

Dwelling and Clothing as Metaphors for the Human Body in 2 Cor 5:1–4

Franciszek Mickiewicz

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
fmickiewicz@o2.pl

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3945-8169>

ABSTRACT: There is an allegory of the human body in 2 Cor 5:1–4 that is discussed by many scholars and has many different interpretations. The author of this article joins this discussion and tries to answer the question of what the theological message of this pericope is. The metaphors that make it up can be divided into two groups: 1) home metaphors; 2) metaphors of putting on and taking off of clothes. In his text, Paul arranges them in an antithetical way and refers to two stages of human life: the earthly life of believers, which a person leads in a destructible body and which ends in death, and the future condition of believers, which begins with the reception of the resurrection body. The analysis carried out in the article leads to the conclusion that, in his reflection, Paul does not write anything about the intermediate state which is referred to by the followers of Platonic and Gnostic thought in the Hellenistic environment. He eagerly wishes to stand before the Lord during the Parousia without losing his mortal body in order to pass to eternal life without the experience of death by putting on the glorious body.

KEYWORDS: body, anthropology of St. Paul, death, resurrection, eternal life

In Paul's theological reflection on the physical and spiritual existence of a person, the term "body" (*σῶμα*) appears frequently (as many as 91 times). It takes on many differing meanings. It might refer to the physical body, which for a person is the cause of suffering and sin, and is subject to death (Rom 4:19; 6:6, 12; 7:24; 1 Cor 6:18 etc.); physical body whose drives a person should control (1 Cor 9:27; 13:3; 2 Cor 4:10; Gal 6:17; Col 2:23); the physical body which has a close relationship with the temporal, earthly life of a person, and is made up of many parts (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 5:3; 6:13; 2 Cor 5:6, 8, 10 etc.); physical body – temple of the Holy Spirit which can be the space to worship God (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 6:19; 7:4; Phil 1:20); the spiritual body in which a person is to live after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:35–44); the glorious body of Christ (Phil 3:21); the eucharistic body of Christ (1 Cor 11:24, 27, 29); the body of Christ represented by the Church (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 6:15; 10:16–17; 12:12–13, 27 and many others).

There have been many studies of all these meanings in theological literature. However, it should be noted that when referring to the human body, Paul, at times, also uses highly meaningful metaphors to describe its nature, dignity or future destiny. Such is the case in 2 Cor 5:1–4. In this short passage, the apostle uses as many as four words to describe

the human body – *σῶμα* (this term appears in 2 Cor 5:6, 8, 10). Those words belong to the semantic field of dwelling: *οἰκία* (2 times: v. 1 – “house,” “dwelling”); *σκῆνος* (2 times: v. 1 and 4 – “tent”); *οἰκοδομή* (1 time: v. 1 – “building”); *οἰκητήριον* (1 times: v. 2 – “dwelling,” “seat”). Subsequently, when writing about the loss of his body, he weaves the metaphor of clothing into this image by using the verb *ἐκδύσασθαι* (1 time: v. 4 – “to unclothe”) and even the adjective *γυμνός* (v. 3 – “naked”), and when referring to the recovery of the body, he uses the words *ἐνδύσασθαι* (1 time: v. 3: “to clothe”) and *ἐπενδύσασθαι* (2 times: v. 2 and 4: “to put on outer clothing”).

This peculiar accumulation of metaphors creates a rich and very complex allegory of the human body, which has been discussed at length in scholarly commentaries and articles (hardly ever noticed in the Polish language literature) and leads exegetes to many divergent conclusions. In interpreting this accumulation, however, most exegetes fail to consider the fact that the metaphors it contains are arranged in an antithetical manner and that it is precisely this literary structure which plays an important role in the proper understanding of the theological message of the pericope of 2 Cor 5:1–4. That is why, this article joins the exegetes’ discussion and makes a renewed attempt to portray the content of these metaphors, starting the exegesis of Paul’s text with an analysis of its antithetical structure.

1. The Antithetical Structure of 2 Cor 5:1–4

There is a fairly widespread view in the exegesis of 2 Cor 5:1–4 that in this passage of his epistle, Paul makes an allusion to an intermediate state between the death of the body and its resurrection. He distinguishes three states in human existence: 1) temporal life, 2) the state of the dead, living a life separated from the body, and 3) life after the resurrection and the transformation accomplished on the day of the Parousia. In 2 Cor 5:1–4, he finds the prospect of the third state much more desirable than the second, but in turn in 2 Cor 5:6–8 he is of the opinion that the second state is superior to the first because it includes “being with the Lord.” He does not explain what exactly this intermediate state involves as he does not know. He is merely convinced in 5:3 that in his state of waiting for the Parousia he will be deprived of the body (naked). This very thought fills him with fear and revives his desire to receive a transformed body in heaven at the time of the Parousia.¹

1 Cf. I.K. Smith, “Does 2 Corinthians 5,1–8 Refer to an Intermediate State?” *RTR* 55 (1996) 14 and 23. In antiquity, this view was proclaimed by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, while of modern exegetes it is supported by, among others, Murray J. Harris (“2 Corinthians 5:1–10: A Watershed in Paul’s Theology?” *TynBul* 22 [1971] 45–48), Lorin Cranford (“A New Look at 2 Cor 5:1–10,” *SujT* 19 [1976] 95–100), Romano Penna (“Vivere con Cristo dopo la morte [2 Cor 5,1–10; Fil 1,23],” *PSV* 8 [1983] 141), Joseph Osei-Bonsu (“Does 2 Cor 5,1–10 Teach Reception of the Resurrection Body at the Moment of Death?” *JSNT* 28 [1986] 89–95), William L. Craig (“Paul’s Dilemma in 2 Corinthians 5.1–10: a «Catch-22»?,” *NTS* 34/1 [1988] 145–147), Raymond O. Zorn (“II Corinthians 5:1–10: Individual Eschatology or Corporate Solidarity, Which?,” *RTR* 48/3 [1989] 93–104), James D.G. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Edinburgh: Clark 1998] 490),

When analysing the text of the entire pericope of 2 Cor 5:1–10, other exegetes pay more attention to the immediate literary context in which the passage is placed (2 Cor 4–5) and on Paul's eschatological ideas, contained in Rom 5:12–21 and 1 Cor 15, among others, as well as taking into account the Jewish background of the first century, from which Paul came, and where apocalyptic texts testifying to the belief in a transitional state in which the righteous are to abide between death and resurrection were written. Based on this, they conclude that although Paul uses a remarkably peculiar language in 2 Cor 5:1–10, it is impossible to find the idea of an intermediate state in which a person would expect to be resurrected, deprived of his body in this text.² Still other exegetes, opposing the intermediate state view, believe that Paul does not address either anthropological or eschatological problems in his text, but merely uses the life-death antithesis to express his confidence that his apostolic ministry will bear the expected fruits, and that in the end he will be crowned with glory when he will be able to “stand in the presence of the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8).³

Works cited here indicate that the presence of the idea of an intermediate state in 2 Cor 5:1–4 is vigorously debated in scholarly literature and divides scholars into several groups, although it is, in fact, completely irrelevant in this pericope. In fact, it is not the adjective *γυμνός* itself in verse 3, which has become an object of exaggerated interest and philosophical speculation for many exegetes, that plays an important role in it, but a whole, content-rich set of body metaphors of which this adjective is an integral part of and which will become the main focus of analysis in this article. It should be noted here that metaphors, images and statements contained in this pericope are arranged in an antithetical manner and this literary construction, consciously employed by the apostle, greatly influences the understanding of the theological message of his reflection on life. Consequently, the text of this pericope (given in its own literal translation, the justification for which is found in the analyses that follow) can be presented in the following two columns:

N.T. Wright (*Surprised by Hope. Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* [New York: Harper One 2008] 172), Ralph P. Martin (*2 Corinthians*, 2 ed. [WBC 40; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2014] 260–262).

- 2 See e.g. R. Hettlinger, “2 Corinthians 5,1–10,” *SJT* 10 (1957) 174–194; E.E. Ellis, “II Corinthians v. 1–10 in Pauline Eschatology,” *NTS* 6 (1960) 224; R.J. Cassidy, “Paul’s Attitude to Death in II Corinthians 5:1–10,” *EvQ* 43 (1971) 210–217; P. Hoffmann, *Die Toten in Christus. Eine Religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie*, 3 ed. (NTAbh. Neue Folge 2; Münster: Aschendorff 1978) 4–20; F. Lindgard, *Paul’s Line of Thought in 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10* (WUNT 2/189; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005) 164–165; K. Daugherty, “Naked Bodies and Heavenly Clothing: ΓΥΜΝΟΣ In 2 Corinthians 5.3,” *JGRChJ* 8 (2011–2012) 199–222; F. Bianchini, “2 Co 5,6–8 et Ph 1,23: État intermédiaire et immortalité de l’âme chez Paul?,” *ScEs* 66 (2014) 433–444.
- 3 Cf. K. Hanhart, “Paul’s Hope in the Face of Death,” *JBL* 88 (1969) 445–457; J.W. McCant, “Competing Pauline Eschatologies. An Exegetical Comparison of 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 29 (1994) 23–49; E. Reynolds, “Away from the Body and at Home with the Lord: 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 in Context,” *JATS* 24 (2013) 138–151.

1a For we know that if the tent (σκῆνος) that is our earthly home (οικία) is destroyed, ...

1b we have a building (οικοδομή) from God, a house (οικία) not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this tent we groan, longing to ...

put on (ἐπενδύσασθαι) our heavenly dwelling (οικητήριον),
3 if indeed by putting it on (ἐνδύσάμενοι) we may not be found naked (γυμνοί).

4a For while we are still in this tent (σκῆνος), we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed (ἐκδύσασθαι),

4b but that we would be further clothed (ἐπενδύσασθαι), so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

It is evident that the left-hand column refers to a temporal, earthly life, filled with longing, sighing, constant striving towards a goal and trust, while the right-hand column features a vision of heaven, and therefore of what is the goal of the desires shown in the first column. If one were to create a third, middle column in this construction in order to place something that would lie between temporal life and eternal life, the result would be that it would remain empty, for there is no explicit word in Paul's text for anything concerning a state bridging these two realities. Such a two-part arrangement may also be related to the Semitic bipolar way of perceiving the world, in which heaven, the kingdom of God, is placed at one end and earth, the place of person's kingship, at the other (see e.g. Gen 1:1–8; Deut 30:19; Ps 115:15–16 and many others).

Such representation of Paul's text makes it easy to realise that when the apostle refers to temporal life and, in this context, writes (verse 6) about dwelling (verb ἐνδημησαι) in the body (ἐν τῷ σώματι), uses metaphors to describe this body: οικία ("dwelling"), σκῆνος ("tent"), and he describes the loss of this body with the verb ἐκδύσασθαι (literally: "to unclothe"). When, on the other hand, he refers to the reality of heaven (still in the realm of expectation and hope), he describes the human body by means of metaphors, which include as many as three nouns: οικοδομή ("building"), οικία ("house") and οικητήριον ("dwelling," "seat"), and verbs ἐπενδύσασθαι ("to put on outer clothing") and ἐνδύσασθαι ("to clothe"). Two complementary groups can therefore be distinguished throughout this allegory: 1) metaphors of the house; 2) metaphors of putting on and taking off clothes. Each of these groups deserves a little more discussion here.

2. House as a Metaphor for the Body

At the beginning of the pericope under discussion (2 Cor 5:1), the term *οικία* appears on both sides of the antithesis, that is, in the context of both earthly life and eternal life in heaven. It is worth noting at this point that the Greek language used two simple nouns having the root *oik-*: *οικία* and *οίκος*. Originally, *οικία* meant a residence, the very building inhabited by people, while the noun *οίκος* means the house with everything in it, and therefore also the family goods and its inhabitants. In the Septuagint, however, this distinction disappeared, so that both terms acquired the same meaning and indicated both family and house.⁴ Since the noun *οικία* had a very general meaning of a house, indispensable for life, without specifying the material of which it is built, Paul can use it to refer to two completely different realities, considering that wherever a person is, they need some kind of a house. He thus implies that in earthly life we have an earthly dwelling (*ἐπίγειος*), and at its end we shall receive “a house not made with hands (*ἀχειροποίητον*)” in heaven.

It is evident from this statement that the nature of the house to which Paul is referring is closely related to the successive stages of human existence, the temporal, transitional and eternal stage. At each of these stages the idea is of a house as a dwelling place, but the wider context of 2 Cor 5:1 leads to the conclusion that *οικία* here does not literally mean a building of some kind, but has a metaphorical sense. In 2 Cor 4:7 there is a picture of clay pots signifying the body, which in verse 10 are referred to as *σῶμα*, and in verse 11 even as *θνητὴ σὰρξ* (“mortal body”). In turn, in 4:16, the apostle states that although the “outer self” (*ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος*) is wasted away, the “inner self” (*ὁ ἔσω*) is being renewed day by day. Reading this sentence against the background of the statement in 4:7, 10–11, it is clear that also the expression “outer person” means a body that is subject to death.⁵ In 5:1, Paul clearly continues the reflection contained in 4:7–18 and enriches it with the metaphor of a house, describing bodily life as being in a dwelling (similar to the author of Job 4:19).

Since the kind of house depends on the mode of life which men lead, the apostle states that at the earthly stage, person’s dwelling is *οικία τοῦ σκηνῶντος*. This expression uses the genitive (*genetivus epexegeticus*) or the appositive (*appositionis*), which explains the preceding noun,⁶ so it can be translated literally: “a house which is a tent.” This portrayal, one could say, fits the author, whose occupation was *σκηνοποιός*,⁷ that is person making tents, and so it seems strange that it appears only once in all of Paul’s texts. However, as many exegetes

4 Cf. J. Goetzman, “Haus, bauen,” *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament*, 7 ed. (eds. L. Coenen – E. Beyreuther – H. Bietenhard) (Wuppertal: Brockhaus 1986) 637.

5 Cf. J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP 8; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1999) 80–81. This author rightly points out that both expressions: “outer person” and “inner person,” although they may be of Hellenistic origin, do not have a dualistic tinge and indicate the whole person, but from a different point of view.

6 M.E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. I. *Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I–VII* (Edinburgh: Clark 1994) 360, n. 1172; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 82.

7 E. Dąbrowski, *Listy do Koryntian. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (PŚNT 7; Poznań: Pallottinum 1965) 424.

note⁸ – the metaphor of a tent (σκηνή or σκήνος) as a temporary, impermanent and movable structure is often used in non-biblical Greek literature to describe human body (in the works of the Pythagoreans, Democritus, Plato, Hippocrates, or Philo of Alexandria). In the Septuagint, however, the metaphor in this sense appears only twice: in Isa 38:12, where Hezekiah, speaking of his death, laments: “My dwelling place is being pulled down. It is carried away from me like a shepherd’s tent.” and in Wis 9:15, where in turn the expression γεώδεις σκήνος (“earthly tent”) means the same as the expression φθαρτόν σῶμα (“mortal body”) standing at the beginning of the verse. While Hellenistic literature, following Plato’s thought, wrote of the tent as a temporary dwelling, or even a prison of the soul, which at death will be freed from it forever, no such dualistic distinction between soul and body can be found in Paul’s theology. Writing in Greek, he had to use a vocabulary understandable to his readers, which can sometimes give the impression that along with the terminology he also adopted the anthropological ideas of Greek philosophers,⁹ in essence, however, he remained faithful to Jewish tradition, which considered a person as a psycho-physical unity and pointed out that if, at the moment of death, there is a definitive separation of the soul from the body, then a person would become an incomplete being.¹⁰

Mathias Rissi argues that in his reflection, Paul uses a metaphor like that found in Isa 38:12 and Job 4:19. Notably, it portrays being in a tent-like dwelling, whereby symbolising the entirety of human existence, which by its very nature is bodily and mortal.¹¹ It should be stated, however, that the overall portrayal is much more complex. On the one hand, it is clear that in contrast to Wis 9:15, where the author notes with sadness that “the corruptible body burdens the soul,” in 2 Cor 5:1 the apostle makes no mention of the soul, and there is no indication that, in the Hellenistic manner, he treats body and soul as two separately existing sides of being human.¹² Therefore, it cannot be claimed that Paul regards the body, portrayed in the tent symbol, as the present dwelling place of the soul and spirit of the believer.¹³ On the other hand, however, we find that throughout the passage (2 Cor 4:7–5:10) there is a kind of anthropological dualism that Paul realises when he begins to reflect on the

8 Regarding this, see e.g. W. Michaelis, “σκήνος,” *TWNT* VII, 383; R. Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg 1985) 130–131; A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Clark 1985) 142–143; Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 357–358; C.S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005) 177–178; D.E. Aune, “Anthropological Duality in the Eschatology of 2 Cor 4:16–5:10,” *Jesus, Gospel Tradition and Paul in the Context of Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity. Collected Essays II* (WUNT 303; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013) 365–366.

9 This issue is discussed in more detail by Nikolaus Walter (“Hellenistische Eschatologie bei Paulus? Zu 2 Kor 5,1–10,” *TQ* 176/1 [1996] 53–64).

10 Cf. W. Lillie, “An Approach to 2 Corinthians 5.1–10,” *SJT* 30 (1977) 62; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 88; T.F. Glasson, “2 Corinthians v. 1–10, Versus Platonism,” *SJT* 43 (1990) 145–155; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 261.

11 M. Rissi, *Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief. Der alte Bund, Der Prediger, Der Tod* (Zürich: Zwingli 1969) 74.

12 Cf. A. Paciorek, *Drugi List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (NKB.NT 8; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2017) 257.

13 So writes, for example, Cornelius R. Stam (*Commentary on the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [Chicago, IL: Berean Bible Society 1992] 73–74).

mystery of death.¹⁴ Sharing the conviction of both Jewish biblical authors and Hellenistic writers that death constitutes the beginning of a new life, he does not suggest that it is in death that the separation of the soul and the body takes place, but he does state clearly that this crucial moment in human existence is experienced differently by the “outer person” and the “inner person” of whom he writes in 4:16. This physical aspect of being human is impermanent and deteriorates like a tent, while the spiritual aspect continues on.

A person, however – according to biblical authors’ vision, is by their very nature not a soul or spirit, but always a body-spiritual being, and therefore Paul holds out the hope that when the temporary earthly home crumbles, he will receive a new, everlasting dwelling from God in heaven, which he terms *οικοδομή* and *οικητήριον*. The noun *οικοδομή* does not mean some ordinary house, but (apart from the act of building itself) indicates a stately structure, splendid edifice; hence several times in the Septuagint and always in the Gospels it refers to the Jerusalem Temple, regarded as the house of God (see e.g. 1 Chr 26:27; 29:1; Matt 24:1; Mark 13:1–2). In the Pauline epistles, it most often means a process of construction (see e.g. Rom 14:19; 15:2), but it is used twice to describe God’s edifice, which together with Christ is constituted by those who believe in him (1 Cor 3:9; Eph 2:21). For this reason, some scholars believed that also in 2 Cor 5:1 *οικοδομή* means the mystical body of Christ, which is the messianic community of believers and which at the time of the Parousia would begin a new phase of its existence as a new temple,¹⁵ or the glorious body of Christ, which at death is given to the believer who enjoys the presence of the risen Lord.¹⁶ The antithetical structure of 2 Cor 5:1–2, however, precludes such an interpretation. Paul contrasts the building in heaven with the tent on earth and declares that it will be given to each believer by God, not to the whole community, taken globally as one organism.¹⁷ While that tent is impermanent and easily destroyed, the building given in heaven is eternal because it is not made by human hand and is solely a gift of God.

The adjective *ἀχειροποίητος*, as used here, still occurs throughout the Bible only in Mark 14:48 in reference to the death and resurrection of Christ and in Col 2:11 in reference to the baptism of the believers. The idea contained in it, however, is rooted in the Old Testament, where the authors of poetic texts (especially Exod 15:17; Ps 78:69) express the conviction that the Jerusalem temple was built by the hands of God, and in this essential way it differs from the temples of pagan deities made by human hands.¹⁸ It is possible that Paul is referring to this Old Testament idea and incorporating it into his metaphor. By this means,

14 Cf. Aune, “Anthropological Duality,” 380.

15 J.A.T. Robinson, *The Body. A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 5; London: SCM 1952) 76–77; Ellis, “II Corinthians,” 217–218.

16 A. Feuillet, “La demeure céleste et la destinée des chrétiens. Exégèse de 2 Co 5,1–10 et contribution à l’étude des fondements de l’eschatologie paulinienne,” *RSR* 44 (1956) 367–378.

17 Cf. I.R. Kitzberger, *Bau der Gemeinde. Das paulinische Wortfeld οἰκοδομή/(ἐπι)οἰκοδομῆν* (FB 53; Würzburg: Echter 1986) 121.

18 Cf. A. Kuśmirek, “Sanktuarium uczynione ręką,” *Słowo pojednania. Księga Pamiątkowa z okazji siedemdziesiątych urodzin Księdza Michała Czajkowskiego* (ed. J. Warzecha) (Biblioteka „Więzi” 160; Warszawa: Więź 2004) 119–120.

in contrast, he makes it clear that person's earthly body comes by birth from another person and therefore decays like the material (cloth or leather) making up the tent, while the heavenly building is the work of God alone, and therefore is durable like the beautifully adorned stones making up the edifice of the Jerusalem Temple¹⁹ (cf. Mark 13:1). The nature of this edifice is further described in verse 2 by the expression τὸ οἰκητήριον τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. The noun οἰκητήριον as used here is still found in the Bible only in 2 Macc 11:2 and Jude 1:6, and in both these texts it means a domicile, a usual residence. Likewise, in Paul's allegorical portrayal, he points to the permanence of the edifice that will become person's possession in eschatological times and which will then be their permanent and proper residence.²⁰

In the tent metaphor, words: "For we know that if our earthly tent which is our house is torn down" (2 Cor 5:1a) unambiguously refer to death. In contrast to this phrase comes the statement in verse 1b: "we have a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens." The antithetical construction of the whole sentence allows this second part to be interpreted as a demonstration of faith in the resurrection, which Paul has extensively described and convincingly justified in 1 Cor 15:35–53. In this rather lengthy argument, he first uses the telling portrayal of grain, making it a metaphor for the body (vv. 37–38), he then notes by contrast that the body (σῶμα) associated with earthly existence is sensual, corruptible, and inglorious, while the body associated with post-resurrection life is spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious (vv. 42–44), and finally concludes that only an incorruptible body can possess the kingdom of God (vv. 50–53). Based on a detailed analysis of 1 Cor 15:35–53 and 2 Cor 5:1–10, exegetes indicate that in the latter text Paul continues the idea found in the former and expresses it anew through the use of complex metaphors.²¹ Although the word "resurrection" itself does not appear, the contrast he uses allows us to conclude that it is precisely the resurrection that will make it possible to obtain an incorruptible body in heaven.

The radical contrast between earthly and heavenly reality at the same time indicates that there is no continuity between this sensual body, which will disintegrate like a tent, and the new eternal, spiritual body. Paul does not state that by the resurrection the temporal body will be perfected and conformed to the new reality of the heavenly kingdom but he makes himself and his readers aware of two contrasting truths: first - our earthly "dwelling" will one day fall apart, but, second - this should not be an object of our despair, because in heaven we "possess" an incorruptible house. Again, not a word suggests that there may be some transitional stage in human existence between the decay of the temporal "tent" and receiving spiritual "building" as a gift. However, the interpretation of the word ἔχομεν ("we possess") used by him in the present tense raises some difficulties, since the future tense would seem more natural here: "we shall possess." Exegetes suggested many different

19 Kuśmirek, "Sanktuarium uczynione ręką," 126.

20 Cf. J. Gillmann, "A Thematic Comparison: 1 Cor 15,50–57 and 2 Cor 5,1–5," *JBL* 107 (1988) 452; R. Metts, "Death, Discipleship, and Discourse Strategies, 2 Cor 5:1–10 – Once Again," *CTR* 4 (1989) 69; Lillie, "An Approach to 2 Corinthians," 67.

21 Cf. Gillmann, "A Thematic Comparison," 454; McCant, "Competing Pauline Eschatologies," 24–48.

interpretations of this form, which Margaret E. Thrall and Murray J. Harris present in brief in their comments.²² Four of them arguably deserve more attention. 1) Word ἔχομεν is closely linked with the words ἐὰν καταλυθῆ, and expresses the idea that receiving home in heaven, as a consequence of the loss of an earthly home, takes place immediately after death.²³ It is true that in 1 Cor 15:23 the apostle suggests that the resurrection will take place not at death, but at the time of the Parousia,²⁴ yet in 1 Cor 15:51–53 he declares solemnly that those who reach the Parousia while still alive on earth will at that moment be changed to clothe themselves with immortality.²⁵ 2) The present tense form used by Paul has a future tense sense and actually points to receiving the body at the time of the Parousia.²⁶ 3) The one who died has from now on a body from God instead of a corrupted body. It is not yet real, but already a perfect possession that will be fully embodied at the time of the Parousia.²⁷ 4) The present tense form ἔχομεν might have a future tense sense, but by its use the apostle expresses primarily the certainty of receiving a new home from God.²⁸

When reviewing the various theological speculations of exegetes, it is worth noting that Paul himself does not even ask the question of when he hopes to come into possession of the body, which he views as a permanent building in heaven. Whenever he attempts to describe eschatological realities, he uses either symbolic language drawn from Jewish apocalyptic, as he does, for example, in 1 Cor 15:50–63; 1 Thess 4:13–5:3; 2 Thess 2:1–12, or metaphorical language, as is the case in 1 Cor 15:35–49; 2 Cor 5:1–10. When interpreting these passages, one should not fantasise, going beyond the text itself and guessing at what the author himself did not even try to say, but should adapt to the specific way of speaking that he used to express truths that are humanly difficult to define. Therefore, it seems that among many proposed meanings of the verb ἔχομεν, the last one is the most appropriate, as it best accounts for the metaphor and lack of precision in Paul's text: his faith in the resurrection is so strong that he even considers the future state of the risen person as an object of knowledge (he begins a whole sentence with the word “we know”) and writes about it as if he already possessed it in the present.²⁹

22 Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 368–370; M.J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 375–380.

23 H. Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (KEK 6; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1970) 160; Harris, “2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” 42; D.A. Garland, *2 Corinthians. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 29; Nashville: Broadman & Holman 1999) 258.

24 This is noted, for example by Margaret E. Thrall (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 368).

25 Harris, “2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” 43.

26 A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4 ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman 1934) 881–882.

27 H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Corinthians* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls 1884) 508; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 380.

28 Cf. C. Wolff, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus und die Korinther* (THKNT 8; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1989) 107; F. Zeilinger, *Wiaro w zmartwychwstanie w Biblii* (Kraków: WAM 2011) 149; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 82; Paciorek, *Drugi List do Koryntian*, 259–260.

29 Cf. F. Manzi, *Seconda lettera ai Corinzi. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I Libri Biblici. Nuovo Testamento 9; Milano: Paoline 2002) 200.

3. Metaphors of Clothing and Unclothing

In 2 Cor 5:2 Paul confesses his desire to “be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,” whereas in verse 4 he states that he does not wish “to be unclothed (ἐκδύσασθαι) but clothed (ἐπενδύσασθαι) so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” In both of these sentences, there is a quite unique move from the metaphor of a building to the metaphor of clothing. More precisely, there is no noun in them denoting any kind of clothing, but the verb ἐπενδύσασθαι is used, suggesting something paradoxical, namely that a person can dress himself in a dwelling. This unusual way of speaking is due to the fact that Paul considers the body simultaneously as a dwelling and as outer clothing³⁰: on earth, both of these things give a person (in a different way) shelter, warmth, a sense of his own dignity and security, and in this sense, they can also serve as a metaphor for the body received from God in heaven. For this reason, the act of dwelling or entering heaven and putting on clothes can also metaphorically mean the same thing: receiving the spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν) in eternal life, of which Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:44.

The verb ἐπενδύσασθαι (“to put something on top of,” “to put on oneself”), used twice in 2 Cor 5:2 and 4, does not appear anywhere else in either the New Testament or the Septuagint. It is etymologically related to the noun ἐπενδύτης, which occurs in 2 Sam 13:18 and John 21:7 and means a top garment. Many exegetes question whether this verb has the same sense as the simpler word ἐνδύσασθαι, which the apostle uses once in 2 Cor 5:3 and four times in 1 Cor 15:53–54. Some of them believe that there is a significant difference between the two. They claim that Paul uses the form ἐνδύειν when writing about the resurrection of the dead, by contrast, he introduces more elaborate form ἐπενδύειν to denote the special experience of believers who, during their life on Earth, have reached the Parousia and are then clothed with a resurrected body.³¹ Such a distinction, however, receives strong criticism from other scholars. Although it might be admitted that the two prefixes ἐπεν- reinforce the idea of superimposing something that is outside the body,³² but they do not significantly change the sense of the word with one prefix ἐν- (ἐνδύσασθαι). The two verbs, therefore, are synonyms and each refers to putting on clothes.³³

In 1 Cor 5:1, the phrase ἐὰν καταλυθῆ (“if he be destroyed”) introduces a conditional mode referred to as *typus probabilis*. When writing his epistle, Paul is still living on Earth, but he can tell from experience that one day his earthly life will come to an end. He writes about this moment using passive voice as the causes of the destruction of his temporary

30 Cf. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 145.

31 This is what T.S. Evans, for example, claimed. As cited in: Harris, “2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” 43. The difference in meaning between the two verbs is also noted by Charles K. Barrett (*A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [HNTC; New York: Harper and Row 1973] 152–153) and Roy Metts (“Death, Discipleship,” 73).

32 As noted by e.g. Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, 83).

33 Cf. among others – Harris (“2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” 43–44), Thrall (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 371–372), Osei-Bonsu (“Does 2 Cor 5,1–10,” 88), Reynolds (“Away from the Body,” 144, n. 12), Garland (*2 Corinthians*, 258), Paciorek (*Drugi List do Koryntian*, 263–264).

“dwelling” are beyond his control, and yet, he, for his part, must submit to them. In verses 2 and 4, he continues this idea and argues that this very state of affairs is the cause of inward anguish and sighing, and he depicts the corruption of the temporal body, which is compared to a tent (σκῆνος), by means of the metaphor of unclathing (ἐκδύσασθαι). In this case, he uses the aorist form of the *medium* voice, but it does not presuppose that a person, for their part, will have any share in his own desolation at death. As in verse 1, verses 2 and 4 the implicit subject of the action of putting on and taking off the garment is God, the Lord of life and death, who predestined us “so that the mortal may be swallowed up by life” (vv. 4b–5).³⁴ In 2 Cor 5:2 and 4, the opposite of both the verb καταλύω, referring to the destruction of the earthly tent, and ἐκδύω introducing the image of bareness is the infinitive ἐπενδύσασθαι. The image of putting on clothing contained therein continues the idea of verse 1b: expressing confidence in the existence of a spiritual building in heaven that makes eternal life possible, immediately afterwards, the apostle, in metaphorical language, confesses that, as a human being, he feels a deep longing in his heart to experience a more complete and fulfilling life than our present mortal existence.³⁵

Between verses 2 and 4, there is a very short interjected sentence which causes exegetes the greatest difficulty. It should first be noted that it was given in three different versions in ancient manuscripts: 1) εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὐρεθησόμεθα (“if, indeed, we are found clothed (ἐνδυσάμενοι) and not naked”); this reading is found in papyrus P⁴⁶, in codices 8, B, C D², Ψ, 075, 0150 and in many other ancient manuscripts, lectionaries, translations and works of the Church Fathers. 2) εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὐρεθησόμεθα (“if, indeed, we are found unclathed and not naked”); this reading is found in D^c, it^{ar.d.f.v.r.g.o}, in the Georgian translation, in the works of Marcion, Tertullian, Ambrose and other ancient writers. 3) εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐκλυσάμενοι ... (“if, indeed, freed...”) – appears only in codices F, G.

The third reading is the result of misreading of the letter Δ and mistaking it for Λ. As for the first and second readings, the juxtaposition of their ancient witnesses provides insight into the fact that the former is found in the oldest and most important manuscripts. Nevertheless, some scholars regarded the second reading as primary, believing that in it the vividness and paradoxicalness characteristic of Paul is preserved, whereas the first reading contains a trite and tautological statement.³⁶ Meanwhile, it should be noted that it is precisely this second reading that appears as a corrective to the one that might have appeared trivial and tautological, although in reality this triviality is apparent.³⁷

34 T. Stegman, *Second Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2009) 123.

35 Cf. Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 122.

36 R. Bultmann, *Exegetische Probleme des zweiten Korintherbriefes* (SymBU 9; Uppsala: Wretman 1947) 11; B.M. Metzger (ed.), *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament*, 4 ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1994) 579–580.

37 This is what is claimed, for example, by Alfred Plummer (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 148). The internal reasoning in support of the ἐνδυσάμενοι reading is discussed in more detail: M.E. Thrall, “Putting on’ or ‘Stripping off’ in 2 Corinthians 5,3,” *New Testament Textual Criticism. Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in*

Paul begins this sentence with the conjunction εἰ, followed by the particle γε, which has several different functions in Greek, and καὶ, which here has an adverbial and emphatic meaning. The whole expression εἰ γε καὶ, depending on which meaning of the particle γε one adopts, can express doubt: “as far as” or certainty: “if, of course,” “provided, of course, that.”³⁸ As these particles begin a remark interjected between two sentences containing true longing and hope, and in verse 1b the certainty is expressed of having a dwelling in heaven from God, it seems that also here, the apostle declares with certainty that his hope is not without purpose, and states positively: “I presume, of course.”³⁹ Paul’s idea follows the same direction as the interjected sentence contained in Gal 3:4, where εἰ γε καὶ is to be translated: “if indeed,” and in Rom 5:6 (in codex B); Eph 3:2; 4:21; Col 1:23, where εἰ γε introduces a positive conviction: “for indeed.”⁴⁰ In these sentences, Paul uses a conditional sentence to express what is actually a fact and to state that his assumption is true.⁴¹ In 2 Cor 5:3, this expression is followed by the participle ἐνδυσάμενοι, which is grammatically subordinate to the verb εὑρεθῆσόμεθα (“we shall be found,” “we shall turn out”), but on the other hand is a continuation of the metaphor in verse 2 and has the same complement as the infinitive ἐπενδύσασθαι.⁴² Therefore, it might be assumed that the whole statement: εἰ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι εὑρεθῆσόμεθα confirms the apostle’s deep hope: “I presume, of course, that we shall appear clothed (in our dwelling from heaven).”

After the participle ἐνδυσάμενοι, expressing a positive reality, Paul adds the words οὐ γυμνοὶ, which indicate its possible negation: “not naked.” There are two main ways of interpreting the adjective γυμνός contained in this verse in the exegetical literature on it.

- 1) Moral significance. Those who accept this sense of nakedness in 2 Cor 5:3 point out that in the Bible, nakedness is often a metaphor for the shame resulting from guilt incurred before God (Gen 3:10–11; Isa 32:11; Ezek 16:39; Hos 2:5; Rev 3:17; 16:15) and revealed at his judgment (Isa 20:2–4; 47:3; Ezek 23:26, 29), which is also mentioned in 2 Cor 5:10. In his text, Paul takes up this tradition and fears to face Christ at the moment of the Parousia naked, that is, “without the garment of righteousness,” with shame and guilt caused by the sins committed (there is also a similar image in Matt 22:11).⁴³ Other theologians, assuming a moral meaning, point out that the participle ἐνδυσάμενοι refers to being clothed with Christ at the moment

Honour of Bruce M. Metzger (eds. E.J. Epp – G.D. Fee) (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981) 221–237; K. Hanhart, “Hope in the Face of Death: Preserving the Original Text of 2 Cor 5:3,” *Neot* 31/1 (1997) 77–86.

³⁸ Cf. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 376; Paciorek, *Drugi List do Koryntian*, 265.

³⁹ Cf. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 367–368; F.W. Danker, “Consolation in 2 Cor. 5:1–10,” *CTM* 39 (1968) 554; D. Zeller, “Versuch über 2 Kor 5,1–5,” *Der zweite Korintherbrief: Literarische Gestalt – historische Situation – theologische Argumentation. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Dietrich-Alex Koch* (ed. D. Sänger) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2012) 386.

⁴⁰ Cf. N. Baumert, *Täglich sterben und auferstehen. Der Literalsinn von 2. Kor. 4,12–5,10* (München: Kösel 1973) 382.

⁴¹ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 384.

⁴² Cf. among others – Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 83.

⁴³ Such moral significance is assumed, for example, by E. Earle Ellis (“II Corinthians,” 220–221), G. Wagner (“Le tabernacle et La vie «en Christ». Exégèse de 2 Corinthiens 5:1 à 10,” *RHPR* 41 [1961] 391–392), Hanhart

of baptism, as Paul writes about in Gal 3:27. In 2 Cor 5:3, on the other hand, he expresses his desire not to lose this union with Christ until the time of the Parousia, since this would mean that he is morally and spiritually naked before him.⁴⁴ The idea that in this verse, as in 2 Cor 11:27 and Rom 8:35, Paul lists nakedness as one of the many afflictions he experiences in his apostolic work, can probably also be included in this group.⁴⁵

- 2) Anthropological meaning. Exegetes in this group point out that in his letter Paul refers to Greek literature of the time. At that time, Plato's view of the soul deprived of its body was still widespread, and there were also ideas put forward by Gnostics, who called the soul deprived of its body naked. Also Paul, referring to these views, writes about nakedness in his letter, in relation to the future existence devoid of the body.⁴⁶ By setting the sentence in 2 Cor 5:3 against such a background, exegetes suggest various ways of interpreting the portrayal of nakedness contained therein.⁴⁷ Some believe that Paul's desire is for believers in Christ not to lose their bodies before the Parousia, at which, according to 1 Cor 15:51–52, the dead will receive a resurrected body and the living a transfigured body.⁴⁸ Paul fears entering such a state of nakedness because he would like to be immediately clothed in a dwelling from heaven.⁴⁹ Conversely, others argue that Paul takes a stand here against the Platonic and Gnostic views according to which a soul without a body enters the kingdom of heaven, and reminds the Corinthians that an existence without a body is not the object of Christian hope.⁵⁰ Still others believe that the nakedness in Paul's text – as in 4 Ezra 7:80 – refers to the future state of unbelievers, wandering without a body.⁵¹

(“Paul's Hope,” 454–456), Norbert Baumert (*Täglich sterben*, 183–186), Christian Wolff (*Der zweite Brief*, 110). This issue is discussed in more detail by Kevin Daugherty (“Naked Bodies,” 202–204).

- 44 Hettlinger, “2 Corinthians 5,1–10,” 191–193; R. Berry, “Death and Life in Christ. The Meaning of 2 Corinthians 5,1–10,” *SJT* 14 (1961) 71–76.
- 45 Zeller, “Versuch über 2 Kor 5,1–5,” 393.
- 46 These meanings are assumed, among others, by Hans Windisch (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 157–175) and Osei-Bonsu (“2 Cor 5,1–10,” 90–92). A more extensive discussion of this interpretation is given, e.g. in Daugherty, “Naked Bodies,” 201–202; Paciorek, *Drugi List do Koryntian*, 264–265.
- 47 Cf. Aune, “Anthropological Duality,” 369–370; Daugherty, “Naked Bodies,” 201.
- 48 It is in accordance with the following: “A New Look,” 97–98; Smith, “Does 2 Corinthians 5,1–8,” 18; Zorn, “II Corinthians 5:1–10,” 103. Lambrecht (*Second Corinthians*, 86–87) believes that Paul did not want to die before the Parousia, but wished to clothe his earthly body with a heavenly body.
- 49 Cf. P. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1997) 262; P. Verster, “Abode in Heaven. Paul and Life After Death in 2 Corinthians 5:1–10,” *Missionalia* 44/1 (2016) 25.
- 50 Cf. Glasson, “2 Corinthians v. 1–10,” 153–155; Cassidy, “Paul's Attitude to Death,” 215; C. Demke, “Zur Auslegung von 2 Korinther 5,1–10,” *EvT* 29 (1969) 597; R. Bultmann, *Teologia del Nuovo Testamento* (Brescia: Queriniana 1985) 194–195; Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 149; Osei-Bonsu, “Does 2 Cor 5,1–10,” 90–91; Metts, “Death, Discipleship,” 60; Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 379–380; McCant, “Competing Pauline Eschatologies,” 48; Aune, “Anthropological Duality,” 370; Paciorek, *Drugi List do Koryntian*, 266.
- 51 This is what is believed, for example by Wilhelm Mundle (“Das Problem des Zwischenzustandes in dem Abschnitt 2 Kor. 5,1–10,” *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70. Geburtstag* [eds. R. Bultmann – H.V. Soden] [Tübingen: Mohr 1927] 101–102); A. Oepke, “γυμνός,” *TWNT* I, 774.

Since each of these opinions is based on a reliable analysis of the text of 2 Cor 5:1–10 and its Hebrew or Hellenistic context, it is difficult to say unequivocally which of them better represents Paul's idea. However, it should be emphasised here (which was not fully appreciated by many exegetes) that in verses 1–4, the apostle uses only metaphorical language and arranges metaphors used in the text next to each other in an antithetical way. Furthermore, there is a parallelism between verses 2–3 and verse 4. In both these passages of his reflection, Paul speaks of sighing (“now” meaning “in this tent”), of the desire to clothe oneself symbolising new life, and of the loss of clothing, the consequence of which is nakedness.⁵² All the metaphors used in 2 Cor 5:1–4 – as well as the portrayals in 2 Cor 4:14–18 – refer to one of the two stages of human life. The first one is the present, earthly life of believers, which a person lives in a corruptible body, and which ends in death. Linked to it are metaphors: “earthly home,” “tent,” “sigh,” “anguish” “nakedness,” “existence without clothing.” The second stage, on the other hand, is the future state of believers, which begins with the reception of the resurrected body. It is referred to by the metaphors: “a building from God,” “a house not made with hands, eternally abiding in heaven,” “put on a dwelling from heaven,” “the absorption of what is mortal by life.”⁵³ In such a juxtaposition, it is clear that the metaphors of loss of clothing and nakedness refer to death, which ends the earthly stage of human life and destroys the present temporary dwelling, rather than to some esoteric eschatological state.⁵⁴

Using clothing terminology, also in 1 Cor 15:53, Paul writes: “For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” In this sentence, he uses the verb ἐνδύσασθαι, which occurs in 2 Cor 5:3, twice. He combines four abstract nouns with it, putting them next to each other in an antithetical way: φθαρτόν – ἀφθαρσία, θνητόν – ἀθανασία. The same structure is found in 2 Cor 5:4, in which the apostle writes: “because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed (ἐπενδύσασθαι) instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (ζωή).” In both texts, “mortal” means the body, which is “corruptible” (cf. 1 Cor 5:1), and the incorruptibility and immortality of 1 Cor 15:53 implies the same reality as life in 2 Cor 5:4. In 1 Cor 15:54, Paul continues the idea of the previous verses and draws the conclusion that in the event of the resurrection the words of Isa 25:8 will be fulfilled: “death has been swallowed up in victory” (κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος). An echo of this phrase can also be heard in 2 Cor 5:4, where the apostle states, in the form of a conclusion derived from the preceding metaphors, that the clothing itself is for the purpose of not being unclothed “but clothed, so that our mortality may be swallowed up by life” (καταποθῆ τὸ θνητόν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς).⁵⁵

52 Cf. A.C. Perriman, “Paul and the Parousia: 1 Corinthians 15:50–57 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–5,” *NTS* 35 (1989) 518.

53 Cf. Daugherty, “Naked Bodies,” 220–221.

54 This is also what Andrew C. Perriman believes (“Paul and the Parousia,” 519).

55 For a more detailed analysis and comparison of 1 Cor. 15:50–57 with 2 Cor 5:1–5, see J. Lambrecht, “La vie engloutit ce qui est mortel: Commentaire de 2 Co 5, 4c,” *La Pâque du Christ, mystère de salut. Mélanges offerts*

Although there are many differences between 1 Cor 15:53–57 and 2 Cor 5:1–4, the latter pericope cannot be understood without the former. The whole of 1 Cor 15:53–57, on the other hand, is the conclusion of the truth expressed in verses 50–52 that entry into the kingdom of God requires a complete transformation. In an indirect way, Paul makes it clear here (vv. 35–50) that this transformation pertains to the body of believers. Also in 2 Cor 5:1–4, by means of sublime metaphors, he writes about the transition from temporal to eternal life, expressing the hope that when his temporal tent is destroyed, i.e. when he loses his temporal, destructible body, he will be clothed with an eternal body. Convinced that on the day of the glorious return of Christ, the dead will rise to new life, and that those then still living on earth will be transformed (1 Cor 15:51–52), he desires then to stand before the Lord without losing his mortal body and without experiencing death to pass into eternal life by being clothed with a glorious body.⁵⁶

Finally, it should be added that – as many of the exegetes mentioned above note – a polemical accent can also be discerned in the pericope 2 Cor 5:1–4, as an integral part of a larger literary unit including 2 Cor 4:7–5:10. Corinthians, influenced by Platonic and Gnostic thought, claimed that after death, the soul enjoys a happy existence without the body. Opposing them, Paul preaches an entirely different doctrine. First, he affirms from human experience that in temporal life the body is fragile like an earthen vessel (4:7) and transitory like a tent or clothing (5:1–4), and is even the cause of suffering, affliction and anguish (4:8–12, 17; 5:4). However, immediately afterwards he declares that the resurrected Jesus Christ (4:14) gives an unfailing hope to those who believe in him. Moreover, his resurrection actually brings certainty that in God’s kingdom they will share in a new life, in a body transfigured and subject to immeasurable glory (4:17; 5:1–4). By sketching images of dwelling and clothing right before his readers’ eyes, Paul reminds them that the hope of the Gospel lies in the resurrection of the body, not the disembodied existence of a naked soul. Salvation, which God grants through Jesus Christ, means entering into a new existence (5:4), into eternal life, which is radically different from the present life, which is similar to being in a tent, but is not the end of bodily existence. On the contrary, it is to bring this existence to perfection.⁵⁷

au Patre F.-X. Durruwell pour son 70e anniversaire (ed. M. Benzerath) (LD 112; Paris: Cerf 1982) 237–248; Gillmann, “A Thematic Comparison,” 448–454. Regarding this, see A. Lindemann, “Paulus und die korinthische Eschatologie. Zur These von einer «Entwicklung» im paulinischen Denken,” *NTS* 37 (1991) 373–399.

⁵⁶ Cf. Manzi, *Seconda lettera ai Corinzi*, 201; F.J. Matera, “Apostolic Suffering and Resurrection Faith. Distinguishing Between Appearance and Reality (2 Cor 4,7–5,10),” *Resurrection in the New Testament. Festschrift J. Lambrecht* (eds. R. Bieringer – V. Koperski – B. Lataire) (Leuven: Leuven University Press 2002) 402–403.

⁵⁷ Cf. M.A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2014) 227.

Conclusions

A detailed analysis of 2 Cor 5:1–4, taking into account the antithetical structure of this pericope, allows formulating some important conclusions regarding its theological message. In this text, Paul perceives the body as both a dwelling and an outer clothing. Both of these metaphors refer to a person experiencing the need to possess a house as well as clothing no matter where they are on earth. These metaphors also point to the fact that the fullness of human existence in heaven also requires the possession of a body, the nature of which is closely related to the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God. Therefore, Paul cherishes the hope that when his temporal body breaks down on earth like a humble and temporary tent, he will receive a new body as a gift from God in heaven. This body will be similar to a magnificent building, which is eternal because it is not made by human hands, so it can become a permanent and proper means of his future existence. This conviction of the apostle is based on the belief in a resurrection, in which the temporal body will be perfected and adapted to the new reality of the heavenly kingdom. This faith of his is so strong that he writes about the future state of the risen person as if it were already his experience.

In this context, it is important to note that both the words about the corruption of the earthly body shown in the metaphor of the movable tent (2 Cor 5:1a), the metaphor of the loss of clothing (v. 4) as well as the metaphor of nakedness, widely discussed by exegetes (v. 3), refer to death, which ends the temporal stage of human life and leads to eternal life (it is impossible to find an allusion to an intermediate state between death and the Parousia in verse 3). When writing about this passage, Paul expresses his deep hope that when he loses his temporal, corruptible body, he will be able to clothe himself with an eternal body. He earnestly desires to stand before the Lord at the moment of the Parousia without losing his mortal body and without experiencing death, to pass into eternal life by being clothed with a glorious body.

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