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NT5150 – GREEK EXEGESIS

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A commentator has described 2 Corinthians 3 as “the student’s nightmare and the exegete’s playground.”<sup>1</sup> Nightmare or playground, 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:6 is unique in the Pauline corpus for the prominence given to Moses, and particularly for its extended treatment on the veil.<sup>2</sup> Of the many unique words found in this section,<sup>3</sup> the *hapax* that stands out is κατοπτριζόμενοι in 2 Cor 3:18. Chris Kugler observes that almost all the occurrences of κατοπτρίζω in ancient Greek literature in the first three centuries is related to 2 Cor 3:18.<sup>4</sup> This paper thus attempts to understand Paul’s use of κατοπτρίζω (*lit.* I mirror) in 2 Cor 3:18 and how that fits into the logic and theology of this pericope.

### Thesis

The first half of this paper will provide an exegesis of 2 Cor 3:12–18. Thereafter, the second half of the paper will argue that all Christians are transformed into the image of Christ by κατοπτριζόμενοι (*beholding-as-in-a-mirror*) the glory of God, which is, hearing (i.e. beholding) the glory of Jesus Christ through the gospel preached (i.e. the mirror).

### **Setting the Context for 2 Corinthians 3:12–18**

2 Corinthians 3:12–18 is a section in beginning with οὖν (“therefore”) in verse 12, and 4:1 beginning with διὰ τοῦτο (“because of this”).<sup>5</sup> Thus, this passage needs to be set in its preceding and following context.

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<sup>1</sup> Edith Humphrey, quoted from Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2024), 289. My hope is that this research paper will not be a nightmare.

<sup>2</sup> J. Murphy-O’Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 34.

<sup>3</sup> The following words appear only in this context: ἡνίκα (v.15, 16), ἀνακαλύπτω (v.14, 16), κάλυμμα (v.13, 14, 15, 16), ἀπεῖπον (4:2) κατοπτριζόμενοι (3:18). μεταμορφώω is used only four times in the New Testament.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Kugler, *Paul and the Image of God* (Lanham (Md.) Boulder (Colo.) New York (N.Y.): Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 134–35. According to *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, this word occurs five times prior to the first century, twice in the first century—Philo and Paul—and then 130 times in the next three centuries.

<sup>5</sup> οὖν, translated “therefore,” or “since” (ESV, CSB, NIV), or “then” (KJV) Victor Paul Furnish, ed., *II Corinthians*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible v. 32A (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1984), 206; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul*,

### The Preceding Context (3:7–11)

Paul's aim in 2 Cor 3:7–11 is to demonstrate that the superiority of the new covenant (i.e. the ministry of the Spirit (v.8); the ministry of righteousness (v.9); the permanent ministry (v.11)). Although some detect polemic undertones against the false teachers,<sup>6</sup> Paul's chief concern should be understood as "defending his bold speech in correcting the Corinthians (v.12)."<sup>7</sup> Also noteworthy is that the keyword δόξα appears ten times in this section. Yet, this word would not appear in 3:12–17, and is only picked up in 2 Cor 3:18.

### The Following Context (4:1–6)

2 Corinthians 4:1–6 focuses on Paul's steadfastness and righteous conduct and message (vv. 1–2, 5–6) even though there are those who reject the gospel (vv. 3–4). Multiple themes from 2 Cor 3:7–18 continue in 4:1–6: ministry (4:1 cf. 3:7), veil-ness (4:3 cf. 3:14–16); blind or hardened minds (4:4 cf. 3:14), and most importantly glory (4:4–6 cf. 3:7ff.).<sup>8</sup> Even though διὰ τοῦτο looks back generally to the whole argument (3:7–18), yet it is directly responding to the truth presented in 3:18.<sup>9</sup>

## **Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:12–18**

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*Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 336, <http://archive.org/details/paulmoseshistory0000hafa>. Runge points out that οὗν is a development marker that adds the constraint of "close continuity with what precedes." Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2010), 43. Similarly, διὰ τοῦτο "plays the same functional role of indicating how the independent clause that follows is to be related to what precedes." Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 48. Wallace describes διὰ τοῦτο as referring back to the previous argument. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 9. Repr. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 333.

<sup>6</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Revised., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Volume 8 (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 128–29.

<sup>7</sup> E. David Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2023), 179.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary v. 29 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 220–21; Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 320–21.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 322. One should also note the semantic similarities that 4:1–6 has with 2:14–17, thus presenting an even broader pericope. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1997), 210.

2 Corinthians 3:12–18 is generally understood to be an exposition of Exodus 34.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the following exegesis will note that Paul is not merely quoting the Exodus 34 verbatim. Nevertheless, a general structure can be observed:<sup>11</sup>

Verses	Description	Persons
v.12	Opening Statement	“We” (Apostles)
v.13a	Text on Moses’ customary veiling (Exod 34:33)	
v.13b–15	Commentary on its implications	“Them” (Israelites)
v.16	Text on the Removal of the veil (Exod 34:34)	
v.17	Commentary on the meaning of “the Lord”	
v.18	Text (Exod 34:35) mixed with commentary	“We all” (Christians)

This exegesis will show that Paul applies a theological understanding of the κάλυμμα (“veil”) as descriptive of sin and condemnation. The ministry of Moses was generally characterized by condemnation, and thus prevented Moses from being open and frank with the Israelites. But in Christ, this veil is removed, thus allowing all who turn to Christ to experience freedom and boldness.

**12a.** Ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα (“therefore, while having such<sup>12</sup> hope”): The implication that Paul draws out from 3:7–11 is that the apostles have great confidence in the new covenant ministry.<sup>13</sup> The present participle Ἔχοντες is rendered as “contemporaneous in time to the action of the main verb”<sup>14</sup> although the relationship with the subsequent clause can be understood as causal and providing the ground for his subsequent assertion.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 131; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 192; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 292; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 229; Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 81; Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary*, 1. ed., NTL (Louisville, Ky. London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 91.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 192.

<sup>12</sup> The word τοιοῦτος is a heightened form of τοῖος, drawing attention to something that precedes or follows in the narrative and w. focus on quality or condition.” Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, “Τοιοῦτος, Αὐτή, Οὗτον/οὗτο,” in *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (CGELNT) (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 354.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 295.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 625.

<sup>15</sup> Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 338.

**12b. πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα** (“we act with much boldness”): χράομαι has the sense of “acting” with the dative of the characteristic shown.<sup>16</sup> The plural use likely indicates an editorial ‘we,’ referring to Paul and his apostolic team.<sup>17</sup> πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ originally referred to the political freedom to speak all one’s mind (cf. “we use great plainness of speech” in the KJV).<sup>18</sup> But the semantic range can be a lot broader to “describe the kind of openness which should characterize the genuinely moral person.”<sup>19</sup> The context of this passage leans towards παρρησίᾳ having the sense of bold outspoken speech, since Paul is primarily thinking about the behavior exhibited in the proclamation of the gospel, although there should be nuance in applying this concept to the whole transformation of anyone in the new covenant community.<sup>20</sup>

**13a.** The use of **καὶ οὐ καθάπερ** (“and not as”) implies that the subsequent clause is of “equal status” to the preceding clause.<sup>21</sup> Paul is presenting a direct contrast to Moses, who **ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ** (“used to put a veil on his face”). ἐτίθει implies a habitual action.<sup>22</sup> The κάλυμμα (“veil”) is a direct reference to the Exodus 34 narrative. κάλυμμα is used 17 out of 19 times to refer to Moses’ veil or the various coverings used in the tabernacle.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, κάλυμμα is used primarily to describe the covering of God’s Shekinah glory. The κάλυμμα

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<sup>16</sup> BDAG, 1088.

<sup>17</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 396. Paul is referring to himself and his team (minimally Timothy, see 2 Cor 1:1).

<sup>18</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 295. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 206. BDAG also indicates that παρρησία refers to “a use of speech that conceals nothing and passes over nothing, outspokenness, frankness, plainness.”

<sup>19</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 206.

<sup>20</sup> Matera, *II Corinthians*, 90. Belleville observes that “in the broader context of the first three chapters Paul is primarily concerned with a defense of his actions and motives rather than his speech. It is not until 4:2ff that the proclamation of the gospel comes into view.” Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory: Paul’s Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3. 1-18*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), 194. However, there is no reason to think that Paul is arguing linearly. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 295; Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 340.

<sup>21</sup> Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> A similar used of the imperfect is found in Acts 3:2 for the same verb. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 548. Philip Hughes also agree that “Paul’s language suggests that this procedure became customary.” Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1992), 108.

<sup>23</sup> NIDNTTE, 2:612. The other two times κάλυμμα is used is in Maccabees, referring to an armor.

prevented the Israelites from beholding the glorious things of God. It is likely that this theological understanding governed Paul's usage of κάλυμμα from that which was habitually put on Moses' face to that τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ("same veil")<sup>24</sup> being over the hearts of the Israelites, even till this very day (3:14).

**13b. πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου** ("so that the sons of Israel might not gaze into the end which was being made ineffective"): The Exodus narrative does not explain why Moses repeatedly veiled himself, but Paul explains that the purpose (πρὸς τὸ + infinitive)<sup>25</sup> of the veil was to prevent the Israelites from gazing into end of the glory. Some scholars think that Paul is presenting Moses as "duplicious."<sup>26</sup> A better way is to understand τέλος as the "consequence" of seeing the glory. Moses' concealment through the veil was a judgement on the people of Israel. As Hughes points out, their iniquities had "rendered them unable, and unworthy, to behold such glory."<sup>27</sup> If they had continue beholding the glory, they would have been destroyed.<sup>28</sup> But with Paul, his ministry is characterized by great openness, and boldness. His

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<sup>24</sup> αὐτός used as an identifying adjective since it is in the attributive position. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 349.

<sup>25</sup> πρὸς τὸ + infinitive indicates the purpose or goal of the action. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 590.

<sup>26</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 110. This is *contra* Minor. Minor argues that Paul is rhetorically presenting himself as having a better ministry than Moses, in the sense that Moses' ministry was ultimately "duplicious." See also Paul Brooks Duff, "Transformed 'from Glory to Glory': Paul's Appeal to the Experience of His Readers in 2 Corinthians 3:18," *JBL* 127.4 (2008): 776. This is his assessment of the purpose of the veil. As verse 13 states, the veil was so that the Israelites would not see the *telos* of the covenant. Some consider that to be the "the end" or the terminus of the old covenant (Hughes). But Richard Hays argues that the "normal meaning" of *telos* is purpose. Hays surmises that Paul sees this as an opportunity to present a "compelling image of a masked Moses whose veil is removed when he enters the presence of the Lord." Minor, however, is cautious that we do not misconstrue his words to think that Paul is offering a negative theological assessment of Moses. Rather, it is a rhetorical argument to show how his own ministry is better, and that "God made [Paul] competent to be a minister of a super-glorious ministry of Spirit that enables, or perhaps requires, him to be frank/bold/open with the Corinthians." Mitzi Minor, *2 Corinthians*, SHBC (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2009), 75. Hughes counter this objection by arguing that to think that Moses was trying to hide the transient nature of the Old Covenant is to confuse the issue at this stage in Paul's argument. Paul is arguing for the more glorious new covenant vis-à-vis the old covenant, not his intentions over and above Moses'. Why would Moses want the Israelites to think that the glory would not fade? Hughes, rather, sees εἰς τὸ τέλος as indicating *duration*. Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 109. Hughes counterargument is valid, but it might be better to understand εἰς τὸ τέλος as referring to the "consequence" of the covenant, which is death. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>27</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 203.

message is “one of grace and mercy and life to every sinner who repents and believes. The eye of faith may gaze upon the everlasting glory of Christ without interruption.”<sup>29</sup>

**14a. ἀλλ’** (“but”) functions as a true adversative. As Runge notes, ἀλλά “introduces a correction of the expectation created by the first conjunct.”<sup>30</sup> Here, Paul is introducing a clarification to πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι. Yes, Moses was covering his face to prevent the Israelites from gazing at God’s glory, *but* in fact, ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν (“their minds<sup>31</sup> were hardened”).

**14b. ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας** (“for until this very day”) introduces the basis for Paul’s statement above.<sup>32</sup> Even to this present day<sup>33</sup>—which might be an allusion to Deut 29:3—τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει (“the same<sup>34</sup> veil during<sup>35</sup> the public reading<sup>36</sup> of the old covenant remains”). Just as Moses covered his face the same veil is present even today, whenever Moses is read.

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<sup>29</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 110.

<sup>30</sup> Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 93. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207. In most of Runge’s example, ἀλλά is preceded with a prior clause beginning with οὐ. Here then, it is likely that the contrast is with πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι. Yes, Moses was covering his face to prevent the Israelites from gazing, *but* it was actually their own minds that was hardened that was actually preventing their sight.

<sup>31</sup> Furnish suggest that νόημα is no different from “hearts” in the next verse; “both terms describe, in this context, the overall perceptive, reasoning, and affective faculties of a human being.” Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207. Similarly, BDAG also render a possible meaning as “the faulty of processing thought.” BDAG, 675.

<sup>32</sup> Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 226; Margaret Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Volume 1: 1-7*, ed. Christopher M. Tuckett, Stuart Weeks, and Jacqueline Vayntrub, ICC (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2000), 263.

<sup>33</sup> σήμερον ἡμέρας is used with emphasis (CGELNT, 320). Furnish recognizes an OT allusion to Deut 29:3. Some manuscripts (K L Ψ 1241 m syp) omits ἡμέρας, although it is well attested in the earlier manuscripts (P<sup>46</sup> & A B C D F G P 0243. 33. 81. 104. 365. 630. 1175. 1505. 1739. 1881. 2464 latt sy<sup>h</sup>; Cl).

<sup>34</sup> αὐτός used as an identifying adjective since it is in the attributive position. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 349.

<sup>35</sup> ἐπὶ in the dative can be rendered with a temporal use of “during.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 376. Furnish, together with Barrett, is careful to observe that Paul is not thinking of a veil covering the public reading, but covering the hearts of the hearers *during* the public reading. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>36</sup> ἀνάγνωσις, in the NT, always refers to the public reading of the scriptures (see Acts 13:15; 1 Tim 4:13).

**14c.** The participial phrase **μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον** (“Not being lifted”) is best as an independent clause explaining the abiding presence of the veil.<sup>37</sup> The reason the veil is not lifted is **ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται** (“because in Christ it is made ineffective;”). **καταργεῖται** is the present passive indicative of **καταργέω**, which is prominent in this section (3:7, 11, 13, 14). It has the sense of causing something to be powerless or to set something aside.<sup>38</sup>

**15. ἀλλ’ ἕως σήμερον ἡνίκα ᾗν ἀναγινώσκηται Ἰωυδοῦς, κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται** (“But, until today whenever Moses might be read publicly, a veil lies on their hearts.”): Commentators, because they see verse 15 as a restatement of verse 14b, render ἀλλ’ as an emphatic conjunction.<sup>39</sup> Belleville is probably more accurate to observe that “if 14b contemporizes the Mosaic veiling action...then v.15 contemporizes the Exodus generation’s response.”<sup>40</sup> She diagrams the sentences as such:

- (v.13) Moses placed a veil over his face...
- (v.14a) But their perceptions were dulled.
- (v.14b) The same veil remains over the reading of the old covenant
- (v.15) but a veil lies over their hearts.

This structure helps us to see that the parallelism is between the hardening of the mind and the veiling of the hearts, rather than the “disparate concepts of the Mosaic face veiling and the Israelite heart veiling.”<sup>41</sup> Although her observation is correct, as discussed in verse 13a, Paul is justified in describing the veil as the “same veil” because of its theological significance of it being the instrument that covers God’s glory from the audience.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, the use of the rare

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<sup>37</sup> Furnish thinks that it cannot be linked to the preceding verb, which is what most translations do (NIV, ESV, NASB) because such a construction would require an *ou* rather than the *me*. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 209. Other options includes: (1) Accusative absolute (i.e. it is not revealed *because*), (2) or just by itself (i.e. unlifted *because*). The second option is preferred by Furnish and Barnett. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 193.

<sup>38</sup> BDAG, 526; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 203; Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 183.

<sup>39</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 210; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 305.

<sup>40</sup> Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 237.

<sup>41</sup> Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 238.

<sup>42</sup> An alternative understanding is that Paul is moving from Moses-as-person to Moses-as-text. Kugler, *Paul and the Image of God*, 132.



conjunction ἡνίκα (“whenever”) seems to be Paul setting up for an allusion to the Exodus 34:24 (LXX): “whenever (ἡνίκα) Moses went in before the Lord to speak to him, he would take the veil off.”

**16. ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα.** (“But whenever someone<sup>43</sup> turns to the Lord, the veil is being removed”): δὲ functions as a development marker, which signals that “what follows is a new, distinct development in the argument.”<sup>44</sup> If verses 14–15 was about the current veil over Israelites, then from verses 16–18 Paul begins to develop his argument regarding the removal of the veil for those who turn to the Lord. This contrast is established by the “repeated staccato use” of δὲ from verses 16–18.<sup>45</sup> There are too many similarities and yet differences between 2 Cor 3:16 and the supposed quotation of Exod 34:34a:

Exodus 34:34a (LXX) <sup>46</sup>	2 Cor 3:16
ἡνίκα δ’ ἂν <u>εἰσεπορεύετο</u> Μωϋσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ, <u>περιηρεῖτο</u> τὸ <u>κάλυμμα</u> ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι.	ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν <u>ἐπιστρέψῃ</u> πρὸς κύριον, <u>περιαιρεῖται</u> τὸ <u>κάλυμμα</u> .

The best way to understand this passage is that Paul is generalizing Exodus 34:34a to anyone.<sup>47</sup> The explicit subject “Moses” is removed in verse 16. The subject is best supplied with “anyone.”<sup>48</sup> Paul, however, is doing more than broadening the reference to include more than Moses. Rather, by using the verb ἐπιστρέψῃ (aorist active) instead of εἰσεπορεύετο (imperfect middle), Paul is expressing the spiritual movement of a “single turning to the Lord” rather than a

<sup>43</sup> This is in agreement with Furnish who presupposes that the unexpressed subject is “someone” rather than the hearts of the people of Israel. It is unlikely that Paul is continuing his OT quote from the previous paragraphs. Rather, it is likely that “Paul wishes to broaden the reference to include more than just Moses.” Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 210–11. Many translations agree with Furnish (NIV, NASB, ESV, CSB, KJV). Barnett disagree because he sees close connections to the OT quotation of Exod 34:24. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 198.

<sup>44</sup> This is in contrast with καί. Both are coordinating conjunction, but καί is unmarked for development. As Runge notes, “if the exegete is seeking to understand the author’s intent, devices such as development markers are worthy of attention.” Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 31–32.

<sup>45</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 195.

<sup>46</sup> Red color means difference. underline means similar or same construction.

<sup>47</sup> Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 250–51.

<sup>48</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 196; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 210–11. Many translations agree with Furnish (NIV, NASB, ESV, CSB, KJV).

repeated entry into the tent of meeting by Moses.<sup>49</sup> In the Exodus 34 narrative, it is Aaron and leaders of the congregation who ἐπεστράφησαν (“turns”) to Moses (Exod 34:31 LXX). Thus, it seems like Paul’s generalization is meant to be applicable not just to Moses-like figures, but to all the people.

**Verse 17a.** ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· (“Now the Lord is the Spirit.”<sup>50</sup>): Harris notes that few sentences in the New Testament have prompted more debate than this.<sup>51</sup> The discussion revolves around who ὁ κύριος is, and what is meant by ἐστιν.<sup>52</sup> It is most likely that ὁ κύριος directly refers to κύριος in 2 Cor 3:16 and thus a reference to God (YHWH). Just as Moses turned to “the Lord,” Paul’s contemporaries must turn to the Spirit.<sup>53</sup> Or, the Lord might refer to Christ and Paul is now saying that just as the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6), in verse 16, it is the Lord who is the Spirit (who gives life and freedom).<sup>54</sup>

**17b.** οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα ἱκυρίου, ἡ ἐλευθερία\*. (“and where the Spirit of the Lord,<sup>55</sup> freedom”).<sup>56</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is an Old Testament phrase (e.g. Judg 3:10; Isa 61:1). At the same time, “Lord” and “Spirit” are closely associated in Rom 8:9–11 and Phil 1:19 too. The Spirit of the Lord gives freedom. This ἐλευθερία could be freedom from the “veil of spiritual ignorance

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<sup>49</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 307.

<sup>50</sup> The other places where Paul associates Lord and Spirit is 1 Cor 6:17 and 12:3. Here, Paul has presented the difference between the law and Spirit covenant (vv.3–6).

<sup>51</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 310. A huge portion of this debate is due to the impulse to put Paul into our neat post-Chalcedonian box, and making him say what he is not exactly saying. Minor, *2 Corinthians*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 278–82.

<sup>53</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 281.

<sup>54</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 116.

<sup>55</sup> The Lord and the Spirit is closely associated in Rom 8:9–11 and Phil 1:19. The Spirit of the Lord is a common phrase in the LXX (e.g. Judg 3:10). Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 213.

<sup>56</sup> Some manuscripts, particularly the codex Sinaiticus (ⲕ<sup>2</sup> D<sup>1</sup> F G K L P Ψ 104. 365. 630. 1241. 1505. 1881. 2464 m lat sy<sup>h</sup> sa; Epiph) include an additional word ἐκεῖ (thus translated, “there is freedom”). Metzger comments that the Textus Receptus was attempting to provide a correlative to οὗ. However, early manuscripts do not have ἐκεῖ. The shorter reading is thus supported by (Ɀ<sup>46</sup> ⲕ\* A B C D\* 0243. 6. 33. 81. 1175. 1739 r sy<sup>p</sup> bo). Furthermore, such a construction is unlike Paul’s normal usage. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (3d Ed.)* (London, New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 509.

concerning truths of the new covenant or the veil of hardheartedness; or freedom from the old covenant or from the law and its effects.”<sup>57</sup> The best answer is that the freedom that the Spirit brings includes all of the above.

**18a. ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες** (“but we all”): The “repeated staccato use” of δὲ in vv. 16 and 18, makes it best to render δὲ as adversative, albeit bearing in mind that its context presents verse 18 as a climax and conclusion to the argument.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, ἡμεῖς πάντες (“we all”) strongly suggests that verse 18 is a conclusion. πάντες is not found in  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ , although it is well attested elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> It is best to understand Paul as speaking to all believers.<sup>60</sup> Hafemann convincingly argues against Belleville that in this context, “we” has already been used by Paul to refer to the apostles in general (see e.g. 2:14).<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Exodus 34 should lend more weight to the use of “all” in 2 Corinthians 3, since Paul has been consistently alluding to its events. In Exodus 34, πᾶς is used to describe both the people and leaders of Israel.<sup>62</sup> It is likely then, that rather than just a reference to the apostolic preachers, ἡμεῖς πάντες is being used inclusively.<sup>63</sup> The context also shows that Paul is not just contrasting himself with Moses, rather, the contrast in verses 16–18 is between the “we” who are “in Christ” (3:14) and veiled Israelites (vv.13–15).<sup>64</sup> The argument can be traced even further upstream, where even though “we” in verse 12 might refer to only the apostles, yet by

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<sup>57</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 313.

<sup>58</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 195. The NLT renders δὲ as “so,” concluding the argument of verses 12–18. Matra notes Paul is at the climax of his argument: “the new covenant allows people to contemplate the glory of the Lord with face unveiled, as did Moses.”<sup>58</sup> The NIV, opts to understand δὲ as a simple continuative (“and”), explaining the meaning of ἐλευθερία (“freedom”) that Paul had just mentioned.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the NASB, renders δὲ as adversative (“but”). Hughes notes that “in the old dispensation only one man, Moses, gazed with unveiled face on the divine glory. Now, in the gospel age, however, this is the blessed privilege of all who are Christ’s.” Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 117.

<sup>59</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 213.

<sup>60</sup> *Contra* Sloan and Belleville. Sloan, for example, has followed omission of  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  thus argues that Paul is only referring to the apostles. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 214. Belleville, although accepting the inclusion of πάντες sees Paul as referring to “all true gospel ministers without exception.” She points to Neh 4:15 and Acts 2:32 to show that ἡμεῖς πάντες is often used to “emphasize characteristic behavior of a particular group.” Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 276.

<sup>61</sup> Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 407–8.

<sup>62</sup> 34:10; 30; 31; 34. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, 411.

<sup>63</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 394.

<sup>64</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 214.

contrasting the ministry of the Spirit with the ministry of the law, Paul is already a representative of all new covenant people.<sup>65</sup> The subject “we all” is then modified by two qualifying phrases.

**18b. ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ** (“with unveiled faces”) is a perfect participle of ἀνακαλύπτω. Hughes observe that the perfect tense “indicates that the veil, once lifted, remains lifted.”<sup>66</sup> The verb ἀνακαλύπτω is used in 3:14, where Christ is the one “sets aside” the veil. The idea of veil (κάλυμμα) best ties 3:18 to the rest of the pericope (3:12–4:6).<sup>67</sup> Whether Moses, the Israelites during his time, the Jews today, the apostles, or the Corinthian Christians, whenever someone turns to the Lord and receive the light of the gospel (4:4), this veil of judgement and hardness of heart is removed.<sup>68</sup> Since the veil is representative of hardness of heart and unbelief (v.14), and of judgement and concealment, then the removal of the veil must represent boldness (v.12), and freedom (v.17). Thus, having our face unveiled, Paul asserts that we are able to behold God’s glory uninterruptedly and to access the divine presence without fear. ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ, expresses the manner in which the subsequent verb, κατοπτριζόμενοι, happens.<sup>69</sup>

**18c. τὴν δόξαν κυρίου ἑκατοπτριζόμενοι** (“while beholding-as-in-a-mirror) has a direct object τὴν δόξαν κυρίου (“the glory of the Lord”). The meaning of κατοπτριζόμενοι is debated. It could mean (1) to reflect as in a mirror, (2) behold as in a mirror, (3) to look and reflect what is beheld, (4) to behold, or (5) to contemplate what one beholds.<sup>70</sup> Option 2 is best because Paul has

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<sup>65</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 204.

<sup>66</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 117.

<sup>67</sup> κάλυμμα is used in 3:13, 14, 15, 16, the passive participle form of ἀνακαλύπτω is used in 3:14 and 18, and καλύπτω is used twice in 4:3.

<sup>68</sup> This way of interpreting the veil cuts across the various options as to what exactly Paul is contrasting to. Some thinks that it is a contrast with Moses’ veiling, others with the veiling on the people of Israel, or as a comparison with Moses who removes the veil to speak to the Lord. C. David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of 2 Corinthians*, 1st ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2003), 140. This way of interpreting would recognize that the contrast is made with both Moses’ veiling and the veiling of the people of Israel, and at the same time drawing the similarity to Moses as he removes the veil when he turns to the Lord.

<sup>69</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 313. Although, it is also possible to understand the dative as locative, “reflecting in our unveiled faces.”

<sup>70</sup> Abernathy, *2 Corinthians*, 140.

already suggested that the glory of the Lord is seen mediately “in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).<sup>71</sup> The significance of κατοπτριζόμενοι will be discussed in the section below. Meanwhile it should be noted that the present tense of κατοπτριζόμενοι implies that while the lifting of the veil was a one-time action, the beholding is continuous and free from interruption.<sup>72</sup>

**18d. τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα ἡμεταμορφούμεθα** (“we are being transfigured into<sup>73</sup> the same<sup>74</sup> image”).<sup>75</sup> μεταμορφόω is used three other times in the NT, referring to Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2), and once to our own transformation (Rom 12:2). In Rom 12:2, μεταμορφόω is contrasted with outward conformity to the world. Thus, μεταμορφόω carries the idea of the inner or real being.<sup>76</sup> In this passage, μεταμορφόω is the main verb of 3:18. τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι being in the same present tense as the main verb ἡμεταμορφούμεθα means that they are two contemporaneous actions implying that the transformation is the result of the beholding.<sup>77</sup>

Some have understood Paul’s use of μεταμορφόω as being influenced by the Hellenistic mystery religions.<sup>78</sup> Fitzmyer argues that Paul was taking up the mythological figure of

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<sup>71</sup> Options 4 and 5 can be rejected since Paul has used other verbs for seeing in this section already (3:7, 13, 4:4). Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 215. Furnish thinks that option 2 is better than option 1 because the contrast is with the Israelites who could not look on God’s glory in the face of Moses. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214.

<sup>72</sup> Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 117.

<sup>73</sup> The accusative of the thing is retained loosely. See BDF §159 (4).

<sup>74</sup> αὐτός used as an identifying adjective since it is in the attributive position. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 349.

<sup>75</sup> Paul is likely thinking of Christ as the *image of God* (4:4). Thus, with Furnish, I think that Paul is holding both a Christological and theological dimension at the same time. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 215.

<sup>76</sup> This is also in line with 4:16b, where it speaks of the “inner person” being renewed day by day. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 315.

<sup>77</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 625. However, one might also consider that the two participles describes how (i.e. means) this metamorphosis takes place. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 207.

<sup>78</sup> Hans-Peter Behm, “μεταμορφόω”, TDNT 4:758. A simplified survey of the data can be found in Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 90.

transformation that is as old as Homer and applying it to the “Christ-event.”<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, Fitzmyer is careful to differentiate Paul’s doctrine from that of the Greeks:

Paul never so expresses it that that person is transformed into Christ himself, as the pagan myths might suggest; rather, through that constant subjection to the reflected glory the person is gradually being transformed into a likeness of him.<sup>80</sup>

At the same time, Paul’s doctrine of transformation is also different from apocalyptic Judaism that “envisaged ecstatic experience as the means of transformation.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, Barnett concludes, “Paul’s Christological goal of transformation is unparalleled.”<sup>82</sup> This transformation is described as moving *ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν* (“from glory to glory”), an idea that will be discussed below.

**18e.** *καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος* (“just as<sup>83</sup> [it is] from the Lord the Spirit”). The conjunction *καθάπερ* is meant to communicate “the sheer naturalness, given the Spirit, of a change from glory to glory.”<sup>84</sup> We would expect the Spirit to move us from glory into glory, just as what Paul has already asserted, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (v.17). *ἀπὸ* would likely indicate the source, or origins of the transformation.<sup>85</sup> The phrase *κυρίου πνεύματος* has traditionally been rendered “Spirit of the Lord” (KJV, BDF §474(4)).<sup>86</sup> This, however, breaks the

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<sup>79</sup> Joseph A Fitzmyer, “Glory Reflected on the Face of Christ (2 Cor 3:7-4:6) and a Palestinian Jewish Motif,” *TS* 42.4 (1981): 632.

<sup>80</sup> Fitzmyer, “Glory Reflected on the Face of Christ,” 644.

<sup>81</sup> Furnish who notes that “the transformation of which Paul writes here is not attained through some ecstatic experience as believers... For Paul it is not an event through which one transcends history but an event in which one’s transformation begins already in this age, and transforms of one’s relationships within history.” Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 241.

<sup>82</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 207.

<sup>83</sup> The codex Vaticanus renders it as *καθὼς περ*, although it is not attested anywhere else. Even so, the meaning is the same.

<sup>84</sup> Dane C Ortlund, “From Glory to Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18 in Biblical-Theological Perspective,” *CTJ* 54.1 (2019): 23. Barnett renders it “just as one would expect.” Transformation is derived—unsurprisingly—from the Lord. Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 209.

<sup>85</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 368; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 317; Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 208.

<sup>86</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 287.

general rule about governing and dependent genitives.<sup>87</sup> It is more likely that πνεύματος is dependent on κυρίου, which still produces a range of options, the best of which is that the two genitives are in apposition, “the Lord, namely, the Spirit.”<sup>88</sup> This highlights the roles of the Godhead in our salvation: “the one who is the *end* of our transformation (“the Lord”) is also its means and provider (through “the Spirit”).”<sup>89</sup>

### **Clarifying the metaphor of κατοπτριζόμενοι**

The second part of the paper will seek to explore the idea of κατοπτριζόμενοι in 2 Cor 3:18 more closely. This section will argue two key points: (1) κατοπτριζόμενοι should be understood as “beholding-as-in-a-mirror” with the mirror being the gospel proclaimed and (2) ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν should be understood as moving from the glory of the Old Covenant to the glory of the New Covenant. Taken together, “beholding-as-in-a-mirror” means that New Testament believers are transformed by seeing the transformational power of the Spirit in the gospel of the glory of Christ.

### Importance of the concept of κατοπτριζόμενοι

2 Corinthians 3:18 is unique for its almost “confessional style.”<sup>90</sup> It functions as the climax of this section, explaining the boldness and freedom that exist in the new covenant (3:12–17). It is also the basis of courage for the gospel minister (4:1–6). It is a grand affirmation of the themes of 2 Cor 3:7–17 and is “impressively integrated.”<sup>91</sup> Yet it also introduces new concepts like κατοπτριζόμενοι and μεταμορφούμεθα. The idea of κατοπτριζόμενοι and μεταμορφούμεθα have been significant in the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*.<sup>92</sup> Particularly, κατοπτριζόμενοι has

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<sup>87</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 216.

<sup>88</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 216; Martin H. (Martin Henry) Scharlemann, “Of Surpassing Splendor: An Exegetical Study of 2 Corinthians 3:4-18,” *Concordia Journal* 4.3 (1978): 117.

<sup>89</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 208–9.

<sup>90</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 238.

<sup>91</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 225.

<sup>92</sup> M David Litwa, “2 Corinthians 3:18 and Its Implications for Theosis,” *JTISup* 2.1 (2008): 117–33.

been central in understanding how this transformation would take place. This verb was significant enough—at least for the scribe of  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ —that he rendered κατοπτριζόμενοι as κατοπτριζόμεθα, making it the main verb of 2 Cor 3:18.

2 Cor 3:18 ( $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ ) <sup>93</sup>	2 Cor 3:18 (NA 28)
ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ κυρίου <b>κατοπτριζόμεθα οἱ</b> τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα <b>μεταμορφουμενοι</b> ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος	ἡμεῖς δὲ <b>πάντες</b> ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου <b>κατοπτριζόμενοι</b> τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα <b>μεταμορφούμεθα</b> ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος
And we, with unveiled faces, <u>we behold-as-in-a-mirror</u> the glory of the Lord, <u>we who</u> are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as [it is] from the Lord, the Spirit	And we all, with unveiled faces, <u>while beholding-as-in-a-mirror</u> the glory of the Lord, <u>we are</u> being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as [it is] from the Lord, the Spirit

We should not dismiss  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  reading as too quickly. Wright argues that a good case can be made for κατοπτριζόμεθα οἱ being the correct reading since it could have been easily contracted to κατοπτριζόμενοι, and changed μεταμορφουμενοι into an indicative in lieu of the patristic interest in deification.<sup>94</sup> Regardless, the variation  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$  highlights the importance of this verb in the reading of this passage.

### Understanding κατοπτριζόμενοι in light of Philo

The meaning of κατοπτρίζω in its middle or passive participle is debated. It could mean (1) to reflect as in a mirror, (2) behold as in a mirror, (3) to look and reflect what is beheld, (4) to behold, or (5) to contemplate what one beholds.<sup>95</sup> Options 4 and 5 is unlikely since Paul had already used other verbs for seeing in this section (3:7, 13; 4:4).<sup>96</sup> Option 3 attempts to capture

<sup>93</sup> Based on Philip Wesley Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds., *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, Third edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019), 263–64. But they have mistakenly rendered μεταμορφουμενοι as μεταμορφούμεθα.

<sup>94</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr, 1996), 186. Thrall's suggestion that a scribe might have miswritten and thereafter adjusted the rest of the verse seems dismissive of the importance of  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ .

<sup>95</sup> Abernathy, *2 Corinthians*, 140.

<sup>96</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 215.



both the passive and active meaning, but the idea of reflecting could already be contained in the sense of μεταμορφούμεθα. Furthermore, the concept of a mirror seems to suggest that Paul is thinking of a mediated access to the “glory of the Lord.”<sup>97</sup>

Philo’s use of κατοπτρίζω should be an important data point for understanding Paul’s use because it is the only other use of κατοπτρίζω and it is used in context of Exodus 33. Philo paraphrases Exod 33:13 as Moses requesting for God to “disclose yourself to me” because he did not want to “behold-as-in-a-mirror (κατοπτρισαίμην), in any other except in you, O God” (Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.101). Even though Paul might not be quoting Philo, yet it gives us a glimpse into the Old Testament context that Paul is thinking in.<sup>98</sup> If behold-as-in-a-mirror is the right understanding of the participle, what is the significance of the metaphor?

First, Litwa argues that we should understand Moses’ request to “behold-in-a-mirror” God’s glory in Exod 33:13 as a request to have a *pure* mediated view of God. This seems to have been a reconciliation between the idea that no one can see God’s face and live (Exod 33:20) and the idea that God asserted that he spoke to Moses “face to face—clearly (וּמַרְאֵה)” (Num 12:8). The Hebrew word מַרְאֶה (without the vowels) can also be understood as מִרְאֶה, which means “mirror.” Litwa’s point is that mirror indicates clarity and mediation.<sup>99</sup> With this, one might be able to argue for a more detailed exploration of the metaphor. The beholding-as-in-a-mirror metaphor consists of four parts: (1) the person who uses the mirror, (2) a mirror, (3) the act of seeing, (4) an image reflected in the mirror. The image reflected is normally the person who uses the mirror.

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<sup>97</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 206.

<sup>98</sup> This is *contra* Belleville, who thinks that ‘reflect’ is the more appropriate translation since there is a parallelism with the shining face of Moses in Exod 34:35. However, the connection to the shining face of Moses can be better connected in the next clause “are being transformed...” Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 314; Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 118; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 215; Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 282.

<sup>99</sup> M David Litwa, “Transformation through a Mirror: Moses in 2 Cor. 3.18,” *JSNT* 34.3 (2012): 294, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X11435044>.

The metaphor is understood better when compared with 4:4 and 4:6:

3:18	4:4	4:6
We all with unveiled faces Beholding- as-in-a-mirror the glory of the Lord we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory	...they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ  who is the image of God.	...to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God  in the face of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in the above comparison, the subject of the one beholding-as-in-a-mirror is “we all,” referring to all Christians who have turned to the Lord (3:16–17). The act of beholding is the same as “seeing the light” (4:4), which is metaphorical for hearing.<sup>100</sup> The mirror is the gospel which when we all look into it, we see “the glory of the Lord.” This mirror-image is Jesus Christ, in whose likeness we are being transformed into. That is, perhaps, the surprise of the metaphor. When Christians look into the mirror, which is the gospel,<sup>101</sup> they do not see their own reflection. Rather, they see Christ. This expands on the idea that the veil is lifted up “*in Christ*” (3:14). In this section Christ as the image of God is both presented—as Ridderbos observes—as the first Adam and the Son of God.<sup>102</sup>

#### Understanding ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν

If transformation is hearing the glory of Jesus Christ in the gospel, and finding ourselves *in* him, then what does transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν (“from glory to glory”) mean? Traditionally, this clause is understood to indicate the progressive nature of the transformation.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 220.

<sup>101</sup> Some other options are proposed are that the mirror could be gospel ministers or Christians in general. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 315. Ridderbos, though understanding κατοπτρίζω as “reflecting-as-in-a-mirror” agrees that the mirror is the gospel. Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul, an Outline of His Theology* (London : S.P.C.K., 1977), 220, [http://archive.org/details/pauloutlineofhis0000ridd\\_r0a3](http://archive.org/details/pauloutlineofhis0000ridd_r0a3).

<sup>102</sup> Ridderbos, *Paul, an Outline of His Theology*, 72.

<sup>103</sup> Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 316; Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 120; Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 208.

The ESV interprets the clause to mean “from one degree of glory to another.”<sup>104</sup> This is generally supported by the doctrine of sanctification. Paul Duff presents a convincing alternative view. “Glory to glory” can refer to the believer’s past and present glorification. ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν is meant to draw the reader back comparison between the glory of the ministry of death and the glory of the ministry of life (3:7–11).<sup>105</sup> Since “glory” is not mentioned in 3:12–17, Paul’s use of this phrase must be referring to the “Corinthian’s own experience of transformation from their previous status, condemned before God and under the sentence of death, to their new status as reconciled with God.”<sup>106</sup> Dane Ortlund supports Duff’s thesis by noting that in 2 Cor 4:1–6, the mention of glory is cast as a “new creational reality that takes place as a decisive event and not a gradual process.”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the phrase “let light shine out of darkness” (4:6) has allusions to Isaiah 9, which anticipates a new creation.

The main objection to this position seems to be the progressive nature of μεταμορφώω. The present tense suggests an ongoing action.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, the concept that is described by Ortlund and Duff could be quantified under the dative phrase “with unveiled face.” Finally, the renewal of the self in 4:16–17 seems to also speak of a progressive, day-by-day growth working for the glory at the eschatological age.<sup>109</sup> Ortlund, however, presents a convincing case that even if μεταμορφώω is understood as gradual, the phrase could mean “that we are being gradually transformed from the glory of the old age into the glory of the new age.”<sup>110</sup> It is thus more feasible to think of ἀπὸ δόξης

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<sup>104</sup> or NIV’s “ever increasing glory.”

<sup>105</sup> Duff, “Transformed ‘from Glory to Glory,’” 772.

<sup>106</sup> Duff, “Transformed ‘from Glory to Glory,’” 773.

<sup>107</sup> Ortlund, “From Glory to Glory,” 21.

<sup>108</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 286; Jan Lambrecht, “From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3,18): A Reply to Paul B Duff,” *ETL* 85.1 (2009): 145, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.85.1.2040700>.

<sup>109</sup> Lambrecht, “From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3,18),” 145.

<sup>110</sup> Ortlund, “From Glory to Glory,” 29.

εἰς δόξαν as moving from one realm to another, or as Sinclair Ferguson alludes to, as “transitioning from bearing the image of the man of dust to bearing the image of the man from heaven.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A basic understanding of 2 Corinthians 3:18 might have been, “the more you look at Jesus, the more you become like Him.” This statement—although not technically wrong—could be nuanced better. 2 Corinthians 3:18 argues that, Christians, having turned to the Lord (3:16), are now *in* Christ. We have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13). When we hear the gospel, we see our glorious reality in Christ, and that is the means of our moral transformation. When we look into the mirror of the gospel, the word of God (James 1:24), we are not looking at a future state, but a present reality. We are presently already in Christ, seated in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6), and partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). We become what we are. This is Paul’s motivation to not lose heart in gospel ministry (4:1), but rather to renounce ungodliness (4:2) and to continue to proclaim this transformational gospel to a perishing world (3:12; 4:4–6).

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted from Ortlund, “From Glory to Glory,” 16.

## Logical Progression of 2 Corinthians 3:12–18

- 12 ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα  
πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα
- 13 καὶ οὐ καθάπερ  
Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα  
ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἑαυτοῦ  
πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ  
εἰς τὸ ἑτέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου\*.
- 14 ἀλλ’  
ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν\*.  
ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ὁήμερας  
τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα  
ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης  
μένει\*,  
μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον  
ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται\*.
- 15 ἀλλ’ ἕως σήμερον ἡνίκα  
ἂν ἀναγινώσκηται ἡ Μωϋσῆς,  
κάλυμμα  
ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν  
κεῖται\*.
- 16 ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ  
πρὸς κύριον,  
περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα\*.
- 17 ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν·  
οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα ἑκ κυρίου,  
ἡ ἐλευθερία\*.
- 18 ἡμεῖς δὲ ὅτι πάντες  
ἀνακαλυμμένοι προσώπων  
τὴν δόξαν κυρίου ἑκατοπτριζόμενοι  
τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα ἑμεταμορφούμεθα  
ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν  
ἡ καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος\*.