

“The Temple of the Living God”: A Study of the Old Testament Explicit Quotations in 2 Corinthians 6,14-7,1

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Introduction

Paul was “the man of three cultures, bearing in mind his Jewish origins, his Greek language and his privilege of being ‘civis romanus’, as also evinced by his name of Latin origin. Another factor to bear in mind is the Stoic philosophy which was dominant in Paul’s day and which contains exalted values of humanity and wisdom that were naturally taken up by Christianity”.¹ He was a man of his time, of the Jewish culture and at the same time versed in the Hellenistic life. Paul’s double citizenship was of immense help in his apostleship. His Jewish background and knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures prepared him for the enormous task ahead of him. His acquired Hellenistic culture gave him the essential tool needed to communicate proficiently to the Gentiles the divine message he received.

Of great importance, indeed, is Paul’s knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Right from the time of the apostles, the Church has always acknowledged the continuity between the OT and the NT. The Evangelists, in their profuse use of the OT interpreted in the light of their experience of Jesus, see the event of Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT. Significant are the words of Jesus after his resurrection: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24,44). This refers to the tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible, which the NT writers copiously cited in their work.² Paul was well acquainted with the contents of these three parts of the OT and made proficient use of them in his mission and letters.

In Phil 3,5-6; Gal 1,14; 2 Cor 11,22 Paul refers to his Pharisaic tradition known for its devotion to the study of Jewish Scriptures, particularly the Law.³ His vast knowledge of the OT is manifested in the many OT images he employs in his letters. Apart from 1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Philemon, all the other letters attributed to Paul in the NT contain explicit OT quotations, of which all together are about ninety.⁴ Paul cites the OT according to his Jewish contemporaries. He makes use of the LXX or takes from both the LXX and the Hebrew version. Sometimes he gives the OT texts new meaning in the context of his letter: Hab 2,4 in Rom 1,17; Gal 3,11; Gen 12,7 in Gal 3,16. Furthermore, he allegorizes some OT texts: Gen 16,15 and 17,16 in Gal 4,21-25. “His Jewish background makes him quote the OT to stress the unity of God’s action in both dispensations, and often as announcing the Christian gospel (Rom 1,2) or preparing for Christ (Gal 3,24)”.⁵

2 Cor 6,14-7,1 studied in this paper is a good example of Paul’s use of the OT and his expertise in Greek rhetoric: “It is almost as though we can in this passage catch an echo of Paul the preacher; the series of rhetorical questions, the notable variety of vocabulary and construction, the quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures and the application of the biblical promises to those he is addressing (7,1) – all these

¹ BENEDICT XVI, “General Audience, July 2, 2008”, *Vatican News Service July 2, 2008*.

² Studies have shown that there are about 160 implicit quotations and allusions, 38 explicit quotations of the OT in the Gospel according to Matthew; 60 implicit and allusions, and 15 explicit quotations in Mark; 192 implicit and allusions, and 15 explicit quotations in Luke; 137 implicit and allusions, and 14 explicit quotations in John; 140 implicit and allusions, and 22 explicit quotations in Acts; 72 implicit and allusions, and 47 explicit quotations in Paul’s Letter to the Romans. These figures are according to THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION, *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002) 17.

³ JEROME MURPHY-O’CONNOR, *Paul A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 59.

⁴ JOSEPH A. FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology”, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992) 1384.

⁵ FITZMYER, “Pauline Theology”, 1384.

conjure up to vivid picture of the power and the effect of the apostle's preaching".⁶ This paper studies 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 in the context of 2 Corinthians with particular interest in Paul's use of the Jewish Scriptures, Greek persuasive literary technique, and the focal theme of "the temple of the living God" predicated of all Christians.

1. The Context of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

The Corinth that Paul visited about three times around 50-56 AD in his missionary journeys is situated on the Peloponnesian⁷ coast of Greece. It is on a plateau at the southern part of the isthmus (a narrow portion of land, enclosed on each part by water and connecting two larger bodies of land: a neck of land) with a mountain (575 m) called Acrocorinth behind it. Corinth has access through its two ports, Cenchreae and Lecaenum, to the two main seas of the area, Aegean and Adriatic. This geographical position of Corinth made it a famous commercial centre and consequently the name "wealthy". Lucius Mummius, a Roman General, destroyed the city in 146 BC but Julius Caesar rebuilt it in 44 BC when he recognized its strategic location. He made it a Roman colony filled initially with freed slaves. The merchants who settled in Corinth came from Greece, Syria, Egypt, and Judea. Some of these wealthy merchants sponsored Corinth's biennial Isthmian games celebrated at the sanctuary of Poseidon (the god of earthquakes and of the seas in Greek mythology) at Isthmus (proper name of a place in Corinth) of Corinth.

From the contents of the Acts of the Apostles and 1-2 Corinthians, we learn that Paul visited Corinth about three times in his missionary journeys. His first visit, according to Acts 18,1-3 between AD 50-52,⁸ was engendered by hostility and rejection in Philippi and Thessalonica. Aquila and Prisca, Jewish Christians expelled from Rome, were already at Corinth when Paul arrived. Hence, contrary to his claim in 1 Cor 3,6.10; 4,15, Paul may not have been the first Christian in the city. He preached in Jewish Synagogue and made many converts from both Jews and Gentiles, from the lower to middle strata of society, with artisans and ex-slaves far outnumbering the rich.

When Paul left Corinth in 52 AD with Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18,18), other missionaries, perhaps more vivacious like Apollos, arrived and set divisive spirit among the converts who relapsed into "idolatry and sexual immorality that were endemic in the community with Achaian capital".⁹ Report of this reached Paul when he was at Ephesus and 1 Corinthians, composed about 56 AD, was his urgent response. Timothy confirmed this degenerated situation of Corinthian converts, caused by false apostles, when he visited the city in early 57 AD (Acts 19,21-22; 1 Cor 4,17-19; 16,10-11). Paul himself refers to these false apostles in 2 Cor 11,12-15. He made his second visit to put the situation aright but this was a failure (2 Cor 2,1) for "he was perceived as timid and ineffective when face to face with the Corinthians".¹⁰ He was even insulted publicly by someone during this second visit (2 Cor 2,5-11; 7,12). He went back to Ephesus and sent to Corinth what he called a letter "with many tears" (2 Cor 2,3-4; 7,8-9). Though with many tears and painful to the addressees, the missive achieved its goal; the Corinthians repented, showed concern for what they did to him, and were anxious to prove their innocence. A greater part of Second Corinthians, written about 57 AD, was Paul's response to the situation. His third visit to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 12,14; 13,1-2) was about late 57 and early 58 AD.

⁶ P.E. HUGHES, P. E., *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans, 1961) 246.

⁷ Peloponnese is a peninsula forming the southernmost part of the Greek mainland.

⁸ RAYMOND E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2004) 514.

⁹ PAUL BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997) 343.

¹⁰ BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 542.

Apart from the opening formula (1,1-2) and thanksgiving (1,3-11), the corpus of 2 Corinthians can be broadly divided into three major parts according to their contents.¹¹ In part one (1,12-7,16), Paul recalls his painful visit, his letter “with many tears”, and the disciplinary measure the Corinthians employed to correct the hostile person that confronted him publicly during his second visit. He even urges them to have mercy and pardon the person. He refers at length to the crisis at Corinth (2,14-7,16), particularly the attack on him by the false or would-be apostles who unsettled the minds of the converts. Even though they entered with letter of recommendation, Paul does not need such letter because the Corinthians have already experienced him and the genuineness of his ministry among them. He opens his mind to them and urges them to do the same. The section 6,14-7,1 fall into this part and flows from what precedes it. Its dualistic contradictions insist on the need for separation from unbelievers. “Withdrawing from the Gentile cults will be their way of responding to his call to them, demonstrating that they are an apostolic church”.¹²

The second part of the letter (8,1-9,15) is on Paul’s zeal to help the Church in Jerusalem. His built-up confidence leads him to request collection for this purpose. Finally, part three (10,1-13,10) returns to the crisis among the Corinthians. Paul affirms that his ministry proceeds from God and cannot be undermined by those who purport to be super-apostles (11,5; 12,11). The exhortation at the end (13,11-13) ends with a triadic blessing that is found even today in Christian liturgy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13,13).

2. The Text of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

A close study of this text elicits Paul’s use of the OT and elucidates the message he relates to the Corinthian converts.

2.1 Integrity of the Text

A predominant interest among some Biblical scholars¹³ in the study of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is to determine the Pauline or non Pauline authorship of these six verses the greater part of which are some explicit quotations from the OT. Consensus on this issue is far from being a reality. Some of the arguments are based on the style, content and context of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1. A synthesis of the arguments for and against Pauline authenticity of this text is considered necessary here.

First in the lists of arguments against the Pauline authorship of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is that the preceding statement in v.13 is a positive direct appeal or exhortation different from the negative pitch with which v. 14 begins. A close reading of the context, however, observes that direct address in the wider context of 6,14-7,1 is rare; therefore, our text cannot be taken as discontinuity but rather continuity in its context.

The second argument is based on the six hapax legomena (*heterozugei*, *metochē*, *sumphōnēsis*, *Beliar*, *sunktathesis*, and *molusmos*) found in 6,14-7,1 which make the text a non-Pauline. Contrary to this observation is that Paul tends to use rare words in his outstanding rhetorical passages like the one we are

¹¹ There are varying views on the structure of 2 Corinthians and these depend on whether one considers the letter as integral or a conglomeration of many missives from Paul.

¹² BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 341.

¹³ Cf. H.D. BETZ, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?” *JBL* 92 (1973) 88-108; J. D. M. DERRET, “2 Cor 6,14ff: A Midrash on Dt 22,10”, *Bib* 59 (1978) 231-250; G.D. FEE, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols”, *NTS* 23 (1976-77) 140-161; J.A. FITZMYER, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1”, *CBQ* 23 (1961) 271-280; J.C. HURD, *The Origin of 1 Cor* (New York 1965) 235-239; J. LAMBRECHT, “The Fragment 2 Cor 6,14-7,1: A Plea for its Authenticity”, *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* (ed. T. BAARDA, et al., NovTSup 48; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 2: 143-161; J. MURPHY-O’CONNOR, “Relating 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 to its Context”, *NTS* 33 (1987) 272-275; M.E. THRALL, “The Problem of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 in some Recent Discussion”, *NTS* 24 (1977-78) 132-148.

studying.¹⁴ Another example is 2 Cor 6,3-10 which has four hapaxes and two other words that are found only in Paul.

Furthermore, 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 makes use of dualistic contrasts or antithesis which are common in Qumran documents. The occurrence of the term Belial in the text seems to give credence to this because it is also found in Qumran literature (cf. 1QM 13,1-4; 1Qs 1,18.24; 2,19; 1QH 6,21).¹⁵ On account of this 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 is, according to some scholars,¹⁶ an interpolation in 2 Corinthians. The use of antithesis is common in Pauline Letters and many of the words employed in the antithetical phrases are typical of Paul.¹⁷

Finally, the text emphasizes so much exclusiveness by the use of “flesh” / “Spirit” dualism which is not common in Paul. To this claim, a counter argument explains that these antithetical words respectively means in the context “outwardly” and “inwardly”.¹⁸

In addition to the points for the Pauline authorship of the text, one observes that the style of triple OT citations found therein occurs also in Rom 3,10-18. In fact, “this passage does not stem from a sectarian backwater, but from mainstream Hellenistic –Jewish thought with a pattern of OT citations that is entirely Pauline”.¹⁹ In important ancient Manuscripts – Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus – of 2 Corinthians, our text is well attested.²⁰ Actually, “there is no evidence that 2 Corinthian ever existed without this section”.²¹ Many recent commentaries on 2 Corinthians consider 6,14,-7,1 as Paul’s authentic composition that flows with his thought in both the wider and immediate contexts of the text.²²

The crisis caused by the advent of false prophets who disparaged Paul’s mission among the Corinthians led to deterioration in the moral life of the converts. Paul finds himself setting aright these two urgent situations – saving his image and helping the converts to preserve the faith. Both are interrelated. If the converts still recognize him as true apostle, they will live the true message of salvation he has communicated to them and remain worthy followers of Christ. He does this through some arguments that he draws from his life experiences (2,14-17; 6,3-10) and from the common belief of true Christians who are the heirs of the new covenant inaugurated by and in Jesus (3,1-18; 6,14-7,1). Each of these has an exhortation that will help the Corinthians solve their current crisis. Exhortation that flows from Paul’s argument based on his personal experiences is presented in 6,11-13; and exhortation from his argument on the salvation history is seen in the two synonymous exhortations in 6,14 and 7,1, which forms an inclusion in the section of 6,14-7,1. Because 6,14-7,1 belongs to his argument on redemptive history, he cites passages from the Scriptures to corroborate his points.

2.2 Literary Style of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

¹⁴ Cf. R. P. MARTIN, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1986) 192.

¹⁵ The text is according to FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996.

¹⁶ BETZ, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?” 88-108; FITZMYER, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1”, 271-280

¹⁷ FEE, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols”, 140-161.

¹⁸ FEE, “2 Cor 6,14-7,1 and Food Offered to Idols”, 161.

¹⁹ BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 340.

²⁰ KURT ALAND – BARBARA ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995) J.

²¹ SCOTT J. HAFEMANN, *2 Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000) 278.

²² PAUL BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997) 337-358; SCOTT J. HAFEMANN, *2 Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000) 277-304; CHARLES HODGE, *2 Corinthians* (The Crossway Classic Commentaries; Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1995) 132-137; JERRY W. McCANT, *2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 62-68; FRANK J. MATERA, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library; Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003) 156-168; JAMES M. SCOTT, *2 Corinthians* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998) 150-164;

Christians are by their vocation the new people of God with the new covenant in the blood of Jesus. They continue, with significant newness, the promise that God made to the people of the old covenant. The divine-human relation and the stipulations to be observed by humans still endure. Central to this is the worship of the true God. Paul presents this to the Corinthians with arguments derived from the Scriptures.

The intrinsic structure of this text can be easily recognized. There are exhortations at the two extremes of the text, marking an inclusion in the text. The first exhortation is articulated in a negative imperative mood of the second person plural, addressed to the Corinthians: *mē gínesthe heterozugountes apistoi* “do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (6,14a). In 7,1 the exhortation is cohortative: *katharisōmen heautous apo pantos molusmou sarkos kai pneumatou, epitelountes hagiōsunēn en phobō theou* “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God”.

There are five antithetical rhetorical questions in 6,14-16a. This is followed first by what has been recognized²³ as the basic assertion in the text: *hēmeis gar naos theou esmen sōntos*, “for we are the temple of the living God”. The antithetical rhetorical questions contain five pairs of antitheses that prepare for this affirmation. These opposing terms, each beginning with the positive one, are arranged thus:

Righteousness – lawlessness
Light – darkness
Christ – Beliar
Believer – unbeliever
Temple of God – (temple of) idols

In the fifth pair he employs an ellipsis of repetition, whereby “the omitted word or words is, or are to be supplied out of the preceding or following clause, in order to complete the sense”.²⁴ The omitted word in our text is “temple”. The rhythmic feature of the five rhetorical questions formed from these pairs is as follows:

For what partnership is there between **righteousness** and *lawlessness*?
Or what fellowship is there between **light** and *darkness*?
What agreement does **Christ** have with *Beliar*?
Or what does a **believer** share with an *unbeliever*?
What agreement has the **temple of God** with *idols*?

Paul evokes the authority of Scripture by his use of OT quotations (v. 16) to support his message conveyed in the rhetorical questions.

Still making use of OT citations in vv. 17-18, he presents two direct commands supported by two promises. The two commands are:

come out from them, and be separate from them
and touch nothing unclean

Their corresponding promises taken from the OT and followed by “thus says the Lord” are presented thus:

then I will welcome you,

²³ BARNETT, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 343.

²⁴ E.W. BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2003) 70, 79.

and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters.

The OT citations, therefore, are significant part of the argument in the text.

2.3 Analyzing the Rhetorical Questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

The rhetorical questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 flow from the introductory negative command in v.14a: *mē ginesthe heterozugountes apistoi* “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers”. The verb, which is participle present active nominative masculine second person plural, is the first out of the six hapax legomena in this section. It means “to be unevenly yoked” or “mismatched”. Its underlying word is the substantive *zugos* “yoke” used figuratively in the NT (Matt 11,29-30; Acts 15,10; Gal 5,1; 1 Tim 6,1). Here the author construes it with imperative present middle or passive deponent second person plural from *ginomai*. Our text has been cited as an example of where *ginomai* in various tenses with a present or perfect participle is used in an analogous way to denote the beginning of a state or condition.²⁵ On this note, the author of our text would be presenting the command as if the addressees have not yet started lending themselves to unbelievers. In other words, the command respectfully eschews any tone of reprimand. The present tense in the command, in addition, indicates in our text an ongoing process. In 2 Cor 6,14 Paul is simply prohibiting the Corinthians from being yoked with unbelievers as a way of life, whether they have begun to do so or not.²⁶ He stresses this carefully constructed imperative by using five rhetorical questions.

Deuteronomy 22,10 may have been a matrix of this command: “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together”. Ox and donkey do not have the same strength. Again, this prohibition is probably made because of the law of clean and unclean animals in Deut 14,1-8; ox is “clean” and ass “unclean”.²⁷ Another OT text that could be a background to Paul’s command is Lev 19,19: “You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials”.

In 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 the author colligates the five rhetorical questions with five pairs of antitheses, and each question beginning with what would have been the point of congruity of the opposing terms. In addition, each of the pairs begins with the positive term from the perspective of both the text and its author. A rhetorical question anticipates a negative answer. It is a persuasive *modus operandi* of stating a fact. In our text, the point is: Christian life is irreconcilable with immorality and idolatry. The questions highlight the different aspects of the identity of Christian life.

By way of definition, antithesis is a figure of speech by which two thoughts, ideas or phrases, are set over one against the other, in order to make the contrast more striking, and thus to emphasize it. The two parts so placed are hence called in Greek *antitheta*, and in Latin *opposita* and *contrapposita*. When this contrast consists of words rather than sentences, it is called *epanodos* and *antimetabole*. When this contrast is made by affirmatives and negatives, it is called *enantiosis* (cf. Isa 1,21; 59,9; 65,13,14; Lam 1,1; Rom 5,18,19; 6,7,8; 8,5,13; 15,12; 2 Cor 4, 17,18; etc.).²⁸

Second Corinthians contains many examples of this literary device. In 2 Cor 6 alone one observes some striking examples. In vv. 7c-8b there are three antitheses to elucidate Paul’s conduct in his ministry: “with

²⁵ F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1961) § 354.

²⁶ .SCOTT, *2 Corinthians*, 279.

²⁷ DUANE L. CHRISTENSEN, *Deuteronomy 21,10-34,12* (WBC 6B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002) 508.

²⁸ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 715.

the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left / in honor and dishonor / in ill repute and good repute”. In 8c-10 Paul, employing seven antitheses presents the reality of his life against how some perceive him: “We are treated as impostors, and yet are true / as unknown, and yet are well known / as dying, and see-- we are alive / as punished, and yet not killed / as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing / as poor, yet making many rich / as having nothing, and yet possessing everything”.

The antitheses in 2 Cor 6,14-16 continue the use of this literary technique in its immediate context. The first question reads: *tis gar metochē dikaiosunē kai anomia*. It reinforced the introductory command. Its post positive particle *gar* subordinates this first question and the subsequent ones to the preceding imperative. Righteousness and lawlessness have nothing in common because they are two mutually exclusive spheres. Paul contracts these two words again in his exhortation in Rom 6,19. The first term, *dikaosunē*, belonging to the sphere of life in Christ, has these variegated meanings: justice, righteousness, uprightness: this occurs 91x in the NT and 57x in Paul (33x in Romans), having a ratio of 62% of its total occurrences in the NT. Its ethical meaning in our text is determined by its antithesis, *anomia* “lawlessness”, “wickedness”, sin as a frame of mind. Therefore, the contrast in our text is similar to the message of Psalms 1; 11; 34. There are two ways in human life as *homo religiosus*: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked.

In the second question, the author adds another reason why the Corinthians should have nothing to do with the life of unbelievers: *tis koinōnia phōti pros skotos*. Since they are in the light, they need not move to the sphere of darkness. Light and darkness as two polar opposites form a word pair that is recurrent in Paul’s letters ((Rom 2,19; 13,12; 1 Cor 4,5; Eph 5,11-14; 1 Thess 5,4-5) and in the NT in general (Matt 4,16; Luke 1,79; John 1,5; 3,19; Acts 26,18; John 1,5; 2,8). In our text, “light is not a mystical concept, but a moral designation that refers to the new life of obedience to God, engendered by trusting in Christ by the power of the Spirit”.²⁹

In the third question the author contrasts Christ with Beliar (or the variant Belial). “Beliar” is another hapax in this text. In the Qumran text (1 QM 13,1-4; 1 QS 1,18,24; 1 QH 14,21) and apocalyptic Judaism it is a proper noun for Satan. It occurs about twenty-seven times as *bālīyya ‘al* (derived from two words *bālī* “not”, “without” and *ya ‘al* “worth”, “use”, “profit”) “wordlessness”, “wickedness” in the Hebrew Bible and often in compound expressions like ‘*īš habbālīyya ‘al* (1 Sam 25,25; 2 Sam 16,7; 20,1; 1 Kgs 21,15; Prov 16,27), *ben-bālīyya ‘al* (Deut 13,14; Judg 19,22; 20,13; 1 Sam 25,17), *dəḇar- bālīyya ‘al* (Ps 41,9).³⁰ Belial occurs often in the Pseudepigraphic Literature of the Jews like *Jubilees*, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Lives of the Prophets*, etc; in all these Belial is personified.³¹ In the Qumran texts, “Belial is the most frequently used title for the leader of the forces of darkness”.³² 1QM 13,4, for instance reads: “Accursed be Belial in his malicious plan, may he be damned for his wicked rule. Accursed be all the spirits of his lot in his wicked ... plan”.³³ It is significant that the author of 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 contrasts Christ and Belial immediately after the antithesis “light and darkness”. Christ, the light belongs to a realm quite different from darkness of Belial.

In the fourth question *tis meris pistō meta apistou* “what does a believer share with unbeliever?” The author becomes more concrete for he has been speaking until now in metaphors. The Corinthian converts have nothing to do with the unbelievers for Christians belong to Christ, the light and his sphere of action is quite different from that of darkness represented by Belial.

²⁹ HAFEMANN, 2 *Corinthians*, 281.

³⁰ THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* I (London: Doubleday, 1992) 654-656.

³¹ See THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, 655, for examples of these occurrences.

³² THEODORE J. LEWIS, “Belial”, 655.

³³ FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 107.

The fifth and final question prepares for the affirmation at the end of all the five rhetorical questions. “Paul establishes the contrast that will function as a thematic statement for the scriptural quotation that he will soon introduce”.³⁴ *Tis de sunkatathesis naō theou meta eidōlōn* “what agreement has the temple of God with idols?”. We have noted above that there is an ellipsis of repetition in this question, which should read “what agreement has the temple of God with temple of idols?” If this observation construes what the author had in mind, then the contrast is between the temple of God and the temple of idols. Another observation is Paul’s choice of the word for temple, *naos*. Its meaning here could be related to the corresponding verb *naiō* “to inhabit”. In the LXX *naos* translates *hēkāl* “the innermost part of the temple”, “the shrine”. It is also one of the Hebrew terms for the Jerusalem Temple. *Naos* refers to the sacred worship space itself (Mark 14,58; 15,29; John 2,19-20). The synonym *hieron* refers more to the entire temple precinct (Matt 12,6; 21,12; Mark 13,3; Luke 22,52; John 10,23; Acts 19,27). From the meaning of *naos* the contrast is on the dwelling place of God and the dwelling place of idols; the two have nothing in common. An idol cannot dwell in God’s temple.

This fifth rhetorical question is the climax of the five and it is closely linked to the assertion that ensues: *hēmeis gar naos theou esmen*. “For we are the temple of the living God”. Just as the *gar* links the first question to the introductory command in v.14, the *gar* in this affirmation links it to the entire rhetorical question and in particular, to the climactic fifth question. There are some ancient texts³⁵ that read *humeis* instead of *hemeis* on the basis, perhaps, of similar expression in 1 Cor 3,16 as well as from the context. In the context, Paul is addressing the Corinthians, using the second person plural, particularly in vv.14 and 17. The difficult reading is preferred here because “*lectio difficilior praestat facili*”. The affirmation: “for we are the temple of God” does not refer only to the Corinthians. Paul reminds them of the universal feature of all Christians: a place where God dwells. He “draws an important conclusion that affects him as well as the Corinthians”.³⁶ It is newness of NT to call human beings temple of God for “nowhere in the Old Testament is Israel ever identified with the temple”.³⁷

In the OT the Jerusalem Temple is a place where God’s presence is experienced. The faithful long to be in God’s temple because of their ardent belief in God’s presence therein. It is God’s house, hence the common appellation, *bēt YHWH* and the variant *bēt Elohim* or with some pronominal suffixes.³⁸ Besides this meaning in the NT, Christ’s body is called a temple for in him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead (John 2,19).³⁹ The Church as the Body of Christ is also called God’s temple because of the presence of the Spirit. In the same way, each believer is the temple of God (1 Cor 3,16; 6,19). A chain of OT quotations that follows substantiate Paul’s assertion on Christians being God’s temple.

3. The Old Testament Explicit Quotations in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1

Like a fully trained scribe Paul “brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13,52). He aptly chooses appropriate OT texts that confirm his argument. These citations are divided into three parts, segmented by some introductory formulae. The first formula introduces the first conflated quotation: “as God said” (v.16). In the second quotation, the formula comes at the end: “the Lord says” (v.17). The third formula is at the end of the third citation: “says the Lord Almighty” (v.18).

³⁴ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 163-164.

³⁵ These texts include both the Alexandrian and Western witnesses P⁴⁶ C D^c G Y 614 etc. the plural *naoi* is seen in Clement and Augustine (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994) 512.

³⁶ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 164.

³⁷ HAFEMANN, *2 Corinthians*, 282.

³⁸ MARY JEROME OBIORAH, *How lovely is your Dwelling Place: The Desire for God’s House in Psalm 84* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag Erzabtei, 2004) 137.

³⁹ HODGE, *2 Corinthians*, 135.

3.1 God's Promise to dwell with his People

The first OT citation reads: *enoikēsō en autois kai emperipatēsō kai esomai autōn theos kai autoi esontai mou laos* “I will be with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (v.16). This is taken from Lev 26,11-12; Jer 32,38 and Ezek 37,27.

Lev 26,11-12

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wənāṭatī miškānī bəṭōkəkem wəlō' tīg'al naphšī 'etkē. wəhīṭhallaktī bəṭōkəkem wəhāyītī lāhem lē'lohīm wə'attem tihyū lī lə'ām	kai thēsō tēn diathēkēn mou en humin kai ou bdeluksetai hē psuchē mou humas kai emperipatēsō en humōn theos kai humeis esesthe mou laos.	I will place my dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Jer 32,38

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wəhāyū lī lə'ām 'ānī 'ehye-lāhem lē'lohīm	kai esontai moi eis laon kai egō esomai autois eis theon	They shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezek 37,27

BHS	LXX	NRSV
wəhāyāh miškānī 'ālēhem wəhāyītī lāhem lē'lohīm wəhēm māh yihyū lī lə'ām	kai estai hē kataskēnōsis mou en autois kai esomai autois theos kai autoi mou esontai laos.	My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The exact words of the first part of Paul's quotation, *enoikēsō en autois*, are not found in any of these. Closest to what he has is the initial phrase in the text of Ezek 37,27 *kai estai hē kataskēnōsis mou en autois*. In Paul's version, the key word is the verb *enoikein* “to dwell” which in the LXX translates the Hebrew *yšb*. *Enoikein* occurs again in Paul in Rom 8,11 for the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in the Christians. In 2 Tim 1,14 Paul exhorts Timothy to guard the good treasure entrusted to him with the help of the Holy Spirit living in all Christians. In Colossians 3,16 it is the word of Christ that dwells in the Christians. In 2 Timothy 1,5, faith dwells or lives in the Christians. Finally, in Rom 7,17 sin also lives in human beings. These are the only occurrences of this verb in the NT and impressively all are found in Paul. It is only in 2 Cor 6,16 that it is predicated of God. In the OT the corresponding Hebrew verb *yšb* occurs often to express God's dwelling in the temple, holy place, and in heaven.⁴⁰

The context of Ezek 37,27 is God's promise of the new covenant after the old has been violated and punishment due to it has been duly paid in the event of the exile.⁴¹ Leviticus 26,12 is often used in Jewish tradition to relate the restoration of the broken covenant after the exile.⁴² God promises to be with his people, to set his dwelling place among them. The promise that God will set his dwelling among his people is a periphrastic way of saying that God will dwell with his people. Paul is more direct in his use of the verb

⁴⁰ M. GÖRG, “yāšab”, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VI* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990) 420-438.

⁴¹ LESLIE C. ALLEN, *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990) 194.

⁴² JAMES M. SCOTT, “The Use of Scripture in 2 Corinthians 6,16c-18 and Paul's Restoration Theology”, *JSNT* 56 (1994) 82.

enoikein “to dwell in”, “to inhabit”. Christians are God’s dwelling place, his temple. The concept of the covenant expressed by the text of Ezek 37,27 is more explicit in the LXX version of Lev 26,11-12, *kai thēsō tēn diathēkēn mou en humin*. The Hebrew version reads *wənāṭatî miškānî bəṭōkəkem* “I will place my dwelling in your midst”. Paul’s version is certainly from this Hebrew text, and with the background of the covenant underlying the text. God promises to set his dwelling among his people; there he will meet with them and his presence will be immanent.⁴³

The next phrase in Paul’s first OT quotation is *kai emperipatēsō*. This has its equivalent in the LXX of Lev 26,12 and the corresponding Hebrew *wəhithallakṭî bəṭōkəkem*. The *hitpael* of *hлк* means “to walk back and forth, up and down”.⁴⁴ It denotes God’s active presence among his people. A literary figure has been recognized in the use of this word as predicated of God. This is the literary device of *anthropopatheia* – the ascription of human passions, actions or attributes to God. It is also called syncatabasis or condescension.⁴⁵ God condescends to the ignorance and infirmity of human beings.

The last part of the first OT quotation reads: *kai esomai autōn Theos kai autoi esontai mou laos* “and I will be their God and they will be my people”. It is found in the three passages he has conflated in his text; moreover, it is a common concept in the OT covenant. This text echoes the promise of the perpetuity of Davidic dynasty in 2 Sam 7,14. Speaking of the would-be heir of David’s throne the Lord made this promise: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”. Later this promise was interpreted to include the entire people who are the sons and daughters of the Lord (Isa 43,6). In the New Covenant, according to Paul, all who believe in Christ, and in the context, the Corinthians, are sons and daughters of God. God’s promise of old also applies to them. He lives in them through his Spirit whom Christians have all received.

3.2 Two Commands and a Divine Promise (v.17abc)

The second set of OT citations in v.17 reads:

1 Cor 6,17	NSRV
dio ekselthate ek mesou autōn kai aphoristhēte legei kurios, kai akathaptou mē haptesthe, kagō eisdeksomai humas	Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you,

This is a modified form of Isa 52,11

BHS	LXX	NRSV
sūrū sūrū šə’û miššām tāma’ ’al-tigā’û habbārū šə’û mitōkāh nōśə’î kəlî YHWH	apostēte apostēte ekselthate ekeithen kai akathaptou mē haptesthe ekselthate ek mesou autēs aphoristhēte hoi pherontes ta skeuē kupiou	Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord

⁴³ JOHN E. HARTLEY, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas, Texas: Word Books) 463.

⁴⁴ HARTLEY, *Leviticus*, 463.

⁴⁵ BULLINGER, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 871,888.

Paul separates these two commands with the formula “the Lord says”. Apart from Isaiah 52,11, which is the basic text, Paul’s version, specifically the last part on the divine promise is a reflection of Ezek 20,34, occurring also in Rev 18,4. In Isaiah, these words are exhortations addressed to the exiles to move out from Babylon, the land of their captivity, and to return to the Holy Land with the vessels of the Lord. “They are urged to protect their ritual cleanliness because their journey is a pilgrimage. They are going to present themselves before God”.⁴⁶

In appropriating this text, Paul has to modify it in order to match his argument. He excludes first the “immediate repetition” in Isaiah and changes *ekeithen* “from there” to *ek mesou autōn* “out from them”, which refers to the unbelievers from whom he wants the Corinthians to extricate themselves. He takes the verb *aphoristhēte* “be separated”, from the LXX instead of the Hebrew *habbārû*, *niphal* imperative from the verbal root *brr* “to purify”. The commands “to come out” and “to be separated” are joined in Paul’s version for they are synonyms, and using two of them together he heightens the imperative. In the next imperative, *kai akathaptou mē haptesthe*, “and touch nothing unclean”, Paul’s version agrees with the LXX and the Hebrew version. The last phrase in the Isaiah’s is not pertinent in Paul’s context and this explains why he does not include it.

In his exhortation to the Corinthians to have nothing to do with the way of life of the unbelievers among whom they live, Paul takes a text from Isaiah, which was addressed to the exiles about to leave the land of their captivity. Paul finds similarity between the condition of the exile and that of his Corinthian converts. In fact, the text fulfils its purpose. Just as the exiles had to leave their slavery, the Corinthians also have to separate themselves from idolatry and immoral behaviour because they are the temple of God. The exiles had to separate themselves from unclean things and persons because they had to encounter the Holy God.

The last part of the quotation in 1 Cor 6,17, “then I will welcome you”, is a promise that ensues from observing the two commands in this verse. It calls to mind Ezek 20,34: “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out”. The context is still the exile from where God promises to bring his people. The word *eisdechomai* occurs only here in the NT and it means “to receive”, “to welcome”, “take in”; it occurs too in the LXX version of Ezek 20,34. The OT texts refer to the restoration of the exiles and for Paul this restoration is already present through the merit of the death and resurrection of the Lord. The only condition as he exhorts the Corinthians is to be separated from all forms of ungodliness prevalent among the unbelievers. “For Paul this restoration is already occurring through his new covenant ministry, whereby God is gathering Gentile converts, such as the Corinthians, into the sanctified community of the church”.⁴⁷

3.3 A Divine Promise (v. 18)

The third quotation is taken from 2 Sam 7,14 and Isa 43,6. In 2 Cor 6,18 the text reads:

2 Cor 6,18	NRSV
kai esomai humin eis patera kai humeis esesthe moi eis huious kai thugateras legei kurios pantokratōp	and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

⁴⁶ JOHN D.W. WATTS, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC 25; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987) 217.

⁴⁷ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 167.

Second Samuel 7,14 is the promise of the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty, made to one person according to its OT context:

2 Sam 7,14 BHS	2 Sam 7,14 LXX	2 Sam 7,14 NRSV
'ānî 'ehye-lô lə'āḇ wəhû' yihye-lî ləḥēn	egō esomai autō eis patera kai autos estai moi eis huion	I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

In Isaiah 43,6, the promise made to David includes all God's sons and daughters: "I will say to the north, 'Give them up', and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth". Paul takes or combines both texts in order to show that the promise of the old covenant applies too to the people of the new covenant; they the sons and daughters of God, and God is their Father.

The importance of all the texts Paul has taken from the OT is summarized in his final exhortation in 2 Cor 7,1, which contains practical implication of this extended quotation.⁴⁸ The promises of the OT, particularly that God will have his dwelling among his people and that he will be a father and the Christians his sons and daughters, should spur the Corinthians to make holiness perfect in the fear of God. "Fear of God" here refers to the introductory command in v. 14 and at the same time elucidates it.

4. The Temple of the Living God: Setting Modern Syncretism aright

The fundamental point in Paul's argument is that "people are either on the side of God or the side of Satan".⁴⁹ There is no room for lukewarmness in Christianity. We have seen above that the central point in both the five rhetorical questions and the three sets of the OT quotations employed in the text is the affirmation, "for we are the temple of the living God". The variant "you are the temple of the living God", would limit this quality only to the Corinthians. Though this first option appears out of place in its context, it is the preferred reading. In the OT temple is God's house. The people believe that their God has a house, a physical edifice here on earth. He is not, however, limited to this sacred precinct. God is experienced in a special way in his house and it is his presence that makes the house holy, the holy dwelling of the Holy God.

The new covenant Paul teaches is continuity of the old one but with significant newness. God's temple is no longer a physical edifice made of bricks; it is human beings. In the first, it is the community of the believers in Jesus in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Second, each individual person is God's house in a special way, because God dwells in them. This affirmation has ethical dimension. If Christians are God's temple, the temple of the living God, according to Paul, then they should be aware of this singular privilege and comport accordingly.

The adjective "living" is significant and should be understood in its OT background where this is a divine appellation. 'ēl-hay "Living God" is not a frequent divine title in the Hebrew Bible. Actually, it occurs in the entire Psalter only in Pss 42,3 and 84,3 and interestingly in the context of an intense longing for God's presence.⁵⁰ Apart from these two texts of the Psalter, 'ēl-hay is found in Deut 5,26; Josh 3,10; 1Sam

⁴⁸ MATERA, *II Corinthians*, 167.

⁴⁹ KEVIN QUAST, *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994) 133.

⁵⁰ For a study of this divine title in Pss 42-43 and other passages in the OT cf. G. STOLA, *Il Desiderio di Dio: Studio dei Sal 42-43*. Estratto della Tesi di Dottorato della Facoltà Biblica del PIB; Roma: PIB, 2002) 48-65. Its occurrence in Ps 42,9 in some Syriac MSS is likely a harmonization with v.3.

17,26,36; 2Kgs 19,4,16 // Isa 37,4,17; Jer 10,10; 23,36; Hos 2,1, as well as in the Aramaic, *elāhā' hayyā'*, of Dan 6,21,27.⁵¹

Besides the two passages of the Psalter (Pss 42,3 and 84,3) that are directed to Yahweh, most of the texts in which *'ēl-hay* occurs have to do with some polemic against foreign opponents.⁵² The living God, in the words of Joshua, would drive out from before the Israelites all the nations who were obstacles to their entrance into the Promised Land (Josh 3,10). David in speaking about the haughtiness and insolence of the Philistine leader, Goliath, depicts him as one who defies the armies of the living God (1Sam 26,36). The envoy of the king of Assyria mocked the living God (2Kgs 19,4 // Isa 37,4), and in the prayers of Hezekiah, the monarch earnestly entreats Yahweh to hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the “living God” (2Kgs 19,16 // Isa 37,17). Yahweh is not like other gods who are “the work of the artisan and of the hands of the goldsmith” (Jer 10,9); “but the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer 10,10). The living God delivered his servant Daniel from the lions and from the threat of the foreign nation (Dan 6,21,27). It is possible that polemical statements against foreign nations and foreign gods prefer to mention the ‘living God’.⁵³

If God who has his home in the Christians is the living God, then their actions should not be dead actions. This is the point that the five rhetorical questions in 2 Cor 6,14-7,1 underscores. All these questions make the same point. The living and the dead belong to two different realms. Righteousness has nothing in common with lawlessness, etc. The OT explicit quotations, carefully chosen and conflated in the periscope, stress the same point. The Scriptures confirm what Paul has said; there are divine promises attached to its compliance.

One of the reasons for the Jubilee Year of Saint Paul is to bring his message anew to modern society; Paul still speaks to us in his letters. In 2 Cor 6,14-7,1, he addresses the perverting illness that threatens and challenges authentic Christian life; it is syncretism. Corinthians at Paul’s time tended towards this and he was not indifferent to their crisis. He did not mince words in his commands and exhortations. Syncretism, according to the periscope we have studied, is to allow oneself to be yoked to the opposite pole of where one should be. Hence, the introductory command with which the text begins reads: “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6,14). It is a warning against attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices.

Although Paul composed this text about two thousand years ago, he still speaks to our contemporary society that is not free from similar tendency. There should be some incompatible features endemic in a society where many overtly profess Christ and at the same time are notorious for high degree of corruption.⁵⁴ The text teaches all Christians of every age to be aware of their privilege of being the temple of the Living God.

Conclusion

Paul’s knowledge of the OT prepared him for the mission he unexpectedly received from God. He makes the best use of this knowledge and his Hellenistic culture. His proclamation of the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection has their firm support in the Jewish Scriptures which he relates to his addressees.

⁵¹ Besides the Hebrew Texts translated in the LXX, the OT passages that are found solely in the Greek text also records the same title. Thus, the phrase “the Living God” occurs in the LXX of Dan 4,22; 5,23; Tob 12,2; Esth 6,13; 3Macc 6,28.

⁵² Cf. T.N.D. METTINGER, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 86; A.M. BESNARD, *Le mystère du nom: quiconque invoquera le nom du Seigneur sera sauvé*. Joël 3, 5 (LD 35; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1962) 70-74.

⁵³ G. GERLEMAN, “hyh” leben”, *THAT I*, 554. However, F.M. CROSS, “El”, *TWAT I*, 276, thinks that it was originally a Baal epithet, a god who dies and rises.

⁵⁴ M. J. OBIORAH, “This People honours me with their Lips (Matt 15,8): Scriptural Hermeneutics, Critical or Literal”, *Focus*, December 2007-2008, pages 18-21.

Every situation in the life of his converts that needs his attention is fully addressed by employing arguments from the authority of the Scriptures and from practical life.

Paul addresses the crisis among his Corinthian converts by allowing his cultural backgrounds come into play. First is the use of antitheses in five antithetical sentences that practically stress the same point, though from different perspectives. Their point is that there is no middle way in serving God, a teaching that is already seen in the OT. It is either one is righteous or lawless; either one is for Christ or for Belial. The reason is that Christians by virtue of their vocation are the temple of the living God.

Paul draws from his Jewish background to underline this point. His quotation of the OT is quite different from how we would today cite the Scriptures. Our study of his OT sources has revealed that he conflates different Scriptural passages in order to arrive at an appropriate version that fits his argument. These OT texts are principally from the LXX. His point is that Christians are the temple of the living God. If his Corinthian converts understand this message, then they will not identify with the pervading and perverting practice in the society in which they find themselves. Paul's teaching, written many years ago, is not only for his immediate addresses but also for all Christians who, though in the world, should not of the world.