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Returning Home

**New Covenant and Second
Exodus as the Context for
2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1**

William J. Webb

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>AusBR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
BAGD	W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christians Literature</i>
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R.W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christians Literature</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
BHT	Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTH	Bibliothèque de Théologie Historique
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CGT	Cambridge Greek Testament
CNieT	Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
EB	Expositors Bible
EBib	Études Bibliques
EchBib	Echter-Bibel
ENT	Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovaniensis</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GCS	Geneva Series Commentaries
GNS	Good News Studies
GTB	Van Gorcum's Theologische Bibliotheek

GTW	Grundriss der Theologischen Wissenschaften
HAR	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HKNT	Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's NT Commentaries
HSNT	Die heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JAARSup</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion Supplements</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KKHSNT	Kurzgesasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Neuen Testament
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LCRL	Limited Classical Reprint Library
LNT	Literature of the New Testament
<i>LTP</i>	<i>Laval Théologique et Philosophique</i>
MeyerK	H.A.W. Meyer, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
MNTC	Moffat NT Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NEBNT	Neue Echter Bibel Neues Testament
NFTL	New Foundations Theological Library
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	<i>Novum Testamentum Supplements</i>
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTG	Neue Theologische Grundrisse
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OIM	Oxford Theological Monographs
OTWSA	<i>Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgenieskap in Suid-Africa</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
<i>SCath</i>	<i>Studia Catholica</i>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SMB	Serie Monografica di Benedictina
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>StBibTh</i>	<i>Studia Biblica et Theologica</i>

STR	Studia Travaux de Recherche
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TC	Theological Collections
TD	Theologischen Dissertationen
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TSK</i>	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>VEv</i>	<i>Vox Evangelica</i>
<i>VSpir</i>	<i>Vie Spirituelle</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

All secondary sources are cited in the footnotes by the author's last name and a convenient short title. Full titles and other bibliographic information are provided in the Bibliography.

PREFACE

This work has been enhanced through the assistance of many individuals. It was originally submitted as a ThD dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1990. I am grateful to my supervisors, David Lowery, Darrell Bock and Robert Chisholm, who gave thorough and gracious guidance throughout each stage of the research and writing process. I must give special credit to Darrell Bock, for it was his lectures on the use of the Old Testament in Luke–Acts that sparked the idea of investigating the traditions in the fragment and its present context. At that juncture, I abandoned the initial direction of my research and pursued what developed into a traditions study.

In its current form as a monograph, it is a work reborn. David Hill interacted with my thesis in its original state, causing me to rework my arguments at a number of crucial points. My own brother, Robert Webb, patiently and meticulously assisted in two revisions beyond the original work. I owe a great deal to both these men for strengthening this book, and I would like to thank them for expanding my horizons. Likewise, Andrew Kirk has been of great assistance in seeing the editorial stage of this work to a successful completion.

In the revision process, my colleagues Jerry Colwell and David Barker read and critically commented on extensive portions of the drafts. They have not only helped shape the content of this book, but added immeasurably to its clarity and style. I thank them along with the rest of the faculty, staff, administration, and board of Heritage Theological Seminary who have provided a warm and caring atmosphere for our family. Their Christian fellowship and encouragement in the writing of this book has meant a great deal to Marilyn and myself.

To my family I owe the greatest debt of gratitude. My parents, Dr Bud Webb and Mrs Doreen Webb, and my wife's parents, Major Barry McFadyen and Mrs June McFadyen, have continually offered us strength and encouragement in the task. Of more profound significance, they instilled in us a love for the Scriptures. My wife, Marilyn, and our three children, Jonathan, Christine and Joel, are my constant

joy. This book is dedicated to the four of them, most especially to Marilyn, who holds my deepest affection and has become my dearest friend. Without her support and love, this work could never have been completed.

William J. Webb
London, Ontario, Canada
May 12, 1993

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This initial Chapter provides a brief and uncomplicated orientation to the book. Without getting bogged down in too many details, I wish to introduce the problem which this book seeks to address, its corresponding hypothesis, and the contribution each Chapter makes towards that hypothesis. This introductory ‘roadmap’ should make the journey through the rest of the book a more enjoyable experience.

1. *The Problem*

The text of 2 Cor. 6.14–7.1, commonly called ‘the fragment’, has been the focus of much debate. Due in particular to its contextual problem, 2 Cor. 6.14–7.1 has been referred to as ‘the enigmatic paragraph’,¹ ‘the notoriously difficult text’,² or ‘an enigma within 2 Corinthians, neither its origin nor its place in the context being entirely clear’.³ The words of W.G. Kümmel are indicative of many New Testament scholars: ‘2 Cor. 6.14–7.1 forms a difficulty probably not to be solved, for this section is without thematic connection to its context and interrupts the good connection between 6.13 and 7.2.’⁴

1. Barrett, ‘Things Sacrificed to Idols’, p. 140.

2. Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit*, p. 85.

3. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, p. 383.

4. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 214. Cf. Young and Ford (*2 Corinthians*, p. 32) who comment on the fragment: ‘It is generally agreed that a satisfactory explanation of their position here [6.147.1] in 2 Corinthians has not been so far advanced. They are usually treated as an insertion.’ Likewise, Collange (*Énigmes*, p. 319) writes, ‘Au chapitre 6, enfin, la difficulté réside dans l’explication de la présence à cet endroit précis de l’épître du fragment 6.14–7.1’. Moffat (*Introduction*, p. 225) refers to 6.14–7.1 as ‘an erratic boulder’ standing out of place from its context. Fee (‘Food Offered to Idols’, p. 142) similarly states, ‘What strikes one as he reads the vast array of literature on this passage is the general unwillingness . . . to deal with the contextual question.’ A list of similar comments

Even the casual reader of 2 Corinthians would acknowledge that the removal 6.14–7.1 smooths the contextual flow, while its presence adds a certain abruptness and its subject matter is not easily explainable within the context.

2. *Statement of the Hypothesis*

It is the problem of contextual integration, then, which this book seeks to address. My hypothesis is that *the fragment is related to its present context through the use of new covenant and exilic return traditions*, particularly in light of Paul's identification with the 'ebed Yahweh (an identification which allows him to formulate his proclamation-message in second exodus language, 'Come out . . .'). The book's short-form title, *Returning Home*, represents a convenient reduction of the longer title, *Coming Out of Babylon and Returning Home*. Along with the return motif, this reflects the imperative: 'Come out of Babylon!' I have chosen this title in view of its crucial role in the contextual theory, echoing the cry for a new exodus. Its wording derives from a piece of the fragment's tradition ('Come out from among them') which has been heavily redacted in order to reiterate the opening exhortation in 6.14a. In this respect, the book's title epitomizes the call of the fragment from a traditions perspective: 'Come out of Babylon and return home'.

3. *Contribution of Chapters towards the Hypothesis*

Each Chapter contributes towards the hypothesis. Chapter 2 traces the history of the interpretation of 2 Cor. 6.14–7.1 from the Reformation to the present day. This historical survey not only provides the 'broader picture' of how larger trends in New Testament studies have influenced different interpretations of the passage, but grants the interpreter the all-too-rare opportunity of seeing one's own position in light of the ebb and flow of these historical trends. In the process, this Chapter introduces the reader to the legacy of scholarship upon which my own book builds and articulates how this study represents a new direction in research on the fragment.

on the fragment's lack of contextual continuity could be reproduced to fill several pages. These should be a sufficient sample.

The third, fourth and fifth Chapters develop the core of my proposed traditions hypothesis. Chapter 3 examines the fragment itself as an isolated unit apart from its present context in an attempt to understand its traditions—their sources, redactional modifications, and theological contributions. Chapters 4 and 5 study the fragment's remote (2.14–5.10) and immediate (5.11–7.4) context for traces of Old Testament traditions similar to those found in the fragment. A detailed correlation between the fragment and its context is then proposed on the basis of this investigation.

The sixth Chapter offers a critique of alternative contextual theories both on their own merits and in light of the traditions investigation just completed. A critical evaluation is made of alternative attempts to explain the relationship between the fragment and its present context. The seventh Chapter concludes with a brief summary of the book's contextual hypothesis and a review of areas where this study contributes to existing research on the fragment.

The two essays in Appendixes A and B apply the contextual findings to the crux interpretive issue in 6.14a. Beyond offering a solution to the contextual problem, the traditions hypothesis contributes towards the understanding of who the 'unbelievers' are and what the 'unequal yoke' refers to.