

Reimund Bieringer – Emmanuel Nathan – Didier Pollefeyt – Peter J. Tomson (eds.), *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of Late Second Temple Judaism* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 14; Leiden: Brill 2014) Pp. x + 348. €126 / \$163. ISBN 9789004269286

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Second Corinthians in the Perspective of the Late Second Temple Judaism, edited by Reimund Bieringer, Emmanuel Nathan, Didier Pollefeyt and Peter J. Tomson, is the fruit of the symposium organized at KU Leuven in 2009, devoted to Second Corinthians in the context of the Late Second Temple period. The book was edited by a group of biblical scholars connected with KU Leuven, participating in the research project on the *New Perspective*, Apostle Paul and Jews, and by specialists in the field of Judaism, rabbinical literature and Pauline letters. *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of the Late Second Temple Judaism* contains eight articles which are revised and extended versions of papers delivered at the symposium. In addition, it consists of the Editor's Foreword, Introductory Essay and Bibliography with abbreviations, as well as indexes of ancient and contemporary authors and of cited ancient sources with their abbreviations.

In the Editor's Foreword, the reader learns about the genesis of the book that emerged from the research project conducted between 2006 and 2010 at KU Leuven and devoted to *The New Perspective on Paul*, Second Corinthians and the Christian-Jewish dialogue, propelled by contemporary studies on Paul's letters. Subsequently, in his "Introductory Essay" (pp. 1-10), Peter J. Tomson briefly sketches the importance of Jewish background for *The New Perspective on Paul* and for the contemporary reading of Paul's letters. The problem underscored by the author is the severed relationship between history and theology: an artificial separation of the two fields and the anachronistic image of Paul creating his own theology disconnected from its Jewish context. In addition, Tomson introduces literary and historical issues related to Second Corinthians (the unity and authorship of the letter) and presents individual essays that make up the publication.

In the first essay, "Love as That Which Binds Everything Together? The Unity of 2 Corinthians Revisited in Light of *Αγαπ*-Terminology" (pp. 11-24), Reimund Bieringer undertakes an examination of love-related vocabulary (the *αγαπ*-stem) in Paul's *homologoumena*, including Second Corinthians, proving that the vo-

cabulary in question testifies to the unity of the letter. With a coherent rhetorical strategy, discernible in Second Corinthians, Paul fights for the love of his community, which was missing at that time. God's love for believers, the love of Christ, love for those who sin and love for the saints in Jerusalem find their culmination in the apostle's appeal in 2 Cor 12:15.

In the next text, "The Politics of the Fifties: Jewish Leadership and the Jews of Corinth in the Time of 2 Corinthians" (pp. 25-35), Martin Goodman probes the reasons for Jewish opposition to Paul in Corinth. The historical narrative of Josephus Flavius, which is an important source of information in this respect, reflects the attitudes of the Palestinian Jews inevitably heading for war. According to the author, Josephus is not the most reliable source, as he emulates Thucydides. Joseph Flavius, on the other hand, confirms, along with other sources of the era, the uncertainty of the Jews' fate in the diaspora, living at the mercy of the peoples surrounding them. This fragile balance could have been undermined by Paul's preaching in Corinth. In the eyes of the Romans, Pauline gospel could have been considered atheism and a call to abandon ancestral gods. It could jeopardize the safety of the Jews with whom Paul and the early Christians were identified.

In the third essay entitled "Methodological Remarks on 'Jewish' Identity: Jews, Jewish Christians and Prolegomena on Pauline Judaism" (pp. 36-58), Joshua Schwartz raises the question of defining Jewish identity in the Second Temple period. According to two existing schools, whose views are discussed by the author, this issue would be closely related to the religious dimension (Judaism) or to the ethnic aspect determined by laws, traditions and customs. The author speaks in favor of the first descriptive category, claiming that the first Christians could easily be labeled as *Ioudaioi*. Schwartz concludes that the parting of ways between Christians and Jews did not have much in common with theology, rituals and traditions, but rather with the socio-historical conditions of the first century.

In the fourth essay in the volume, "The Notion of a 'New Covenant' in 2 Cor 3: Its Function in Paul's Argument and Its Jewish Background" (pp. 58-78), Friedrich Avermarie examines the vocabulary and concept of the "covenant" in Second Corinthians, its theological significance and the function it plays in Paul's argument. 2 Cor 3:6-18, where the idea is mentioned, is in the author's view not a digression or an outside addition, but it serves to defend Paul's ministry compared in this case with the ministry of Moses. The New Covenant, which Paul is a servant of, does not replace the old one. Avermarie shows it aptly by comparing 2 Cor 3:6-18 with other proto-Pauline letters, like Rom 9:4; Ga 3:15-17 and 4:24-25. Additionally, Jr 31:31-34, Dn 3:34, Lev 26:44, Qumran and rabbinical literature confirm that the "new covenant" always occurs in the context of a renewal and revival of the old one, and not of its abolition. Carefully analyzing 2 Cor 3:7-14, the author states that Paul clearly sees the need for the New Covenant, which radically differs from the old one in its gift of the Spirit and

justification. However, the apostle does not speak of the nullification of the Old Covenant. The fading glory of the Mosaic Covenant serves to emphasize the greatness of the New Covenant in Christ.

The fifth essay by Peter J. Tomson, “Christ, Belial, and Women: 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 Compared with Ancient Judaism and with the Pauline Corpus” (pp. 79-131), is devoted to a text usually treated by exegetes as Pauline interpolation. In an over forty-four-page-long article, Tomson x-rays the passage and the related issues of its duality, its view of women and Christian authorship. Duality, the division into the children of Belial and God’s children, as well as the image of women and their functions in ancient communities are presented by Tomson in a wide context of Qumran literature, Philo, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, *Didache*, the tradition of Jesus and early rabbinical traditions. After having prepared the ground, the author examines 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 to conclude that in terms of style, its dualistic character and the image of women, the text can be situated somewhere between Qumran and early rabbinic writings. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 is firmly embedded in the Jewish theology of Paul’s time and at the same time shows points of contact with the apostle’s letters, which, contrary to many researchers, enables the recognition of its Pauline authorship. In 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 Paul criticizes his Jewish opponents, who, though different from those he describes in 2 Cor 10–13, pose a threat to the community for the sake of which Paul fights and which, according to the author, escapes his authority.

In the sixth essay, “Paul’s ‘Collection for the Saints’ (2 Cor 8–9) and Financial Support of Leaders in Early Christianity and Judaism” (pp. 132-220), Ze’ev Safrai and Peter J. Tomson study 2 Cor 8–9, which deals with the topic of collection for Jerusalem. If the previous article seemed long to the reader, the present one trumps it with nearly ninety pages of text, which is a real gold mine of information on the economic subsistence of Jewish and early Christian communities. The authors start by examining historical and literary evidence for the collection for Jerusalem in the epistles of Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. They take note of radical Judeo-Christian opposition to Paul in Corinth, which, according to them, fits well the radicalizing Jewish attitudes of the fifties of the first century, centered around the Law. The image of the opponents and the problems faced by Paul while organizing the collection, mentioned in 2 Cor 8–9, are closely interwoven with the content of Second Corinthians, proving that the two chapters are not a separate letter, but an integral part of the analyzed correspondence. Subsequently, the authors analyze the category of “saints” and various models of financial support for leaders, teachers and traveling preachers in the Jewish and early Christian milieu. After quoting a whole range of historical facts and texts that illustrate them, the authors conclude that Paul created an original system of financial support for community leaders and preachers, which had no counterpart in the Jewish tradition and which preceded the Tannaites by several generations.

In the penultimate essay, “Paul’s ‘Fool’s Speech’ (2 Cor 11:16-32) in the Context of Ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman Culture” (pp. 221-244), Catherine Hezser analyzes the literary, social and biographical context of the famous “Fool’s speech” in 2 Cor 11:16-32. Usually interpreted in the key of Greco-Roman rhetoric, it also shows numerous connections with the Jewish background. These include Paul’s idea of foolishness and wisdom, the identification of the apostle and his opponents as Jews in 2 Cor 11:22, a potential reference to the Suffering Servant in Paul’s catalog of adversities, the mention of being punished by the Jewish authorities, or the topic of dangers while traveling, also appearing in rabbinical literature. Eventually, Paul’s argument with his opponents in Corinth may resemble disputes with charismatic rabbis that took place in the bosom of Judaism after the seventies of the first century. The author concludes that in the absence of emphasis on theological issues, the differences between Paul and his adversaries were not as great as one could suppose, and the conflicts between Christian missionaries resembled similar Jewish conflicts of that time.

Finally, in the last text, “The Ascent into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1-12): Paul’s Mer-kava Vision and Apostolic Call” (pp. 245-285), Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones points to a similarity between Paul’s vision of the third heaven in 2 Cor 12:1-12 and the Jewish literature of *hekhalot*. Despite the skepticism about the ancient provenance of the *hekhalot*, the author derives their roots from the Jewish mysticism of the Second Temple period. Presenting the rabbinical versions of the story about “The Four Who Entered Paradise,” Morray-Jones shows its connection with Qumran ideas. According to the author, the version of the story preserved in *hekhalot* may have been transmitted by Rabbi Akiba himself or by his school. Morray-Jones spots numerous parallels between Paul’s capture into Paradise and the story of the four: the presence of an angel threatening the hero, the hero being smitten by the angel, leaving the protagonist alive and the mysterious words that he hears when ascending to heaven. Moreover, in accord with the conventions of *hekhalot*, Paul, like Akiba, does not want to feel superior due to the visions which are at the same time to serve his apostolic authority. In the last step, the author attempts a chronological placement of the vision in 2 Cor 12:1-12, combining it with Chapter Twenty Two of the Acts. According to Morray-Jones, the Pauline vision took place in Jerusalem three years after the apostle’s conversion.

Second Corinthians in the Perspective of the Late Second Temple Judaism is a valuable contribution to the studies on the Corinthian correspondence. Its Greco-Roman background has already been given a lot of attention, while the same cannot be said about its Jewish roots.¹ The authors provide valid arguments

1 Among the works referring to the Greco-Roman background of Paul’s thought in Second Corinthians, see: H.D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition. Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner Apologie 2 Korinther 10-13* (BHT 45; Tübingen: Mohr 1972); H.D. Betz, “De laude ipsius (Moralia 539A–547F),” *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (ed. H.D. Betz)

for the unity of the letter and its Pauline authorship, including the problematic 2 Cor 6:14-7:1. The studies of Peter J. Tomson and Ze'ev Safrai are a real mine of information about the Jewish parallels to the aforementioned passage as well as about the living conditions and subsistence of Christian and Jewish communities in the first century. An excellent article by the late Friedrich Avemarie could perhaps be supplemented with an analysis of Paul's application of *synkrisis*, from which one can deduce that the apostle, comparing the New Covenant to the Mosaic Covenant, treats the latter as still standing and valuable.

Like any good scholarly work, *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of the Late Second Temple Judaism* also opens itself up to criticism. It may regard, for

(SCHNT 4; Leiden: Brill 1978) 367-393; P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth. Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT II/23; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1987); J.T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel. An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBLDS 99; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1988); F.W. Danker, "Paul's Debt to the De Corona of Demosthenes. A Study of Rhetorical Techniques in Second Corinthians," *Persuasive Artistry. Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (eds. G.A. Kennedy – D.F. Watson) (JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1991) 262-280; J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power. A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1992); M.M. DiCicco, *Paul's Use of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in 2 Corinthians 10-13* (Mellen Biblical Press series 31; Lewiston: Mellen 1995); B.K. Peterson, *Eloquence and the Proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth* (SBLDS 163; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1998); D.A. Hester, "The Unity of 2 Corinthians. A Test Case for a Re-Discovered and Re-Invented Rhetoric," *Neot.* 33/2 (1999) 411-432; F.J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology. The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (SNTSMS 131; Cambridge U.K. – New York: Cambridge University Press 2004); I. Vegge, *2 Corinthians, a Letter about Reconciliation. A Psychagogical, Epistolographical, and Rhetorical Analysis* (WUNT II/239; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008); T. Schmeller, "Die Cicerobriefe und die Frage nach der Einheitlichkeit des 2. Korintherbriefs," *ZNW* 95/3-4 (2004) 181-208; T.D. Stegemann, "Ancient Rhetorical and Epistolary Theory. Second Corinthians as Deliberative Discourse," *Method and Meaning. Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge* (eds. A. MacGowan – K.H. Richards – H.W. Attridge) (RBS 67; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2011) 193-2011; V.H.T. Nguyen, *Christian Identity in Corinth. A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus, and Valerius Maximus* (WUNT II/243; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012); M. Kowalski, *Transforming Boasting of Self into Boasting in the Lord. The Development of the Pauline Periautologia in 2 Cor 10-13* (Studies in Judaism; Lanham: University Press of America 2013); R. Bieringer, "Présence dans l'absence du corps. Constructions de la présence et de l'absence de Paul en 2 Corinthiens dans la perspective des épîtres pauliniennes et du monde grec," *Paul's Graeco-Roman Context* (ed. C. Breytenbach) (BETL 277; Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT: Peeters 2015) 357-371; J.R. Unwin, "« Thrown down but not destroyed ». Paul's Use of a Spectacle Metaphor in 2 Corinthians 4:7-15," *NovT* 57/4 (2015) 379-412. For the Jewish background of Second Corinthians, see e.g.: T.R. Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant. Discursive Strategies in the Damascus Document and Second Corinthians* (WUNT II/233; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007); S.J. Joubert, "Paul's Apocalyptic Eschatology in 2 Corinthians," *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (ed. J.G. van der Watt) (WUNT II/315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011) 225-238; S.J. Hafemann, "Paul's Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians," *Int* 52/3 (1998) 246-257; J. Heath, "Moses' End and the Succession. Deuteronomy 31 and 2 Corinthians 3," *NTS* 60/1 (2014) 37-60; E.M. Humphrey, "Ambivalent Apocalypse: Apocalyptic Rhetoric and Intertextuality in 2 Corinthians," *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (ed. D.F. Watson) (SBLSS 14; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2002) 113-135.

example, the image of the Corinthian community that notoriously defies Paul's authority, as presented in the articles by Reimund Bieringer and Peter J. Tomson. Such a stance seems to be contradicted by chapters such as 2 Corinthians 7, as well as by metaphors, irony, a careful distinction between the community and the opponents, and the genre of periautology employed by Paul in 2 Cor 10–13. They would have the opposite effect if Paul was not sure that the Corinthian community was on his side.²

Likewise, Joshua Schwartz's thesis may be considered problematic for he claims that the parting of ways between Christians and Jews can be attributed to socio-historical factors, practically excluding theological issues. Was not the separation between the Synagogue and the Church also influenced by faith in Christ as God, whose development is confirmed in Paul's letters already at the early Christian stage? The emergence of this phenomenon and its problematicity were aptly described in numerous publications by Larry Hurtado.³ Was not the threat that Christ's followers posed to the Pharisees' plans a reason for Paul's persecution of the Church, as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor suggests?⁴ While Schwartz rightly underscores the importance of socio-historical factors, he overlooks the novelty and problematic nature of faith in the divinity of Christ, which was also a catalyst for the separation of Christians and Jews.

It is also difficult to accept the conclusion of Catherine Hezser, who claims there was practically no doctrinal difference between Paul and his opponents. The apostle himself, in 2 Cor 11:1-4, expresses his anxiety about the purity of the community's faith, which was susceptible to the influence of his adversaries. The apostle speaks of a different Jesus, Spirit and gospel that they proclaim. One can agree with scholars claiming that this difference may be associated primarily with the lifestyle propagated by the opponents, their theology of strength, success and brilliant rhetorical demonstration. However, their model of the apostolate is closely related to their vision of Christ and the lack of orthopraxis naturally indicates the lack of orthodoxy. Finally, it is difficult to imagine how the mysticism of *merkava* and *hekhlot* could be central to Paul's religious experience and his understanding of the apostolate, as Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones argues. Even statistically speaking, visions do not play a major role in Paul's epistles. The apostle mentions the Damascus event very sparingly and only to stress his apostolic authority (Ga 1:12, 15; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). Paul also refers to the mysteries which the Lord continually reveals to him (Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1;

² See Kowalski, *Transforming Boasting of Self into Boasting in the Lord*, 158-171.

³ L.W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans 2005); L.W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans 2005).

⁴ J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul a Critical Life* (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 1997) 65.

15:5; 2 Thess 2:7). For the most part, however, his letters lack the descriptions of heavenly realities and encounters with angels, characteristic of mystical literature. The questions raised by Paul are practical and serve to respond to specific problems of his communities. In 2 Cor 12:1-12 Paul deliberately hides behind a “certain man” and states that he does not want his apostolate to be judged on the basis of visions, but only on the basis of what the believers see and hear from him (2 Cor 12:6). Jewish mysticism, however interesting and undoubtedly present in the Jewish theology of the first century, does not seem to be an inspiration first for Paul the Pharisee and then for Paul a Christian.

To sum up, when reading *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of Late Second Temple Judaism* one can get the impression that sometimes the proposed Jewish parallels blur the logic of Paul’s arguments and the novelty of his ideas. The major weakness of the *New Perspective on Paul* is that the authors make Paul fit so neatly his Jewish environment that he loses all his freshness and originality. Was it not the novelty of the Gospel that ultimately translated into the success of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles? Was it not the cause of the apostles’ persecutions? Despite these polemical remarks, *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of the Late Second Temple of Judaism* is absolutely worth recommending to anyone who is looking for a stimulating and content-rich reading on the Jewish foundations of Paul’s thought and mission.

