

PAUL AND THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION IN 2 COR 5:11-6:2

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Introduction

The passage which is the object of this study is one of the most memorable sections of the NT. R. P. C. Hanson refers to it as "one of the charters of the Christian ministry in the New Testament."¹ C. K. Barrett calls it "one of the most pregnant, difficult, and important in the whole of the Pauline literature."² Calvin's comment on 5:18 is also arresting: "Here, if anywhere in Paul's writings, we have a quite remarkably important passage and we must carefully examine the words one by one."³

While the present author is in sympathy with Calvin's remarks about the necessity of carefully studying this remarkable passage, this study does not examine its words one by one. Rather the goal is to develop Paul's teaching on reconciliation in the literary context of 2 Corinthians. This necessitates careful attention to the syntax of 5:11-6:2 and to the argument of the entire letter. There is also a brief survey of reconciliation elsewhere in Paul, along with a concluding theological synthesis of Paul's doctrine of reconciliation. The doctrine of reconciliation involves individual, corporate, cosmic, and eschatological dimensions which make it extremely challenging theologically.

¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *2 Corinthians* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM, 1954) 51.

² C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper, 1973) 163.

³ J. Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (eds. D. Wand T. F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 77.

However, the real proof of our understanding of it is our competence as agents of reconciliation in this hostile world.

Reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:11-6:2

Background Considerations

The argument of 2 Corinthians is a hotly debated issue, mainly due to major questions about the unity of the letter. Abrupt changes in tone and subject matter in 6:14-7:1 and especially 10:1-13:10 have caused many to believe that the letter contains interpolations, perhaps involving the letters alluded to elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4). While these and other related questions are not determinative of the exegesis of 2 Cor 5:11-6:2, the positions adopted in answering them indirectly influence that exegesis. This study will proceed on the assumption that 2 Corinthians is a literary unity from the hand of Paul and that the abrupt changes evident in the letter may be satisfactorily explained by the apostle's emotional state and personal anguish over the Corinthians' spiritual problems.

Another difficult question is the occasion of the letter in view of Paul's earlier contact and correspondence with the Corinthians (Acts 18:1-18; 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4). This is related to the identity and views of the party which was promoting the rift between Paul and the Corinthians. One may suggest answers to this question by attempting a "mirror reading" of the epistle (cf. 2 Cor 2:11; 3:1; 4:2-4; 5:12; 6:14; 10:1-2, 10-12; 11:3-4, 12-15, 18-23), but there is no agreement as to whether this party emphasized gnosis, law, or a syncretistic blending of many false ideas. It is clear that Paul viewed his opponents as false apostles, messengers of Satan whose emphasis on fleshly show, rhetorical flourish, and self-commendation was antithetical to the message and ministry of the true gospel.⁴

Despite these difficulties the epistle's argument is clear. In chaps. 1-7 Paul is appealing to the Corinthians to recognize that his is a true gospel ministry. Chaps. 8-9 comprise his instructions and encouragement regarding the offering for the saints in Judea. Feelings which had evidently been held in check up to this point erupt in chaps. 10-13, where Paul feels compelled to boast about the authority and

⁴ For discussion of these problems, see the introductions to the exegetical commentaries. There is a convenient summary in D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970) 422-41. P. E. Hughes makes a good case for the unity of the letter in *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans., 1962) xxi-xxxv. For an exegetical treatment of Paul's teaching on the style of genuine ministry, see D.A. Black, *Paul, Apostle of Weakness: Astheneia and its Cognates in the Pauline Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984).

power of his ministry. This polemic is written sarcastically (cf. especially 10:1; 11:4, 19-21; 12:13, 16; 13:3) in order to get the attention of the Corinthians and to convince them that he loves them and that he seeks only their spiritual well-being (10:14-15; 11:2, 12; 12:14-15, 19).

In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul is in the middle of his appeal to the Corinthians to recognize his personal integrity and apostolic authority. This appeal and defense is developed in between references to time spent in Macedonia awaiting the arrival of Titus (2 Cor 2:14; 7:4). Martin is correct in saying that this section is not a digression or a rehearsal of the past. Rather

it is an extension of the same spirit he [Paul] had shown them in calling them to repentance (2:2; 7:8-11) and obedience (2:9), and it is a fervent yet reasoned appeal to any who were still unyielding to the pressure of his earlier appeal and whose friendly attitude toward himself he still has reason to doubt. The plea is a renewed call to them to leave their hostile dispositions and suspicions of both his message and his ministry and accept his proffered reconciliation, already given to the ringleader (2:5-11; 7:12).⁵

The section is intensely theological and strikingly personal, for Paul's theology and his manner of ministry will stand or fall together. Paul presupposes that it is impossible to separate the gospel message from the messenger of the gospel.

Exegesis of 2 Cor 5:11-6:2

This pericope⁶ begins with the note that Paul's attempts⁷ to persuade people⁸ are motivated by awe of Christ's judgment seat (5:11). Paul acknowledges that his life and ministry is an "open book" before

⁵ R.. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1986) 137.

⁶ Helpful studies dealing with reconciliation and this passage include J. W. Fraser, "Paul's Knowledge of Jesus: II Cor V.16 once more," *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 293-313; R. Martin, "Reconciliation at Corinth," *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 90-110; J. L. Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Cor 5:16," *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 269-87; J. I. H. McDonald, "Paul and the Preaching Ministry," *JSNT* 17 (1983) 35-50; M. E. Thrall, "2 Corinthians 5:18-21," *ExpTim* 93 (1982) 227-32.

⁷ The present tense verb *πείθομεν* is correctly interpreted by Barrett and Furnish as conative in force. Day in and day out, Paul is seeking to persuade people. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 163; and V. P. Furnish, *2 Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) 306.

⁸ Hughes' idea that Paul is referring to persuading the Corinthians, not to evangelism (2 Corinthians, 186), is too specific. It is doubtful that Paul would have granted such a distinction between receiving the message and receiving the messenger of the gospel. Rejection of the messenger calls into question the reception of the message (cE. 2:9; 6:1; 7:1; 8:8, 24; 9:3; 11:3-4; 12:20; 13:5).

God (cf. 1 Cor 4:4) even though it is necessary for him to persuade people of his sincerity.⁹ He will not get involved in self-commendation (5:12; cf. 3:1-2; 10:12, 18; 12:19; but on the other hand cf. 4:2; 6:4; 12:11); he is not interested in outward appearance but in internal integrity. Whether he is in an ecstatic state of mind before God or in a serious state of mind before the Corinthians, they have no reason to doubt his integrity (5:13).¹⁰

The prospect of appearing before Christ's judgment seat is a strong motive, but it is not Paul's sole motive for ministry. In 5:14 he explains (γάρ) that he is also controlled¹¹ by the retrospect of Christ's love¹² demonstrated by his death. This constraint of the cross is due to Paul's conviction¹³ that the death of Christ¹⁴ represented¹⁵ the death of all. Further (5:15), the death of Christ means that those who live¹⁶

⁹ Plummer insightfully explains that the first δέ. in 5:11 conveys the antithesis that "God knows all about us through and through, but we have to persuade men to believe in our sincerity." Cf. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1915) 168.

¹⁰ It is difficult to know the precise reason for his statement. Perhaps Paul used both of these opposite mental states to defend his total integrity. Or perhaps the false apostles were critical of Paul's participation in the *χαρίσματα*. Cf. 1 Cor 13:1-2; 14:1ff., especially vv 18-19.

¹¹ The precise translation of *συνέχει* is disputed, though the general sense is clear. In more concrete settings it can mean "to press" or "to crowd," but here the idea seems to be "to constrain" or "to impel." Furnish (*2 Corinthians*, 309-10) opts for "to lay claim to" due to usage in the papyri denoting legal obligation.

¹² There is little doubt that *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ* emphasizes the love of Christ for sinners (subjective genitive). Jean Hering's preference for the objective genitive (love for Christ) is weakly supported. See his *The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1967) 41-42. Zerwick's argument for a "general" (others use such terms as "comprehensive" or "plenary") genitive comprising both Christ's love for Paul and Paul's resulting love for Christ is more plausible, but meanings plausible to the reader are not necessarily meanings intended by the author. Contextually the emphasis is upon God's initiative and grace, thus the subjective genitive is strongly preferred. See M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) 13.

¹³ The aorist participle *κρίναντας* should be viewed as causal.

¹⁴ The death of Christ on the cross (and the resurrection of his body) as the heart of the gospel is repeatedly stressed in the Corinthian correspondence. Cf. 1 Cor 1:17-18; 2:2; 5:7; 8:11; 10:16; 11:23-26; 15:3ff.; 2 Cor 4:10; 13:4.

¹⁵ Perhaps "represented" does not sufficiently stress the substitutionary nature of our Lord's death. The debate over the precise meaning of *ὑπὲρ πάντων* is well summarized by Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 129-31), who favors a substitutionary understanding. Hughes (*2 Corinthians*, 193-95) strongly argues for a substitutionary understanding. It is quite clear that terminology such as "example" or "moral influence" cannot begin to explain the thought of Paul at this juncture.

¹⁶ Systematic theologians have long debated the question of the extent or intent of the atonement, and this passage is commonly brought up. Does the "all" for whom Christ died constitute the whole human race or those who will eventually believe in

should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and again. The theological framework behind this is that the Adamic order, characterized since the Fall by selfishness and death, has been superseded by the order of the second Adam, characterized by selfless living for Christ. Paul's ministry is characterized not by living for himself but by living for the one who died for him and rose again. Paul sees believers dying with Christ in the past and standing before him at the future judgment. Therefore life in between these two epochal events can never be the same again. Self-commendation and pride in appearance cannot characterize those who are controlled by love of their redeemer and future judge.

Second Corinthians 5:14-15 has stressed Christ's death as a representative act and as an act of renewal. Due to Christ's representative death, Christ-centered rather than self-centered living is required of those who would identify with the gospel. Paul next in 5:16-17 describes two consequences of Christ's death.¹⁷ First, Christ's death means that from now on a radically different way of viewing reality is present. No one is to be viewed according to the old order with its "fleshly" priorities and values;¹⁸ Even if Paul has known Christ in this manner, those days are gone forever.¹⁹ Further (v 17), the former fleshly worldview has been replaced by a distinctively Christian one.

him (the elect)? Similarly, are "those who live" human beings in general, or those who through faith have come alive spiritually? These questions are somewhat foreign to Paul's immediate agenda in this passage, which is to explain Christ's epochal death and resurrection as the ultimate motivation for his ministry. The universality of Paul's commission and message would seem to demand that the whole human race has been impacted by the cross, and yet that every human being must come to terms with it personally in order to experience its benefits.

¹⁷ Verses 16 and 17 both begin with ὥστε, a particle of result or consequence. It seems best to take both these verses as parallel consequences of 5:14-15 instead of viewing v 17 as a consequence of v 16 (Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 314, 332).

¹⁸ The phrase κατὰ σάρκα describes a point of view dominated by the flesh, which should be taken in its pejorative ethical sense (cf. Rom 8:3-13; Gal 5:16-24). At Corinth the fleshly worldview involved pride in external prestige and appearance, not in internal realities of the heart (1 Cor 1:26, 29; 3:1-4; 2 Cor 1:12, 17; 5:12; 10:2-4; 11:18).

¹⁹ The combination of εἰ καὶ which begins v 16b concedes that Paul once viewed Christ erroneously. As Harris states, "his sincere yet superficial preconversion estimate of Jesus as a messianic pretender whose followers must be extirpated (Acts 9:1, 2; 26:9-11) he now repudiated as being totally erroneous, for he had come to recognize him as the divinely appointed Messiah whose death had brought life." See M. J. Harris, *2 Corinthians* (EBC. 10; Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1976) 353. Perhaps the "Christ party" at Corinth (1 Cor 1:12ff.) was also guilty of viewing Christ in a fleshly manner. The view of Reitzenstein and existentialist sources that this text shows Paul's disinterest in the Jesus of history is rightly debunked by W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 195; and Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 199-200.

Those who come to be "in Christ"²⁰ by faith in the gospel are part of a new order for the universe. The former Adamic order (τὰ ἀρχαῖα) is gone and a new order has come to exist.²¹ The cross has once for all radically changed Paul's view of reality by its power to begin the renewal of the universe by renewing individuals within it (5:16-17).²²

This individual and cosmic renewal which has forever changed Paul's view of life is not achieved without human instrumentality. In 5:17 Paul alludes to the divine origin of the new order²³ and its mediation through Christ, but he also clearly speaks of his own part in the ministry of reconciliation. The mention of ministry returns to the main theme of 2 Corinthians 2-7, the appeal to the Corinthians to recognize Paul's ministry as authentic (cf. 3:7-9; 4:1; 6:3). Verse 17 describes the origin of reconciliation in the Father, the mediation of reconciliation through the Son, and the actual accomplishment of reconciliation through the ministry of Paul.

At this point it will be helpful to focus on the vocabulary and conceptualization of reconciliation.²⁴ When Paul describes his ministry of the gospel as a ministry of reconciliation, he uses a familiar image

²⁰ This is the characteristic Pauline expression for those who are in solidarity with Christ by faith (cf. e.g., Eph 1:4, 7; 2:10). Thus there are individual, corporate, and eschatological dimensions of this expression. Through faith in the gospel individuals enter the New Covenant community (I Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 3:1-18) of those who already (though partially) experience the blessings of the age to come (I Cor 2:6-8; 7:31; 15:20; 2 Cor 1:22; 2:14).

²¹ Paul's thoughts on the new order may be based in part on Isa 42:9-10; 43:19; 48:6; 62:2; 65:17; 66:22; cf. Rev 21:1-2,5. The new order as a divine creation has already been mentioned in 2 Cor 4:5-6. Despite satanic opposition (4:3-4), the God who originally created light is now enlightening sin-darkened hearts as the gospel is being preached. It is striking that Paul uses the creation motif to describe the new order in Christ. For the Adam-Christ analogy elsewhere, see I Cor 15:20-22; Rom 5:12-21.

²² The phrase *καινὴ κτίσις* in 5:17 (cf. Gal 6:15) may be translated "he is a new creature" or "there is a new creation." Thus there are both individualistic, subjective interpretations and corporate, cosmic, eschatological interpretations of the expression. It is best to see the two as complementary, however the expression is translated. Hughes (*2 Corinthians*, 201-2) puts it quite well: "As a man-in-Christ he [Paul] is in fact a new creation--a reborn microcosm belonging to the eschatological macrocosm of the new heavens and the new earth--for whom the old order of things has given place to a transcendental experience in which everything is new. . . . Redemption in Christ is nothing less than the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose in creation, so radical in its effects that it is justly called a new creation."

²³ The clause *τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ* in 5:18 probably refers to the content of 5:16-17 about the new creation, not to the universe as God's creation (Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 115). For verbal parallels, see Rom 11:36; I Cor 8:6. For emphasis upon the Father's activity in 2 Corinthians, see 1:21; 2:14; 4:6; 5:5; 7:6; 9:15; 10:13; 11:7; 13:4.

²⁴ Helpful studies of the reconciliation word group may be found in *NIDNTT*, s. v. "Reconciliation. . . καταλλάσσω," H. Vorlander and C. Brown (3.166-76.); *TDNT*, S.v. ἀλλάσσω κ. τ. λ. by F. Buchsel (1.251-59).

from human interpersonal relations. Anyone who undertakes a study of soteriological reconciliation in the NT soon discovers that it is a Pauline concept. Indeed Paul is the primary NT author to use the *καταλλάσσω* word group which is commonly associated with the concept of reconciliation.²⁵ The three key words are *ἀποκαταλλάσσω* (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 22), *καταλλαγή* (Rom 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:19), and *καταλλάσσω* (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18, 19, 20).²⁶ Of course, the concept of reconciliation is broader than any one word group. Louw and Nida state that "meanings involving reconciliation have a presuppositional component of opposition and hostility, and it is the process of reconciliation which reverses this presuppositional factor."²⁷ Thus any NT teaching which deals with God's gracious redemption as overcoming the hostility of sinners and establishing peace is implicitly dealing with reconciliation.

The use of this word group in extrabiblical Jewish literature is strikingly different than its NT usage.²⁸ Josephus uses the word *καταλλάσσω* to describe David's being asked to be reconciled to Absalom.²⁹ Also in 2 Maccabees God is implored to be reconciled to his erring people Israel in consideration of the merit of their suffering and the efficacy of their prayers.³⁰ This contrasts with Paul's usage here and elsewhere in that God is always the subject and never the object of reconciliation. Human beings need to be reconciled to God, not vice versa. God is the initiator and people are the receptors of reconciliation. Though L. Morris tends to minimize this distinction,³¹ its validity will be supported in later discussion.

²⁵ The simple verb *ἀλλάσσω*, which means "to change" or "exchange," occurs in nonredemptive contexts in Acts 6:14; Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 15:51, 52; Gal 4:20; and Heb 1:12. The other occurrences of this word group outside of Paul involve reconciliation between human adversaries. See *ἀπαλλάσσομαι* in Luke 12:58, *διαλλάσσομαι* in Matt 5:24, and *συναλλάσσω* in Acts 7:26.

²⁶ *Καταλλάσσω* also occurs in 1 Cor 7:11 describing marital reconciliation.

²⁷ J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988) 1.502. Louw and Nida also include the words *εἰρηνοποιέω* (Col 1:20), *εἰρηνοποιός* (Matt 5:9), *μεσίτης* (1 Tim 2:5), and *ἄσπονδος* (2 Tim 3:3) under the semantic domain of reconciliation.

²⁸ This is noted by Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 334-35; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 149; Thrall, "2 Cor 5:18-21," 227.

²⁹ Josephus *Ant.* 7.184.

³⁰ 2 Macc 1:4-5; 5:20; 7:18, 32ff.; 8:29.

³¹ L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 192-98. Morris is concerned to show that God is not passive in relation to sin but rather is actively wrathful against it. His wrath against sin must be satisfied. This of course is true, but the fact remains that Paul uses the term "propitiation" (*ἱλαστήριον* Rom 3:25), not the term "reconciliation" to describe the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin.

Paul's description of the ministry of reconciliation is expanded in 5:19.³² This verse begins with the difficult double connective ὡς ὅτι variously translated "namely" (*NASB*), "that" (*NIV*), "that is" (*RSV*), "to wit" (*KJV*), "for indeed" (*DI*), and "what I mean is" (*NEB*).³³ All of these are exegetical translations implying that 5:19 further explains the thought of 5:18. Two other questions confront the exegete of this verse. First, should the prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ be understood adverbially ("God was reconciling in Christ," *NIV*) or adjectivally ("God-in-Christ was reconciling," *KJV*, *NASB*)? The first option is preferable due to the usual usage of prepositional phrases as adverbs, not adjectives. Further, Paul's emphasis is not upon incarnation but upon reconciliation, and it is his habit to mention Christ as the means of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18; Rom 5:10; Col 1:20). The second question concerns the periphrastic verbal construction ἦν . . . καταλλάσσω (imperfect plus present participle). One wonders why the simple finite verb was not used, and also why the progressive *aktionsart* rather than the aorist (as in v 18) appears. Perhaps the best answer is that Paul wished to emphasize here the element of contingency in the ongoing process of reconciliation through the ministry of the gospel. It is noteworthy that the middle clause of v 19, "not counting their sins against them," also uses a progressive tense (λογιζόμενος, present participle) to describe God's reconciling action. Although there is an historic, objective sense in which reconciliation was finished at the cross, there is also the subjective actualization of that objective truth as the gospel is preached and people believe.³⁴

³² The following displays the similarity of these two verses:

- 18 A τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ
 B καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς,
 19 A' ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσω ἑαυτῷ,
 C μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν
 B' καὶ θέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς.

The A and A' lines are quite similar except that the object of reconciliation ("us") in A is expanded to "world" in A'. The B and B' lines are nearly synonymous except for the terminology, with B having δόντος . . . διακονίαν and B' having θέμενος . . . λόγον. It is obvious that the major expansion has taken place in line C, which describes reconciliation in terms used elsewhere of justification (Psa 32:2; Rom 4:8).

³³ Paul also uses this combination in 2 Cor 11:21 and 2 Thess 2:2, but in these cases the combination introduces statements which Paul does not totally affirm. Some who believe that Paul is alluding to a traditional formula at this point translate "as it is said" (e.g., Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 317-18). But arguments that Paul is adapting tradition throughout the passage (as, e.g., by Martin, "Reconciliation at Corinth," 94ff.) are not convincing. One thing is clear, the thought of v 18 is enlarged in v 19, making an exegetical translation such as "that is" preferable. See further BDF §396; and T. Muraoka, "The use of ΩΣ in the Greek Bible," *NovT* 7 (1964) 65.

³⁴ See Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 318; Hering, *2 Corinthians*, 44; and Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 154.

Paul's statement in v 19 is that in Christ God was reconciling "the world" (cf. Rom 11:15) to himself, not "us" as in v 18. While some take the world as equivalent to "all" (people) in 5:14-15,³⁵ it is more likely that a cosmic meaning is intended. Though people are primarily in mind (note the middle clause of the verse, "not counting their trespasses against them,") Paul's thought cannot be limited merely to human beings. Paul has been speaking of the new creation in Christ as superseding the old creation ruined by Adam's fall (5:17). Thus it is likely that he does not mean merely all people (believers?), or even the Gentiles as opposed to merely Israel (as in Rom 11:15), but rather the universe as a whole. "All things" are in the process of being reconciled through the cross of Christ. The effects of the second Adam's obedience can be no less than the effects of the first Adam's disobedience. As Adam's disobedience wreaked havoc throughout the entire created order, so Christ's obedience will ultimately harmonize the universe in the new heavens and new earth. The entire *κόσμος* will ultimately be at peace with God due to Christ's redemptive mediacy (cf. Rom 8:18-21; Eph 1:10; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:20). This is not to be confused with soteric universalism, since many will only bow the knee grudgingly. However, recognition of a sort of cosmic universalism is necessary if we are to grasp the glorious comprehensiveness of Christ's work of redemption. Paul seems to picture this process of reconciliation elsewhere through a military motif (2 Cor 2:14; 10:3-5; Col 1:13; 2:15). It is as if the decisive battle of the war has already been fought, and it is only a matter of time until the defeated foes lay down their arms. In God's wisdom the ministry of reconciliation already is calling his enemies to surrender. Ultimately this will result in the total victory of the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁶

In v 20 contemplation of the glorious truth of God's program to reconcile the world to himself through the gospel of Christ brings Paul to a conclusion (*οὖν*). In vv 20-21 Paul takes the general truths which he has been explaining and applies them directly and specifically to the situation in Corinth. As Christ's ambassador,³⁷ and as the very mouthpiece of God, Paul pleads with the Corinthians in Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God. Though some take this to be a sample

³⁵ E.g., Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 177; C. Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (TNTC; Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity/ Eerdmans, 1987) 127.

³⁶ For the cosmic view see, e.g., Hughes, who precisely comments, "The cosmic rehabilitation is brought about through the salvation of sinful men" (*2 Corinthians*, 209).

³⁷ The verb *πρεσβεύομεν* (Cf. Eph 6:10) pictures Paul's ministry as the representative or legate of a king carrying out diplomatic or governmental business. That verb was used to describe such activities for the Roman emperor in NT times. Cf. 1 Macc 14:22; 2 Macc 11:34.

of Paul's missionary preaching directed to no one in particular,³⁸ it is preferable to understand it as Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to renew their peaceful relationship to God and his messenger.³⁹ Though it is true that the personal pronouns ("you") found in many English translations do not occur in the Greek text of 5:20, the second person plural ending of the imperative *καταλλάγητε* implies that the Corinthians are its subject. Also, the presence of *οὖν* at the beginning of 5:20 implies that Paul is now drawing a new inference from his previous general statements about reconciliation. Likewise, the urgent, emotive, personal tone of 5:20 makes more sense if it is directed to the Corinthians than if it is merely an example of what Paul would preach if he had an audience for evangelism. Most importantly, the context must be given its due. Since 2:14 Paul has been making an appeal/defense to the Corinthians regarding his message and ministry. Their rift with him carried with it ominous implications of defection from the gospel. The messenger and the message cannot be separated, as is underlined in Paul's warning in 6:1-2. Paul is God's ambassador, speaking in Christ's stead. Rejection of the ambassador is tantamount to rejection of the King of kings and calls into question the reception of the King's message (cf. 2:9; 6:1; 1:1; 8:8, 24; 9:3; 11:3-4; 12:20; 13:5).

The urgency of Paul's appeal for the Corinthians to renew their relationship with God is underlined by the striking asyndetic addition of v 21. Here Paul explains how reconciliation can be achieved: the sinless Messiah became sin so that sinners might become righteous in him (cf. Rom 3:21-22; 1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9). The language is once more (cf. 5:19b) reminiscent of justification. Barrett's proposal of a chiasmic structure for this verse is unconvincing, but he is correct that the verse "is set out in a carefully balanced pair of parallel lines."⁴⁰ Through the years this striking statement has been the basis of a great deal of theological debate as the relationship of Christ to sin was pondered. Harris correctly comments that these words "defy final exegetical explanation, dealing as they do with the heart of the atonement."⁴¹ This passage reaffirms and defines the central truth Paul has just alluded to in 5:14-15: the representative, substitutionary character of Christ's death.

The central problem of the verse is the meaning *ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν*.⁴² How indeed was Christ "made sin"? Paul affirms in continuity

³⁸ Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, 210-11.

³⁹ Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 350; Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 128; and especially Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 155-56.

⁴⁰ Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 179.

⁴¹ Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 354.

⁴² Among many treatments of this problem, see especially L. Sabourin and S. Lyonnet, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970) 185-296.

with many NT passages that Christ "knew no sin"⁴³ (cf. John 8:46; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 2:22, citing Isa 53:9; 1 John 3:5). Nevertheless, Christ identified himself with sinners in order to redeem them (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 23:40-41; Rom 8:3; Gal 3:13). Paul does not say that God made Christ a sinner, but that he made (appointed?) him to be sin. While some have argued that sin means "sin offering," it seems better to view this as compressed, almost hyperbolic language intended to say that Christ totally identified with sinners. Harris eloquently explains that it was Paul's intent

to say more than that Christ was made a sin-offering and yet less than that Christ became a sinner. So complete was the identification of the sinless Christ with the sin of the sinner, including its dire guilt and its dread consequence of separation from God, that Paul could say profoundly, "God made him. . . to be sin for us."⁴⁴

The compressed statement of 5:21 regarding the substitutionary basis of reconciliation now gives way to a direct appeal to the Corinthians in 6:1-2. The chapter division is unfortunate, since the flow of thought runs uninterrupted from the profundity of Christ's identification with sinners to the appeal for the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain.⁴⁵ Most scholars agree that *συνεργοῦντες*; in 6:1 speaks of Paul as God's coworker. This striking thought fits the context, especially the thought of 5:20 (cf. 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thess 3:2). Paul does not mean to lord this over the Corinthians since he uses the same word to describe his relationship with them (2 Cor 1:24). Nevertheless, in his apostolic vocation he is uniquely endowed for ministry (2 Cor 2:14; 3:4-6; 10:14; 12:11-12), and this heightens the obligation of the Corinthians to respond obediently. Coming as it does after 5:11-21, this appeal is perhaps the most direct and urgent of the entire epistle.⁴⁶ Paul urges (*παρακαλοῦμεν*; cf. *δεόμεθα* in 5:20) the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain (*εἰς κενόν*, cf. Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16;

⁴³ Obviously this is not to say that Christ was intellectually unaware of sin. Here the "knowledge" of sin refers to accepting or approving it, or having an intimate relationship with it. The verb *γινώσκω*, and its Hebrew equivalent *it*", commonly fixpress this idea (cf. Ps 1:6; Amos 3:2; Matt 7:23).

⁴⁴ Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 354.

⁴⁵ Sources which recognize that the appeal of 6:1-2 belongs with the flow of 5:11-21 include Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, 182; Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 341; Harris, *2 Corinthians*, 355; and Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 160. Hughes (*2 Corinthians*, 211) makes too much of a distinction between the appeals of 5:20 and 6:2. Hanson goes so far as to say that Paul wrote 2 Cor 5:19-6:2 as "unostentatious midrash" because he had been meditating on Isa 49:1-8. See A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 167.

⁴⁶ Furnish (*2 Corinthians*, 321, 338) states that the appeal of 5:20-6:2 connects Paul's discussion of apostleship (2:14ff.) with a major section of appeals (5:20-9:15).

1 Thess 3:5). This expression has been taken in two different ways. Some think that Paul warns the Corinthians so that their genuine acceptance of the gospel will not be without beneficial purpose.⁴⁷ However, Hering is correct that "acceptance of the gospel is an action or state which continues."⁴⁸ In this understanding genuine acceptance of the gospel will be a persevering acceptance. If this is accepted, Paul must be warning the Corinthians to consider whether their acceptance of the gospel has been superficial and counterfeit.⁴⁹ In other words, the offer and acceptance of God's grace is an ongoing process. Though acceptance of this grace has a beginning, it must also have continuance. This second option is to be preferred due to the solemnity and urgency of Paul's argument to this point, an urgency which is emphasized further in the OT passage cited next in 6:2.⁵⁰

The section under consideration began in 5:11 with the awesome prospect of future judgment. This prospect caused Paul to have a ministry characterized by integrity, one which the Corinthians must obey. Now the prospect of future judgment should cause the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain. To emphasize this point even further, Paul cites Isa 49:8 from the LXX. The appeal becomes more urgent if it is realized that the eschatological "day of salvation" is already present. The thought here relies upon Paul's new creation emphasis in 5:14-17. The old order is past; the new order has dawned; and the opportunity for salvation must be grasped now, at the "acceptable time," during the "day of salvation." Paul thus applies Isaiah's oracle about the Servant and postexilic salvation to the gospel era of messianic salvation (cf. Isa 61:1-2 in Luke 4:19).

Therefore the Corinthians are participants in the age of opportunity, and this heightens their accountability to Paul's appeal. They must renew their original faith in the message and messenger of God's

⁴⁷ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 131.

⁴⁸ Hering, *2 Corinthians*, 46.

⁴⁹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 167.

⁵⁰ Many lack understanding and appreciation of Paul's warnings due to a one-sided and misguided emphasis upon the "eternal security" doctrine. It must be noted that the NT generally promises security to those who are persevering in faith (John 10:27-30; Rom 8:25, 28; 1 Pet 1:5; Jude 1, 21, 25). God preserves those whose genuine faith produces fruit (Matt 7:15-27). The urgent warning of 2 Cor 6:1-2 is not exceptional in the Corinthian correspondence (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-4, 16-17; 6:9-11; 8:11; 9:24-27; 10:12; 15:2, 10, 12, 14; 2 Cor 11:2-4, 20; 13:5-6) or in Paul's other epistles (cf. Gal 1:6; 3:1-4; 4:19-20; 5:2, 4; Col 1:23; 2:8; 1 Tim 6:9-10; 2 Tim 2:14-21; Tit 1:10-16). Paul places strong emphasis upon the duty of believers to persevere in good works (cf. e.g., Rom 2:7; 8:25; 11:22; 12:1-2; Eph 2:10; 4:1; Phil 1:29; 2:12; Col 1:10; Tit 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14). The cliché bears repeating with urgency: "Faith alone saves but the faith which saves is never alone."

reconciliation. Their hostility to the messenger is tantamount to hostility to the message. Paul models God's reconciling activity by opening his heart to them,⁵¹ and they must reciprocate (6:11-13).

Reconciliation Elsewhere in Paul

There are many scholarly works which present detailed studies of the Pauline material on reconciliation.⁵² And of course the topic is regularly treated by systematic theologians and ethicists. Here only a brief survey of the major passages is possible.

Besides 2 Corinthians 5, four other Pauline passages⁵³ speak directly of reconciliation. Rom 5:6-11 speaks of reconciliation as God's loving act toward undeserving sinners in which Christ died for the helpless enemies of God. Once this reconciliation has been received, the believer may rejoice in his/her salvation from God's eschatological wrath. Paul's words here take the form of two arguments, the first "lesser to greater," and the second "greater to lesser." If dying for a righteous or good man is praiseworthy, how much more is Christ's death for helpless sinners (5:6-8)? This magnifies God's mercy in providing reconciliation through Christ's death. Second, if Christ went so far as to reconcile his enemies, will he not in the end save his friends (5:9-11)? This provides assurance that God will ultimately complete what he has begun in Christ. It is interesting to note the close connection between justification and reconciliation in the protases of

⁵¹ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 166-67.

⁵² See, e.g., J. Dupont, *La reconciliation dans la theologie de Saint Paul* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1953); J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation in Pauline Theology," *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie* (ed. J. W. Flanagan and A. W. Robinson; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975) 155-77; D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981) 486-92; E. Kasemann, "Some Thoughts on the Theme The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament," *The Future of our Religious Past: Essays in Honor of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. J. M. Robinson and R. P. Scharlemann; New York: Harper, 1971) 49-64; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 450-56; I. H. Marshall, "The Meaning of 'Reconciliation,'" *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. R. A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 117-32; L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 186-223; R. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981); J. Murray, "The Reconciliation," in *Studies in Theology, Reviews (Collected Writings of John Murray)* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982) 4.92-112; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 182-86; and V. Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (London: Macmillan, 1941) 83-129.

⁵³ The authenticity of Ephesians and Colossians as genuine epistles of Paul is assumed in this study.

vv 10 and 11 respectively. Eschatological salvation is the consummation of redemption already begun. The "already" (justification and reconciliation) assures believers of the "not yet" ("we shall be saved").⁵⁴

In Rom 11:15 Paul turns again to the language of reconciliation in his defense of the wisdom of God's plan for the Jews and Gentiles. If the present national unbelief of Israel has resulted in the reconciliation of the Gentiles, the marvelous outcome of Israel's national repentance can only be described as life from the dead! Paul has been speaking of his ministry to the Gentiles as a means of provoking Israel to jealousy (11:11-14). He goes on to illustrate the redemptive historical process with the olive tree (11:16b-24). The phrase in 11:16 is **καταλλαγὴ κόσμου**, and **κόσμου** is clearly an objective genitive describing the worldwide opportunity for Gentiles to receive salvation through faith in the Messiah of Israel. While reconciliation in Rom 5:6-11 was something received individually (5:11; **τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν**), here in Romans 11 it has more of a corporate reference to Gentiles having the opportunity to receive salvation. This opportunity results in "the fullness of the Gentiles" receiving salvation, which in turn spells the consummation of national Israel's salvation (11:25-26).⁵⁵

Corporate reconciliation is also the theme of reconciliation language in Ephesians 2. Here Paul stresses the grace (2:5, 7-8), mercy (2:4), and kindness (2:7) of God who reconciles (2:16) those who deserve wrath (2:3). Here the state of alienation from God (2:1) is also described as a state of satanic influence (2:2) and alienation from God's Messiah, covenant promises, and covenant nation (2:12-13). The enmity (**ἔχθρα**) or hostility removed by Christ's redemption is not merely vertical but is also horizontal. The stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant formed a barrier between Jews and Gentiles which Christ abolished (2:14-15) when he created the church (1:22) as "one new man" (2:15), and "one body" (2:16) in which equal access to God is opened up to all who believe, Jew and Gentile alike (2:18). It is

⁵⁴ This connection between justification and reconciliation in vv 10-11 may be illustrated by the following arrangement of the clauses:

A πολλῶ ὄν μᾶλλον δικαιωθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ

B σωθησόμεθα δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς.

A' εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες καταλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ·

B' πολλῶ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ·

Both justification (A) and reconciliation (A') produce the assurance of future salvation (B, B'). There is perhaps a shade of distinction between B and B' in that B states the truth negatively and B' states it positively. Believers will be saved from wrath by and to Christ's life.

⁵⁵ This interplay between Israel's present rejection and future reception is well grasped by J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 65) 75-90.

noteworthy that Christ, not the Father as generally stated elsewhere in Paul, is the subject of the act of reconciliation in 2:16. This is not a point of tension or contradiction since the Father is acting to reconcile through, his appointed Messiah.⁵⁶ The experience of reconciliation through Christ radically redefines vertical and horizontal human relationships as there is now peace between mankind and God and peace between Jew and Gentile (2:14, 17). Both are built into one dynamic dwelling of God through the Spirit (2:19-22).⁵⁷

When one turns to Colossians there is less of the emphasis upon Jew-Gentile equality which has just been noticed in Ephesians (but see 1:27; 3:11). Rather, the stress can only be called cosmic. Paul is not interested so much in individual reconciliation, or in redemptive history, or even in the corporate unity of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ. He is more concerned to point out that the reconciliation wrought by Christ leaves nothing outside its impact. The entire universe, including both visible and invisible beings, has in some way been reconciled by the blood of the cross (1:20).⁵⁸ Paul's chief goal in Colossians 1 seems to be the magnification of Christ as the all-sufficient Lord of the universe. This truth is then applied more directly in Colossians 2 to the false teaching which has endangered the church.

Thus, Paul speaks of Christ as creator and sustainer of the universe (1:16-17; τὰ πάντα) and as the head of the church (1:18). The Father was pleased for divine fullness (cf. 2:9) to dwell in Christ and to reconcile the universe to himself through Christ (1:19-20). Here the familiar vocabulary of alienation (1:21) occurs again as the presupposition of reconciliation, as Paul moves from the universe in general to the Colossians in particular (1:22). It is striking that the emphasis is primarily upon the reconciliation of the universe, especially the supernatural powers (1:16, 20). This is evidently due to the false teaching about the powers which has been troubling the Colossians (2:8, 10, 15, 18, 20). They needed to know that not only did Christ originally create the powers but also that subsequently his cross defeated them when they rebelled against their Creator. The term reconciliation describes both the defeat of the evil powers (1:20) and the redemption of the Colossians, who are now exhorted to stand firm in their freedom from the defeated powers (1:23; 2:8, 16, 18, 20).

⁵⁶ M. Barth, *Ephesians 1-3* (AB 34; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 266.

⁵⁷ For a careful study of the unity of Jew and Gentile see C. B. Hoch, "The Significance of the *syn*-Compounds for Jew-Gentile Relationships in the Body of Christ," *JETS* 25 (1982) 175-83.

⁵⁸ For a careful study of this text see P. T. O'Brien, "Col. 1:20 and the Reconciliation of All Things," *Reformed Theological Review* 33 (1974) 45-53; as well as O'Brien's *Colossians; Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco, TX; Word, 1982) 53-57,

While there are some who conclude that the reconciliation of things involves the annihilation of evil powers and unbelieving human beings,⁵⁹ this seems to go beyond Paul's statements and to conflict with other biblical truths. The doctrine of eternal punishment does not conflict with the reconciliation of the powers and even of those who reject Christ's redemption. Rather their defeat in the cross of Christ leads to the pacification of the universe. Their eternal punishment is the means by which eternal peace is achieved on the renewed earth for the people of God (cf. Rev 21:7-8,27; 22:14-15).

To conclude the survey, a few lines of continuity between 2 Corinthians 5 and the other Pauline passages may be drawn. It is clear that Paul's concept of reconciliation was related to his concept of justification (2 Cor 5:19, 21; cf. Rom 4:8; 5:9-11). Barrett and Davies opine that these two terms do not describe distinct acts but are merely different ways of explaining freedom from sin.⁶⁰ However, despite some overlap it does seem that distinct truths are expressed by reconciliation and justification. For one thing it has been rightly suggested by Buchsel and Cranfield that reconciliation is the more personal term of the two.⁶¹ Not merely a right legal standing but a harmonious relationship of reciprocal personal love is the result of reconciliation. Further, Ridderbos notes that the eschatological, cosmic scope of reconciliation is lacking from justification, which seems to be concerned only with individual human beings.⁶²

Another line of continuity is the necessity of reconciliation being received individually by faith (2 Cor 5:20; cf. Rom 5:11). People are not passive in the actualization of reconciliation on earth. There is a ministry to be fulfilled, a message to be proclaimed, a Lord to be received. The message is that people must be reconciled to God, not that they are so already.⁶³

Three other matters call for brief notice. The horizontal aspect of reconciliation so emphasized in Ephesians 2 was threatened by Paul's

⁵⁹ Recently this has been argued by P. E. Hughes, *The True Image* (Grand Rapids/Leicester: Eerdmans/InterVarsity, 1989) 405-6. Against others who attempt to use this text to demonstrate universal salvation, O'Brien (*Colossians, Philemon*, 57) says "Although all things will finally unite to bow in the name of Jesus and to acknowledge him as Lord (Phil 2:10-11), it is not to be assumed that this will be done gladly by all. . . ."

⁶⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; New York: Harper, 1957) 108; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 36. .

⁶¹ Buchsel, "ἀλλάσσω," 255-56; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 79) 1.267.

⁶² Ridderbos, *Paul*, 160-61.

⁶³ Thrall, "2 Cor 5:18-21," 228.

strained relations with the Corinthians (2 Cor 5:20; cf. Eph 2:16). The cosmic aspect of reconciliation found in Colossians 1 is connected in 2 Corinthians 5 with the renewal of all things (2 Cor 5:17; cf. Col 1:20). And finally, it is repeatedly evident that reconciliation is a state which must be maintained by the believer's perseverance (2 Cor 5:20; 6:1; cf. Rom 11:22; Col 1:23).

Conclusion: A Pauline Theology of Reconciliation

A brief synthesis now concludes this study. Though some despair of the idea of a NT doctrine of reconciliation, that pessimism is unwarranted.⁶⁴ The doctrine can be elucidated by several contrasts and by four perspectives. First by way of contrast, the literature on the biblical theology of reconciliation indicates that Paul's teaching may be explained as follows:

Reconciliation is both. . .	and. . .
Objective	Subjective
Accomplished	Applied
God's act	A person's state
<i>Extra nos</i>	<i>In/pro nobis</i>
Abstract	Concrete
Indicative	Imperative
Kerygmatic	Parenetic
Vertical	Horizontal
Already	Not yet
Personal	Cosmic

This grid for conceptualizing reconciliation attempts to show that it is a duality. The sovereign work of God in Christ. accomplished reconciliation objectively, but God also sovereignly planned to apply this reconciliation to individuals through the work of the Spirit in the proclamation of the message. Individual reception of the message changes both vertical (Godward) and horizontal (humanward) relationships as peace permeates the whole of one's life. Those who receive reconciliation have already received a taste, token, or guarantee of God's future work in their lives and in the universe as a whole. They also individually begin to model the kind of peaceful relationships in every area of life which God has ordained for the eschaton. Paul's strained relationship with the Corinthians is a serious aberration from this ideal, and he desperately desires to resolve the hostility.

⁶⁴ See E. Kasemann, "Some Thoughts on the Theme 'The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament,'" 49-51; J. A. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation in Pauline Theology," 162-70. Kasemann's pessimism is largely corrected by Fitzmyer.

A second way of conceiving Paul's doctrine of reconciliation is from the four perspectives of initiation, mediation, proclamation, and actualization. First, God the Father is the initiator of reconciliation:

τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ
(2 Cor 5:18)

This emphasis on the Father as the ultimate source of reconciliation is also seen in 2 Cor 5:19, Col 1:20, and in Rom 5:10 (if *κατηλλάγημεν* is interpreted as a "divine passive"). Though the Father did not lack the means to destroy all those who spurned his rule, his grace initiated a plan to remove the hostility between himself and his incorrigible children.

Second, God the Son in his death on the cross is the mediator of reconciliation:

κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (Rom 5:10)

Christ's redemption as the mediating dynamic of reconciliation may also be noted in Rom 5:11, 2 Cor 5:18, Col 1:20 (all of which use *διὰ*), and 2 Cor 5:19 (*EV*). The two passages which speak of Christ as the subject of the verb "to reconcile" also speak of him as mediator of reconciliation (Eph 2:16; Col 1:22). The Father gave the Son who knew no sin as a substitute for sinners so that they might become righteous before God. Christ identified with sinners so that there would be a redemptive basis for sinners to be identified with God through him. The cross did not merely provide an example by which sinners were morally influenced to turn to God. Rather it provided a sinless substitute for sinners by which they could approach a holy and just God.

Third, the proclamation of reconciliation is carried out by Paul:
δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ (2 Cor 5:20)

Paul had been divinely appointed to a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19). His consciousness of this apostolic commission stood the test of the Corinthians' disobedience only because he understood that as an ambassador of the reconciling God his message was the functional equivalent of the very voice of God (2 Cor 5:20). Paul also realized that the proclamation of this message demonstrated the wisdom of God in redemptive history. In Rom 11:13ff. he shows how Israel's present rejection of the message of reconciliation in Christ has resulted in the Gentiles experiencing reconciliation. He goes on to explain that the Gentiles' reconciliation will ultimately bring Israel to a point of national reception of their Messiah, which will in turn bring unprecedented blessing to the whole world.

Fourth, the *actualization* of reconciliation comes only when individuals hear the proclaimed message and receive it by faith:

καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ
νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν (Rom 5:11)

Individuals cannot experience reconciliation with God apart from faith in the proclamation of the messianic mediation of the Father's gracious initiative. As individuals respond to the message of reconciliation, they gain confidence that they are now at last in harmony with the Creator of the universe who has begun a new creation in them (2 Cor 5:17). Their destiny is no longer an unknown which causes fear. Rather they gain confidence in the good will of their reconciler and are assured (Rom 5:2ff.) that they will ultimately be saved by his life (Rom 5:10). The actualization of reconciliation has even greater effects as reconciled individuals begin to live at peace with one another in the community of the people of God. Local churches thus become microcosmic examples of the ultimate eschatological shalom which will some day characterize the macrocosm of the universe when the Creator brings about new heavens and a new earth.

As has been often stated, believers today live "between the times" of the first and second advents of Christ. The first advent mediated the basis of reconciliation; the second will mediate its universal extension. In the meantime, may those who have experienced through the gospel the end of hostilities and the beginning of peace with God make every effort in their family, church, and societal duties to extend the message of reconciliation by word and deed. Paul modeled this reconciling lifestyle as he patiently served the Corinthians in obedience to his master who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matt 5:9; cf. Jas 3:17-18).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Kasemann said it well: "Cosmic peace does not settle over the world, as in a fairy tale. It takes root only so far as men [and women] in the service of reconciliation confirm that they have themselves found peace with God" ("Some Thoughts on the Theme 'The Doctrine of Reconciliation in the New Testament,'" 56).

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