

Identity and the Embodiment of Privilege in Corinth

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INTRODUCTION

Years ago, I learned about the seductive appeal of the “prosperity gospel” from acquaintances in a black church in a small town in the rural South. These new friends were generous and loving, and threw open the doors of their hearts and homes to me with scarcely a thought for their own scarcity. They were as open-handed in their giving to the church as they were to me, a virtual stranger. Yet, when it came to a discussion about the prosperity gospel and predatory gimmicks designed to increase contributions from people who are often poor and oppressed, we soon found ourselves at an impasse. Though I denigrated the greed that powers this movement, my friends stunned me with their passionate defense of church leaders in fine suits, fancy cars, and elaborate homes: “Who wants to follow a broke-down pastor?!” In their view, legitimate pastors must have access to the accoutrements of wealth and power; a “broke-down” pastor is simply not a compelling witness to the power of the gospel. This vignette gives insight into the complicated tangle of faith, wealth, race, and the aspirational desire for status and privilege. Though rooted in the not-too-distant past, this thinking is not that far removed from some of the problems Paul faced in Roman Corinth, problems that surface particularly in the correspondence now preserved in 2 Corinthians.

This essay explores the nature of Paul’s vision of Christian ministry and the association between physical identity and privilege. Though interpreters speculate about the arguments that gave rise to Paul’s responses in 2 Corinthians, many suspect that tension emerged from Paul’s failure to embody then-contemporary aspirations about a leader’s demeanor. Paul assumes the glory of his ministry accomplishments, heritage, and ethnic identity, but

emphasizes his brokenness, humiliation, and suffering as an “earthen vessel,” interpreting these qualities as the preferred expressions of participation in Christ. Here I consider the implications of this rhetorical strategy for a modern society in which white bodies signify privilege and power but which regards black and brown bodies as humble, cheap, and disposable. We shall see that Paul was, at one and the same time, both privileged and humble, occupying a position of privilege in his own culture on the one hand, while enslaving himself to recipients of his ministry on the other. We begin with a consideration of privilege and identity, before examining the way these concepts interact with the situation in 2 Corinthians.

THE EMBODIED NATURE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

Constructs of identity are embodied; that is, they fundamentally involve the nexus of heritage, personality, physical appearance, and social connections. Educators, theologians, and critical theorists alike are exploring the ways in which we understand identity, the human person, and society (Green 2008; Westfield 2008; Tatum 1997). In racial and ethnic studies, the embodied nature of identity organically emerges from the fact that these concepts involve value judgments about skin colors, hair textures, facial features, and body types beyond the simple fact of physical difference. Recent work in the social sciences no longer focuses on the essentialist enumeration of physical characteristics that belong to particular groups, but instead explores the ways that society inscribes social meaning and privileges on particular bodies. The social history of the United States can be narrated in terms of the ways interactions in public spaces in the United States manifest embedded value judgments about bodies, ordering them by gender, ethnoracial identity, and apparent socioeconomic position.¹ In this society, white bodies signify privilege and power, while black and brown bodies are figured as either expendable or threatening, or both.

The notion of privilege is one common theoretical concept that attempts to model how persons inhabit social spaces (Feagin 2006: 33–48; Tatum 1997: 7–9). Privilege mediates position in a hierarchical ordering of ethnoracial groups by characterizing access to social resources. These resources may be material resources like wealth, credit, property, and access to safe neighborhoods and schools; alternately, resources may be immaterial and less easy to quantify, such as assumed social status, access to beneficial social networks, employment opportunity, and the presumption of innocence in the legal justice system (McIntosh 1990: 32–35). Privilege is relative, varying by the complexities of multiple identity attachments, and context sensitive, varying by social location or setting. The relative privilege may be seen in the fact

that a black female college professor will enjoy the privileges of educational attainment, but that such privileges will be generally less visible than those accorded to her male colleagues from other ethnic groups (Westfield 2008). Nevertheless, context matters—if a black female professor’s privilege can be positively influenced by educational achievement in certain settings, a white male professor’s privilege may be diminished in some settings if, for instance, he publicly identifies as a homosexual. Though recipients of privilege are often unconscious of its influence, privilege confers advantages for both the pursuit of happiness and the cultivation of character; it not only smoothes the way for its beneficiaries, but it also confers a poise and self-possession that can function as intangible but nonetheless genuine social resources that confer competitive advantages on the bearers of privilege.

Complicating the concept of privilege is religious social location. Within the larger category of “Christian” in the U.S. scene, there is considerable ethnoracial diversity despite the disembodied, universalistic theorizing of Christian identity. Disembodied constructions of Christian identity appear in modern discourse about Christian theology, and are typically embedded in the idea that Christian identity and origins transcend ethnicity and race (Hodge 2007; Buell 2005; Sechrest 2009; Boyarin and Boyarin 1995). Such disembodied constructs of Christian identity that depict it as a nonethnic, universal group unmarked by particularity are aided by Enlightenment and modernist assumptions about the ideal objective observer, as well as the influence of body-soul dualism in the Western philosophical tradition (Douglas 2005: 3–103).² These constructions are not uncommon in New Testament studies, even those that self-consciously interrogate the intersection of identity theory and biblical studies (Cosgrove 2006; Duling 2008).³

Kelly Brown Douglas examines the interaction between racial identity and core Christian beliefs, finding among other things that the cross/crucifixion complex is a central element that has facilitated Christian oppression of the ethnic “other” inasmuch as it sanctions suffering. Indeed, Paul is sometimes mentioned as the locus of a problematic discourse about oppression that becomes racially loaded in the current context (Patterson 1998: 229–32). Douglas discusses the traditional reckoning of the crucifixion in the context of womanist thought, wherein some protest the idea of redemptive suffering as damaging for oppressed peoples, while others argue that traditional atonement categories have succored and nourished black Christians in the midst of historical oppression. Douglas steers a middle way, maintaining that when understood as a single indivisible construct, the incarnation and resurrection affirm the importance of human bodies while simultaneously participating

in God's self-revelation to humanity (Douglas 2005: 89–103). According to Douglas, the incarnation/resurrection complex affirms: (1) God's identification with human suffering in the context of oppression and unjust uses of power; (2) the incarnation as a declaration of the intrinsic dignity of human flesh as a witness to and medium of God's self-revelation; and (3) God's effective rejection of the ideal of redemptive suffering by the resurrection, inasmuch as it restores Jesus to embodied life. However, contrary to Douglas and others who maintain that there is an essential collusion between Pauline theology and hyper-Platonic thought, Paul himself espouses similar values in 2 Corinthians, especially with reference to the intrinsic dignity of human flesh as a conduit of God's power. Though Paul differs from Douglas on how suffering can be redemptive, 2 Corinthians does contain Paul's conviction that the promise of the resurrection stimulates active and fearless engagement with the world. Paul's bold Christian witness is grounded in privileges that emerge from reflections on his rich ethnoracial heritage on the one hand and his identification with the embodied suffering and resurrection of Jesus on the other. Far from denigrating the body, Paul's countercultural ministry affirms the essentially embodied nature of Christian life and witness in all its messiness.

PAUL'S ETHNIC IDENTITY AND PRIVILEGE (2 CORINTHIANS 3–4)

Paul's extended reflection on Christian ministry in 2 Cor. 2:14–6:10 is an argument that proceeds in four moves that together address the contrast at the center of the conflict in this epistle: How can authentic ministers fail to exhibit a glory that is comparable to the glory of God in Christ? In the first move, 2:14–3:6, Paul introduces the topic of sufficiency, maintaining that God is the basis for adequacy when ministry conveys life and death to its recipients. Drawing on Roman triumphal procession imagery, Paul depicts himself as God's captive who tangibly manifests knowledge of God to others; those who accept the gospel perceive the message and its messengers as a pleasing aroma leading to salvation, while knowledge of God is the odor of death and decay for those who reject it. In the second move of the argument, Paul contrasts his ministry with Moses' ministry, the most revered leader in Israel's past (3:7–4:6), and in the third section, he develops a pottery metaphor, where he contrasts God's glorious power with the fragile and common human conduit of that power (4:7–5:10). He characterizes his work as the ministry of reconciliation in the fourth and final move, in 5:11–6:10, ending it with a *peristasis*, or catalog of suffering, offered as proof of his authenticity. Although we are here concerned with the second and third sections of this discourse, the major issue throughout 2:14–6:10 concerns a tension that we can also find at the heart of problems in

race relations, and that is the clash between physical differences on the one hand and embodied social status and privilege on the other.

In 3:7–4:6, through a rereading Exod. 34:29–35, Paul introduces the new covenant ministry by contrasting the life-giving spirit with the “killing” letter, ultimately describing this as a contrast between Moses’ ministry and Paul’s via a series of antithetical terms.⁴ Post-Shoah interpreters are understandably uncomfortable with this initial comparison and with the series of negative images used for Moses’ work throughout this paragraph; including “ministry of death,” “ministry of condemnation,” as well as the possible references to the abolition of the old covenant (for example, 3:11, 14).⁵ A closer reading suggests that these images for the Mosaic ministry were likely chosen not as a realistic or informative description of that ministry for outsiders, but instead communicates to insiders the extent to which Paul’s own ministry surpasses Moses’.⁶ Paul’s description of Moses was intended for the consumption of insiders, and Paul seems to assume that his audience will agree with two propositions: first that Moses’ ministry was glorious, and second that it is valid to compare the righteousness and life in his own ministry with the condemnation and death in Moses’ (Thrall 1994: 1: 240). By contrast, when discussing the nature of the Mosaic law with outsiders in Romans 7, it is clear that he is addressing people whom he has never met; his description of the law is much more lengthy and nuanced since there he has to argue for his understanding. In the end, it is difficult to imagine a more vivid disparity than that between the description of the law as holy, just, and good in Rom. 7:12 and Moses’ killing ministry of death and condemnation through the letter in 2 Cor. 3:6–9. We can reconcile these different depictions by realizing that the former careful characterization represents his core beliefs, while the latter was an ad hoc straw man never intended as a standalone exposition, for use only with colleagues in the context of a comparison.

In other words, the Mosaic ministry ministers death only inasmuch as it vividly contrasts with the resurrection life mediated through the new covenant (see 2 Cor. 4:14) (Sanders 1983: 138). Paul’s esteem for the old covenant is evident in the way that he chooses to contrast “glory” with “more glory” rather than using a more negative term as a contrast to glory, such as “dishonor” (*atimia*; 1 Cor. 11:14–15; 15:43; 2 Cor. 6:8) or “humiliation” (*tapenōsis*; Phil. 3:21).⁷ When Paul describes the veil over the reading of the old covenant that is only removed in Christ in 3:14–17, his reasoning seems focused on the proper interpretation of the old covenant through the Spirit versus a focus on its destruction, a conclusion that makes sense of Paul’s habitual appeal to the Torah throughout the epistles. Indeed, when Paul does develop a foil to

contrast with the glory of the new covenant ministry, he will not look to the old covenant but will use his own person as an illustration. The glory of the new covenant contrasts with the humble earthen vessel, lacking in all honor, privilege, or inherent power (4:7). Thus, using a *qal vahomer*, from-lesser-to-greater, argument, Paul establishes the gloriousness of the new covenant ministry by comparing it to something that was for him both self-evident and beyond argument, that is, the intrinsic glory of the Mosaic ministry and covenant (cf. Rom. 7:12).⁸ Paul's purposes here are not so much to denigrate the regime of the Mosaic ministry but to establish the glory of new covenant ministry—despite Paul's own apparent lack of this quality—by showing that his ministry is more glorious than the most revered ministry in the central mythomoteur of the people of Israel. In Corinth, Paul's opponents would raise serious doubts about the authenticity of his leadership (10:1-5, 8-9; 11:20-23; 12:11-12) and person (5:12; 10:10), accusing him of poor oratory (10:10; 11:6), inconsistency (10:11; cf. 1:17), and financial fraud (11:7-9; 12:13-18; cf. 2:17; 4:2; 9:20). While we cannot know whether the charges in 2 Corinthians 10-12 had already been leveled, it seems probable that this section in 2 Corinthians 3 either responds to something similar or anticipates that such charges would soon be forthcoming.⁹

Yet one of the key messages in this section appears in the conclusion that Paul draws from his exegesis, in 2 Cor. 3:12, of Exod. 34:29-35. Here Paul infers that the upshot of the unveiled and more glorious nature of the new covenant ministry is a ministry characterized by greater boldness (*parresia*). Indeed, it seems likely that the boldness in Paul's conviction about the glorious new covenant ministry is closely akin to his confidence (*pepoithēsis*) in 3:4, which in context refers to the fact that God empowers ministry (Bultmann 1985: 75-76). Furthermore, Paul's confidence in God's empowerment and the boldness that accompanies his convictions about the surpassing glory of the new covenant ministry also issues in "freedom" (*eleutheria*; 3:17) (Bultmann 1985: 75-76; Furnish 1984: 237-38).¹⁰ Though "freedom" in Paul is normally associated with his thinking about the role of the law for those who are in Christ (for example, Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 4:4-5), the immediate context makes it more likely that he is using all of this language—confidence, freedom, and boldness—as a way of showing that his new covenant ministry is not only more glorious but also more powerful in its ability to overcome all kinds of obstacles. Moreover, the phrase "we do not lose heart" (*ouk enkakoumen*) in 4:1 and 4:16 simply expresses the same sentiment negatively, that the ministry of the new covenant in Christ will not be diminished by misunderstanding (4:1-4) or danger (4:16; 5:1).¹¹ Thus the main idea in this section and the next is that

the gloriousness of the ministry of the Spirit outshines the greatest ministry in all of Israel's history, the ministry of the Lawgiver himself, and this conviction produces in Paul great confidence and boldness for the task before him (Matera 2003: 66).

In light of this discussion of the main issues in 3:7—4:6, it is necessary to pause to reflect on our earlier discussion about the notion of privilege. It will not be too much of a stretch for us to see in Paul's confidence, courage, and boldness a network of sentiments that is analogous to the fearlessness and assuredness that undergirds the modern notion of privilege in critical race theory. Here we see Paul bolstered by the idea that God has empowered his new covenant ministry so that it transcends even the most glorious ministry in his proud ethnic heritage. Though opponents point to Paul's failure to personify then-current standards of conduct for leaders in Corinth, Paul measures himself against Moses, invoking a traditional standard of leadership that was apparently still unassailable within the local community.¹² Paul's argument about the glory of his new ministry in Christ works as a source of empowerment largely because he has confidence that he and his audience share assumptions about the glory of his ethnoracial heritage.

Read another way, however, one could argue that, far from seeking strength from his ethnic heritage, Paul has actually rejected it, inasmuch as many think that he proclaims the annulment of the old covenant in this passage (3:7, 11, 13, 14; *katargoumenēn*).¹³ This interpretation would not only be countercultural relative to his ancient context but would also conflict with many goals of contemporary identity theorists who seek to nurture most forms of ethnic sentiment as a way of resisting an oppressive assimilationist ideal. However, this kind of objection reduces ethnoracial identity to ancestry when identity is much more often complicated by multiple identity associations in which aspects of identity may be emphasized in one setting and subordinated in others. For many Jews of the period, ethnoracial identity included religious sentiment as a key element alongside the element of ancestry (Sechrest 2009). If Paul's religious sentiments have changed in that he now worships the God of Abraham through the new covenant, his focus on Moses affirms that he has nonetheless retained pride in his ancestry as a descendant of Abraham (see 2 Cor. 11:22). Paul does not reject his birth identity in this passage any more than he does in Phil. 3:3-6, a similar passage. In both contexts, Paul's *qal vahomer* reasoning depends on an exalted opinion of that heritage. Even more noteworthy is the fact that Paul's pride in the great example from his heritage is probably unconscious inasmuch as it is assumed rather than argued, as mentioned above. His focus is much more on the way God has empowered

the new ministry of the Spirit; he takes the gloriousness of his heritage for granted, and the effectiveness of the argument rests on this shared and implicit assumption. On the other hand, Paul's attitudes do contrast with modern notions of privilege from critical race theory in that they are divorced from specifically visible markers like skin color, even though privilege is associated with particular ethnoracial cultures in both contexts. Indeed, the next sections will show that Paul reverses expectations about visible external markers of status and privilege against then current expectations.

EMBODIED MINISTRY AND THE WEAKNESS OF ETHNORACIAL STIGMA (2 CORINTHIANS 4–5)

The Corinthian correspondence does more to establish the embodied nature of Christian identity than any other section of the Pauline corpus. Much of the scholarship on this passage concerns the relationship between 2 Cor. 5:1-10 and 1 Cor. 15:35-58 and explores the question of whether Paul's views about resurrection in 2 Corinthians have shifted since he wrote the earlier document.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the question of Paul's eschatology, this segment has important implications for contemporary race relations. In this section, we will explore the evidence about Paul's conception of embodied ministry in 2 Corinthians 4–5. Thereafter, we will connect Paul's understanding of embodiment with evidence about how the conflict in Corinth concerned rival perceptions about leadership qualities. In important ways, the opposition to Paul underlying this epistle is deeply concerned about Paul's public persona, and thus analogous to some modern identity dynamics.¹⁵

The focal image of 4:7–5:21 occurs in the opening verse, in the poignant description of the human body as an earthen vessel. Aune reports that this image was a common metaphor for the fragility of the human body in Greco-Roman antiquity, but the Old Testament background for this metaphor adds additional nuances—the human body is not only weak (Dan. 2:42) but also disposable (Lev. 6:28; 11:32; 15:12; cf. Isa. 30:14; Jer. 19:11), cheap (Lam. 4:2), and perhaps forgettable to boot (Ps. 31:12) (Aune 2001: 221; Thrall 1994: 322–25).¹⁶ Paul does not evoke this image in an effort to demean human existence, but, as shown in the purpose clause in 4:7, to make the point that the human person is the conduit for the extraordinary power of God. As Paul will make even clearer in 12:1-9, the fragility and weakness of the human body is a prerequisite for the demonstration of divine power through it (Savage 1996: 166–67). The catalog of suffering in 4:8-9 shows that God's power is evident even in the midst of ostensible defeat—the minister experiences all kinds of affliction but is not

crushed; she is neither perplexed nor forsaken; while struck down, she is not ultimately destroyed. Thus Pauline theology dignifies the fragility and weakness of the human body as an agent for the demonstration of divine power through ministry.

Not only does Paul link the frailty of the human body to divine power, but he goes on to link suffering in the context of Christian life and ministry with the suffering of Jesus. In 4:7–15, Paul several times refers to “Jesus” without adding “Christ,” in a departure from his customary practice (4:5, 10, 11, and twice in v. 14; cf. 11:4).¹⁷ This does not suggest, however, that Paul “separates” the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith or any similar bifurcation.¹⁸ Indeed, Paul refers to the “Lord Jesus” in verse 14 in the midst of this particular discourse, an appellation that obviously affirms Jesus’ exalted status and nature (cf. 4:5) (Lambrecht 1994: 313–14). By and large, however, interpreters do not make sense of the heavy concentration of this unusual usage in 4:5–15 beyond their insistence on what Paul does not mean.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Paul does make occasional references to “Jesus” without the much more common addition of “Christ” in texts where he is more interested in his person rather than status: Rom. 3:26; 8:11; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 2:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14.²⁰ Paul also emphasizes Jesus’ person over his status in 4:10, where the phrase “the death of Jesus” (literally, *nekrosis*) emphasizes the entire network of events that led to Jesus’ earthly death (Bauer 2000: 668). When Paul speaks of bearing this death process in order to manifest Jesus’ life, he speaks of living a life that continues Jesus’ own earthly ministry, one that is *oriented to achieve life-giving results for the benefit of others* (4:11–12, 15–16; cf. 1:6). In other words, Paul’s ministry participates in the life and death of Jesus inasmuch as a life spent for others is the way of Jesus (Matera 2003: 110–12; Georgi 1986: 296). The overall message in this section is that Paul’s ministry embodies Jesus’ ministry; his body, like Jesus’, is a concrete conduit for the expression of God’s power in human society.²¹

Second Corinthians 4:16–5:10 is also a premier vehicle for Paul’s dialectical eschatology, showcasing his convictions about the way a future hope impinges on present existence. The main idea in this passage is that Paul’s eschatological hope of renewal provides the assurance that he can minister in confidence, notwithstanding the suffering that threatens the integrity of his physical body (4:16). As mentioned above, much of the discussion about this passage focuses on whether his views about the resurrection of the body have shifted since the writing of 1 Corinthians 15. That debate seems to spin on two axes, the first concerning whether 5:3 refers to a disembodied intermediate state, and the second surrounding the use of metaphorical language throughout the section, which may or may not refer to bodies.

Paul's eschatology in his earlier discourse in 1 Corinthians 15 is clear: First, the Christian hope is oriented toward the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:12-34). Second, though different, there is nonetheless continuity between the earthly body and the resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:35-50, 53-54). Third, 1 Corinthians 15 maintains that the transformation from earthly to heavenly takes place at the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Though some scholars think Paul's views have changed in some degree between the time he wrote 1 Cor. 15:35-57 and 2 Cor. 5:1-5, there are many similarities between these passages.²² Paul contrasts the earthly and the heavenly in both texts (1 Cor. 15:49 vs. 2 Cor. 5:1-2). Similarly, he contrasts the perishable/imperishable on the one hand (1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 52-53) and the eternal/temporal on the other (2 Cor. 4:16-5:1). Mortality (*to thnēton*) puts on immortality in 1 Cor. 15:53-54, and mortality (*to thnēton*) is swallowed by life in 2 Cor. 5:4. He also uses clothing metaphors similarly in these texts: referring to "putting on" (*endysasthai*) imperishability and immortality in 1 Cor. 15:53, and using a similar metaphor, "clothed" (*ependysasthai*) with the heavenly in 2 Cor. 5:2, 4. In 1 Cor. 15:54, death is "swallowed up" (*katapothē*) by victory, and in 2 Cor. 5:4 mortality is "swallowed up" (*katapothē*) by life. On the one hand, Paul says that the Spirit characterizes resurrection life (1 Cor. 15:44-46), and on the other he depicts the Spirit as a down payment for being swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:5). Indeed, one scholar plausibly suggests that the much-debated "we know" formula in 2 Cor. 5:1 actually represents a deliberate allusion to the earlier discourse in 1 Corinthians 15 (Green 2008: 177). It seems unlikely that Paul would have significantly changed his views in 2 Cor. 5:1-5 without a more explicit signal of the change, especially given the prominence of the discourse in 1 Corinthians 15 and the significant similarities between it and 2 Cor. 5:1-5, in what is another communication to the same audience (Matera 2003: 170).

But what of the differences between the texts—do those imply that Paul changed his views? The most significant differences are those mentioned earlier, regarding the metaphorical language in 2 Cor. 5:1-5 and the specific interpretation of 5:3. While Paul uses the word "body" (*sōma*) eight times in 1 Corinthians 15 (vv. 35, 37-38, 40, 44), he does not use the word at all in 2 Cor. 5:1-5. Most agree, however, that the earthly tent (5:1; cf. 5:4) is a metaphor for the human body that reflects the same focus on fragility as the earthen vessel of 4:7.²³ Despite this consensus, opinion is divided about whether the building from God (5:1b) or the heavenly dwelling (5:4) likewise refer to the bodies of individual believers or instead to a corporate dwelling, perhaps during an intermediate state.²⁴ Yet these interpreters miss the import of the thrice-reiterated comparison that forms the backdrop for this imagery in 4:16-5:5,

that of the contrast between the temporary and the permanent: momentary versus eternal (4:17); temporary versus eternal (4:18); an earthly house that is a tent (5:1; 5:4) versus an eternal heavenly building that is a dwelling (5:1b-2).²⁵

That tent, building, dwelling, and all of the clothing metaphors in this passage symbolize bodies is reinforced in the parallel structures in 5:2-4, which vividly recall the earlier discourse in 1 Cor. 15:35-43 (Matera 2003: 121):

(2a) in this [tent] we <i>groan longing</i>	(A)
(2b) to be <i>clothed over with a dwelling</i>	(B)
(3a) <i>If clothed</i> ²⁶	(C)
(3b) then we will not be naked	(D)
(4a) in this tent we <i>groan burdened</i>	(A')
(4b) because we do <i>not</i> want to be <i>unclothed</i>	(B')
(4c) <i>but clothed over</i>	(C')
(4d) that mortality might be swallowed by life	(D')

Given Paul's earlier use of clothing metaphors and virtually identical sentiments in 1 Cor. 15:54d and 2 Cor. 5:4d, here we see that "nakedness" is not a reference to a corporate existence or possible intermediate state, as maintained by some,²⁷ but is a synonym for a death in which the believer's mortality has not been swallowed by life (see D-D'). This passage is another way of saying that the believer never has to worry about the shame of a disembodied state, even if the present home in the body is destroyed by death (Harris 1974: 384-89).²⁸ Indeed, far from longing for a Neoplatonic liberation of the mind from the prison of the body at death, Paul describes an abhorrence for a disembodied existence, instead groaning not to take off one body for another, but to be further embodied (*ependysasthai*; 5:4c), a sentiment that he elsewhere describes as a groaning for the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

Thus in 4:7-5:10, Paul emphasizes the embodied nature of Christian life and ministry in three ways. First, he dignifies human somatic fragility as the preferred agency of divine power through the focal image of the earthen vessel. Second, he connects human suffering for the sake of others with the earthly suffering of Jesus as a way of manifesting Jesus' continuing ministry. Finally, he insists on the embodied nature of human life in this age and in the next. Indeed, these three elements are foundational for his argument that an apparently weak or ignoble body can manifest the glory of God and participation in Christ; the promise of a resurrection body liberates the minister from concern with the fragility of human existence to operate in a new boldness that goes beyond the great heroes of the past.

Thus the modern penchant for a Christian life that prioritizes the soul at the expense or neglect of the body is anti-Pauline, as are the associated implications for contemporary Christian ministry. It is more than wrong-headed to allow an erroneous body-soul dualism to require ministry to become segregated into relative concerns for “spiritual” evangelism versus “material” social justice, as some would have it (Green 2008: 70). Moreover, a desire for “colorblindness,” that is, a goodly and pseudo-godly attempt to disregard racial difference as immaterial and perhaps even unseemly—a view rampant in Christian circles—is equally misguided. The imprudent think that a colorblind approach to encountering racial difference is godly in that it assumes difference is a flaw that generous people should overlook. It is interesting that this approach is not only politically untenable, in that it implicitly normalizes one kind of racial difference while marginalizing all others, but theologically untenable as well. What some Christians deem a handicap, Paul emphasizes as a means of participating in the work of Jesus inasmuch as racial stigmas metaphorically and literally weaken racialized bodies through social forces. In other words, colorblindness inhibits God’s way of working in the world. This approach disregards the way that bodies are connected with identities and, according to the texts we have considered, sunder the connection with Christian ministry in its embodiment of Christ’s suffering and glorification. From Paul’s perspective, attempts to transcend the nature of earthen vessels run counter to the way of Jesus, and become attempts to subvert the power of God at work in the world, inasmuch as God uses the weak to shame the wise. That is, bodies weakened by racial and ethnic stigmas nevertheless prevail through the power of God in ministry, in ways that belie their lack of privilege.

As mentioned above, Douglas and other womanists rightly raise the concern that an emphasis on participation in the suffering of Jesus as we see here in Paul can be dangerous theology for those already occupying a demeaned position. An emphasis on suffering can be heard among those experiencing oppression as a demand to endure the evils inflicted by an unjust society, which can then have the additional negative effect of reinscribing internalized racism.²⁹ Yet it is important to note that Paul does not endorse all suffering, nor does he advocate that Christians should seek out suffering. Instead, Paul speaks of a suffering that is endured inasmuch as it is concomitant with service on behalf of others (Lambrecht 1994: 328). The suffering that he speaks of here is that which comes as a consequence of the Christian’s fearless engagement with the world, as she flings her body into the conflict between good and evil with abandon, confident that if she loses one body, she gains something more glorious (4:16–5:10). Paul’s ethic is on full display in the freedom fighters’

practice of nonviolent direct engagement in the Jim Crow South, and is not the idealization of some ascetic ideal that pressures broken peoples to mute their resistance to oppression. Paul emphasizes suffering that is endured—not embraced—as part of the cost of following the way of Jesus in ministering life to others (4:11–12, 15–16; cf. 1:6). Wielding the weapons of righteousness as an agent of righteousness (5:20–21; 6:4), Paul’s ministry is bold and public (3:12, 17), fearless in the face of death (5:1–5), and wholly devoted to promoting the life and well-being of those for whom Jesus has died. When it comes to encounters with the other, below we shall see that Paul’s ministry philosophy is one that regards every minister and every person through a lens that penetrates stigmatized appearances.

PAUL’S LACK OF PRIVILEGE AND THE CRISIS IN CORINTH
(2 COR. 5:12–17; 11:1–12:10)

Though there is considerable debate about the identity of Paul’s opposition underlying 2 Corinthians, there is broad agreement that these critics challenge Paul’s leadership as an apostle and servant of Christ. In reviewing the specifics of the dispute, we will find that their charges are similar to race rhetoric in modern society. The opponents’ accusations about Paul’s leadership deficiencies are analogous in some ways to modern-day racist dialogue that inhibits the full participation of ethnoracial minorities in U.S. society.

The extended reflection on ministry in 2:14–6:10 seems to be an oblique answer to questions about the character of Paul’s ministry and person, questions that emerge more forcefully and directly in 10:1–13:10. When Paul describes the life-and-death consequences of Christian ministry using the olfactory metaphors of aroma and fragrance, asking, “Who is sufficient?” for such a ministry (2:16), it is clear that the question of adequacy is at the heart of the opposition. Indeed, comments about letters of recommendations in 3:1–4 separate the question about adequacy in 2:16 from its response in 3:5 and following—a telling parenthesis that suggests that one of the criteria for leadership in the eyes of the opponents was evidence of support from recognized authorities (cf. 4:5; 10:2–18; 11:4). In other words, Paul faced challenges about his legitimacy with respect to a perceived lack of endorsement from key contacts. Yet we will see that in Corinth the issue of adequacy went well beyond the mere question of contacts, also encompassing the leader’s total public persona, including his appearance, pedigree, finances, and public actions.

Paul may hint at some of the opposition to him again in 5:12, where he refers to those who boast *en prosōpō*—usually translated “boast in appearance” (Sumney 1990: 129).³⁰ Because 10:10 does indicate that his opponents malign

Paul's appearance, many interpret 5:12 similarly, an interpretation that seems strengthened by Paul's tacit admission about his own unassuming appearance in 4:7. Yet the immediate context of 5:12 suggests another possibility. Verse 13 very likely implies that some in Corinth having been boasting in appearances associated with charismatic displays. Instead, Paul says that the believers could boast in the fact that he continues the mission of Christ through self-sacrificial actions for the benefit of others (5:14-15), rather than boasting about ecstatic behavior (13; cf. 1 Cor. 14:18-19). Paul affirms that the love of Christ constrains him from offering ecstatic displays as evidence of his legitimacy when these displays do not benefit the community. Thus the opponents' boasts may indeed concern physical appearances, as some interpret 5:12, but the seamless way that Paul elaborates on the phrase "boasting in appearances" in 5:13-15 suggests that this boasting may go beyond appearances to include certain kinds of actions as well.

Several interpreters remark on the way that "knowing (or recognizing) according to the flesh" in 2 Cor. 5:16 is parallel to "boasting in appearances" in 5:12, and see in this parallelism support for the idea that these phrases refer only to appearances (O'Neill 1987: 104; Georgi 1986: 252-53).³¹ However, beyond the connections between 5:12 and 5:13-15 as discussed above, the alternation in verbs of knowing in 5:16 may also support my hypothesis that "appearance" (*en prosōpō*) and "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*) encompass more than simple physical exteriors. When Paul uses "recognize" in 5:16a (NAS; *oidamen*) and forms of "know" in the rest of verse 16 (NAS; *ginōskō*), he is using these two lexemes as synonyms for the idea of "knowing about": "Therefore, from now on we recognize [*oidamen*] no one according to the flesh; even though we have known [*egnōkamen*] Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [*ginōskomen*] him thus no longer."

However, the alternation in these lexemes goes beyond simple stylistic variation; the tense forms of the words for "know" in these verses communicate differences in verbal aspect.³² In the New Testament, the Greek word for "recognize" (*oida*; usually translated "know") was well on the way to being a frozen form and was thus not useful for communicating the author's perspective on the action.³³ When he uses a different word to speak of "knowing [*egnōkamen*] Christ according to the flesh" using the perfect tense, he emphasizes the complexity of the "knowing" and the stative aspect. When he says, "now we know [*ginōskomen*] him no longer in that way" with the present tense, he denies that this kind of knowledge constitutes a meaningful way of a continuing participation in Christ by using the imperfective aspect. If Paul is stressing the author's perspective on the action in this verse, then

5:16b does not at all refer to a previous encounter with the historical Jesus, as some maintain, but, as we will see, to a complex state of “knowing” that goes beyond a simple engagement with the flesh or its physical appearance.³⁴ It is as if Paul acknowledges that a narrative about Christ that focuses on outward appearances would produce a thoroughly unattractive judgment. If someone assesses Christ’s life and status using some set of “fleshly” criteria that evaluates Christ’s own earthen vessel, humble ministry, and ignoble death as contemptible, Paul maintains that Christ’s resurrection nullifies these standards and inaugurates a wholly fresh way of engaging others in the new age.³⁵ If, according to Paul, Christians must eschew judging by fleshly superficialities even in the case of Christ’s glorious status as Messiah, then it is surely appropriate to reject this kind of criteria in all lesser cases as well. Thus 5:16 indicates that in Christ, ministers have new lenses, lenses that nullify appearance and fleshly criteria as considerations that communicate the truth about persons, whether in evaluating Jesus, the minister himself, or any other person.

Paul’s other uses of *kata sarka*, and especially the uses in 2 Corinthians, can help us discern the nature of the complexities associated with “knowing *kata sarka*.” Paul’s earliest uses of *kata sarka* may occur in Gal. 4:23, 29, where it refers to physical descent in general and a biological means of producing converts to the gospel in particular (Martyr 1997: 451–54). In that passage, the phrase stands in contrast to *kata pneuma*, which is Paul’s preferred means of incorporating people into the gospel community. Uses of the phrase in other epistles are compatible with this meaning (Rom. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3; 1 Cor. 10:18),³⁶ but there is evidence in 2 Corinthians that Paul is responding to his opponents’ usage.³⁷ In 2 Cor. 1:17, Paul seems to be responding to a charge that he is weak-minded, indecisive, or overly obsequious, and in 10:1–2 we see that this charge has explicitly originated from opponents (“I reckon to be bold against those who think that we are walking according to the flesh”).³⁸ Though *kata sarka* is still ambiguous in 10:2, it seems that the phrase refers to public behavior that lacks strength of purpose and cravenly caters to public opinion. That is, though Paul aligned his demeanor with Christ’s in 10:2 in rebuttal, the preceding verse reveals that he has been accused of weakness and inconsistent behavior in a way that is somewhat reminiscent of 1:17.

Paul’s use of the phrase in 2 Cor. 11:18 is much more illuminating for our study of what is involved in “knowing *kata sarka*,” especially since the use of *kata sarka* in this verse is most similar syntactically to the usage in 5:16.³⁹ Here the phrase occurs at the end of the prologue to the fool’s boast in 11:1–21. The fool’s boast itself begins in 11:22 and runs through 12:10 and is a discourse in which Paul depicts himself as forced to engage in the same kind of foolish

boasting and self-commendation that his opponents undertake (11:1, 16, and 21). Even though Paul responds to the boasting of his opponents, he ultimately refuses to boast in kind, deftly using irony to boast in a way consistent with his theological convictions about ministry. What is revealing for our purposes is the fact that Paul names this kind of discourse “boasting according to the flesh.” Thus we can expect that when Paul engages in his own boasts, however ironic the *contents* of the boasts, the *topical scope* of the boasts in the discourse will shed light on whether and how *kata sarka* goes beyond mere physical appearance to include a complex set of behaviors and demeanors as we have surmised above.

We see that when Paul boasts according to the flesh as a rebuttal to his opponents, he uses categories that suggest at least three standards of evaluation involved in assessing the legitimacy of his apostleship. First, *kata sarka* boasting includes boasting in a privileged ethnic heritage (11:22; cf. Phil. 3:3-9) (Duling 2008: 831). By way of establishing his equivalence with the “super-apostles,” Paul boasts that he, too, shares language, ancestry, and nationality with them.⁴⁰ While we can only speculate about whether the opponents emphasize their service to and identity in Christ over their privileged heritage, there can be no doubt of Paul’s emphasis both here and in 3:7-18. Nevertheless, the fact that Paul makes mention of these ethnic terms suggests that boasting *kata sarka* encompasses consideration of ethnoracial heritage. Second, *kata sarka* boasting includes boasting about status—here the status of being a servant of Christ. The evidence suggests that the opponents have relied in part on recommendations from outside of the community to substantiate their status as servants of Christ as well as their own self-boasting (3:1; 10:12, 18; cf. 4:2; 5:12; 6:4). Paul, however, focuses attention on the breadth, depth, and intensity of his service to Christ to speak for the legitimacy of his leadership (11:23-27). His half-hearted boast about charismatic visions in 12:1-9 (cf. 5:13) hints that the opponents have additionally relied on charismatic displays to substantiate their claims to leadership status.⁴¹ Taken together, Paul’s boasts about suffering and weaknesses in 11:23–12:9 may be intended as ironic contrasts to the opponents’ boasts about a set of activities that they think substantiates their claims about being a servant of Christ. Third, boasting or walking *kata sarka* involves bearing a forceful public demeanor that contrasts with Paul’s personal humility (11:30-33; cf. 10:1-2, 10; 11:20-21; 13:2-3). The comparatively numerous references to Paul’s weak public persona expose this as one of the major areas of contention between Paul and the opponents. In addition, it is likely that mention of Paul’s unprepossessing physical appearance and lack of eloquence also contribute to this motif (4:7-9; 5:12; 10:10; 11:6). Where opponents apparently boast in their superiority to believers in Corinth, Paul

deliberately draws attention to his own weakness, among other things recounting his furtive escape from the king of Damascus (11:30–33; 12:1–9; cf. 4:7). Indeed, some in Corinth may have interpreted Paul’s practice of foregoing the patronage of the Corinthians in light of legitimacy, as if the rejection of this financial support were interpreted as an admission by Paul that he had no right to support as an apostle (2:17; 11:7–11; cf. 1 Cor. 9:3–14) (Sumney 1990: 164).

Thus the uses of *kata sarka* in 2 Corinthians indicate that the term includes a broad array of social value judgments, including ethnoracial identity, social status, contacts, and a particular kind of forceful public behavior. When Paul’s opponents contested his sufficiency for leadership, they were challenging him on his demeanor as a leader, including assessments of his pedigree, social contacts, actions (i.e., miracles, ecstatic utterances, etc.), and his ability to project strength in his speech and presence. In 5:16–17, then, knowing *kata sarka* likely encompasses a similar complex network of elements. In the context of the leadership crisis at Corinth, it is clear that some group or contingent in Corinth thought that Paul failed to measure up to their image of what leaders or ministers personify. Instead of someone with gravitas and social standing, exhibiting powerful deeds and all of the accoutrements of glory and wealth, they got Paul, a “broke-down” pastor, who publicly gloried in sharing the fate of a crucified Lord.

The opponents’ *kata sarka* standards are analogous to judgments made in the context of contemporary race discourse. Modern identity politics involves embodied social constructs and the nexus of heritage, personality, physical appearance, and social connections, and we have seen that these same elements were in contention in Paul’s defense of his ministerial identity in Corinth. Our consideration of the *kata sarka* standards operating there suggests that Paul’s opponents had concepts of identity that were animated by forces not too dissimilar from modern identity dynamics. The opponents boasted in a privileged ethnic heritage and an elevated social status as servants of Christ. Ancient status privilege manifested itself in charismatic deeds, acceptance of financial support, letters of recommendation, and a boastful demeanor, behaviors that Paul considered inconsistent with his ministry of identification and participation in Christ’s other-focused ministry. In Corinth, the opponents malign Paul’s physical appearance and public demeanor as one who does not meet the then-current expectations associated with high status. Today, minorities often face obstacles in public life because they, too, fail to “look or act the part” due to negative stereotypes about people of color and cultural behavioral norms and status that are keyed to whiteness.

Paul's situation also exhibits the way that privilege is relative: though he shares a privileged heritage with his opponents, by refusing support and practicing manual labor, he incurs condemnation and inhabits a lower social status (11:7-9; 1 Cor 4:12; cf. Acts 18:3) (Sumney 1990: 165). The discourse on Moses in 2 Cor. 3:7-18 also illustrates the way that privileged persons have the luxury of temporarily forgoing their privilege. In a society that revered antiquity, Paul is able to point to an ancient and glorious ancestor, but he is secure enough in his own status that he is able to relativize the esteem accorded to that figure. Yet, when the situation has degraded to the point that he felt forced to address the charges against him, he makes an explicit appeal to his ethnic heritage, even though he recognizes as he does so that the boast is the height of foolishness (11:21-22). Taken together, it may be that Paul recognizes the power of his proud heritage but takes it up only in service of the greater good (cf. Phil 3:4-8).

This does not imply that when Paul rejects knowing Jesus *kata sarka* in 5:16-17, he is undermining Jesus' Jewish heritage; Paul is clear on the point that Jesus' Jewishness demonstrates God's faithfulness to Israel (Rom. 9:5; cf. 1:4). Rather, from Paul's perspective, both he and Jesus inhabited privileged identities, but their confidence in God enables them to eschew these social privileges to become effective conduits of divine power. As a coda to a section that began by exploring the paradoxical juxtaposition of weak human vessels with the manifest power of God, in these verses, Paul not only grants that even the most privileged identities will reject privilege in the new age, but he also makes this humility *normative*.

CONCLUSION

The overall arc of Paul's personal narrative is a fascinating study when examined with an interest in racial differences and the hierarchical ordering of privilege. We have only to consider the remarkable nature of how Paul moved from stylized attitudes about Greeks, gentile sinners, barbarians, and others then prevalent among Jews (Rom. 1:18-32; Gal. 2:15; Col. 3:11), to becoming a "slave" of such people through his missionary endeavors. Paul went from being "blameless" with respect to the law as a Pharisee who outstripped his colleagues in zeal for the traditions (Phil. 3:4-6; Gal. 1:14), to being a broke-down preacher in Corinth who needed to remind people that he shared that proud ethnic heritage. In reflections on ministry in Corinth in 2 Cor. 2:14-6:10 that were perhaps designed to preempt the growing opposition to him that emerges directly in 2 Corinthians 10-12, Paul defends his identity as a leader

who can be compared favorably with Moses, as one who is bolder and more confident in his ability to speak as an ambassador for God. Yet even there, this breathtakingly audacious claim is juxtaposed with an acknowledgment of his likeness to a common, humble, disposable, and fragile piece of clay pottery. Even later in 2 Corinthians 10–12 when the defense of his ministry is more direct and full throated, he continues to identify as a fool for Christ, one of the weak and despised of the age, while still maintaining that his authority and standing are equal to any others to whom he has been compared (10:6; 11:5–6; 12–14).

It would be tempting to divide the message of 2 Corinthians into one exhortation to the majority race in the United States and another one to minority groups. One could exhort privileged groups to imitate the way Paul embraced weakness as a prerequisite for authentic, other-focused ministry, reminding them that the way of Jesus is the way that endures for the sake of others. Similarly, one could exhort the oppressed to mimic Paul's boldness and confidence in their confrontation of the evils of racial and ethnic injustice. Yet it is more interesting to note that both of these behaviors resided in the same servant of Christ. In 2 Corinthians, Paul describes his countercultural ministry with a combination of subtlety and boldness, shifts that probably reflect changing circumstances or movement in the nature of his opposition. It may be that the best adaptation of his ethics for race relations in the United States is one that sees privilege and humility as two sides of the same coin, both deployed for the sake of and in service to the ethnic other.

Notes

1. Throughout, I use the term *ethnoracial* to indicate the difficulty in differentiating “ethnicity” and “race,” both in modern discourse and in ancient discourse. For more on this topic, see Buell 2001: 450; 2004: 236.

2. For more on body-soul dual in Christian theology, see Green (2008: 1–71). The negative effects of a disembodied dualism in Christian thought is aptly captured in Green's comment on this philosophical tradition: “Angst among Christians in recent decades over how to prioritize ministries of ‘evangelism’ and ‘social witness’ is simply wrong-headed . . . since the gospel . . . cannot but concern itself with *human need in all of its aspects*. Only an erroneous body-soul dualism could allow—indeed require—‘ministry’ to become segregated by its relative concern for ‘spiritual’ vs. ‘material’ matters (Green 2008: 70).

3. For examples of studies that deliberately challenge this common construction of Christianity, see Hodge 2007 and Sechrest 2009.

4. Though 2:14–6:10 is ostensibly a defense of apostolic ministry in general and Paul's ministry in particular as corroborated by his more direct comments in 2 Corinthians 10–13, there are several indications that the comments throughout apply to Christian life broadly. J. Lambrecht points out that 2 Cor. 1:3–11 uses much the same language as 4:7–15: Paul suffers and shares in Christ's suffering, suffers for the sake of Corinthians, and sees God deliverance of him from death.

See Lambrecht 1994: 331–32). Further, 2 Cor. 1:6–7 explicitly maintains that the Corinthians endure the same kind of suffering as Paul does (that is, the sufferings of Christ; 1:5). Further, the opposition of “we” and “you” in 4:7–15 disappears in the next section, indicating a broadening of the concern to all Christians. The “we all” in 5:10 is explicit and probably applies back to 4:16–18 (331).

5. While interpreters frequently debate whether 3:11 refers to the fading or the abolition of the old covenant, Georgi’s exegesis helpfully points out that the contrast here is a contrast between two *ministries* rather than two covenants. See Georgi 1986: 229–56.

6. This is perhaps more evidence for Paul’s “solution to plight” thinking, a phrase popularized in Sanders 1983; cf. Thielman 1989.

7. Note also how Paul uses a participle when referring the passing glory of Moses’ face (3:7, 13; cf. 1 Cor. 1:26 NAS) and the fading glory of the old covenant (3:14), but that he uses the finite verb when referring to the removal of the veil over the old covenant (3.13; cf. 1 Cor. 6:13; 13:8, 10; 15:24, 26 NAS). The NAS translators capture the distinction between the participial and finite forms of *katargeō* well by translating the participle with the less negative “fade” in 3:7, 11, 13 but the verb with “removed” in 3:14, a distinction they preserve in the only other appearance of *katargeō* in a participial form in Paul, where the milder translation “fade” also suits the context (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13).

8. On Paul’s *qal vahomer* argument see Thrall 1994: 239–40; Harris 2005: 279–90; cf. Ben Witherington (1995: 380), who also notes how this argument of the lesser to the greater appears in Greco-Roman discourse.

9. The temporal relationship between 2 Cor. 1–9 and 10–13 is connected to an interpreter’s assessment about the literary integrity of 2 Corinthians. For more on this issue, see the discussions in the following: Furnish 1984: 30–48; Barrett 1973: 11–21; Georgi 1986: 9–18; and Thrall 1994: 3–61. For more discussion about the identity of Paul’s opponents, see the good overview in R. Bieringer 1994: 181–221; and the two frequently cited monographs by Georgi (1986) and Sumney (1990).

10. Barrett (1973: 122–23) relates freedom in this verse to the law.

11. *Tharrountes* (“be of good courage”) in 5:6, 8 functions similarly as a synonym for confidence, freedom, and boldness.

12. See Savage (1996: 54–99) for a discussion of personal characteristics valued in status-conscious first-century Corinth.

13. So many interpreters: Thrall 1994: 248; Witherington 1995: 279–380; Furnish 1984: 203; Barrett 1973: 116; cf. Harris 2005: 290–91.

14. 2 Cor. 5:1–10 has elicited more comment that just about any other passage in 2 Corinthians. One set of questions focuses on the extent to which Paul adopts or rejects Platonic dualism or other Greco-Roman philosophical categories: see Heckel 1993; 2000: 117–31; Aune 2001; Green 2008: 170–78; Betz 2000: 315–41; Glasson 1990: 145–55. For articles on the relationship of this passage to Paul’s discussion of resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:35–58, see Benoit 1970: 107; Gillman 1988: 439–54; Harris 1974: 317–28; Hettinger 1957: 174–94; Ellis 1960: 211–24; Perriman 1989: 512–21.

15. Georgi: “From the beginning of chapter 10 on, the argument is over how to appear in public” (Georgi 1986: 33).

16. Furnish also mentions the connection of the earthen vessel imagery to the Old Testament metaphor of God as the divine potter and creator of humanity. See Furnish 1984: 253; Harris 1974: 340; Matera 2003: 108.

17. The manuscript evidence is widespread and diverse for both the omission of *kyrion* (“lord”) and its inclusion in 4:14, though with Metzger, I favor the longer reading. See Metzger 1994: 510–11. While the committee maintains that the shorter reading is assimilation to Rom. 8:11, I would point to the fact that the inclusion of *kyrion* is the *lectio difficilior* in 4:7–15, where every other occurrence of *Iēsou* (“Jesus”) occurs without a title.

18. For a good summary of the scholarly literature on the question, see Fraser 1971: 293–97.

19. See, e.g., Fraser, who after noting the heavy incidence of this usage in 2 Corinthians, merely correlates the usage with Paul's references to *Christos* (as opposed to *ho Christos*), insisting that both usages refer holistically to Jesus' earthly ministry, passion, resurrection, and postresurrection work (Fraser 1971: 299). The exception to this might be Georgi, who reads the usage in light of his hypothesis about allegorizing Hellenistic Jewish missionaries (Georgi 1986: 271–77); cf. Sumney's critique of Georgi's methodology in Sumney 1990: 49–55.

20. Georgi notes that all of these references occur in proximity to traditional pre-Pauline material except in 2 Corinthians, concluding that this is an indication that this usage is intimately connected to the situation in Corinth vis-à-vis his opponents (Georgi 1986: 272).

21. According to Georgi (1986: 274), in 4:7–16, Paul says that the significance of the preacher is tied to the earthly Jesus inasmuch as the minister bears Jesus' body in theirs and manifests a continuation of his suffering and death.

22. See Craig Keener's list of these similarities (Keener 2005: 179).

23. Matera mentions the "broad agreement" on this point (Matera 2003: 120); see also Thrall 1994: 362, 367–71; Harris 1974: 370; Aune 2001: 224.

24. See Thrall for a comprehensive discussion of the interpretive options in this section, beginning with the possible interpretations of the "dwelling from God": the resurrection body; an intermediate state; a present "spiritual garment"; the resurrected body of Christ; a heavenly temple (Thrall 1994: 363–68). Thrall herself, in agreement with "older scholarship," opts to understand the reference to the believer's resurrection body, which is available at the moment of death (367–78); cf. Furnish, who sees a reference to existence in a future eschatological age (Furnish 1984: 294–95), and Harris, who interprets the section with reference to Paul's desire to avoid a disembodied intermediate state (Harris 1974: 317–28).

25. Note that the difference between the permanent and temporary is also an important issue in Paul's interpretation of how the new covenant differs from the old (3:7–18).

26. There is much stronger manuscript support for *endysamenoī* (P⁴⁶, a, B, C, D², Y, etc.; see NAS translation) than for *ekdysamenoī* (D*) in 5:3 (see NRSV translation).

27. For example, Aune 2001; Furnish 1984: 292–99, who interprets the heavenly dwelling of 5:1 as a corporate reference to the eschatological age vs. a reference to individualistic concerns about embodiment.

28. For an exploration of the association of "shame" with nakedness in Jewish literature, see Green 2008: 385–86.

29. For a definition of internalized racism, see Jones (1997).

30. Literally, "boast in the face."

31. Also note that there may be a similar parallelism between *kata sarka* in 10:3 and *kata prosōpon* in 10:7, as is seen here in 5:12 and 5:16. On the question about understanding the syntax of "knowing according to the flesh" (*oidamen kata sarka*) in 5:16, many think that the evidence slightly favors an adverbial construal of *kata sarka* (see Thrall 1994: 418; Fraser 1971: 298). However, it is not inconceivable that Paul is intentionally ambiguous here. If Paul normally places *kata sarka* after a noun when using it adjectivally (e.g., Rom. 1:3) and before the verb when using it adverbially (for example, 2 Cor. 1:17), he could not have been more ambiguous than he was in 5:16, where it appears *before* the noun and *after* the verb (*egnōkamen kata sarka Christon*; cf. 2 Cor. 10:18). Thus it is possible that both senses are alluded to here, and we cannot rule out the idea that *kata sarka* includes the notion of physical descent (normally associated with an adjectival understanding of the phrase) alongside an adverbial interpretation that speaks of a fleshly way of knowing or perceiving. See the discussion below on *kata sarka* in 2 Cor. 11:22; 12:10.

32. For a full discussion of the history of scholarship on the question of 2 Cor. 5:16 and the question of Paul's knowledge of the historical Jesus, see Fraser 1971: 293–313.

33. The author's perspective on the action communicates "verbal aspect." Paul himself uses the perfect tense form for *oida* 58 times and the pluperfect only once, usage that suggests that this word is aspectually vague since authors could not choose from among multiple viable tense forms for this lexeme. Usage in the rest of the New Testament supports this idea since the word appears

in only two tenses: 228 times in the perfect and 31 times in the pluperfect. That Paul uses two forms of “know” in 5:16, *oida* and *ginōskō*, the latter of which appears in tense forms that were not available for the word *oida*, may indicate that Paul switches to a different verb for “knowing” to communicate verbal aspect. For more on interpreting the aspect associated with perfect and present tense forms, see Porter 1995: 20–42; 1993: 75–108, 211–38, 251–59.

34. See Porter for more on the way that the perfect tense communicates an author’s focus on the complexity of the state of action in a verb used in this way (Porter 1993: 256–59). Here Paul refers to a complex understanding that emerges from judgments made in accordance with a common set of standards (for example, *kata sarka*) that goes far beyond the simple temporal question of knowing Jesus in the past. Below we explore this set of standards as they are illuminated in 2 Cor. 11:22–12:10, when Paul ironically “boasts” *kata sarka*.

35. Georgi rightly notes that the argument in 5:16–17 is an argument from the greater to the lesser, extending standards used in forming opinions about the most important figure in God’s economy to everyone participating in the new order (Georgi 1986: 253). O’Neill, on the other hand, thinks that it is nonsensical to think that Paul would advocate disregarding Christ’s miracles, earthly ministry, or his humility as a servant (O’Neill 1987: 101–2).

36. For more on the use of *kata sarka* in 1 Cor 10:18, see Schweizer 1972: 125–35; Sechrest 2009: 132, 142–44.

37. Georgi infers that the opponents accuse Paul of acting *kata sarka* in 10:2 because he acts contrary to their own *kata pneuma* proclivities (Georgi 1986: 236–37). Sumney, however, thinks that the phrase *kata sarka* originates with the opponents, though he does not reckon with the different use of the phrase in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, epistles that likely precede 2 Corinthians chronologically (Gal. 4:23, 29; 1 Cor. 10:18; possibly 1 Cor. 1:26), or in usages like these that appear in Romans (Rom. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5; cf. 8:4–5, 12–13). See Sumney 1990: 156.

38. For more on allegations from Paul’s opponents that he was a “flatterer,” see Marshall 1987.

39. In 11:18, *kata sarka* appears after the verb with the same ambiguity as it does in 5:16. See the discussion about “knowing according to the flesh” (*oidamen kata sarka*); see Sumney 1990: 129.

40. The word “Hebrew” in other Jewish literature in the Greek-speaking Diaspora seems to be the preferred way of talking about Aramaic, the language commonly spoken among Palestinian Jews in the Second Temple period; see, e.g., Niebuhr 1992: 105–7.

41. Charismatic displays of spiritual power play important roles in Sumney’s identification of the opponents as Pneumatics (Sumney 1990: 177–79) and Georgi’s proposal about Hellenistic *theios anēr* (Georgi 1986: 254–83).