prays that this will not be counted against them (4:16). He then writes,

17 Yet the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the proclamation might be completely fulfilled and all the nations might hear. And I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. **18** The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and he will save me into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory into the ages of the ages. Amen.

To interpret this passage accurately one must appreciate the threat from which Paul was delivered (4:17c, 18a). That threat is widely understood as death, which is possible. Two considerations, however, make it problematic. First, as Smith states, this position is illogical: "How can one's death be imminent in 4.6b if one has just been delivered from death in 4.17c?" (2006: 128; cf. Miller 1997: 150). Paul's deliverance could be a "temporary reprieve" or a "temporary stay of execution" (Mounce 2000: 597, 598; cf. Kelly 1963: 219) gained at his first trial, but this strains the statement, "I was delivered"—delivered partially or temporarily? The second problem is that if the "first defense" (4:16) can be reliably identified as a *prima actio*, then Paul could not have been delivered from death because a death verdict would never be issued at a preliminary hearing. If not death, then what was the threat from which Paul was delivered?

There are several indications that the fundamental threat was apostasy or at least Paul's compromised testimony. The corresponding "deliverance" was a bold and straightforward presentation of the gospel. This is precisely what I have argued for in relation to Phil 1:18d–20 (see §10.2.2). When Paul writes that no earthly companion drew

near to him for his first defense (4:16) he may be referring to supporting testimony but perhaps also to moral support. No friend or colleague was present at his trial to encourage him in his preaching of the gospel. Yet this lack was more than compensated for by the Lord, who stood by him and strengthened him (4:17a) for the purpose of his proclamation (4:17b). As mentioned above, this climactic testimony before “all the Gentiles” was a pivotal moment in Paul’s life and in the extension of the Christian message. Philip Towner reiterates this idea and connects it to 2 Tim 4:7 and Paul’s model:

What Paul says figuratively in 4:7, “I have competed well, finished the race, kept the faith,” now on the historical (and missiologial) plane translates into “I have fully accomplished my mission to the Gentiles.” Whether or not Paul ever made it as far as Spain, it is this Roman appearance that signaled for him the end of his course and the successful discharge of his apostolic responsibilities. Rome was for Paul the symbolic cosmopolitan center of “the nations” . . . The importance for Timothy, who has also been charged to fulfill his ministry, is that the moment of fulfillment for Paul, Timothy’s model, took place while Paul was a prisoner sharing in the sufferings of Christ. (2006: 643, 644)

Therefore, in claiming “I was delivered from the mouth of the lion” (ἐρρύσθην ἐκ στόματος λέοντος; 4:17c), Paul is probably recounting God’s grace to him that he did not fail to preach the message out of fear or shame, despite the suffering his boldness would entail (cf. 2 Tim 1:7–8, 12; 2:3, 8–10; 3:11–12; 4:2). This may be the meaning of ῥύομαι in 2 Tim 3:11 as well: Paul was delivered from the persecutions he endured, not in the sense that these persecutions did not lead to his death (though that was true), but in the sense that these persecutions did not lead to a lapse in Paul’s integrity so that he failed to live a godly life (3:12) or remain a model for Timothy (3:10).

This understanding of deliverance has some traction in Psalm 21 LXX (22 MT), from which much of the wording in this section is drawn. In pleading with God, “Save me from the mouth of a lion!” (σῶσόν με ἐκ στόματος λέοντος; 21:22), the psalmist could be asking God to deliver him from death, but it is also possible that this refers to the mouths of his enemies, which are used to reproach, despise, and mock him (21:7–9). Such verbal abuse causes the psalmist to lose all confidence; it dries out his mouth so that he cannot speak (21:15–16). Nevertheless, the jubilant second half of the psalm begins with bold, public testimony, “I will recount your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I

will sing your praise” (21:23)—a reversal of the situation described in 21:15–16. The hinge upon which the psalm turns from terrified silence to triumphant testimony is the prayer for deliverance in v. 22. Even if deliverance from a mute paralysis were not the original meaning of Psalm 21 LXX, it appears as if Paul has transformed the language of the psalm in this very way.

Following this deliverance from the mouth of a lion, Paul confidently declares, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work” (ῥύσεται με ὁ κύριος ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔργου πονηροῦ; 4:18a). This could be paraphrased in two ways: “The Lord will preserve my bodily life from every machination of evil men” or “The Lord will preserve my Christian integrity so that I do not succumb to evil works that I might be tempted to do.” Given the stress on good works in 2 Timothy (and throughout the so-called Pastoral Epistles), the statement that the Lord will deliver Paul from every evil work might be an inverted articulation of the desire to be prepared “for every good work” (εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν; 2 Tim 2:21) or equipped “for every good work” (πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν; 2 Tim 3:17). Furthermore, one wonders if Paul really did not anticipate dying at some point as a result of evil people plotting against his life. So what is likely in view is, once again, a deliverance from stumbling in the race.³⁶

Finally, Paul declares that the Lord “will save me into his heavenly kingdom” (σώσει εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπουράνιον; 4:18b). The use of εἰς with σώζω appears to be a compressed formulation. Marshall calls it a “pregnant construction” and renders as “will save me [and bring me] to” (1999: 826n45). There are no comparable constructions I could find in the NT and the only constructions I could find like it in the LXX are 1 Kgdms 27:1; 4 Kgdms 19:37; and Isa 66:19, in which it is said that certain people are

³⁶ Cf. Marshall 1999: 826: “The deliverance is from ‘the power of evil to destroy him finally’. This makes it unlikely that the writer is thinking of literal deliverance from the opposition, so that Paul is able to continue his life and work (either for a further period until his death or until the parousia). Rather the hope is of spiritual deliverance, so that nothing prevents him from attaining his heavenly reward; he will be preserved from falling into apostasy under the pressure of persecution.” See also Wieland 2006: 172: “Rescue is effected when servants of Christ are preserved from failure to fulfil their commission, as exemplified by Paul”; and Saarinen 2008: 164: “An exemplary Christian who puts his trust in the Lord avoids evil deeds and remains ‘equipped for every good work.’”

“saved into” (or “escape into”) a foreign land, and *4 Macc.* 15.3, in which “godliness” (εὐσέβεια) saves into eternal life. Though grammatically peculiar, the language here could imply movement, much as ἀνάλυστις does in 2 Tim 4:6. The Lord will rescue Paul *out of* this world and its kingdom(s) and bring him *into* the heavenly kingdom. In all the NT texts we have considered thus far, Paul never expressly claims that he will go to “heaven” (οὐρανός) when he dies. Nor is such a claim ever made for any believer in the early Christian texts we examined in Part II.³⁷ Yet heaven clearly is the place where God the Father and the Lord Jesus reside (see e.g., Rom 1:18; 10:6; Phil 3:20; Col 4:1; 1 Thess 1:10) and to the extent that Paul would be with Christ or in God’s kingdom at death, one would assume that it would be appropriate to speak of him as in heaven. The fact that this is never made explicit could be merely coincidental or it could display Paul’s reticence in projecting himself into a realm so closely identified with God. In any case, it seems reasonable to infer that the location of the Christian’s intermediate existence is in God’s heavenly kingdom, there awaiting the Lord’s revelation and reunification with the body.³⁸

11.3.2 *The God Who Guards Paul’s Deposit (2 Tim 1:12)*

The final verse to be considered is 2 Tim 1:12: “. . . But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and I am confident that he is able to guard my deposit for that day.” This verse makes no direct reference to Paul’s death but his death is implied and the day of judgment is in view. Furthermore, this verse reconfigures an aspect of Paul’s approach to his judgment that can be seen in 1 Thess 5:23–24; 1 Cor 1:8–9; and Phil 1:6 (cf. 2 Thess 3:3).

³⁷ The book of Acts does repeatedly speak of Jesus going into or up to heaven at his ascension (1:11; 2:33–34; 3:21). One could infer a similar journey and destination for deceased followers of Christ (cf. Acts 7:55–60 and §8.2.5).

³⁸ So Bockmuehl 2011: 226. Some commentators read Paul’s entry into the heavenly kingdom as occurring on the final day (e.g., Wieland 2006: 172–73). However, 2 Tim 4:18 presents salvation into the heavenly kingdom as immediately following upon deliverance from every evil work. Moreover, the Lord’s “kingdom” (βασιλεία) in 4:18 is not joined to his “appearance” (ἐπιφάνεια) as in 4:1 or to any reference to “that day” (1:12, 18; 4:8).

The pivotal interpretive question in this verse is the meaning of the phrase “my deposit” (τὴν παραθήκην μου). Commentators debate whether this is properly paraphrased “what God has entrusted to me” or “what I have entrusted to God.” In my view, neither paraphrase captures the full sense. Regarding the former, the genitive μου cannot be an objective genitive, as is often claimed, because in similar constructions outside of the NT μου always designates the depositor.³⁹ The genitive μου is thus better understood as a possessive genitive—the deposit that belongs to Paul and that he entrusts to another. Yet, it is not incorrect to say that Paul received this deposit from God or that he was entrusted with it.⁴⁰ Outside of 2 Timothy it is asserted that the gospel was “entrusted” (passive forms of πιστεύω) to Paul by God in Gal 2:7; 1 Thess 2:4; and 1 Tim 1:11. Titus 1:3 speaks of the “proclamation” (κήρυγμα) being entrusted to Paul. Moreover, within the immediate context of 2 Timothy Paul declares that he was “appointed” (passive form of τίθημι) as a herald, apostle, and teacher of the gospel (1:11). So while it is true that Paul is in possession of this deposit because he has it from God, the phrase τὴν παραθήκην μου itself does not mean “what God has entrusted to me.”

Neither, however, does τὴν παραθήκην μου strictly mean “what I have entrusted to God.” Once again, this paraphrase is not incorrect—Paul does trust God to guard his deposit and in that sense it could be said that Paul entrusts his deposit to God. Yet as Paul makes clear two verses later (1:14), the good deposit has been entrusted *to Timothy* for safekeeping (cf. 1 Tim 6:20). Likewise, in 1 Tim 1:18, Paul “entrusts” (middle form of παρατίθημι; cf. 2 Tim 2:2) to Timothy a “charge” (παραγγελία). Indeed the entire dynamic of 2 Timothy suggests that what Paul has received from God—excepting his apostolic authority—he is now passing on to Timothy. Hence, παραθήκη in 2 Tim 1:12 refers to the same entity as παραθήκη in 2 Tim 1:14 (contra Miller 1997: 104–5). It is no more of a contradiction for Paul to exhort Timothy to guard “my deposit” (cf. 1:12, 14)

³⁹ See the references listed in Wolter 1988: 117.

⁴⁰ As Alfons Weiser states, Paul himself did not generate this deposit: “Bei dieser Sichtweise ist allerdings mitzubedenken, dass der Deponent »Paulus« selbstverständlich nicht als Schöpfer, Urheber oder Ursprung der Paratheke betrachtet wird” (2003: 127). Contra Wolter 1988: 118.

than it is for him to exhort Timothy to share in the suffering of “my gospel” (cf. 1:8; 2:8). Paul’s deposit likely includes everything that Timothy has observed in Paul: both his “pattern of healthy words” (1:13)⁴¹ and the corresponding lifestyle that embodies and validates this teaching, especially in the midst of suffering (cf. 3:10–12).

Therefore, the full sense of 2 Tim 1:12 could be paraphrased as follows: “I am not ashamed of the suffering that proclaiming the gospel entails because I know that the God in whom I have believed is powerful and willing to guard what he has entrusted to me and what I am now entrusting to you, Timothy.⁴² God will preserve the fruits of my labor until the day of judgment.” This last sentence signals my understanding of how 2 Tim 1:12 connects with similar eschatological assurances Paul holds (cf. 1 Thess 5:23–24; 1 Cor 1:8–9; Phil 1:6). Paul believes that God will preserve the faith of his churches; he will not have labored in vain. Yet in 2 Tim 1:12 the focus of Paul’s confidence in God is not on God’s preservation of his converts per se but on God’s protection of the content and form of his gospel ministry through Timothy.

11.4 Conclusion: Paul’s Shaping of His Own Legacy

It is a phenomenon both ancient and modern that a person—especially one of social prominence—would give some thought to how they would be remembered after death. We can observe this in figures as diverse as OT characters, Socrates, Jewish martyrs, Roman emperors, and even Ignatius of Antioch. Thus it is not unreasonable to suppose that Paul also would have deliberately thought about his legacy and would have attempted to shape it—that is, to influence how his life and departure would be remembered.

The portrayal of the departing Paul that 2 Timothy offers is hardly one of a contemplative figure. He does not, like Socrates in the *Phaedo*, quietly consider his postmortem fate and calmly embrace it. On the contrary, this Paul is bustling about,

⁴¹ Towner views ὑποτύπωσις (1:13) as parallel to παραθήκη (1:12, 14) and for him this implies that “the *parathēkē* was the outline of Paul’s gospel, which consisted of the core material of the gospel message, the ‘essentials’ . . .” (Towner 1989: 126).

⁴² Cf. Weiser 2003: 127. Stepp 2005: 154n1 finds this reading an intriguing alternative but rejects it.

busily preparing for his departure. As Robert Wall writes, “Much like the closing of Acts, which portrays Paul awaiting his fate by doing what he has always done (Acts 28:30–31), here [in 2 Timothy] he faces death by staying in the moment, keeping warm and studying” (2012: 286). The Paul of 2 Timothy seems more concerned with how things will continue on after he has left than with where he is going or when.

As we can now see, there is a remarkable amount of continuity between Paul’s approach to death in his own letters and what is said of Paul’s death in the earliest Christian writings that refer to him. How can this continuity be explained? This is a question explored in chapter 13, but here is an initial explanation to ponder: the continuity was achieved, at least in part, by Paul himself in producing the letter of 2 Timothy. In 2 Timothy we find a repetition of themes present in earlier letters. In 1 Corinthians Paul identifies himself as a steward (4:1; 9:17); in 2 Timothy he is one who has been entrusted with the gospel and now passes on his deposit (1:12–14). In 1 Corinthians Paul pictures himself as an athlete straining toward the prize (9:24–27); in 2 Timothy he claims that he has run the race, finished his course, and secured that prize (4:7–8). In Philippians Paul imagines himself to be a drink offering and speaks of his death as a departure (2:17; 1:23); in 2 Timothy he does as well (4:6). Even 2 Corinthians, in which Paul describes his desire to leave the body (5:6–8), might be remixed in 2 Timothy as Paul talks of escaping earthly temptations and being saved into a heavenly kingdom (4:18). If 2 Timothy were not written or commissioned by Paul (as I have assumed), then one of his disciples has masterfully imitated his voice and developed his approach to death in a way that is indistinguishably consistent with his earlier letters.

Therefore, 2 Timothy gathers together most of the images of the departing Paul from previous letters and explicitly ties them to Paul’s imminent death. The vivid and multifaceted portrait sketched in 2 Timothy may have contributed to the persistence of these images in early Christian memory and literature. Paul’s spiritual descendants, for at least the first two generations, remembered Paul in the way he wanted to be remembered.

Chapter 12

The Departing Paul's Self-Portrait

12.1 Observations Gleaned from Paul's Anticipated Departure

Paul the tent-dweller, Paul the drink offering, Paul the victor—these are some of the most prominent images Paul employs in his letters when he reflects on his death. Rather than tracing the development of these and other images, this chapter will set forth four observations that can be gleaned from the analysis of Paul's approach to death in the previous three chapters.

12.1.1 The "Decision of Death" (2 Cor 1:9) Was a Significant Event in Paul's Life

In biographies on Paul's life and in accounts of formative influences on his theology, the decision of death referred to in 2 Cor 1:8–9 is rarely mentioned. For example, the following comprehensive studies on Paul's life or theology or both offer little to no discussion of 2 Cor 1:8–9: Bornkamm 1969; Lüdemann 1980; Becker 1992; Murphy O'Connor 1996 and 2004; Schreiner 2001; Schnelle 2003; and Gorman 2004.

Of all the works I surveyed, the one with the most explication of 2 Cor 1:8–9 was F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (1977), which devotes about four pages to the effect of the "one specially serious danger which overtook him in proconsular Asia" (310).¹ Bruce claims, "Whatever other changes this experience occasioned in his outlook, it modified his perspective on death and resurrection. For one thing, he henceforth treats the prospect of his dying before the parousia as more probable than otherwise" (310). Bruce later states that Paul's expectation of imminent execution "concentrated Paul's

¹ James Dunn posits that the "major crisis in Ephesus" referred to in 2 Cor 1:8 [N.B., *not* 2 Cor 1:9] could be one of four events or experiences that "changed the emphases and prompted the elaborations" of his theology, but Dunn states that the crisis "may well have contributed to Paul's theology of suffering" and says nothing else (1998: 371).

mind” (313) on the question of whether bodily death would interrupt union with Christ, and he argues that Paul’s answer in 2 Cor 5:1–10 was to envisage a “change-over from the old body to the new” so instantaneous that “there will be no interval of conscious ‘nakedness’ between the one and the other” (312).

We have already noted that the well-known purpose clause of 2 Cor 1:9b (“so that I might be confident not in myself but in the God who raises the dead”) is linked to the decision of death (2 Cor 1:9a) and not to Paul’s affliction (1:8) *per se*. However, when theologians and commentators mention 2 Cor 1:8–9, they almost invariably refer to Paul’s affliction or near-death experience rather than the (divine) decision of death. Even C. H. Dodd, who recognized the significance of Paul’s “spiritual crisis” in 2 Cor 1:8–9 perhaps more penetratingly than any other, links the “sort of second conversion” to a near-fatal illness, rather than the decision of death (1953: 81). Yet as we saw in chapters 9–11, 2 Cor 1:9 represents a significant turning point in Paul’s life in that he gains, for the first time, a deep-seated conviction that he will die before the Parousia and that many people in the churches he founded will outlive him. Therefore, the decision of death brought to Paul a new consciousness of his own mortality but also a realization that his churches must be prepared to grow and reproduce in his permanent absence. This suggests that interpreters of Paul’s letters should pay more attention to 2 Cor 1:8–9 as a religious experience that prompted new emphases in Paul’s theology and altered his perspective on his remaining earthly ministry.

12.1.2 Paul Was Assured of His Own Postmortem Destination

In the preceding chapters we have also noticed that Paul was surprisingly self-assured in his approach to death. Though it may be embarrassing to our modern sense of modesty, we should understand that Paul was unabashedly confident in himself—or rather, in God’s work in and through him. When Paul contemplates what will happen to him after death, he frequently mentions or assumes the uprightness of his conduct (see 2 Cor 1:12; 5:9–10; Phil 1:20; 3:7–14; 2 Tim 4:7–8, 17–18). In this way, Krister Stendahl’s

(in)famous declaration that Paul lacked the introspective and plagued conscience of the West is confirmed, at least in his approach to death.²

Furthermore, Paul seems to be innocent of any existential anxiety or emotional ambivalence when he considers his death. On the contrary, Paul seems to have desired death—not for itself, but for the heightened intimacy with Christ to which it would lead. Apparently Paul did not think that death could separate him from the Lord. As he writes in Romans, “I am convinced that neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God” (8:38, 39) and “So then, whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord” (14:8; cf. 1 Thess 5:10). Yet as 2 Cor 5:8 and Phil 1:23 imply, the experience of this union with Christ would be deepened in death, when Paul would leave his body in order to ascend to heaven.

This, of course, does not in any way negate or diminish Paul’s desire for the resurrection. As we saw in Paul’s effective history as well as in his letters, a belief in the intermediate state can be maintained in conjunction with a belief in a future bodily resurrection. In general it seems that when Paul articulates his personal and immediate hope in death, he speaks of departing his body and this world to be with Christ; when he articulates his corporate and ultimate hope, Paul speaks of the resurrection of the body and the judgment of all people. Both remain important aspects of Pauline eschatology and the Christian hope, and neither should be allowed to trump the other.³

Finally, we may say that not only was Paul assured of his own postmortem destination, but also that he was motivated by it. Paul described his approach to death in

² See Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56.3 (1963): 199–215.

³ Without becoming embroiled in a debate concerning What Tom Wright Really Said, it does appear as if Wright’s concern to correct “popular modern Western thought” has led him to deemphasize the Christian hope of going to heaven when one dies. The foundational reality Paul anticipates in both the intermediate state and the resurrection is fellowship with the risen and glorified Christ. According to Paul, a departed believer will never part from Christ’s presence (or leave heaven) in order to go somewhere else. In that sense, heaven *is* the Christian’s final destination. On the other hand, Wright helpfully emphasizes that Christ’s presence can only be enjoyed to the fullest when a believer experiences that presence in resurrected bodily form.

terms of self-sacrifice and service to others, and yet this did not thereby obliterate any trace of self-interest. Paul often spoke of what lay beyond death as a reward toward which he was straining. Therefore, any form of Kantian ethics or other ethical system that would deny that the good can and should be pursued out of self-interest, must be judged as ill-suited for an exposition of Paul. A radical others-regard *and* a legitimate self-interest—what Paul has joined together, let no interpreter of him put asunder.

12.1.3 Paul's Death Presented Primarily a Pastoral Challenge

In Part III we have observed that in the view of most theologians and commentators, Paul's death presented a personal or existential challenge, if any challenge at all. Therefore, in reading 2 Cor 1:9 Pauline interpreters stress that Paul's near-death experience taught him the spiritual lesson of total God-reliance as opposed to partial self-reliance. When boasting is seen as the quintessential human problem, the value of this lesson seems obvious.

Whether or not this perspective on Paul and death can be attributed to the pervasive influence of Rudolf Bultmann, Bultmann did give poignant expression to this view. He comments on 2 Cor 1:9:

The attitude of sinful self-reliance finds its extreme expression in man's "boasting." . . . "Putting confidence in the flesh" is nothing else than man's confidence in himself, and this is just what must come to naught before God; as there should be a "boasting" only "in the Lord," so there should be a "reliance" upon God alone. When God caused Paul to despair of his life he learned by experience "that we should not rely upon ourselves but upon God who raises the dead." (1952: 243)

Although these reflections are in a chapter entitled, "Man Prior to the Revelation of Faith," Bultmann applies this lesson to Paul as a mature apostle. He later adds, "In the face of threatening death, *Paul learns to pronounce the death-verdict over himself*, 'in order that we should rely not upon ourselves but on God who raises the dead'" (349; italics added). In Bultmann's theological system, "I received the decision, 'Death,' in myself" (2 Cor 1:9a) becomes a self-initiated practice of humility, which presumably would have universal Christian application. In my view, Bultmann's interpretation fails to appreciate the particularity of Paul's language of religious experience. Rather, I have

argued that the decision of death referred to in 2 Cor 1:9 was a decision from God that led Paul to a firm conviction that he would die before the Parousia. Since this would inevitably mean that the churches he founded would outlast his earthly ministry, Paul had to trust in God to guard his spiritual children and raise them up on the last day.

Therefore, in approaching death, Paul's primary question was not, "What will happen to me after death?" nor "How can I overcome my fear of death?" nor "What can my own mortality and finitude teach me about God and about being human?" Rather, the primary question put to Paul by his own death was, "What will happen to the churches I founded after I die?" This concern is in continuity with the daily pressure Paul felt of anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor 11:28)—the crowning item in the list of Paul's apostolic qualifications and hardships (11:22–28). It is the concern a father feels for his children when he is leaving them behind sooner than he would want to.

Paul's basic response to this dilemma was to do everything he could for his spiritual children while he still was with them, no matter the cost. Then he would entrust them to other leaders and ultimately to God's grace and sovereign care. He had great confidence that God would ensure that his labor was not in vain and that his children would be his boast at the Lord's return. Although Paul's own salvation was his reward, his children's salvation was also, for a joy shared is a joy doubled.

A related issue to ponder is how Paul could write to the Corinthians, "I would rather go away from the body and go home to the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8), while writing "to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Phil 1:24) to the Philippians. This tension is only heightened when it is perceived that of the two congregations, it seems as if the need for Paul's presence was much more acute among the wayward Corinthians. Yet these conflicting statements could be reconciled by observing their different rhetorical contexts. In 2 Corinthians Paul stresses his confidence in the work of God through his ministry and among the Corinthians. Therefore, it is natural for Paul to state in this context that his confidence in God's work frees him to leave the congregation behind. In Philippians Paul is expressing his warm regard and gratitude for the Philippians' partnership in the gospel. In this context, it makes sense that Paul would articulate his desire to remain with his

friends for their mutual encouragement and joy. A synthesis of these two perspectives might be that as Paul thought about his death in itself, he can rest in the knowledge that it will bring him to Christ and that God will establish the work of his hands in his absence. When Paul thought about the impact that his death might have on his spiritual children and friends, his heart is pulled to remain with them for as long as possible so that they might be built up in the faith.

In either case, all of Paul's reflections on his death have a very definite pastoral context and tone. This is to be expected, perhaps, because Paul's personal musings on death are embedded in letters with specific pastoral purposes. Nevertheless, as Steven Kraftchick has declared, it seems as if Paul's very thoughts on death were inextricably bound up with what his death would mean for others:

Desiring to live or to die is not ultimately a function of the significance of "life" or "death" in the abstract, but living in relationship to others. We cannot conceive of death except in the context of this relatedness. Indeed, outside of his concern for the Philippians, it seems evident that the deliberation about death would not have taken place. (2007: 205)

Therefore, Paul approached death as an apostle, as one whose calling, identity, and reward was tied not only to the preaching of the gospel but also to its abiding efficacy in the lives of those to whom he preached (see, e.g., 1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 3:2–3; Phil 2:16).

12.1.4 Paul Set Forth His Approach to Death as an Example to Be Imitated

The final observation to be gleaned is that Paul approached his death conscious of the fact that he was leaving to those following him an example to be imitated. In 2 Corinthians Paul wants the Corinthians to gain the same confidence he has in God's ability to bring life out of death and to display power in the midst of weakness. The Corinthians will embrace Paul's approach to death to the extent that they embrace their suffering apostle, partnering with him and returning his affection for them. In Philippians this element of imitation is even more pronounced as Paul's concern for what is "more necessary on your account" (1:24) is an instantiation of his exhortation to look out for the interests of others (2:4). Likewise, after describing his single-minded focus on knowing Christ and pursuing the resurrection, Paul writes, "Brothers and sisters, become fellow

imitators of me” (3:17). In 2 Timothy we have already noted how Paul’s approach to death in 4:6–8 grounds his exhortation in 2 Tim 4:5d. Indeed, Paul’s confidence in the face of death displayed throughout the letter offers to Timothy a model for how to join with Paul in suffering for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8; cf. 3:10–12).

Paul achieves this conscious and intentional modeling of how to live for Christ in view of bodily death *in the writing of these letters*. In other words, it appears as if Paul is inscribing his thoughts on death with the explicit aim that his recorded example will prove useful beyond his death. Paul, like Jesus, related to his followers in some ways that were unique and unrepeatable. His letter addressees could not imitate him in every respect. Yet, as with Jesus, this did not negate Paul’s ability to function as an exemplar. And unlike Jesus, Paul left a written legacy behind that was to serve the flesh-and-blood legacy he had created in the churches he founded.

12.2 Paul the Father from a Distance

It is apparent from his letters that Paul devoted a lot of thought to how his churches were doing in his absence and how he could continue to influence them from a distance. The very existence of the Pauline letters themselves is witness to this and in them we find abundant evidence of Paul’s remote “parenting” in lieu of his presence.⁴ Therefore it would be peculiar, to say the least, if Paul was intensely conscious of the potential effects his temporary absence could cause but totally oblivious to the potential effects of a permanent (bodily) absence that would be caused by his death.

Nevertheless, this is exactly what some NT scholars seem to suggest when they imply that church governance, the preservation of Paul’s gospel, and the legacy of Paul were only the concerns of the generation(s) following Paul and not concerns of Paul himself. It is sometimes implied that Paul gave no thought to how churches would be led or how he

⁴ References are almost too numerous to list but in the undisputed letters see esp. 1 Cor 4:14–21; 5:3–5; 11:2, 33–34; 14:37–38; 16:1–11; 2 Cor 2:1–9; 7:12; 10:1–2, 9–11; 13:1–2, 10; Gal 4:18–20; Phil 2:12; 4:2; 1 Thess 2:17–3:13; Phlm 1:17–22.

would be remembered after his death. This conception of Paul renders him rather dim-witted but also out of step with his contemporaries, many of whom were reflecting on how a person ought to approach death or how matters would unfold after their own departures (see §1.1.3 and the example of Ignatius of Antioch).

Therefore, in reading literary anticipations of Paul's death, we should not view Paul as an abstract thinker or as one who approached death as a philosophical problem. Paul's reflections were neither that detached nor that theoretical. Rather, we should recognize Paul as a pastor, a "father" in the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 4:15). Although Paul acknowledged his need for perseverance in faith until the end, he seemed assured of his own postmortem fate. This freed him to concentrate his thoughts and his words on those he was soon to leave behind.

Part IV

Conclusion

Chapter 13

Where We Have Arrived

13.1 The Departing Paul Translated

The goal of this thesis has been to speak constructively about Paul's approach to his own death. By "Paul" I mean the earthly Paul as we know him through the epistolary Paul and the remembered Paul. Combining an evaluation of Paul's early effective history with a detailed exegesis of his letters has yielded a more complete picture than would be possible with only one and not the other. We have illustrated that the epistolary Paul and the remembered Paul are mutually interpretive. I now bring the two more directly into conversation: How does Paul's family portrait compare to his self-portrait? How was the departing Paul later translated as the departed Paul? A brief literary comparison with Shakespeare's character Hamlet follows, then a note on the potential for further work and a few concluding thoughts and contemporary challenges.

13.1.1 Features Shared by the Departing Paul and Departed Paul

The epistolary Paul and the remembered Paul (as preserved in early Christian writings within the first two generations after his death) share a common, overriding priority: preaching the gospel. When Luke has Paul say, "I do not give any account for life as precious to myself in order that I might finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24), he simply but profoundly summarizes one aspect of Paul's approach to death. It is clear from Paul's letters that he consciously chose a path of suffering and continually risked death in obedience to God's calling of him as an apostle. The magnification of Christ was more important to Paul than his own bodily life (Phil 1:20).

This choice of faithfulness to God above all else was one that Paul needed to reaffirm and hold onto unwaveringly for the duration of his earthly course. Both the departing Paul and the departed Paul share a concern for perseverance to the end (often couched in athletic imagery). In Philippians Paul speaks of “pressing on” (3:12) and “straining toward what lies ahead” (3:13), and in 2 Timothy he speaks of completing the race (4:7). The necessity of perseverance in the Christian life is reflected in Paul’s early effective history in the emphasis on Paul’s “endurance” (ὑπομονή) unto death (see *1 Clem.* 5.5, 7; *Pol. Phil.* 9.1). While the term ὑπομονή is not one that Paul associates with his approach to death in his letters, later descriptions of Paul’s endurance develop naturally from Paul’s concern to finish well.

Related to this concern for perseverance is Paul’s desire to pursue righteousness. I have argued that Paul’s determination to be found in Christ, having a righteousness that is from God (Phil 3:9), is an expression of Paul’s desire to produce a righteousness that is only made possible through Jesus Christ (Phil 1:11; §10.4.1). The fitting reward for such a life is to be awarded the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8). This strain within the epistolary Paul suggests that Polycarp’s emphasis on Paul as a teacher of human, moral righteousness (and cf. *1 Clem.* 5.7), both in his life and his death, is not a distortion of Paul’s perspective but a reasonable development of one aspect of it. Likewise, since Polycarp’s letter is so obviously influenced by Paul and deferential to him, it would be surprising if the exhortations in *Pol. Phil.* 8.1–10.1 could find no foothold in Paul’s approach to death or were antithetical to Paul’s teaching. The patent historical and textual links between Paul’s letters and Polycarp’s letter should lead us to consider their reflections on death as mutually interpretive rather than unrelated or opposed.

Furthermore, Paul’s effective history suggests that he did persevere to the end and maintain his righteousness. With regard to the ending of Acts, we have already noted C. K. Barrett’s remark, “If room remains for conjecture—and there is indeed room for little else—it may be suggested that the end of the story was omitted because it was not edifying” (1998: 1249). The uniform testimony of the rest of Paul’s early effective history argues against such a conjecture if Paul’s cowardice is thereby implied. It is difficult to

see how Paul could be set forth as a model for endurance—seemingly without controversy, even in Rome—if he had somehow compromised his witness at the end. As Dale Allison claims for Jesus, “He saw death coming, and he did not run away. If he had instead refused to consent to his unhappy lot, one wonders how it has come to pass that we have so much confident testimony to the contrary” (2010: 433).

Included within Paul’s “living memory” is also testimony that Paul was “taken up to the holy place” (*1 Clem.* 5.7) where he is “with the Lord” (*Pol. Phil.* 9.2) and can serve as a shining example of a postmortem ascent to God and spiritual freedom (*Ign. Eph.* 12.2; *Rom.* 4.3). This demonstrates continuity with Paul’s stated desire to “go away from the body and go home to the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8) and to “depart and be with Christ” (*Phil* 1:23). Christians immediately following Paul may have been confident in attributing a postmortem ascent to him because that is what Paul anticipated for himself in his own writing and oral teaching. In my view, the image of the ascended Paul is more likely the result of Pauline influence than an uncritical adoption of a Hellenistic trope that Paul would have rejected. And even if a heavenly intermediate state was a concept broadly accepted in early Christianity and not uniquely Pauline, the seemingly uncontested adoption of this concept in writings clearly influenced by Paul suggests that the early Christian passages examined in this study must factor into any exegesis of Paul’s musings on his own afterlife.

Finally, we may note that Paul’s approach to death served as an ethical model for imitation both in his letters and in his early effective history. This demonstrates that while portraits of Paul in early Christianity sought to address contemporary problems, they did so by connecting these problems to Pauline tradition they had received, thus preserving Paul’s “history” for the benefit of subsequent Christians (contra Pervo 2010: xiii, 12). Although Paul’s death was certainly “constructed” by later Christians (starting perhaps with the *Martyrdom of Paul*), in the earliest period it is more accurate to say that it was “remembered”—or, at least, that his followers attempted to remember how Paul actually conducted himself as he drew near to death and claimed that they had.

13.1.2 Features Transposed from the Departing Paul to the Departed Paul

Thus far we have noted a number of features that display continuity between the departing Paul and the departed Paul, or the epistolary Paul and the remembered Paul. The cohesion of these features suggests that there was a single magnetic force behind them all: the earthly Paul. Consistency in the earthly Paul's teaching and practice would explain how presentations of his death remained relatively stable throughout his letters and the first two generations after his death. To employ a metaphor, a series of similar footprints suggests that one person is responsible for them all. This is not to suggest, however, that traditions concerning Paul's death became rigidly unmalleable. We now turn our attention to three features that display discontinuity.

The first is the evolution of Paul's counter-imperial stance, seen most strikingly in the *Martyrdom of Paul*. It is possible that Paul really did speak stridently and forcefully against the Roman Empire in a legal hearing or trial or from his imprisonment as he confronted his execution. This anti-imperialism could have been deliberately suppressed in the first generation after his death because it was politically perilous. However, we find no trace of an *explicit* stand against the emperor or Roman power in Paul's letters or in his early effective history outside of the *MPI*. When the Paul of 2 Timothy is granted an audience in Rome, he seizes the opportunity to preach the gospel (4:16–17), not to denounce the governing authorities. Of course, preaching the *gospel* of Christ or Jesus as *Lord* was in one sense inherently a criticism and subversion of imperial ideology. Yet if we were to ask whether Paul's diplomatic posture in the canonical Acts or his defiant posture in the *MPI* is more likely to reflect the earthly Paul's approach to death, it would seem that the canonical Acts is to be prioritized (and may be deemed compatible with Paul's scant reflections on the issue, such as Rom 13:1–7).³³⁷

³³⁷ As Barclay contends, "Paul's most subversive act, vis-à-vis the Roman empire, was not to oppose or upstage it, but to relegate it to the rank of a dependent and derivative entity, denied a distinguishable name or significant role in the story of the world. . . . Paul does not oppose Rome *as Rome*, but opposes anti-God powers wherever and however they manifest themselves on the human stage" (2011: 383–84, 387).

Whereas Paul the anti-Roman martyr seems mostly to be a layer of second-century accretion in the depiction of Paul, the image of Paul as a tent-dweller is one that was lost to early Pauline memory, at least in the texts we have surveyed. We find no statement comparable to *Diogn.* 6.8, “The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tent (σκήνωμα) and Christians live as strangers in perishable bodies, waiting for the imperishable in the heavens” (cf. Wis 9:15) or even 2 Pet 1:14, “the removal of my tent (σκήνωμα) is imminent.” This could be put down to the surprisingly light impression that the letter(s) of 2 Corinthians made in the first two generations after Paul’s death. It could also indicate that 2 Cor 5:1–5 was not typical of Paul’s teaching on his own death but rather was an expression of the ultimate Christian hope geared toward a polemically-charged debate concerning eschatology specific to Corinth (see §9.4.2).

A third feature of discontinuity is that the pastoral dimension to Paul’s reflections on death in his letters failed to translate into most of the earliest Christian texts that mention Paul. Although Paul’s approach to death is considered in these later texts to be *for others* in the sense that it established a model for others to imitate, there is no sense that Paul’s life up until death was being poured out for others’ benefit, that his death was the culmination of his Christ-like suffering, or that in approaching death Paul was deeply concerned about what would happen to the churches he founded. The sole and glaring exception to this is the Miletus speech in the book of Acts. Here we may perceive Paul’s pastoral heart as he passionately charges the Ephesian elders to defend his gospel and then cries with them at his final goodbye. Paul is keenly aware of the dangers that await his churches after his death and he does all that he can to ensure that they will carry on his teaching and lifestyle. Where Richard Pervo would claim that the author of Acts has “effectively *created* a new character” in the Miletus speech (2009: 506; cf. 522; italics added), I would suggest that Luke has accurately remembered and faithfully portrayed the earthly Paul’s approach to death, perhaps to a greater degree than any other early Christian text.

13.2 Paul's Approach to Death in Shakespearean Relief

We have been studying Paul's approach to death in such close proximity to early Christian texts that it could be easy to lose a wider perspective or to underrate the distinctiveness of Paul's deportment. The contours of his approach can be seen more distinctly if they are set against another well-known literary contemplation of death: Shakespeare's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy in *Hamlet*. Many will agree with the judgment of Shakespearean scholars Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor: "'To be or not to be' must be the most frequently quoted (and parodied) speech in western and indeed global cultural tradition" (2006: 15). Due to their sharp similarities and differences in approaching death, Paul and Hamlet present a stimulating comparison.

The similarities between Hamlet's soliloquy (3.1.55–89) and especially Paul's inner monologue in Phil 1:22–26 are striking. We have labeled Phil 1:22–26 an example of ἀπορία (§10.2.3). Roland Frye writes of Hamlet's soliloquy, "We have here what is surely the greatest aporia (in the sense of a debate about an issue and weighing of its sides) in Shakespeare" (1984: 189). In these passages, both Paul and Hamlet are contemplating their deaths and I would suggest that the interpretation of each becomes distorted if the particular context of the protagonist is ignored.

In the case of Hamlet's soliloquy, the popular conception is that the speech concerns suicide: for Hamlet to "take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them" (3.1.58–59)³³⁸ would be for him to take his own life. However, this interpretation is not widely endorsed in Shakespearean scholarship.³³⁹ It is dubious because suicide would be awkwardly expressed as an enterprise "of great pitch and moment" (3.1.85) and

³³⁸ All quotations of *Hamlet* reproduce the edited text of the 1604–5 (Second Quarto) printed version found in Thompson and Taylor 2006.

³³⁹ A notable counterexample is Harry Levin, who posits that Hamlet's ontological question ("To be or not to be") becomes an "existential question" (1959: 70). Levin then cites the opening line of Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* as the question Shakespeare is exploring in Hamlet's soliloquy: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (Camus 1955: 11).

throughout the play the central dilemma is whether or not Hamlet will act upon the ghost's imperative to revenge his father's "foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25).

In my interpretation of this soliloquy Hamlet is expressing indecision regarding his plan to kill the king if he "blenches" at the play (see 2.2.532–33).³⁴⁰ As R. A. Foakes has contended,

In neglecting his revenge, Hamlet is not 'stifled by remembrance' so much as by his inheritance of conflicting classical and Christian values. The heroic code he associates with his father urges him to action, while the Christian code that is given lip-service in Claudius's Denmark condemns revenge and inhibits him from murder most foul. (2002: 96)

Hamlet's hesitation arises from the fact that revenge murder, like suicide, contravenes the Everlasting's fixed canon (see 1.2.131–32). Therefore, if there is an afterlife and death is not merely "sleep" (3.1.59), then Hamlet fears "what dreams may come" (3.1.65), "the dread of something after death" (3.1.77), or those ills "we know not of" (3.1.81).

Hamlet's fear is not a fear of physically dying, nor even a "fear of being dead" (Lewis 1969: 99) *per se*. Rather, Hamlet fears the postmortem repercussions of murdering a blood relative, an enterprise of great pitch and moment that would probably result in his death (and eventually does). If Hamlet knew that death was the end, there would be no reason to pause for deliberation. Likewise, if death was merely sleep, there would be no reason for one to "bear the whips and scorns of time . . . when he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin" (3.1.69, 74–75). Thus Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy should be juxtaposed with Laertes's cry for revenge in 4.5.129–34. As Foakes says, "Insofar as *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy, Laertes is the revenger figure, who, in Senecan fashion, is willing, unlike Hamlet, to reject 'conscience' and 'dare damnation' (4.5.133–34) to get his revenge for the death of his father, and cut Hamlet's throat in the church (4.7.126)" (2002: 97).

When read in this way, Hamlet's soliloquy provides a nearly perfect foil for Paul's approach to death. For Hamlet, to live is "to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous

³⁴⁰ Contra Newell, who argues that the speech debates Hamlet's "*first* intended action against Claudius" (*italics added*), which is "the presentation of the mousetrap play" (1991: 80).

fortune” (3.1.56–57) or “to grunt and sweat under a weary life” (3.1.76); for Paul, “to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21) and “fruitful labor” (Phil 1:23). Hamlet claims that the afterlife is an unknown, “the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns” (3.1.78–79); Paul speaks confidently of what is in store for him after death, and his visit to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2–4) is the kind of journey that Hamlet thinks impossible. Hamlet is compelled to “bear those ills we have” rather than “fly to others that we know not of” (3.1.80–81); Paul prefers to “go away from the body and go home to the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8) and “to depart and be with Christ, for this is by far much better” (Phil 1:23). Hamlet’s conscience makes him a coward (3.1.82) and his “native hue of resolution is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (3.1.83–84). Paul’s conscience is clear (1 Cor 4:4) and it is his “eager expectation and hope, that [he] will be ashamed in nothing but that by all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in [his] body” (Phil 1:20). Finally, Hamlet’s approach to death is dominated by a narrow self-fixation. He gives little thought to how his actions or his death will affect those living around him. Paul’s approach to death, as I have argued, is dominated by a Christ-like concern for others. He is zealous for the preservation of his spiritual children (Phil 2:16) and the protection of his “deposit” (2 Tim 1:12).

Hopefully this brief comparison of memorable figures has highlighted the findings of my research. Readers must judge which of these two competing perspectives on life and death has gained greater currency in contemporary Western culture.

13.3 Paul’s Approach to Death a Viable Topic for Further Study

In addition to the foregoing comparison, many more could be undertaken. Paul’s approach to death could be compared to other works of Western literature or to modern philosophy. As mentioned in the introduction (§1.1.3), there is also a much broader ancient discourse on this subject. A fuller analysis of Paul’s reflections on his death could usefully explore their relation to similar Greco-Roman or Jewish texts, or the ancient *acta martyrum*. Such comparisons are beyond the scope of this thesis but promise to afford

new vistas onto Paul in his first-century milieu or later reception. Paul's approach to death is a viable but relatively uncharted topic for scholarly inquiry.

Furthermore, I believe that a rewarding study could be conducted on the relation between the departed Paul and the image of Paul the letter-writer. We have noted that these twin images are the dominant ones in Paul's early effective history, occurring together in *1 Clement*, Ignatius's *To the Ephesians*, and Polycarp's *To the Philippians*. In the Pauline letters themselves there is a persistent theme of Paul's absence in body and "presence" through the letter. If, as I have suggested, Paul composed his later letters with the conscious thought that *his churches* would outlast his earthly presence, then perhaps he had a sense that *his letters* would outlast his earthly presence too. Writing letters would then be one way in which Paul could attempt to protect his legacy, even after his death. This topic could be studied in prospective and retrospective view, combining Pauline exegesis and effective history as this thesis has.

13.4 The Opportunity and Challenge in Consciously Approaching Death

To conclude, I would suggest that Paul's approach to death offers not only a subject of academic interest but also one of universal concern. Modern Western society has attempted to relegate any sober discussion of death and beyond to the periphery of cultural discourse. Stephen Barton has noted the loss that this entails:

To the extent that the biomedicalization of death renders death a scientific "problem" to be controlled and (if possible) solved, it diverts attention from death as an inevitable part of the passage of life and life's natural rhythm [in a fallen world]. Indeed, we could say that it takes away a crucial aspect of death and dying—namely, that it is a *performance of the living* with moral, social and spiritual dimensions of the most profound kind. (2011: 323)³⁴¹

This suggests that any deliberate engagement with life must include an engagement with death. As the boundary for (earthly) life, death sets an important parameter for any

³⁴¹ Cf. Kraftchick 2007: 211: "For Paul, death is not glorified and he surely understands it as the termination of physical existence. At the same time, death is not restricted to the single moment when such life stops. Rather, death is part of life and part of human existence, to be included in our thinking about our lives and not as an act outside of them."

contemplation or conversation about life. Steven Kraftchick presents similar reflections while meditating on Paul's words in Philippians:

Paul's comments suggest that reflections on death are the bases for understanding how we can live more fully. As Anton Van Niekerk suggests, reflection on death and mortality is an opportunity to assess the value of our actions and desires and thus to construct an existence of meaning. Paul is attempting to help the Philippians in that sort of construction. Thus, that death is understood in this regard is an opportunity for our own attempts to understand life. (2007: 208)

It is important to form an approach to death because this is, in essence, one's approach to life itself. And we may all hope that in approaching death, we find life.

Appendix: Martyr Images in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and in the Mid-Second Century Greek Apologists

This appendix examines the image of Polycarp in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the projected image of the Christian martyr in the mid-second century Greek apologists. The images present in this literature could be usefully compared to the image of Paul in the *MPI*. The similarities suggest that the *MPI* can be dated to the mid-second century.

Polycarp: An Anti-Roman Martyr in the Mold of Paul?

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, perhaps surprisingly, does not contain a single explicit reference to the Apostle Paul. For this reason it is not considered as one of the primary texts of this study; it includes no portrayals of Paul's approach to death. Nevertheless, the *Mart. Pol.* is of some interest and for two reasons: first, Polycarp's posture toward death does bear some possible marks of Pauline influence; second, the representation of Polycarp in the *Mart. Pol.* is eerily similar to the representation of Paul in the *MPI*. An argument can be made that these two texts grew from the same soil.

Questionable Marks of Pauline Influence on Polycarp's Approach to Death

The question of whether any definite citations of or allusions to the NT can be established within the *Mart. Pol.* has received a thorough, text-by-text examination in a recent essay by Michael Holmes (2005a). He concludes, with appropriate restraint, that there is no concrete evidence that the author of the *Mart. Pol.* has made literary use of either Gospel or non-Gospel material now included in the canonical NT (417, 431). However, as Holmes admits, "this negative conclusion to a very precise, targeted question is hardly, of course, the whole story" (418; cf. 432). With regard to several proposed parallels Holmes concludes that allusions to Gospel or Pauline tradition—whether written

or oral—are “virtually certain” (411) or quite likely “definite” (428), though no specific textual referent can be proven.¹

As stated in chapter 2 my aim was not to establish incontrovertible examples of literary dependence but rather to illuminate the Pauline features of early Christian texts, both on the verbal and theological levels. In chapters 3–7 this inquiry was tethered to explicit references to Paul and demonstrable usage of at least some of his letters. In the case of the *Mart. Pol.* neither condition obtains. In surveying the *Mart. Pol.* we will note several possible examples of Pauline language being applied to the martyr’s approach to death. Yet the lack of a direct connection to Paul tempers any conclusions.

In describing “all the martyrdoms that have happened according to the will of God” (2.1) the author claims that these martyrs “were looking up with the eyes of the heart to the good things being kept for those who endure, which neither ear has heard nor eye has seen, nor have they entered into the heart of man, but which the Lord showed to them” (2.3). The complications concerning a potential parallel to 1 Cor 2:9–10 here are well known (see Holmes 2005a: 429–30), but the phrase “eyes of the heart” is distinctively Pauline (see Eph 1:18; *1 Clem.* 36.2; 59.3; Holmes 2005a: 428) and even the concept of looking to unseen, heavenly things by faith is possibly taken, directly or indirectly, from Paul (cf. 2 Cor 4:18; Col 3:1–2).

Later in the narrative, Polycarp hears a voice from heaven saying, “Be strong (ἰσχυε), Polycarp, and be a man (ἀνδρίζου)” (9.1) as he enters the stadium to die. The verb ἀνδρίζομαι occurs only once in the NT, in 1 Cor 16:13. Though 1 Cor 16:13 is not specifically an exhortation unto death, the verb ἀνδρίζομαι occurs in the imperative (ἀνδρίζεσθε) and is linked with another imperative to “be strong” (κραταιοῦσθε). This could represent a very light touch of Pauline influence. It must be admitted, though, that the refrain ἰσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου from Josh 1 LXX forms a much stronger parallel. Lastly, those Christians witnessing Polycarp’s death were said to have noticed a strong “pleasing

¹ See also Holmes 2005a: 409, 414, 430. As Holmes summarizes, “The author of *Martyrdom* clearly knows and is deeply indebted to gospel tradition; the evidence leaves us unable, however, to demonstrate any use of a *specific written version* of it” (417; italics added).

fragrance” (εὐωδία; 15.2) wafting from his baking body, which is reminiscent of 2 Cor 2:14–16 (cf. Eph 5:2).² The Pauline terminology employed in these examples is not specifically used in the Pauline letters to describe one’s approach to death (with the possible exception of εὐωδία in 2 Cor 2:15). Therefore it could be said that these are potential instances of Pauline coloring but not necessarily of Pauline influence.

Other texts in the *Mart. Pol.* more clearly echo Paul’s approach to death. In *Mart. Pol.* 2.2, which describes martyrdoms that were according to God’s will (2.1), the author claims that in the hour of torture the martyrs “were going from their home of the flesh (τῆς σαρκὸς ἀπεδήμουν), or rather, that the Lord was standing by (παρεστώς), speaking to them.” This description evokes both 2 Cor 5:8 (ἐκδημῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος) and 2 Tim 4:17 (ὁ δὲ κύριός μοι παρέστη καὶ ἐνεδυνάμωσέν με)—texts that describe Paul’s experience in the face of death. Likewise, the description of Polycarp in his death as a “partner” (κοινωνός) of Christ recalls Phil 3:10 (but also 1 Pet 4:13).

Perhaps most compelling is the repeated use of Pauline postmortem reward language in the *Mart. Pol.* In 17.1 Polycarp is said at his death to have been “crowned” (ἐστεφανωμένον) with “the crown of imperishability” (τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στέφανον) and to have carried off the undeniable “prize” (βραβεῖον). The language here may be indebted to 1 Cor 9:24–25, in which Paul sets forth a “prize” (βραβεῖον) for the Christian life (cf. Phil 3:14) and declares that Christian athletes compete for an “imperishable crown” (ἄφθαρτον [στέφανον]).³ The language of Christian athletes being crowned is also present in 2 Tim 2:5. Similarly, in *Mart. Pol.* 19.2 the author states that “through endurance” Polycarp conquered the unjust ruler and thus he received the “crown of imperishability” (τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στέφανον). This phrase may be drawn from 1 Cor 9:25 but the logic is parallel to 2 Tim 4:7–8 (on which, see chapter 11). Finally, *Mart. Pol.* 18.3 speaks of commemorating Polycarp’s “birthday” in order to remember those who have “already

² The noun εὐωδία only occurs three times in the NT, all in the Pauline letters (2 Cor 2:15; Eph 5:2; Phil 4:18). The author of the *Mart. Pol.* may have drawn this idea of a fragrant human death from Paul rather than creating it from OT sacrificial language, independent of Pauline influence. For a thorough discussion of *Mart. Pol.* 15.2 in relation to Pauline parallels, see Buschmann 1998: 302–9.

³ Cf. Buschmann 1998: 328. Holmes 2005a fails to mention this parallel.

competed” (προαθλέω) and to prepare those who are about to compete. The Christian use of this athletic imagery can be traced to Paul through his early effective history.⁴

One more marker of potential Pauline influence must be considered. Near the very beginning of the *Mart. Pol.* the narrative declares that “nearly everything that was leading up [to Polycarp’s martyrdom] happened so that the Lord could show, from above, a martyrdom that was according to the gospel” (1.1; cf. 2.1; 19.1). While many interpreters have understood the phrase “a martyrdom that was according to the gospel” as “a martyrdom that *imitates* the episodes and events in the passion of Jesus, one that *repeats* in its own time the things that happened to Jesus as he went to his death at the hands of the Romans” (Holmes 2005a: 419), Holmes has argued that this interpretation lacks contextual warrant and “confuses a literary feature of the narrative with the meaning of the narrative” (419; contra Dehandschutter 2005: 403). Holmes then proposes that a martyrdom according to the gospel “reflects a particular approach to (one might even say a theology of) martyrdom: one that reacts rather than initiates (thus permitting the divine will to be accomplished), one that demonstrates the concern for others exemplified by Jesus, and one that is characterized by endurance in the face of trials” (421).

Paul Hartog (2010) extends Holmes’s argument. While scholars have long noted the parallel between *Mart. Pol.* 1.2 and Phil 2:4, Hartog contends that it is possible that the broader context surrounding Phil 2:4 influenced the author of the *MPI*. He writes,

If one is inclined to agree with Holmes (and others) that the gist of “a martyrdom according to the gospel” is not found primarily in particular parallels to detailed events in Jesus’ passion, but in broader theological traits such as a submission to God’s will, a concern for the salvation of others, an endurance in suffering, and (I would add) a nobility of composure, then it may be noteworthy that these very traits are underscored in *Phil.* [*sic*] 1–2. Paul’s theology of martyrdom permits the divine will to be accomplished (1:20–3), demonstrates a concern for others (1:24–6), and is characterized by endurance and courageous composure (1:28–9). (394)

If Holmes and especially Hartog have accurately interpreted what a martyrdom “according to the gospel” is, then the case for Pauline influence on the portrayal of

⁴ See *1 Clem* 5.2 and the discussion in §4.2.2. Cf. 2 Tim 2:5.

Polycarp's approach to death is strengthened. Nevertheless, the Pauline character of the *Mart. Pol.* would still be very weak relative to other texts we have examined.

Paul and Polycarp as Anti-Roman Martyrs

The foregoing discussion has indicated that even though the *Mart. Pol.* fails to mention the Apostle Paul, he may still be exerting an attenuated influence on how Polycarp's approach to death is described. The *MPI* and the *Mart. Pol.* may both be within the broad stream of Paul's early effective history. But how closely do these two narratives flow together?

There are several similarities in how Paul and Polycarp are portrayed as anti-Roman martyrs in these texts. While the *Mart. Pol.* lacks the prevalent soldier imagery of the *MPI*, Polycarp is portrayed as stubbornly and even defiantly resisting Roman power (see esp. 8.2; 9.2–11.2; 13.3–14.1). Both the Paul of the *MPI* and the Polycarp of the *Mart. Pol.* speak of Jesus as “my king” (*MPI* 3, 4; *Mart. Pol.* 9.3) and as one who can save (*MPI* 3; *Mart. Pol.* 9.3). They both warn of a future judgment with fire (*MPI* 4; *Mart. Pol.* 11.2). According to *MPI* 5 Paul prays at length immediately before his execution; according to *Mart. Pol.* 7.2–3 Polycarp prays at length immediately before his arrest and then again immediately before his execution (14.1–3). Both Paul and Polycarp talk to and win over Roman subordinates (*MPI* 4–7; *Mart. Pol.* 7.2–3). There is a definite evangelistic thrust to the martyrdom of each one (see esp. *MPI* 5, 7; *Mart. Pol.* 10.1; 19.1) and both are met with amazement (*MPI* 6; *Mart. Pol.* 7.2–3; 12.1). At the moment of death, in particular, there is amazement over a miracle involving the martyr's body: Paul's neck squirts milk (*MPI* 5) and Polycarp cannot be burned (*Mart. Pol.* 15.2). It is then said that Polycarp's puncture wound releases a dove and enough blood to extinguish the fire completely (16.1). Both the *MPI* and the *Mart. Pol.* end with a doxology to Christ (*MPI* 7; *Mart. Pol.* 21).

Yet what draws these two texts closest together are not parallel narrative details but a common compositional purpose: “In a situation intended to display Roman power and authority, to remind everyone who is in control, the author of the *Martyrdom* presents a

subversive narrative that mocks Roman pretensions. . . . God, not Rome, is really in control” (Holmes 2005a: 426). Though written originally with reference to Polycarp’s execution in the *Mart. Pol.*, Holmes’s insight could apply equally to the *MPl*.

Any conclusion must be tentative, but the striking similarities between the depictions of the martyr in the *Mart. Pol.* and the *MPl* suggest that these two texts share more than a literary genre; it is possible that they have theological influences in common and maybe even a historical and social setting. At the least, this comparison has shown that the representation of Paul in the *MPl* is more closely akin to that of Polycarp in the *Mart. Pol.* than it is to other representations of Paul in the canonical Acts, *I Clement*, Ignatius’s letters, or Polycarp’s letter. Traces of Pauline influence upon the martyr’s approach to death in the *MPl* and the *Mart. Pol.* can be found, but developments in a new direction likely signal that living memory of Paul’s death is beginning to fade from the scene.

The Christian’s Approach to Death in the Mid-Second Century Greek Apologists

The similarities between the *MPl* and the *Mart. Pol.* are to a large extent due to the literary genre that they share. This does not lessen the significance of their similarities. In the history of early Christian literature to this point, pictures of Paul have been embedded in letters that resemble Paul’s own letters—the canonical Acts being the sole exception. The decision to write a *narrative* account of Paul and his approach to death represents a significant turn in early Pauline effective history. The image of the defiant Christian martyr, however, was not only being developed in gospel-like narratives. We also see this image in the various Greek apologists of the mid-second century.

Justin Martyr on the Christian’s Approach to Death

The first and most prominent apologist to consider is Justin Martyr. Justin could have been composing his apology (or apologies) to emperor Antoninus Pius within a few years

of when the *Mart. Pol.* was composed.⁵ Denis Minns and Paul Parvis (2009) contend that “Justin’s primary purpose in making his petition is to obtain relief from what he believes to be the unjust practice of the Roman government in executing those who will not renounce their allegiance to Christ” (44). Though Justin’s audience dictates that his work must be more conciliatory than the *MPI* or *Mart. Pol.*, there are still signs of Christian defiance in the face of a death at the hands of the Romans.

In *1 Apol.* 2.4 Justin flatly declares that Christians “consider that no evil can be done to us by anyone, provided we are not shown to be evil-doers or found to be wicked. You have the power to kill us, but not to harm us.” This stance is reiterated later in the *First Apology*: “Even if you read these words with hostile intent, you can do nothing further, as we said before, than kill, which bears no harm to us, but which works punishment through eternal fire to you and to all who are unjustly hostile and are not converted” (45.6; cf. 68.2). This perspective on death seems very similar to what Paul expresses in the *MPI* 4 and 6. Furthermore, Justin writes, “If we were awaiting a human kingdom we would have denied [being Christians], in order to avoid being killed, and we would have tried to escape detention, in order to obtain what we were waiting for. But since our hopes are not for this present time, killers have not been of concern to us” (11.2). As we have seen, in the *MPI* Paul says basically the same thing: “If I had known that I would die, Longus and Cestus, I would flee; but since I know that I live in my king, Christ, I depart to him rejoicing in order that I also might come with him in the glory of his father” (4).⁶

Indeed throughout Justin’s *First Apology* he claims that Christians prefer righteousness above their own earthly lives, disdaining death (see, e.g., 2.1; 8.2; 25.1; cf. *2 Apol.* 11.8), because righteousness leads to eternal life (8.2; 10.1–4). A future judgment according to deeds is also emphasized (12.1–3; 43.2–8; 65.1). These features are also

⁵ Ehrman (2003: 362) dates the *Mart. Pol.* to the mid-150s and Minns and Parvis (2009: 44) date Justin’s work to ca. 154. See Minns and Parvis 2009: 3–70 for a thorough introduction to Justin including a helpful discussion on whether Justin wrote one or more apologies (21–31). I have taken my English translations of Justin from this work.

⁶ In *2 Apol.* 2.19 Justin reports that Lucius “confessed that he was thankful to have been set free from evil masters such as these and that he was going to the father and king of all.”

parallel to the *MPI* (and the *Mart. Pol.*). In addition, Justin at times attributes persecution of Christians to demonic activity (2 *Apol.* 1.2; 11.1), as the *MPI* 3 does. And for Justin, Christian fearlessness before death has a powerful evangelistic effect (2 *Apol.* 12.1–2; cf. *MPI* 5, 7).

Thus, even though Justin tries to reason with the Roman authorities to obtain relief from persecution, he does make it clear that continued threats of death will not dissuade Christians from confessing Christ. He claims that a better fate awaits Christian martyrs while judgment awaits their wicked persecutors. The differences between Justin, the *MPI*, and the *Mart. Pol.* should thus not be overstated (as, e.g., Rhee 2005: 187–88 does).

Other Apologists on the Christian's Approach to Death

The same basic image of the (potential) Christian martyr can be seen in other, later apologists as well. Tatian's *Oratio* (ca. 160?) strikes a more combative tone:

You who have no comprehension of these things should learn from us who have, when you say that you despise death and practise self-sufficiency. Your philosophers are so far from that practice . . . [Crescens] who advised contempt for death was himself so afraid of death that he set about involving Justin—as he did me too—in the death penalty as if it were an evil . . . Therefore if you say that one should fear death, and agree with our doctrines, do not seek death, like Anaxarchus, out of a mad passion for fame, but let knowledge of God be your motive for despising death. (19.1, 2)⁷

In Melito of Sardis's petition addressed to Marcus Aurelius (ca. 175?), as preserved in Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.26.5–6), he writes, “The only petition which we make to you is this, that you first personally acquaint yourself with those whose actions cause such strife, and fairly decide whether they deserve death and punishment or safety and peace.” Nevertheless, this petition is prefaced with the remark that “a just king would not ever purpose wrong, and we are glad to win the prize of such a death.”⁸ Athenagoras in his *Legatio* (ca. 177) proclaims, “We do not think that we shall suffer so great an evil here below, even if they rob us of our lives, that it may be compared to what we shall gain beyond from the great Judge in return for a way of life that is gentle, affectionate, and

⁷ This translation is taken from M. Whittaker 1982: 39.

⁸ These translations are taken from Hall 1979: 63.

kind.”⁹ Later in his plea Athenagoras attributes the persecution of Christians to injustice and emphasizes the Christian’s immediate postmortem hope (31.1–4).

Once again, the texts considered in this appendix cannot directly contribute to the family portrait of Paul, because they never mention Paul by name. However, we have noted striking similarities between the *MPI* and these mid-second century texts in terms of their respective martyr images. This suggests that the image of Paul in the *MPI* is more naturally akin to the martyr images of the *Mart. Pol.* and the Greek apologists rather than the canonical Acts, *1 Clement*, the letters of Ignatius, or Polycarp’s letter *To the Philippians*.

⁹ This translation is taken from Schoedel 1972: 25. Cf. 2 Cor 4–5.

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