

A PRECURSOR OF THE NRSV? 'SONS AND DAUGHTERS' IN 2 COR 6.18

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The phrase 'sons and daughters' in 2 Cor 6.18 provides the only instance of *θυγάτηρ* in all of the letters ascribed to Paul. It is argued that (1) the OT allusions in vv. 16–18 are from similar contexts of warning against combining the worship and service of God with that given to other gods, with (2) v. 18 being an echo of Deut 32.19, another instance of Paul's use of Deut 32. (3) Another influence is the OT practice, unlike that of the NT, of predominantly using both 'sons' and 'daughters' in parenting and family contexts.

A commendable feature of the *New Revised Standard Version* is a mandate 'that, in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture'.¹ Thus instances of *υἱός* in the New Testament are predominantly translated 'child(ren)' (unless clearly referring to a male or to Jesus as 'Son of God'),² and the majority of instances of *ἀδελφοί* as 'brothers and sisters'.³

Certainly the NT writers, for whatever reason, frequently used the masculine words alone. The use in one verse of *θυγάτηρ* in addition to *υἱός* is not common, occurring only in Matt 10.37; its parallel, Luke 12.53; Acts 2.17 (quoting Joel 2.28 [3.1]); and 2 Cor 6.18.⁴ The use of both *ἀδελφός* and *ἀδελφή* in one verse is likewise rare, occurring only in Matt 12.50 ('my brother and sister and mother', interestingly after only 'mother and brothers' in each of vv. 46, 47, 48, 49); the parallel in Mark 3 (where vv. 32 and 35

¹ From the preface, 'To the Reader', as in the 1990 edition published by Nelson, Nashville.

² 'Descendants' is used when linked with Israel or Abraham.

³ The NRSV uses 'brothers and sisters' overwhelmingly in the letters (more than 80 times), but has 'member(s)' (of family or church) in Matthew (18.15 [2x], 21; 25.40; and also 1 Cor 8.12; Gal 1.2 and 1 Tim 6.2), and 'believer(s)' in Acts (15 times; only Acts 16.40 has 'brothers and sisters'). 'Believers' is used only 11 times in letters (5 in a cluster, 1 Cor 6.5, 6 [2x], 8; 7.12; 8.11).

⁴ I do not include here verses such as Matt 15.22 where 'son' and 'daughter' refer to specific individuals.

have both genders, with 31, 33 and 34 only the masculine⁵); Matt 13.55–6 (and parallel Mark 6.3); Matt 19.29 (and parallel Mark 10.29–30); Luke 14.26; 1 Cor 7.15; and Jas 2.15.

It is of note that the phrase, καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῖν εἰς πατέρα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἕσεσθέ μοι εἰς υἱοὺς καὶ θυγατέρας (2 Cor 6.18), provides the only instance of θυγάτηρ in all of the letters ascribed to Paul.⁶ Further, this instance is in a catena of Old Testament quotations.

Understandably there have been several major studies of the passage 2 Cor 6.14–7.1. It is not my purpose to review these, or the various arguments on the authenticity of the passage.⁷ The concern here is the question: is there significance in the use of 'sons and daughters' in 6.18 and what may be its source?

Three major contributions on interpreting 2 Cor 6.14–7.1 are those of Fee, Thrall and Beale.⁸ Fee surprisingly does not list θυγάτηρ as a 'Pauline' *hapax legomenon*.⁹ Nor does he comment on its use. Similarly, in a long discussion arguing for a link of the passage to its wider context, Thrall has no comment on the word nor does she discuss details of the OT quotations. In her more recent commentary, however, she observes the addition of 'daughters' as having 'no Pauline parallel' and comments that 'it may be occasioned by the OT promises of the restoration of Israel in which "daughters" are often mentioned with "sons" (Isa 43.6; 49.22; 60.4).'¹⁰ In this later comment and the verses cited she follows Beale.¹¹

Where any comment is made by writers it usually is in the form of two brief observations. First, where an OT passage is seen to be relevant Isa 43.6 is cited:¹²

⁵ The parallel in Luke 18.19–20 has only the masculine.

⁶ My colleague, Dr Richard Moore, first alerted me to the combination, 'sons and daughters', and its similarity to NRSV practice. I also have benefited from the helpful comments of the editor and a reader on an earlier form of this article.

⁷ A recent review is R. Bieringer, '2 Korinther 6,14–7,1 im Kontext des 2. Korintherbriefes. Forschungsüberblick und Versuch eines eigenen Zugangs', in R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (BETL 112; Leuven: University and Peeters, 1994) 551–70. He focuses on issues of authenticity and relation to context, and thus has very little on details of the catena of OT quotations.

⁸ G. D. Fee, 'II Corinthians vi.14–vii.1 and Food Offered to Idols', *NTS* 23 (1977) 140–61; M. E. Thrall, 'The Problem of II Cor. vi.14–vii.1 in Some Recent Discussion', *NTS* 24 (1977) 132–48; and G. K. Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5–7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6.14–7.1', *NTS* 35 (1989) 550–81.

⁹ Fee, 'II Corinthians', 144–7.

¹⁰ M. E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Volume I* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 479.

¹¹ Beale, 'Reconciliation', 572.

¹² E.g., by C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's NT Commentaries; London: A. & C. Black, 1973) 201 (and citing Schlatter and Bonsirven); V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) 364; and R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*

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 . . .'. (NRSV)

Secondly, the inclusion of 'daughters' is seen by Barrett to flow from a Pauline concern: 'To Paul it was an essential feature of Christian existence that in Christ men become sons of God . . . and the statement in the same context in Galatians (iii.28) that in Christ there could be neither male nor female could be otherwise expressed by speaking of daughters as well as of sons of God.'¹³ This argument is adopted by Lambrecht¹⁴ and Martin,¹⁵ although rejected by Furnish.¹⁶

It is my contention that a more likely association is a combination of 2 Sam 7.8 and Deut 32.19 and that the use of 'sons and daughters' follows a common OT pattern when there is reference to 'children'. The combination is thus due to its being part of a catena of OT quotations.

THE LOGIC AND POSSIBLE SOURCES OF THE CATENA OF 6.16b-18

Fee has argued convincingly that verse 14 has particular reference to eating at idol temples. He notes the use of *μετοχή* and *κοινωνία* in 1 Cor 10.14-22, with *ἄπιστοι* in the Corinthian correspondence referring to pagans (e.g., 2 Cor 4.4). This conclusion receives further support from the logic of the catena which focuses on the incompatibility of being God's temple/people/children and participating in worship of other gods.

The precise sources of the Old Testament references cited are unclear. The catena is a collation and merging of phrases, full of 'echoes'.¹⁷ There is general agreement as to the use of Lev

(WBC 40; Waco, Texas: Word, 1986) 206. As noted already, Beale, 'Reconciliation', 572, and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 479, also include Isa 49.22 and 60.4, similarly referring to 'sons' and 'daughters' in a context of return from exile. J. Lambrecht, 'The Fragment 2 Corinthians 6,14-7,1: A Plea for Its Authenticity', in Bieringer and Lambrecht, *Studies*, 531-49 (reprint of T. Baarda, ed., *Miscellanea Neotestamentica. II* [NovTSup 48; Leiden: Brill, 1978] 143-61), however says (543, n. 29), 'No conscious reference to Is xlili 6 . . . is to be assumed here.'

¹³ *Corinthians*, 201.

¹⁴ 'Fragment', 543, n. 29.

¹⁵ 2 *Corinthians*, 206; also citing in agreement Plummer, Hughes, and Héring.

¹⁶ II *Corinthians*, 374, giving as his reason that in Gal 3.26 Paul has only 'sons'.

¹⁷ R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1989), builds on Hollander's figure of 'echo' to describe the way 'poets honor the voices of the dead even while forming echoes that transform their words in new acoustical environments' (p. 19). Hays recognises that the volume of the echo may vary: 'Sometimes . . .

26.11–12; Isa 51.22; and 2 Sam 7.14, but debate over the influence of other passages. A minimalist statement is that of Lambrecht: 'We should bear in mind, however, that more of (*sic*) less vague reminiscences of several passages cannot be excluded and that both the Covenant formula and the promise to David appear in many variants in the O.T. and later Jewish literature.'¹⁸

There is general consensus that v. 16b cites Lev 26.11–12 (with change in 2 Cor from 2nd person to 3rd):

I will place my dwelling (יְשֻׁבִי¹⁹) among you . . .
 And I will walk among you
 and I will be your God
 and you will be my people.

The context of the Leviticus passage is of separation from worshipping idols and of reverencing 'my holy place' (יְשֻׁבִי, τῶν ἁγίων μου; vv. 1–2), appropriate for the Corinthian context also. Ezek 37.27 is commonly cited as possibly associated due to ἐνοικήσω and 'their god/my people' link (using 3rd person), although 'walking' is not in this verse.²⁰ Less commonly Jer 32.38 [LXX 39.38] is proposed²¹ for the final half (again using the 3rd person, although the order is reversed, 'people . . . God', and reference is to the city).

Verse 17a–ba is clearly based on Isa 52.11, although with phrases in different order:

Isa 52.11 LXX

ἀπόσπυτε ἀπόσπυτε ἐξέλθατε ἐκεῖθεν καὶ
 ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε
 ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῆς
 ἀφορίσθητε οἱ φέροντες τὰ σκεύη κυρίου

2 Cor 6.17

διὸ ἐξέλθατε ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν καὶ
 ἀφορίσθητε, λέγει κύριος,
 καὶ ἀκαθάρτου μὴ ἄπτεσθε . . .

Again the context is relevant, with reference to 'carrying the Lord's vessels' (Num 1.50–1). The priestly task requires separation. There cannot be contamination through other associations.

The source of the final phrase of v. 17: *καὶ γὰρ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς* has

so loud that only the dullest or most ignorant reader could miss it . . . ; other times there will be room for serious differences of opinion about whether a particular phrase should be heard as an echo of a prior text and, if so, how it should be understood' (p. 29).

¹⁸ 'Fragment', 543.

¹⁹ LXX unexpectedly has τὴν διαθήκην μου. There is certainly a link between the presence of God and the covenant. P. Harlé and D. Pralon, *Le Lévitique* (La Bible d'Alexandrie; Paris: Cerf, 1988) 206, suggest that LXX may be an echo of Gen 17.2 and Exod 34.10, 12, 15, 27.

²⁰ J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 1992) 459–60, comments on the close connections between Lev 26 and Ezekiel, especially with Ezek 34.25–8; 36.28; and 37.24–7, and contends that Lev 26 is a source used by Ezekiel.

²¹ E.g., *UBSGNT*.

been elusive. It has close similarities to Ezek 20.34 LXX καὶ εἰσδέξομαι ὑμᾶς (MT: 'and I will gather you'²²). The context of Ezek 20.34 however is more difficult. It requires more nuances than that commonly seen in εἰσδέχομαι (and in the English, 'welcome, accept'). God is gathering people for purging, removing rebels who are worshipping idols. Ezek 20.34 has both the rescuing exodus imagery of 'mighty hand and outstretched arm' and the following phrase, 'and with wrath poured out' (as also in v. 33). There is to be a 'purging of rebels' (v. 38), alluding to the persistent worship of other gods in vv. 1–32. If 2 Cor 6.17bβ is citing Ezek 20.34 then it has a note of warning. It is reinforcing the need to be separated from the worship of idols if the hearers are to be 'God's people'. There is a comparable emphasis in the similar phrase in Ezek 20.41: καὶ εἰσδέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς, referring to God gathering the people so that 'you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed' (v. 43). An examination of the OT context of the phrase points to a nuance which is overlooked by commentators, but which is peculiarly appropriate to the Corinthian context.

The OT passages alluded to thus far have all had links with worship, whether the Temple or of idols. One would therefore expect that theme to continue.

'SONS AND DAUGHTERS', DEUT 32.18-19 AND OT PRACTICE

The phrase, 'I will be your father' has led many to see an allusion to the Nathan oracle in 2 Sam 7.8–16. Certainly there is an association with the Temple (although there David is told that God is more interested in building a 'house' for David than in having a 'house' for himself built by David). Perhaps the later democratising of the promise to David was aided by the double use of 'house'. A similar shift is seen in Rev 21.17 ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός.²³ An earlier likely democratising of the promise to David is Isa 55.3: 'I will make with you (plural; people called to leave Babylon) an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.'²⁴

²² LXX often has εἰσδέχομαι for MT גָּבַר, all in the Later Prophets, probably because the context is gathering of exiles. See H.-G. Link, 'δέχομαι', *NIDNTT* 3.745; and J. Lust, E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint. Part I* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992) 100.

²³ So Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 374.

²⁴ J. W. Olley, *Righteousness in the Septuagint of Isaiah: A Contextual Study* (SBLSCS 8; Missoula: Scholars, 1979) 144–5, discusses the meaning of both MT and LXX of Isa 55.3.

The fact that 2 Sam 7.14 is being cited here is supported by the unusual occurrence at the end of v. 18 of the combination κύριος παντοκράτωρ. It is used in the NT only here.²⁵ As a translation of יהוה צבאות it occurs in the LXX only in 2 Sam 5.10;²⁶ 7.8 (and parallels, 1 Chron 11.9; 17.7), Job and in some of the prophets (Jeremiah, Nahum, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).²⁷ It is possible that the use in 2 Cor is an echo of 2 Sam, although below we suggest another complementary reason.

As mentioned above a number of scholars have seen in the phrase 'sons and daughters' a possible citing of Isa 43.6. The question arises, why would Isa 43.6 be chosen to be linked with the other OT passages of this catena? The only possible association is the 'gathering' of exiles alluded to in 2 Cor 6.17bβ²⁸ (apart from the suggestion of Barrett and others that Paul wants to include both men and women, so antedating the mandate of the NRSV!). Dodd²⁹ has proposed allusion to Jer 31(38).9, 31–3, but the content there is more remote (v. 9: 'I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn'; v. 33: 'I will be their God and they shall be my people').

A much closer association is Deut 32.19 which has the two words joined by a conjunction: בני וּבְנֹתָיו υἱῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ θυγατέρων. At first sight this may appear to be the only factor supporting the relevance of this verse, especially on an isolated reading of the whole verse. Although there are some difficulties³⁰ the general sense is given by the NRSV: 'The LORD saw it, and was jealous, he spurned his sons and daughters.'

Nevertheless, the overall context of Deut 32.7 is very apposite to the situation of 2 Cor 6.14–7.1. The Song of Moses is an indictment of the people of Israel for abandoning God (v. 15), serving 'strange gods' (v. 16), and sacrificing to demons and other deities (v. 18). Further, v. 18 refers specifically to God as parent (father–mother):

²⁵ 4 times in Revelation is the longer combination κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

²⁶ Here (but not in the parallel 1 Chron 11.9) MT has יהוה אלהי צבאות.

²⁷ Fee, 'II Corinthians', 156, cites Amos 3.13 LXX, as does the marginal notation in the 26th edition (1979) of the Nestle–Aland text. However, this has the longer form seen in Revelation, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

²⁸ Beale, 'Reconciliation', has argued at length for a focus on 'Israel's restoration promises' (p. 572).

²⁹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1962) 45–6.

³⁰ The LXX in fact seems to give two verbs, ἐζήλωσεν καὶ παρωξύνθη, for the single MT verb גָּאָ. See the discussion of the LXX and other early interpretations by C. Dogniez and M. Harl, *Le Deutéronome* (La Bible d'Alexandrie; Paris: Cerf, 1992) 331.

You were unmindful of the Rock that fathered³¹ you
 You forgot the God who gave birth³² to you.

The Song continues to refer to rebellious children who worship other gods (e.g., vv. 20–1). At the end it brings a promise of cleansing. The general setting described in Deut 32 has similarities with that of Ezek 20.34 and is closely associated with the general idea of 2 Cor 6.16–18.

Further, Deut 32 has already been alluded to in an earlier Pauline argument against participation in ‘worship of idols’: 1 Cor 10.20, ἂ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ [θύουσιν], has clear echoes of Deut 32.17, ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ, and 1 Cor 10.22, παραζηλοῦμεν, of Deut 32.21, παρεζήλωσαν.³³ The use of Deut 32 in this passage also clarifies Paul’s identification of Christ as ‘the Rock that followed them’ (1 Cor 10.4). It is above all in Deut 32 that ‘Rock’ is a description of God (and of idols as ‘rocks’ that provide no protection).³⁴ Hays argues, from usage in Romans and 1 Corinthians, that ‘the Song of Moses . . . becomes in Paul’s hands a hermeneutical key of equal importance with the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah’.³⁵

If *all* the OT passages cited or alluded to in 2 Cor 6.14–18 thus contain an undercurrent of warning against treating God lightly by combining the worship and service of him with that given to other gods, it is appropriate that the more awesome title for God is then used, κύριος παντοκράτωρ.

There is a further observation relevant to the use of the combination, ‘sons and daughters’. It is of note that of the few OT passages where God speaks of his ‘children’ (as distinct from the corporate Israel or Ephraim, Jer 31.9; Hos 11.1) most have both בנים and בנות/בנות/בנות and θυγατήρες. In addition to Deut 32.19 and Isa 43.6, there is Isa 45.11 LXX,³⁶ and the reference in Ezek 16.20 to ‘your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me’.³⁷ The

³¹ ילד is commonly used for ‘being the ancestor of’, whether as father, or grandfather, or other legal links for inheritance. Older English versions have ‘beget’.

³² דויל (polel form) refers to going through the pains of birthing, and hence normally has woman as subject of the verb.

³³ Hays, *Echoes*, 93–4. He points out that in 1 Cor 10.20 the later gloss τὰ ἔθνη (followed *inter alia* by NRSV and NIV ‘the pagans’) is a result of failure to see the echo and weakens the point of Paul’s argument which links the Corinthian behaviour with ‘Israel’s wilderness idolatry’ (emphasis mine).

³⁴ MT, vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31 [2x], 37. The LXX has θεός on each occasion, including references to the ‘rock’ of those who worship idols.

³⁵ *Echoes*, 164.

³⁶ So the better texts. B, which follows MT and does not have καὶ περὶ τῶν θυγατέρων μου, is not a good text for Isaiah.

³⁷ LXX has no ‘to me’.

only OT references I have found that do not have this combination are in Ezek 16.21 (where the combination is unnecessary, following its use in v. 20), and Jer 3.19 (LXX here uses the non-gender specific τέκνα). This practice is the same as the use of both 'sons' and 'daughters' in other parenting or family situations: it is far more common to refer to both rather than simply בני' 'sons' (or 'children'). The contexts are varied: genealogies (e.g., Gen 5.4, 7, 10, etc.), family situations (Gen 31.28; 37.35; etc.), the exodus narrative (Exod 3.22; 10.9), laws (Exod 20.10; 21.4, 31; Lev 10.24), child sacrifice (Deut 12.31; 18.10; Ps 106.37; Jer 7.31), siege, defeat and exile (Lev 26.29; Num 21.29; Deut 28.32, 53; 1 Sam 30.3), and restoration of Zion (as mother) (Isa 49.22; 60.4).³⁸ Indeed, the OT is far more likely to use both 'sons' and 'daughters' than is the case in the NT. Certainly the usage in 2 Cor 6.18 is consistent with a Pauline theology of the equality of men and women ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3.28), but the actual wording is more likely to have been the result of common OT practice.

One might compare the OT practice of referring to both parents, 'father and mother', when the relationship with children is the topic, whether in the commandment of Exod 20.12 (and parallel Deut 5.16, and related curses), other laws concerning children (e.g., Exod 20.15, 17; Lev 19.3,³⁹ Deut 21.18–30), narrative (e.g., Josh 2.13, 18; Judg 14.2–9), psalm (e.g., Ps 27.10; 109.14), wisdom literature (e.g., Prov 1.8; 19.26), or prophetic literature (e.g., Isa 8.4; Ezek 22.7).⁴⁰ This contrasts with the NT use of 'fathers' alone in Eph 6.4 and Col 3.21.⁴¹ While the OT does have examples of using the masculine noun alone when both male and female are implied, the usage of both masculine and feminine forms together is far more common.

It could thus be argued on the basis of OT usage, that in the catena in 2 Cor 6.16–18 it would in fact be more natural to say 'sons and daughters' than simply 'sons' and that all that is involved in v. 18 is a democratising of the promise to David. Nevertheless the strong contextual parallels with Deut 32, supported by Pauline echoes of Deut 32 elsewhere, argue for a clear allusion. Indeed, the case for Deut 32.19 is greater than for the commonly cited Isa 43.6,

³⁸ Over 100 instances in OT.

³⁹ MT has the reverse order, 'his mother and his father', while LXX follows the more common 'his father and his mother'.

⁴⁰ Approximately 75 instances in the OT.

⁴¹ Despite the preceding words, τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν (ὕμῶν), in Eph 6.1 and Col 3.20, and the quote in Eph 6.2 of the OT form of the command, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα.

although given the place that both Deut 32 and Isaiah 40–66 play in Paul's thought there may be echoes of both.

All of the verses cited or alluded to in vv. 16–18 are thus from contexts of worship of God, whether linked with the temple or in opposition to worship of other gods. Each in its own way reinforces both in warning and promise the call to give sole undivided allegiance to God as his 'people', his 'sons and daughters'.