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PAUL, THE LAW, AND THE JUDGMENT

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The purpose of this essay is to determine whether there is an exegetical basis for Ellen G. White’s statement that justification by faith is the third angel’s message “in verity.” This essay will address only this concern, and all other concerns, pressing and tempting as they may be, will go unaddressed.

There are three main sections to this essay. The first section compares Rev 14:6-12 and Rom 1. This investigation seeks to determine whether there is an intertextual relationship between Rev 14 and Rom 1. The reason for choosing Romans 1 is twofold. Romans is Paul’s most lucid presentation of justification by faith. Also, there are significant verbal correlations between Rev 14 and Rom 1 that call for investigation. In the second section, I will examine Rom 2 as a test case to see whether the concept of the gospel in Rev 14 coincides with the concept of the gospel in Romans. Romans 2 is ideal for this purpose because it contains the most complete discussion of law and judgment in the entire Pauline corpus. In the final section, I will seek to clarify the role of faith, law, and judgment in Paul’s thinking based on passages taken from Rom 4, 6, 7, and 14. I will conclude by answering possible objections to my thesis.

Finally, due to space, discussion of secondary literature will be kept to a minimum.

Romans 1:14-32 and Revelation 14:6-12

One might not suspect that Revelation and Romans could have much in common. In his commentary on Revelation, David Aune states that the word gospel in Rev 14:6 has “no semantic connections to Pauline usage.” Indeed, for many, Revelation is a book filled with exotic imagery, symbolism, and numbers that evoke wild speculations. It is also a book full of threats of hellfire and brimstone and of curses that are poured out without mercy upon the inhabitants of the earth to their great devastation. By contrast, Romans is a clear expression of the joyous gospel, full of grace and forgiveness. For example, Romans does not once mention the word “curse” in its discussion of the history of Israel’s apostasy in chs. 9-11.

A careful look, however, reveals that there is a closer affinity between Romans and Revelation than meets one at first glance. To begin with, both letters have a strong Roman connection. Revelation was sent to the seven churches on the western coast of Asia Minor facing persecution from Rome. Romans was directly sent to Rome, where nascent Christianity was struggling to take root. In other words, both letters address early Christian communities struggling to survive in the hostile environment of the Empire. More importantly, significant verbal parallels exist between Romans and Revelation. For this essay, we will limit our comparisons to Rom 1:14-32 and Rev 14:6-12. The first parallel concerns the universalism of the gospel. Rom 1:15-17 states: “I am eager to preach the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον αὐτοῦ) to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one (πᾶν) who has faith.” The two words in this passage that capture the universalism of Paul’s gospel are πᾶν (every) and εὐαγγέλιον (preach the gospel). The same two words appear in Rev 14:6, also denoting the universalism of the gospel. The eternal gospel (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον) is to be preached

1 E. G. White, “Repentance the Gift of God,” Review and Herald, 1 April, 1890, 193. Eric Claude Webster, “Damnation or Deliverance,” Ministry, February, 1988, 37-40, appears to be the only serious attempt to explain the relation between the two. Webster argues that the Sabbath, which is the opposite of the mark of the beast in Rev 14, is the sign of the sanctification that results from justification by faith. Webster does not offer detailed exegesis to support his views.
4 All quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise indicated. The italics appearing within scriptural quotations are all mine, unless otherwise indicated.
(ἐκακγέλισαι) “to every (ἐπὶ τάν) nation and tribe and tongue and people.” Another eye-catching parallel is the expression the wrath of God. In Rom 1:18, the expression ὁργή θεοῦ (the wrath of God) describes the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against the wicked (ἁπτοκαλύττεται γὰρ ὁργή θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ).² A virtually identical phrase appears in Revelation 14:10, warning deluded humans about the wrath of God (άπτεσι πιθήκας . . . τὸν ὁργήν αὐτοῦ). And both Rev 14 and Rom 1 describe the wrath in the context of idolatry. Romans 1:23 denounces those who exchange the glory of God for images of mortal creatures (ἔν υμωμέναι εἰκόνας). Revelation 14:9-11 likewise pronounces the wrath of God upon those who worship the beast and its image (ἐὰς τις προκοπεῖ . . . τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ). Moreover, both Rev 14 and Rom 1 directly link idolatry with immorality. In Rom 1:24-31, immorality and vices are the direct result of idolatry. In Revelation 14:8, the wine of the idolatry of Babylon is its immorality (τοῦ θημοῦ τῆς ποτηρίας).³ These parallels suggest that Revelation 14 is dependent on Romans 1 for its language of judgment.

The unusually large number of occurrences of the term wrath (ὁργή) in Romans and Revelation are yet another indication of literary dependence. The term ὁργή occurs 36 times in the New Testament. Of these, 21 occurrences are in Paul, and the majority of them (12 times) are in Romans (1:18; 2:5 [2×]; 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22 [2×]; 12:19; 13:4; 13:5). In other words, Paul speaks about the wrath of God more than any other New Testament writer, and fully one third of the occurrences of ὁργή are found in Romans.⁴ Remarkably, Revelation has the next largest occurrence of the term in the NT—six times (6:16; 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:9; 19:15). If we add the verb ὄργανον (to be angry), which does not occur in Paul, to the list (Rev 11:18; 12:17), then the total occurrences of “wrath” in Revelation come to eight. One asks: Is it possible that Paul’s gospel is the source of the language and concept of “the wrath of God” in Revelation? The answer is yes.

This is further evident from the way Rom 1 and Rev 14 use the term glory (δόξα; dōxa henceforth). Both chapters use dōxa to underscore the importance of renouncing idolatry and of recognizing God as the sole Creator of the world. Romans 1:21-23 condemns the human refusal to give glory to Creator God (νοεῖ ὡς θεόν δόξαν) and the resultant idolatry that exchanges the glory of God for images resembling creatures (ἐπλακαίνει τὴν δόξα τοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκόνας). Similarly, Revelation 14:7-10 calls upon humans to give glory to God (δόξα αὐτῷ δόξαν) and to avoid the image of the beast—in other words, to renounce idolatry. In Jewish monotheism, the worship of Creator God and the rejection of idolatry are, as it were, the two sides of the same coin, and it appears that Rev 14:7-10 is the obverse of Rom 1:18-23: Romans 1 denounces idolatry, and Revelation 14 extols the worship of Creator God. What needs to be noted here, however, is that dōxa is a theological theme bearing Paul’s own unique stamp. As Robert W. Yarbrough rightly notes, the noun δόξα occurs 77 times in Paul and figures very prominently in his theology.⁵

One particularly interesting occurrence of a Pauline term in Revelation is the word mind (νοῦς). Except for its one occurrence in Luke 24:45, the Greek word νοῦς (nous henceforth) occurs in the NT only in Paul and Revelation. It occurs a whopping 21 times in Paul (Rom 1:28; 7:23, 25; 11:34; 12:2; 14:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 2:16 [2×];

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² For the purpose of this essay, the anarthrous state of εἰκακγέλισαι is not critical because there are many other parallels besides this one (cf. Aune, 825). The missing article may be due to faulty Greek. Concerning the Greek of Revelation, C. F. D. Moule remarks: “the author of the Apocalypse, who writes like a person who, nurtured in a Semitic speech, is only just learning to write in Greek”; C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, 2d ed. (Cambridge [Engl.]: University Press, 1960), 3.

³ The term “anger (θυμός)” expressing God’s wrath (ὁργή) occurs in Rev 14:8, 10, 19, and it also occurs in the same sense in Rom 2:8.

⁴ Aune, 831: “τοῦ ὁλου, ‘wine,’ is a partitive genitive, τοῦ θυμων, ‘passions,’ ‘appetite,’ is an appositive or epegegetical genitive.” In other words, the wine is the passion (cf. 17:2).

⁵Not all the occurrences of ὁργή (wrath) in Paul refer to the wrath of God (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 2:8). Although Rom 12:19; 13:4; 13:5 do not directly refer to the wrath of God, one cannot preclude this possibility. Even when one removes these six occurrences from the count, Paul is still the most frequent user of ὁργή in relation to divine judgment.

⁶Robert W. Yarbrough, “Paul and Salvation History,” Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 322-324; Yarbrough also notes that glory is a neglected theme in Pauline scholarship. Jacob Jervell’s definition according to which the glory of God in Paul refers only to the divine image in humans is too narrow; see Jacob Jervell, Imago Dei. Gen 1, 26 f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den Paulinischen Briefen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 320, 325.
14:14, 15 [2×], 19; Eph 4:17, 23; Phil 4:7; Col 2:8; 2 Thes 2:2; 1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:15), and twice in Revelation (13:18; 17:9). In Paul, nous or the mind is a human faculty that enables one to discern the will of God morally and in the events taking place in history. Thus Rom 12:2 states, “be transformed by the renewal of your mind (μεταμορφωθεῖτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ νοοῦ), that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” The nous is also the faculty that enables a person to acknowledge and worship Creator God. The reason for idolatry is that idolators have a degenerate nous. Paul states in Rom 1:28: “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind (παράδοξης ούτος ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκητου νοῦς) and to improper conduct.” Interestingly, the two occurrences of nous in Revelation bear more than a passing resemblance to these uses of nous in Paul. Revelation 13:18 states: “This calls for wisdom: let him who has a mind (ὁ ἔχων νοῦν) count the number of the beast” (my translation). And again, Rev 17:9 states: “This calls for a mind with wisdom (ὅτι ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν)”(RSV). The word nous or mind in these two passages denotes a renewed human faculty that enables one to discern the identity of the beast and its immoral and impious schemes. Mutatis mutandis, this means possessing a renewed mind is essential to faith because it enables one to recognize the true worship of Creator God and to avoid idolatry. This unusual term (at least for the NT) appearing in Paul and Revelation in approximately the same sense and context clearly suggests literary dependence.

In this context, it is difficult to miss the clear Pauline echo in Rev 14:12: “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ).” This phrase “the faith of Jesus (τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ)” is nearly identical to the phrase “the faith of Jesus Christ (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)” in Gal 2:16 and certainly echoes the verbal phrase “we have believed in Christ Jesus (ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστευσαν).” The ambiguity, however, that beclouds the Pauline phrase—whether it is an objective or a subjective genitive—also beclouds John’s. This discussion, however, lies outside the scope of this essay. For our purpose, it suffices to say merely two things: (1) In Rev 14:12, the quintessential Pauline phrase “the faith of Jesus” appears together with the phrase “the commandments of God” as a direct object of the verb τυγχάνει (to keep); and (2) this unique and vague phrase appears nowhere else in the NT except in Paul and Rev 14:12. By using the phrase as the direct object of the verb to keep in conjunction with “the law of God,” Rev 14:12 appears to treat the faith of Jesus, like the law, as something to keep and to fulfill. A similar usage of faith is found in 2 Tim 4:7 (“I have kept the faith [τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα].”)

These parallels seem to indicate that Revelation 14 is intentionally trying to engage Rom 1 in order to make a statement about Paul’s gospel. In Rev 14:6-12, the gospel has three basic characteristics: (1) Divine judgment

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2. Aune, 769, thinks that Rev 13:18 and 17:9 allude to Dan 12:10. It is possible that with the term mind the author of Revelation is trying to index the apocalyptic framework of Paul’s gospel.
3. For bibliography and summaries of positions taken on the issue, see Sigve Tonstad, “Πίστεως Χριστοῦ: Reading Paul in a New Paradigm,” Andrews University Seminary Studies 40 (2002): 37-47. Tonstad argues for the subjective genitive on grounds that (1) Rom 3:21-26 represents an accurate reading of Hab 2:3-4, and (2) like Habakkuk’s concern, Paul’s concern in Rom 3:21-26 is theodicy (pp. 47-59). Tonstad’s thesis that the nature of Jesus’ faithfulness was “the ultimate rebuttal of the satanic misrepresentation” of God (p. 59) may perhaps be true for Revelation, but has little exegetical basis in Paul. Satan does not play a prominent role in Paul. See also Bruce W. Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community: Galatians 2:15-21 and Beyond,” in James D. G. Dunn, ed., Paul and the Mosaic Law (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 75-97. For Tonstad’s detailed study of the phrase the faith of Jesus in the context of Revelation and theodicy, see idem, “Saving God’s Reputation: The Theological Function of Pístis Iesou in the Cosmic Narrative of Revelation,” (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 2004), 250-292. In the dissertation, Tonstad updates the bibliography and softens his views about the Pauline pístis chriostou (pp. 278-284). The objective-genitive reading will be adopted for both Revelation and Paul in this essay; when the term faith is used in this essay, it refers to the faith of the believer. It should be noted that Tonstad himself does not oppose this usage of the word faith (cf. pp. 288-289).
4. Tonstad’s argument that τυγχάνει means “to preserve” or “have” in Rev 14:12 seems forced; cf. idem, “God’s Reputation,” 250-278. The verb τυγχάνει is used in this sense mostly with personal objects; see Harald Riesenfeld, τυγχάνει, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 142-146. When used with the law, it means keep or fulfill (ibid., 143-145). I, however, accept the cosmic background of Paul’s concept of faith on grounds that Paul’s theology is largely apocalyptic in orientation. See Johan Christiaan Beker, Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).
forms an integral part of the gospel (vv. 6b-7a); (2) the proper response to the proclamation of the gospel is fearing God and giving glory to him as the Creator of the world (v. 7b, 9-11); and (3) the law has an active role alongside faith in the life of a Christian (v. 12). The question is whether these notions are consistent with Paul’s concept of the gospel, particularly as articulated in Romans. To determine this, I will examine Rom 2 in detail, below. I chose Rom 2 for two reasons. First, Rom 2 is the only extensive discussion on law and judgment in the entire Pauline corpus. Second, Rom 1-2 appears to form a single unit held together by the themes of divine impartiality and the wrath of God. As a continuation of ch. 1, Rom 2 offers an ideal setting from which to clarify the relations between Rom 1 and Rev 14.

Paul’s Concept of Law and Judgment in Rom 2:1-29

In his article “The Law in Romans 2,” which appears in James D. G. Dunn’s Paul and the Mosaic Law, N. T. Wright calls Rom 2 “the Achilles heel of schemes on Paul and the law.” Professor Wright states:

One commentary after another has set out the scheme, according to which the chapters [1-8] deal with human sin (1-3), the divine remedy in Christ, and justification by faith (3-4), and, one way or another, the new life the Christian enjoys (5-8). The epistle thus far, in other words, is imagined to follow and expound some sort of ordo salutis. Within this Romans 2 has no business to be speaking either of how one is justified or of the results of justification.

Needless to say, the law is not a salient feature of this ordo salutis. A believer moves from a life of sin to the remedy found in Christ through justification by faith, and the law does not have a significant role in the new life of a Christian. Romans 2 differs with this simplistic understanding of salvation.

The context of Rom 2 is the final judgment. In Rom 2:5, Paul warns his imaginary interlocutor who judges others that they are storing up wrath “against the day of wrath (ἐν ημερήσιν ὀργῆς) and revelation of the righteous judgment (καὶ ἀποκάλυψις δικαιοσυνεῖς)” (KJV). These direct references to the future judgment—namely “the wrath of God” and “the righteous judgment”—establish the futuristic orientation of Rom 2. The same futuristic orientation is also evident in v. 12: “All who have sinned without the law will also perish (ἀπολοῦσιν) without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged (κρίθησονται) by the law” (v. 12; RSV). The future tense verbs—“will perish” and “will be judged”—unmistakably allude to the future “general” judgment. In this light, the categorical statement in v. 13 is also a reference to the final judgment.

15 Aune, 827, rightly states concerning the response called for in 14:7a: “This is not the gospel of early Christianity but the message proclaimed by Hellenistic Judaism and taken over by early Christianity, reflections of which are found in the NT.” It is therefore imperative to try to determine whether, or how far, Paul deviates from early Judaism. Tonstad, “God’s Reputation,” rightly places Rev 14:12 in a cosmic context. Rev 14:7b prescribes the church’s proper response to the gospel in apocalyptic terms. It does not seem warranted, however, that there needs to be a sharp dichotomy between soteriology and theodicy, as Tonstad makes out (279-280).

16 Jouette M. Bassler, Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1982). On pp. 123-137, she gives five reasons why Rom 1:16-2:11 is a unit. (1) The language is similar throughout 1:18-2:11. (2) Almost all ancient Greek codices that have chapter divisions place a chapter division after 2:11. (3) Romans 2:6-11 has been carefully structured to reflect the measure-for-measure justice outlined in 1:22-32. (4) The formula “to the Jew first and also the Greek” found in 1:16 is repeated in 2:10 as a unit marker. (5) The wording of 2:9-10 closely resembles that of 1:18.

17 Jervell, 328.


19 Ibid., 131.


21 Wright, “Romans 2,” 143-1; Bassler, 140. “Paul... focuses... on the impartiality that is ultimately effective at the final judgment.”

22 Dunn rightly notes the “eschatological dimension” of the future tense “will be justified”: Dunn, Romans, 97. See also Wright, “Romans 2,” 143. However, the notion in 2:13 that the law is the norm of the final judgment is unusual. Paul generally connects the condemning work of the law with Israel’s past and present predicaments rather than with the future universal judgment (cf. 2 Cor 3:7, 13-15; Rom 5:13-14, 20-21; Gal 3:10, 19, 23-24.)
justified (δικαιωθήκεται).” Verse 16 also makes an allusion to the final judgment: 21 “in the day when God will judge (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως ὕπ' θεοῦ)” (NKJV; italics mine).

In this context, Paul introduces the word law in 2:12, for the first time in Romans. He then uses it in rapid succession to the end of ch. 2 (vv. 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, 27) and continues to mention it in every chapter of Romans, all the way to ch. 13. The reason for this rather dramatic introduction and ensuing rapid-fire mention of the law in Rom 2 appears to be to establish a definition of the law for the rest of the letter. According to Rom 2, the law is the sole criterion of judgment in the final judgment, whose demand is for moral and ethical performance.22 Yet this definition is not free of exegetical problems. For example, Paul’s statement in 3:20 “that no human being will be justified (δικαιωθήκεται) . . . by works of the law” flatly contradicts 2:13 (that “the doers of the law . . . will be justified”). Another problem is 2:12, which states: “all who have sinned without the law will . . . perish without the law” (2:12). According to this verse, it appears that the law will not be allowed to serve as a criterion of judgment for those who did not have the law. Thus Wright states, wrongly, that “the law sets the standard by which Israel will be judged; Gentiles will be judged without reference to it.”23 Furthermore, according to 2:16, the standard of judgment is not the performance of the law but the gospel (“God shall judge . . . according to my gospel” [KJV]). In other words, the depiction of the final judgment in Rom 2, which has the law at its center, apparently collides with the rest of Romans, which depicts the centrality of Christ and the joy of acquittal and freedom that results from justification by faith. Wright describes the problem this way:

In Romans, as elsewhere in Paul, it is present justification, not future, that is closely correlated with faith. Future justification, acquittal at the last great Assize, always takes place on the basis of the totality of the life lived (e.g. Romans 14:11f; 2 Cor 5:10). It is because the relation between the two has by no means always been understood . . . that exegetes have glossed uneasily over this passage [2:12-16], and have flattened it into a general treatment of the sinfulness of all humans beings” (italics mine).26

One wonders, however, whether Romans 2:14-15 and 2:26-29, rather than being the source of the problem, might not be the key to the solution. These verses, particularly 2:14-15, contain detailed descriptions of how Gentiles keep the law (ἡ ἄρεστοι ἡ δικαιομαχία τοῦ νόμον φυλάσσων). If these Gentiles are Christians, then we may be half way to the solution because we would know from these verses how, according to Paul’s thinking, believing Gentiles experience the dynamic of faith, law, and judgment in their lives. And on the basis of an analysis of this passage, we could derive an understanding about the relation between judgment by works and justification by faith. In fact, this is what I propose we do. But there is a problem. Scholarship is sharply divided about the identity of the Gentiles in these verses, whether they are pagan or Christian. Jouette Bassler and N. T. Wright have addressed this thorny question from opposite sides of the debate with greater creativity and thoroughness than anyone else has in the field in recent years. In my view, Wright, who argues that these verses refer to Gentile Christians, has the better argument. This actually represents a change of mind on my part because I began reading Wright’s article with the opposite conviction. I will summarize Wright’s arguments here,27 not only because they

22Bassler, 141, rightly states: “Verse 13 established performance, not possession, as the decisive factor.” 2 Corinthians 5:10 mentions the same criterion for the final judgment: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.” See Kent L. Yinger, Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 260-270.
23Wright, “Romans 2,”149.
24Ibid., 144. See also, Yinger, 6-16.
25For references and details, see Wright, “Romans 2,” 134-139, 144-145. Bassler, 141-143, provides an excellent summary of both positions. In favor of the view that the Gentiles are not Christians, Bassler lists the following six arguments: (1) The phrase “not having the law (τὰ μὴ νόμου Ξοινα) in v. 14 cannot apply to Christians since, in the ultimate sense, Paul argues that Christians keep the law. (2) Ἐλληνες (Greeks) in 2:10 does not refer to Christians, and, consequently, cannot refer to the same body of people as άνθι (Gentiles) in 2:14. (3) φύσις (by nature) in 2:14 goes with the phrase that immediately follows and refers to the experience of the non-Christians. (4) The terminology of nature, law, and conscience belong to “the Greek concept of natural law.” (5) A similar notion of natural law existed in Judaism, and, as such, φύσις does not specifically refer to Christian experience. (6) The theme of impartiality running through chapters 1 and 2 will be severely compromised if the Gentiles in 2:14-15 are read as Christians. This last argument seems a bit circular to me since her thesis is that Rom
represent my present position but because they for the most part constitute fresh evidence. Wright begins with 2:26-29.28 (1) The language of Rom 2:29 (‘real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal’) closely resembles that of Rom 7:6, 2 Cor 3:16, and Phil 3:3. These passages all contrast spirit and letter, or circumcision and spirit, to describe the Christian experience of the new life. Rom 2:29 should not be an exception. (2) The mention of the spirit in 2:29 uses the new covenant language of Ezek 36:24. Paul’s intention in 2:29 is to describe a complete transformation of the heart. (3) The term ‘reception (λαβονθέρχεται)’ refers to justification by faith because this is how the word is used throughout Romans. (4) Romans 2:25-26 is an interjection that anticipates a much fuller discussion that will appear later in the letter. Interjections of this type abound in Romans.

Then Wright offers six more weighty arguments in connection with 2:14-15.29 The first three of these arguments concern the term φίλος (by nature), which is at the center of the debate. (1) φίλοι in 2:14 modifies the preceding phrase “the Gentiles who have not the law (εθνη τα μη νομον έχοντα)” The resultant phrase “the Gentiles who have not the law by nature” would then be referring to “those outside the covenant.” This however, still does not alleviate the problem that εθνη τα μη νομον έχοντα φίλοι still sounds awkward. (2) Wright points to των ἀθεόνων τη πίστει in Rom 14:1 (“as for the man who is weak in faith”) as evidence of how Paul is capable of placing a dative noun after the participle it modifies. Wright grants that εθνη φίλοι τα μη νομον έχοντα would have been more natural sounding. (3) If φίλοι refers to the coincidental and occasional performance of the law by pagan Gentiles, then 2:14-15 would be only an aside inserted into the overall argument of Rom 2. But there is no clear indication in the text that Paul intends 2:14-15 as a mere aside. (4) The phrase “the law written on their hearts (τον νόμον γραπτον εν ταις καρδιαις αυτων)” is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:33. There is no satisfactory explanation why Paul should have chosen Jeremiah’s new covenant language to describe pagan Gentiles. (5) If 2:14 (‘when Gentiles who have not the law’) is a continuation of the thought in v. 13 (‘the doers of the law will be justified’), then it would mean that, unlike the Jews, the pagan Gentiles will be justified in the final judgment for their occasional and coincidental performance of some aspects of the law. This would be unfair. (6) If the Gentiles mentioned in 2:12-14 refer to pagan Gentiles, then the idea in v. 15 that the Gentiles have the law written on their hearts would be nonsense since these Gentiles will be destroyed anyway, without the law (v. 12; άνιμος και απολογεωμενοι).

Even after these arguments, difficulties and ambiguities remain, but no one has yet mounted equally compelling, fresh arguments to counter Wright’s evidence, and it is not possible to wait until every difficulty has been removed to begin working on a text. We will proceed on the assumption that the Gentiles in Rom 2:14-16 and 2:26-29 are Christian. According to v. 14, these Gentile Christians are able to perform what the law requires (τα τον νομον τουσαν), and they are a law to themselves (άουτοι... λεγοντος εις αυτους). How can this be? The new covenant motif in v. 15 explains the phenomena. These Gentile Christians are able to keep the law because “what the law requires is written on their hearts (o έργον τον νομον γραπτων εν ταις καρδιαις αυτων).” And this eschatological experience takes place through a believer’s inner activity (τηε συνειδησεως) consisting of accusations and excuses made in response to the conflicting thoughts that arise in their consciences (μεταξο αλληλης των λογισμων κατηγορουντων η και απολογουμενων).30 According to v.16, this decision-making process takes place in

1-2 center on the theme of divine impartiality. For a more succinct summary of the views and refutations, see C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 155-156. Commentators generally avoid detailed discussion of the issue. For example, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993). Fitzmyer, who rejects the “Gentile Christian” argument, presents basically only two arguments: (1) the context does not make clear that Gentile Christians are meant here; and (2) φίλοι (by nature) goes with the phrase that immediately follows (“do the things in the law”; NKJV). Dunn, Romans, 98, likewise also appeals to the less than clear notion of “widespread sense of rightness and wrongness of certain conduct.” On the question of φίλοι, see Paul J. Achtemeier, Romans, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 45. Achtemeier argues that to take φίλοι the way, for example, Fitzmyer suggests would make Jews inferior to Gentiles because the Jewish sense of rightness required a revelation. Commentators unfortunately overlook Achtemeier’s point.

28Wright, “Romans 2,” 134-139.
29Ibid., 144-146.
30See Bassler, 147. She notes that the words συμμαρτυρωνσε, κατηγορουντων, and ἀπολογουμένων are legal terminologies. Mainly on the strength of this observation and on the basis the problematic nature of εν ἡμέρα (as to which verb it goes with), she argues that the accusations and the excuses refer to the activities of the conscience that will appear as eschatological witnesses. Bassler, however, fails to consider the force of the present
the secrecy of the heart (τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἁπαθῶν) while bearing in mind the final judgment (cf. ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ). If the protasis of 2:26a (“if [Ἰάν] a man who is uncircumcised keeps [φυλάσσει] the precepts of the law”) is a recap of these inner processes described in 2:14-16, then we have in this passage an unusually graphic description of the mechanics through which a Christian experiences and fulfills the new covenant in their lives. In other words, 2:14-16 is a description of faith experienced in relation to law and judgment. Before getting too far, however, we need to ask whether these ideas are consistent with Paul’s statements in the rest of Romans.

Law, Judgment, and Faith

According to Paul, one of the functions of the law is to cause humans to experience condemnation before God. Romans 3:19-20 clarifies this function of the law.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God (τὸ θεὸν). For no human being will be justified in his sight (ἐν οὐδενὶ ἀναπτυγμένον) by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (3:19-20).

The problem of the Jews was not that they possessed the law or that they tried to keep it. Rather, their problem was that the way they kept the law and reasoned about it prevented them from recognizing that they were in fact breaking the law and at the same time failing to experience the terror of God’s impartial judgment. When Paul makes statements like “through the law comes knowledge of sin” (3:20) or “the law came in to increase the trespass” (Rom 5:20), his intent is not to demean the law. His point, rather, is that, if the law had been allowed to function as originally intended by God, it would have given the people the τὸ θεῶ (before-God) experience described in 3:19-20, and this experience would have removed boasting from them, leaving them condemned before God without excuse (cf. 1:20; εἰς τὸ ἐὰν αὐτὸς ἀναπολογηθῶ). Therefore Paul’s aim in Rom 1-3 is to explain the law in such a way that it is allowed to fulfill its intended function, which is to bring sinners before God, face to face, to receive condemnation. In this light, it is noteworthy how Paul creates an inclusio in 3:11 and 3:18 with quotations that define sin as a failure to seek God’s presence. In v. 11, he quotes from Ps 14: “no one understands, no one seeks for God.” This quotation would no doubt have caused an informed reader to recall the opening words of Ps 14: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (v. 1). A similar quote closes the catena of scriptural quotations that follow the opening charge: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18). The refusal to acknowledge God as God is the essence of sin. And it is in just such terms that Paul portrays human sinfulness in Rom 1-3. The pagan, the judgmental person in 2:1-11 (whoever they are), and the Jew—they all have in common their desire to depart from the presence of God and give glory to themselves. Therefore a sinner can fulfill the law only by fulfilling its original intention, which is to stand before God (τῷ θεῷ) and face judgment.

Remarkably, Paul uses the same τῷ θεῷ language to describe faith. According to Rom 4:2, Abraham had nothing to boast about before God (οὗ πρὸς θεῶν). Instead, he was justified because he had faith in the presence of God (ἐν θεῶν: Ἄραβα ἡμών τῷ θεῷ; v. 3). Paul repeats the same point in v. 17: “God, in whose presence he believed (κατέναναὶ οἱ ἐπίστευσαν θεόν; my translation),” and in v. 20: “he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God (δοκεῖ δόξαν τῷ θεῷ).” Clearly, Abraham’s faith—the yardstick by which we are to measure our own—is consistently described in Rom 4 as a τῷ θεῷ experience—an experience of existing in the presence of God. In other words, faith and law have essentially the same spiritual structure. They both demand that we exist before God the Creator, whose judgment knows no partiality. Romans 6:11 states: “You also must consider yourselves dead to sin
(τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) and alive to God (τῷ Θεῷ) in Christ Jesus." Here Paul uses the word sin in the same personal sense as God. This is even clearer in v. 13: "Do not yield your members to sin (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God (τῷ Θεῷ)." As indicated by the precise juxtaposition of to sin and to God in these verses, the opposite of the presence of God is the presence of sin whose wicked whims control human existence. Faith35 denotes the life of one who has been judged before the Judgment Seat of an impartial God and set free from the grips of sin to enjoy life in God’s presence. The τῷ Θεῷ language appears again in 7:4: "we may bear fruit to God (καρποφόρησομεν τῷ Θεῷ)." This time, however, the contrast is between τῷ Θεῷ and τῷ νόμῳ (the law); "you have died to the law (ἐκατακτήσατε τῷ νόμῳ)." Then 7:6 further contrasts τῷ Θεῷ with τῷ θειάτῳ (death): "our [bodily] members... bear fruit for death (εἰς τῷ καρποφόρησοι τῷ θειάτῳ)." The existence away from the presence of God described in Romans 6 and 7 may be given in a chart as follows. (I use the phrase “in the presence” to denote a general sense of environment or setting.).

6:10-11  In the presence of sin (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ)
7:4  In the presence of the law (τῷ νόμῳ)
7:5  In the presence of death (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ)

These depictions of sinful existence closely resemble the depictions of sin and human rebellion in chs 1-3. In chs. 6-7, the τῷ Θεῷ language, used opposite the three modes of existence under sin, defines faith as a life lived before God.

In Rom 14, Paul again takes up the τῷ Θεῷ language, as it were, in a grand finale. Paul declares in v. 6: "a person who eats eats before the Lord (κυρίῳ ἐστίν), for they offer thanks to God (εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ Θεῷ; my translation)." The anarthrous κυρίος (Lord) in this verse appears to reflect the translation of the tetragrammaton YHWH in the LXX.36 Similar usages of the τῷ Θεῷ language occur throughout the chapter (vv. 7, 8, 11, 10, 12), evoking the OT phrase πρὸς Ἰησοῦν (before the Lord; cf. v. 11). In the OT, the expression πρὸς Ἰησοῦν (before the Lord) is used to designate the entirety of life lived before God, privately, collectively, and cultically.37 Likewise, for Paul, living by faith means that we exist πρὸς Ἰησοῦν, whether we eat, drink, or rest. The judgment language of Rom 14:10-12 highlights this meaning of faith: "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (v. 10) and “each of us shall give account of himself [to God] (τῷ Θεῷ, v. 12).”38 These descriptions of faith as a life under judgment are remarkably similar to those that describe the life under the law. What is Paul’s point? Faith and law basically operate under the same spiritual principle in the life of a believer.39 Both faith and law cause people to live and die λίπνευ, before the Lord. The prospect of judgment continues for those who live by faith, as for those who are under the law, not only as a future event but as a reality to be reckoned with on a daily, if not hourly, basis. The difference is that, acquitted, the people of faith boldly approach the throne of grace (cf. 5:1-2; τῷ προσεύχεσθαι ἐκεῖνον τὸν θεόν; cf. v. 13). Jouette Bassler rightly notes: "The impartiality of the new dispensation of grace, which is open to all without distinction, is consistent with, even grounded in, the impartiality in judgment."40 The present tense verbs in 14:8 denote this on-going reality of divine judgment and acquittal in the life of a believer (τῷ κυρίῳ ζῶμεν... τῷ κυρίῳ ἐπαθομοῦμεν). This understanding of faith seems to echo the Psalms that express an ardent desire to behold the face of God (cf. Ps 24:6; 27:8). In Rom 14:22-23, Paul ends the chapter on the note of faith, with a significant undertone of the τῷ Θεῷ language. He writes: "Hast thou faith (οὐ πιστεύεις ἐξελικ;? have it to thyself before God (ἐκατανοήσας τοῦ Θεοῦ)?" (v. 22; KJV) This statement as it were sums up the

35Romans 6:8 explains the resurrection experience of a baptized person in confessional terms (πιστεύεις ἐν καὶ συζευγαμεν αὐτῷ). Confession implies faith.
38Although the phrase "to God" in v. 12 is omitted in some manuscripts, major uncials include it, but even without it, the phrase "give account" implies judgment.
39Revelation 14:12 perhaps intends to make this point by designating both the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus as the direct objects of the verb to keep (οἱ τρόποις τῶν ἑνεκας τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν πιστεύει τοῦ Θεοῦ)—a verb that has a connotation of obedience; against Aune, 837.
40Bassler, 156.
principle of faith repeatedly outlined in chs 4, 6 and 7. There are only two ways to live a life, in the presence of God or away from it. Paul writes: “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (πᾶν ὁ άγιος ἐκ τίποτας ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν)” (v. 23; RSV). Faith means a life intentionally lived in the presence of God. Conversely, the opposite of faith is forgetfulness that keeps the fear of God’s judgment out of one’s life and consciousness.

Therefore I submit that the proper response to the gospel given in Rev 14:7 is a rather accurate summary of Paul’s understanding of faith expressed in Romans: Living by faith means: (a) to fear God and give glory to him who is an impartial Judge of all humankind and (b) to worship God, who is Creator of the world.

**Objections and Conclusion**

There will obviously be objections to and questions about my interpretation of Romans. Due to space, I will only deal with four of the objections, which are: (1) My concept of judgment is too individualistic; (2) My reading of Romans is too dependent on N. T. Wright’s argument according to which Rom 2:14-16 and 2:26-29 refer to Gentile Christians; (3) my reading will foster petty legalism and self-centered introspection; and (4) my reading takes away from the centrality of Christ and turns faith into human performance. I will take up these objections one at a time.

First, any discussion about judgment implies a cosmic, apocalyptic, and prophetic perspective that addresses issues like theodicy and justice. I do not wish to deny this. My intent in this essay has been simply to show that Paul’s concept of faith exists in inseparable relation to judgment, however one defines it.

Second, my reading of Romans is not as dependent on N. T. Wright’s argument as it might appear. The original draft of this essay was actually written on the premise that the Gentiles referred to in Rom 2 are primarily pagans. My original argument was that Paul is intentionally vague in Rom 2 in order to make clear that everyone—Jews, pagan Gentiles, and Christian Gentiles—will all face God’s impartial judgment on the basis of performance. In addition, the debate about the identity of the Gentiles in Rom 2 does not materially affect my more important argument that Paul explains the experience of faith in relation to judgment and in terms that approximate the experience of the law.

Third, while it is true that my exposition of the gospel fosters introspection, it does not necessarily lead to petty legalism or self-centeredness. The “before-God” character of faith preempts the possibility of legalism in that no one needs to answer to anyone else, except to God, whether one has kept the law. Legalism is a product of judgmentalism that causes people to measure themselves against each other. Being no respecter of persons, God will judge everyone based on his standards.

As for introspection, for many, faith means saying goodbye to the feelings of uncertainty as something characterizing the existence under the law. Faith means an assurance of salvation free from all doubts. Paul would agree that faith does not breed doubts, but he would not agree that faith frees you from having to look inside yourself and at God’s judgment in trying to determine whether your actions are just, whether they accord with the will of God. This is clear from Rom 14:22-23, even if we leave Rom 2:14-16 out of the discussion. Paul writes: “Happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves (ὁ μὴ κρίνων ἐκατέρτ] ἐν ὧ δοκεῖ οὖσα). But he who has doubts is condemned” (Rom 14:22b-23a). According to this passage, a believer engages in private and personal judiciary activities that result in either approval or disapproval of their own actions. The experiences of inner conflict arising from these activities and the joyful experience of the gospel are necessarily coterminal. Faith that causes people to live before God also allows them to enjoy the power of personal agency to make even difficult ethical decisions by themselves. This is the new covenant. The notion that faith offers an assurance that precludes the fear of judgment and accountability is a gospel unknown to Paul.

In this light, Krister Stendahl’s charge that the notion of introspective conscience was introduced to Western Christianity by Augustine and Martin Luther needs a fresh examination. Due to the scope of this paper, only a few brief comments are possible. Stendahl is probably right in his observation that Paul had “a rather ‘robust’ conscience.” At the same time, a robust conscience does not preclude introspection. The various Greek schools of

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41Aune, 827, rightly notes: “The phrase ‘the fear of God’ or ‘the fear of the Lord’ is often used in a way synonymous with true faith (Ps 34:11).”

42Bassler, 163. These descriptions closely resemble the experience of the Gentiles in Rom 2:15.


44Ibid., 80.
philosophy were nothing if they were not about introspection. They were deeply involved in what Stanley Stowers calls "the technology of the self" through which they tried to carefully map out the inner workings of the human mind and body to foster self-improvement and perfection. Stendahl is himself unduly influenced by Augustine and Luther when he equates introspection with a "troubled conscience." As we saw, for Paul, introspection is synonymous with the personal agency and accountability of the individual expressing inwardness and freedom enjoyed under the new covenant.

Finally, my understanding of the gospel does not need to undermine the centrality of Christ. The law plays a hermeneutical role (by no means the only one it plays). One cannot understand the true meaning of faith without the belief that the law is the norm of judgment. Almost every mention of faith in Paul presupposes an understanding of law and judgment. Judgment by law based on performance is the default procedure by which one is declared righteous. Justification by faith is an exception made to this rule—an eschatological surprise. The Cross graciously opened up the unexpected kairós of the opportunity for salvation (cf. 2 Cor 6:2; ἰδοὺ νῦν καρπὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας). We cannot fully appreciate this unexpected nature of grace without the default of judgment by law.

Furthermore, the Pauline gospel does not preempt the need for human performance. A new covenant experience that excludes ethical responsibility is an oxymoron. N. T. Wright bifurcates when he states in the same breath that the keeping of the law is "in tune with Ezekiel 36" and that "it is a matter . . . [not] of ethics, but of

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46Stendahl, 81, 84. Stendahl himself resorts to guilt when speaking on social and political issues: "how insignificant it is to the world that one little person repents, because his actions move on. And if that is true about such trivial things as pornography, how gruesomely true it is about our collective acts, our responsibilities as a nation and as human beings dirtying up this earth morally and ecologically. If the consequences last, is it really important that the individual or even the people repent? Yes, it is for them, for God, and perhaps for the future. But the guilt lies heavy" (pp. 104-105). What Stendahl despises is theological guilt, which for him is a mere "soul game." His willingness to impose guilt on people for their bad social and political conduct simply means that, for him, sin as a theological category no longer functions as part of his reality. It is a mistake, however, to think that sin was not a stark reality for Paul. Paul writes: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith (Ἐξετάσατε ἑαυτούς, ἵνα ἀρνήσητε τὴν πίστιν). Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Cor 13:5). If Paul felt no need of introspection for himself, he certainly did not hesitate to impose it on his Gentile congregations, albeit collectively.

47Yinger, 287, rightly notes: "Though collective aspects are not eliminated, it is particularly individual accountability which is now stressed most strongly" (italics original).

48Ibid., 6-16, offers a survey of the ways in which scholars have tried to explain the relation between justification by faith and judgment by works. To summarize Yinger: (1) As a vestigial remain of Jewish theology, Judgment by works cannot be reconciled with Paul's theology of grace even though Paul often places the two side by side (Gillis Wetter). (2) Judgment by works is a subcategory of justification by faith; justification by faith guarantees the favorable verdict at the final judgment (Herbert Braun). (3) As polemic doctrines, judgment by works is aimed at the proud and justification by faith, at the legalists (Nigel Watson). (4) Paul wrote occasional letters, so there is no need to figure out the relation between judgment by works and justification by faith. Judgment should be considered by itself in the context of Paul's Jewish eschatology and the present reprieve from its wrath that the believers enjoy (Calvin Roetzel). (5) Paul uses judgment by work only for a heuristic purpose (Ernst Synofzik). (6) Judgment by works deals with reward and justification by faith deals with salvation; judgment has no effect on salvation (D. E. Kühl). (7) Justification by faith is a free gift of salvation, but the extent to which the salvation can be claimed will be determined at the final judgment (Richard Devor). (8) There will be two judgments, one based on faith to separate the justified Christian from the rest and another one based on works to determine the reward of the justified (Luise Mattern). (9) Justification by faith allows the believer to live a sinless life, giving them confidence to face judgment (Floyd Filson). Yinger's own position is that judgment by works confirms justification by faith (p. 290). My present view comes closest to Devor's: justification by faith is an exception made to the default of judgment by works, but I hasten to add that the new covenant experience inaugurated and sustained in one's life through justification by faith prepares one for the final judgment, which will be based on performance. Justification by faith, per se, does not guarantee salvation (cf. 1 Cor 9:27; "but I pommerge my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified").
As a new covenant experience, the gospel represents the higher expectation of righteousness articulated in the Sermon on the Mount and Paul’s own paraenesis. If the letters of Paul are any indication of his gospel, then we must say that the gospel is just as much a demand for ethical purity and accountability as it is a proclamation of grace. To be judged according to the gospel (Rom 2:16) means to be judged according to the new covenant that promises and expects the law to be written on our hearts. In Rom 8:3-4, Paul states that, through Christ’s death, the law is fulfilled in us (τὸ δίκαιωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν). In 13:8, Paul states that love fulfills the law (πληρωμα ὑπὸ νόμου ἢ ἁγάπη). The two foci of accountability before God under the law—the fear of God’s judgment and the worship of the Creator God—remain unchanged under faith. Certainly, salvation is by faith, but the fulfillment of the law is not optional for Christians; the business of being a Christian is about fulfilling the moral and ethical demands of the law before God and before our fellow humans.

In conclusion, then, the apocalyptic delineations of the gospel found in Rev 14:6-12 are consistent with Paul’s concept of the gospel in Romans. And it appears that the third angel’s message is indeed the message of righteousness by faith in verity.

\[^{49}\text{Wright, “Romans 2,”139; but see his affirmation on p. 137. My problem with Wright is not with his brilliant new covenant reading of Rom 2 but his attempts to limit the new covenant reality to status.}\]
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The Transfigured Paul
By Roy Branson

QUOTATIONS

Ezekiel

Narrator/Ezekiel: In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God…As I looked a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures…over the living creatures there was something like a dome shining crystal, spread above their heads…and there came a voice from above the dome…and there was a splendor all around…there was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

The Lord God: “O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you…Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to the nation of rebels who have rebelled against me…O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel…speak my very words to them…say to them, ‘thus says the Lord God’, whether they hear or refuse to hear.”

—from Ezekiel 1 & 2 (NRSV)

Paul

Narrator/Paul: About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me,

Jesus: “Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?”

Saul: “Who are you, Lord?”

Jesus: “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.”

Narrator/Paul: My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

Paul: “What shall I do, Lord?

Jesus: “Get up…and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.

—from Acts 22:6-10 (NIV)

Christ

Narrator/Matthew: After six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, Peter: “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make here three [tents], one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

Narrator/Matthew: While he was still speaking a bright cloud enveloped them, and behold a voice from the cloud said:

God: “This is my Son in whom I love; with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Narrator/Matthew: When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them.

Jesus: “Get up…Don’t be afraid.”

—from Matt. 17:1-9 (NIV)
Ellen White
(from a Letter from Sister Harmon, Dec. 20, 1845 in The Day-Star)

Narrator/Ellen: While praying at the family altar the Holy Ghost fell on me and I seemed to rising higher and higher, far above the dark world...a voice said to me,
Voice: “look again, and look a little higher.”
Narrator/Ellen: At this, I raised my eyes and see a strait and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the City which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path...this light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble...We heard the voice of God like many waters...Our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God as Moses did when he came down from Mount Sinai...

We all in solemn silenced gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, lighter, and brighter, glorious...The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over it, around the cloud were ten thousand angels singing a most lovely song. And on it sat the Son of Man...His feet had the appearance of fire, in his right hand was a sharp sickle, in his left a silver trumpet. His eyes were as a flame of fire...

We all marched in and felt we had a perfect right in the City...Mount Zion was just before us, and on the Mount sat a glorious temple...The glorious things I saw there I cannot begin to describe...I asked Jesus to let me eat of the fruit of this land...He said, Jesus: “Not now...but in a little while if faithful, you shall both eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of the water of the fountain...You must go back to the earth again, and relate to others, what I have revealed to you.”
Narrator/Ellen: Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world.
THE “IN CHRIST” MOTIF: PAUL AMONG 1888 ADVENTISTS

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Introduction
The “in Christ” motif has suffered much at the hands of theologians and other expositors of Scripture. While all agree it is a central theme in Pauline theology there is no scholarly consensus on the meaning of this phrase. The problem is further complicated in that the Greek proposition, ἐν (en), can be used in at least two different ways. First, it can be locative in use, communicating a spatial or relational position inside something (i.e. in the jar, in the city, in the book of Isaiah, etc.). Second, this preposition is used to communicate instrumentality (i.e. by means of). Thus, as Andrew Lincoln notes concerning the “in Christ” motif, its meaning, “must be derived from the context in which it is found.”

An passage illustrating the importance of context for properly understanding ἐν Χριστῷ (en christō – in Christ), is found in Col 1:16, commonly rendered, “for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth.” If we translate “in him” locatively, then Paul’s statement would be teaching that the material universe is literally in, and thus part of Christ. This would be a form of pantheism, and would contradict the biblical doctrines of God and creation. Thus, in Col 1:16, ἐν Χριστῷ (en christō – in Christ) should be translated instrumentally – as all things being created by means of Christ. This translation harmonizes with the instrumental depictions of Christ’s creative activity in John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:2. It must be noted, however, that the instrumental use of “in Christ” is not universal, and that some form of locative usage is widely employed by Paul. The challenge of interpreting this latter usage has engendered much debate, yet scholars have shown little ability to agree on the meaning of this motif, but there does appear to be three main veins of scholarly interpretation for this expression: 1. Corporate unity of Christ with believers. 2. Being in the sphere/power/control of Christ. 3. Mystical or spiritual union with Christ. How then, are we to understand


2All citations in English come from the Revised Standard Version.

3In both John and Hebrews, instrumentality or agency is expressed with the Greek preposition διά (dia) combined with a noun or pronoun in the genitive case. In particular, this combination is used to depict secondary agency. Christ is the agent though whom God created the word. See James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, Syntax of New Testament Greek (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 25-26. For other examples of the instrumental use of ἐν, see, See Albrecht Oepke, “ἐν,” Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [TDNT], Ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 539-540.

4For example, see M. A. Seifrid, “In Christ,” Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, eds. Gerald F. Hartshorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 433, and James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 397-398, who both propose a range of three meanings. By contrast, five meanings are proposed in Oepke, 541.


this phrase? Must we be marooned in the wastelands of conflicting scholarly opinions, or can we come to a realistically firm conclusion as to the meaning of this motif?

Due to the scope of this essay, I shall not be able to survey the main scholarly opinions concerning the “in Christ” motif. I shall briefly introduce Jack Sequeira’s interpretation and then shall seek a Sola Scriptura solution. In particular, I shall propose that Paul received the motif from Christ himself, and that one must first understand Christ to correctly interpret Paul. We will see some variety of emphases, yet a holistic, overarching meaning will emerge.

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It is my perception that the 1888 Study Committee—i.e. Robert Wieland and Donald Short—and Jack Sequeira share the same doctrine of Salvation and interpretation of the “in Christ” motif. Wieland seems bent towards perfectionism while Sequeira focuses on assurance and shies strongly away from perfectionism.
Jack Sequeira's Interpretation

Jack Sequeira interprets the "in Christ" motif as a corporate unity between Christ and believers in a manner very similar to Ridderbos. While Ridderbos seems to assume an Augustinian model of original sin, Sequeira declares such doctrine heresy, yet both argue that there are two corporate personalities in the Bible—Adam and Christ. Both argue that an individual's fate is determined, not by his own actions, but by the destiny of the corporate personality to whom he or she belongs. All people are in one person, either Adam or Christ. 9

Sequeira's interpretation is heavily dependent on a unique doctrine of man which I cannot adequately analyze in the scope of this paper. It appears that for Sequeira, "corporate humanity" is an externalized human nature in a quasi-Platonic fashion—Sequeira would, of course deny the immortality of the soul—in which all human beings participate in the one corporate nature. 10 The human race is viewed as an abstract unit in which individuals are merely a multiplication of Adam's life. 11 Sequeira also expresses this in terms of all of us being breathed into Adam at creation, based on his interpretation of the Hebrew plural of "life," in the phrase, "breath of life,"—i.e., "breath of lives"—in Gen 2:7. Thus there is a type of dualism without the immortality of the soul which seems to challenge our traditional Adventist holistic doctrine of man.

For Sequeira, Christ redeemed this corporate human entity, which is then equated as saving and cleansing our human nature. Thus, those comprising the church are multiplications of the very life of Christ. 12 Hence Sequeira appears to define damnation and salvation in highly ontological terms, and the "in Christ" motif is therefore interpreted with strongly ontic overtones.

Sequeira pursues what appears to be a unique twist in arguing for two "in Christ" motifs in the New Testament: One that is objective and one that is subjective. The objective is what he holds in common with Ridderbos and focuses on the relationship of "corporate humanity" to Christ and is universal, while the subjective version refers to the individual's experience of the objective form, driven by this ontological infusion of Christ's life, and is restricted to believers.

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10Sequeira, Beyond Belief, 33, 35.

11Ibid., 63.

12Ibid., 63, Sequeira, Saviour, 41. In the latter citation, Sequeira also states that "the incredible good news of the gospel is that God so loved the world that He gave the eternal life of His only begotten son to the human race" (13). Note his interpretive paraphrase of John 3:16 is highly ontological. Thus we actually partake of the life of Christ in an ontological way.
It is interesting that both Sequeira and Ridderbos argue that corporate solidarity is at odds with western thinking. Ridderbos credits the early twentieth-century scholar, H. Wheeler Robinson with, introducing the concept of “corporate personality,” and adopts this perspective in his work.\textsuperscript{13} Robinson, in turn, is dependent on the theory of L. Levy-Bruhl, who studied Australian aborigines. In Robinson’s usage of the theory, it is posited that primitive cultures exhibited a “prelogical mentality,” which is inconceivable to our modern mind. The prelogical mentality, “permits the primitive mind to think at the same time of the individual and the collective in the individual.”\textsuperscript{14} Robinson then applies this aboriginal principle to Hebrew thinking with little justification except the use of Egyptian mythology.\textsuperscript{15} For Robinson, the execution of Achan’s family is a clear example of the all-in-one corporate mentality.\textsuperscript{16}

Robinson’s work has not been without its critics. J. W. Rogerson notes that Robinson’s “claim could rest only on the assumption that Hebrew thought processes resembled those of Levy-Bruhl’s primitives.”\textsuperscript{17} Interestingly, Gene Tucker acknowledges that, “Among anthropologists, serious questions have been raised about the theories upon which H. Wheeler Robinson’s view of corporate personality rested.”\textsuperscript{18} Rogerson reiterates this claim describing Levy-Bruhl’s theory as “seriously questioned.”\textsuperscript{19} Rogerson further argues that by depending on faulty theories, Robinson and his followers have “formed an entity labeled ‘Hebrew thought’ and then imposed [it] on the rest of the Old Testament regardless of social context.”\textsuperscript{20}

J. R. Porter’s work would seem to corroborate this claim. Porter observes that the legal corpus of early Israel does not exhibit a corporate view of justice. Instead, it reveals a high emphasis on the responsibility and accountability of the individual.\textsuperscript{21} This is especially evident, observes Porter, in Exodus 20-23:

\textsuperscript{13}Sequeira, Beyond Belief, 33; idem, Saviour, 37-38; Ridderbos, 61, see footnote 59. See also H. Wheeler Robinson, Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980).

\textsuperscript{14}Robinson, 31.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 32.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 25-26. He also uses the execution of Saul’s sons in II Samuel 21 as another example.


\textsuperscript{19}Rogerson, 9.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{21}J. R. Porter, “The Legal Aspects of the Concept of ‘Corporate Personality’ in the Old Testament,” Vetus Testamentum 15 (1965):365. Porter’s article is an especially devastating critique of H. Wheeler Robinson’s position, providing an exegetical and theologically based argument. Five years later (1970), Rogerson supplemented Porter’s work by focusing more on Robinson’s faulty theoretical foundations and internal contradictions. Twenty years after Rogerson’s article, Stanley Porter noted that neither J. R. Porter’s nor Rogerson’s articles have been rebutted. “... I know of no substantial rebuttal of their many substantial arguments.” Again, “... on the basis of the work of Rogerson, to my knowledge not in any way seriously challenged and certainly not refuted, the theoretical framework of Robinson’s work cannot stand ....” See Stanley E. Porter, “Two Myths: Corporate Personality and Language/Mentality Determinism.” Scottish Journal of Theology 43 (1990): 292, 298.
Here the individual wrongdoer is consistently made responsible in his own person, while his family is not touched. This is so of the greater part of the legal provisions of the Code which are often described as 'casuistic', the laws, that is, which begin with the formula 'if a man' – that is an individual – 'do so and so', or some similar provision.  

Porter further observes that Mosaic code differs sharply with the code of Hammurabi on the issue of corporate punishment. Hammurabi’s code had a form of corporate punishment in which a building collapse which killed the owner’s son, but not the owner, was punished by executing the builder’s son, not the builder. By contrast, in the Mosaic law concerning the ox that gores a person, only the owner of the ox is punished, not another member of his family, regardless of whom the ox gored.\(^{23}\)

Porter has presented solid evidence that individuals were treated as such and that there was no legalized mechanism for blurring the view between the group and the individual. Additionally, he shows that for those in the Covenant community, prosecution and punishment are always focused on the responsible, culpable individual.\(^{24}\) He notes that it is only in cases of apostasy from the

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 364-5, 371.

\(^{24}\)This is further illustrated in Deut. 29:18-21. Here, God promises to “single out” from among all the tribes, the apostate who thinks he or she can break covenant with impunity, and to “blot out his name from under heaven.”
covenant that there appears to be a "corporate punishment," Achan being a prime example.\textsuperscript{25}

Porter proposes, however, that the corporate idea is not required for a proper understanding of Achan’s story. Rather, the Achan incident is better understood as a personal punishment on Achan. Porter argues that the family was Achan’s property and thus in destroying his property with him, the family was also consumed.\textsuperscript{26} Porter is on the right track, but may not have quite captured the full concept. In the ancient Semitic culture, maintaining the perpetuity of the family name was critical. This is seen in Abraham’s complaint to God that he had no blood heir and that his servant, Eliezer, would inherit his estate (Gen 15.1-4). The converse is shown in the promise of God to “blot out the name” of the covenant breaker (Deut 29:20). Thus Achan was punished by executing his family, not because they were deemed guilty of his sin, but rather to cut off his name from perpetuity. He was receiving the covenant punishment of blotting out the name of the individual.\textsuperscript{27}

The non-biblical foundations of the corporate identity model, and the substantive criticism leveled against it, raise serious questions concerning the veracity of this view, yet Stanley Porter observes that the corporate interpretation is, “uncritically accepted by many scholars to this day . . . .”\textsuperscript{28} It seems to me that Sequeira is one of those who have uncritically accepted the flawed theory of ancient anthropology and that it is probable that a better option could be found for understanding the “in Christ” motif.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 365-367.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 367-370.

\textsuperscript{27}It is also possible that Achan’s family incurred a measure of individual culpability by helping conceal his sin, even during the judgement process.

\textsuperscript{28}S. Porter, 290. A good example of an uncritical acceptance of Robinson’s theory, can be found in F. F. Bruce’s commentary on Romans 5. Bruce early cites the “Hebrew concept of corporate personality,” footnoting Robinson, and proceeds to interpret the chapter in a fully corporate way with both an “in Adam” and “in Christ” motif. Ridderbos correctly observes that in Romans 5, “there is no mention of “in Adam,” yet he still applies the concept of Robinson’s theory anyway, declaring that the chapter tells us, “the transgression of Adam is called the sin of all.” Unfortunately for Ridderbos, no such pronouncement occurs in Romans 5. Such a conclusion appears to be an exegetical imposition of Robinson’s corporate personality into the chapter. Since there is no “in Christ” language in Romans 5, we cannot fully address the corporate interpretation of that chapter within the limits of this essay. See, F. F. Bruce, The Letter of Paul to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 119-120; Ridderbos, 61.
The Origin of the "in Christ" Motif

There has been some scholarly debate over the influence or influences that introduced this motif into Paul's theology. However the scope of this work precludes further examination of this scholarship. The fact that "pronominal references to Christ" (i.e. "in me," etc.), are found in John's writings has raised the question of whether or not Paul's use of "in Christ" is the dependent on John's usage. By why would this motif be found in John's writings?

Snodgrass suggests "it is at least possible that the idea comes from Jesus himself." Both Mackintosh and Fred Fisher make a vigorous case that there is a strong tie between the "in Christ" expressions in Paul and John, particularly focusing on the concept of reciprocity -- to be in Christ is to have Christ in you. This reciprocity is further demonstrated by William Barclay in his study of the Pauline phrase, "Christ in you." The similarity of Paul and John with respect to the reciprocity theme seems to suggest there is a tie between them. It is tempting to conclude that Paul received the "in Christ" motif from Christ himself, and there are some good biblical reasons to conclude this.

First, Paul, in addressing conflict over the doctrine of salvation, goes out of his way to assure the Galatians (chapters 1-2) that he did not invent his own gospel. The gospel he preached had been evaluated by "those of repute" (2:2), and they had not required Titus to be circumcised (2:3). Paul thus clearly emphasizes that he was not inventing a unique theology, but rather, was in harmony with the other apostles.

Additionally, Paul vigorously claims that he did not receive the Gospel from human sources, but "through a revelation from Christ" (1:12, 16-17). Thus Paul asserts he was taught the Gospel by Christ himself. Christ, in turn, commissioned the disciples to teach whatsoever things I have commanded you" (Mat 28:20). The disciples were not to invent their own teaching but were to teach what Christ taught. Paul would have violated this injunction to invent a new theology. Furthermore, it would seem probable that the same Jesus who taught John about abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in him, taught Paul the same concept.

It is thus the premise of this essay that Christ is the originator of the "in Christ" motif, and that we cannot correctly understand Paul's use of it, unless we first understand Christ's teaching. The motif, as found in the Gospel of John, is not John's teaching but is given in Christ's own words. Let us then, start with Christ's exposition of the "in Christ" motif, and then move to Paul's usage, using a Sola Scriptura approach. I believe this method will give us a clearer picture than the conflicting views found in our survey of scholarship.

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30Selfrid, 433.

31Stewart, 155-156.


33Barclay, 111-112. Interestingly, Barclay shifts from a reciprocal view of in Christ to a corporate view on p. 113.
Towards a Sola Scriptura Understanding of the “in Christ” Motif

Christ’s Teaching on Being “In Christ”

The first use of “in Christ” (or its cognates: “in whom,” “in him,” etc.) in the New Testament appears to be found in John 6:56. Christ is speaking in this passage, and says, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” The motif is introduced as a reciprocal relationship between Christ and the believer. To be in Christ is to have Christ in you. There is a conditional dimension as well. Only those who “eat” Christ’s flesh and “drink” his blood are said to be in Christ. Again Christ says, “he who eats me will live because of me” (verse 57), but then he identifies the nature of the flesh we are to “eat” if we are to abide in him: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (verse 63). By using the eating metaphor, Christ shows us that to be “in Christ” is to be as dependent on him and his words, as we are on food. The conditional nature of being in Christ is exhibited in the reciprocal nature of the motif. To be in Christ, Christ must be in you. The reciprocity and dependence themes are further expanded by Christ in John 14, 15, and 17.

In John 14:10-11, Jesus refers to the Father as being in him (Christ), and he (Christ) being in the Father. Here again, we see the reciprocity introduced in John 6 – God is in Christ while Christ is in God. This reciprocity is applied to the believer (verse 20), where again, to be in Christ is to have Christ in you. Verses 16-17 give us hint at how Christ dwells in the believer. It is through the Holy Spirit who is to dwell in the believer. The ministry of the Holy Spirit then is crucial to being in Christ and having Christ in you. But Christ adds one other element into the concept of his dwelling in us. In John 14:21 and 23, Christ ties his indwelling to the individual’s obedience. He says, “He who has my commandments and keeps them loves me,” and again, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” Thus: those who are in Christ and thus have Christ in them, are those who are obedient to Christ.

34 All emphases used in biblical texts are supplied.
John 15 is the apex of Christ’s teaching about being in him. Here he uses the famous image of the vine and branches (verses 1-11). Immediately (verse 2), we see that the branches are treated individually, not corporately. Only the fruitless branches are removed. This theme is picked up by Paul in Romans 11:17-24, with the image of the olive tree. Paul notes that some branches were broken off while others were grafted into their place. Thus, some branches are off while others are on the tree. It is an individual matter. However, the good news is that those branches broken off may still be rejoined to the tree (verse 24). In a similar fashion, Jesus contrasts being “in the world” with being “in him” (John 15:18-21; 16:33). Some can be in the world while others are in Christ. Thus, in Christ’s teaching, being in him is something deeply personal. Each branch thrives or dies based on its individual connection to the vine. Another’s connection will not help the ailing bough.

The branch to vine image also shows the concepts of reciprocity and dependence. In verse 4, Christ says, “Abide in me and I in you.” The reciprocal relationship is then depicted in terms of dependence. The branch abides “in the vine,” totally dependent on the trunk to supply its needs and powers. When the branch abides in the vine, it bears fruit. But if the connection – the dependence – is broken, the branch cannot bear fruit and soon dies. Christ then adds, “without me you can do nothing” (verse 5). We see here that to be in Christ is to abide in him with a connection and dependence similar to that of branch and vine (or tree). In John 17:21-23, Jesus repeats the reciprocity theme but adds the nuance that when we are in Christ and Christ is in us, that it brings oneness between the believers, while simultaneously putting them in tension and conflict with the world (John 15:18-20). For Christ, then, to be “in him,” means that the individual believer abides in total dependence on Christ for life, power, and righteous living.

We have seen Christ depict being “in Christ” as conditional and personal. Those who are in him are those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of the son of God. They abide in him ad he in them. Thus Christ also depicts being in him as a reciprocal yet dependent, abiding relationship which “bears much fruit” in ethical living (obedience to Christ’s commandments), and brings the believer into oneness and fellowship with other
Paul's Use of Christ's Teachings

One of the clearest texts revealing Paul's concept of the "in Christ" motif is Phil 3:8-9. In verses 4-7, Paul describes his life of self-dependence and self-righteousness as a Pharisee. He then states that all his "gains" he counted as loss for Christ, and that he reckoned his self-righteous heritage as "refuse" (verse 8). For what purpose did Paul renounce the things he had valued so highly? Paul answers, "in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . . " Paul thus did not see himself as automatically in Christ. Rather, he saw being in Christ as conditional, and thus took intentional steps to gain Christ and be found in him (verses 8-9). But what does it mean to Paul to found "in him?" Paul reveals the meaning in the clause immediately following "in him," stating, "not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith on Christ, the righteousness of from God that depends on faith . . . " Paul could not be clearer. To be, "in Christ," is to renounce works righteousness and to gain Christ's righteousness by exercising faith on Jesus. This parallels John's assertion that "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). In a similar fashion, Paul connects receiving the gift of righteousness to one's confession of Christ - "For man believes in his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved" (Rom 10:10).
Thus both Paul and John see righteousness by faith as the means by which one enters into Christ. This is further illustrated by Paul's teaching that we are joined to Christ's death and resurrection by baptism, "have put on Christ" (Rom 6:3-5; Gal 3:27). In this metaphor, when we put on clothes, we are then in them.

Paul's conditional view of being in Christ is further illustrated Rom 16:7. Here, Paul asks the church to greet Andronicus and Junias, "who were in Christ before me." Thus, while Paul was not yet in Christ, these two were in Christ. They had been justified and joined to Christ chronologically prior to Paul. Paul clearly does not see everyone as being simultaneously in Christ. This conditionality can again be seen in 2 Cor 5:17. Here, we find a conditional sentence, starting, "If any man is in Christ . . . " This condition implies that not all men are in Christ. Thus Paul, like John, mirrors Christ's conditional view of being in Christ.

When Paul equates being "in Christ" with receiving righteousness by faith (Phil 3:8-10), it shows it includes a legal or objective connotation. Paul, however, does not restrict the "in Christ" motif to the objective dimension, for after equating the motif with being justified by faith, he immediately continues the sentence, with the subjective dimension, "that I may know him . . . ." By containing both aspects in the same sentence, it appears clear that Paul sees the objective and subjective as parts of an inseparable whole. We cannot be "in Christ" without being in intimate relationship with him, just as we have seen with John's writings through the idea of reciprocity. Paul demonstrates this subjective-objective unity when he says, "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:17). The holistic view is further seen in 2 Cor 5:17. Here, the person who is in Christ is a new creation (objective), his old experience/life is gone and all things are new (subjective). Thus, for both Paul and John, being "in Christ" is simultaneously experiential (subjective) and legal (objective) in meaning. Fisher insightfully notes that, for Paul,

35Notice also verse 11 where Paul asks the church to, "Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus," implying that not all in that family were yet in Christ. Paul is extending greetings to fellow believers in Christ who belong to that household.

36See, Barclay, 112, where he makes this observation.
Salvation meant a new and vital relationship with God. Paul could describe this new relationship by a variety of terms — justification, reconciliation, sanctification, adoption, or being “in Christ.” He meant essentially the same thing by each term. The old effort to divide Paul’s thought into parts — the legal and the vital — is a lost effort. *Paul had no concept of salvation which was purely legal; every concept denoted a vital relationship with God.*

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To view the “in Christ” motif as only objective or only subjective, would emasculate its power. Of course, it is possible to emphasize one dimension over another, but this should never be at the expense of the holistic understanding of the motif.

The holistic view of the “in Christ” motif is also illustrated in Eph 2. In their personal past (verse 11-12) the Gentiles were “separated38 from Christ,” “alienated,” and “strangers,” who had “no hope” and were “without God39 in the world.” Both their objective standing with God and their spiritual life were broken. They were “dead through trespasses and sins in which you once walked (2:1-2).” Then, in sharp contrast to this Past, Paul declares, “But NOW, in Christ [here instrumental-by Christ] you . . . have been brought near” (verse 13) and made fellow citizens of Christ’s kingdom (verses 20-21). For Paul, being in Christ was not oriented to a time two or three decades earlier when Christ lived, died, and rose. Rather, being in Christ is a now experience of access to God, citizenship, and new birth, of being righteous by faith, and a life being lived in total, ongoing dependence on Jesus.

Paul further shows that fellowship with Christ produces unity between Jew and Gentile creating a new Christian man whose identity in Christ supercedes his old sinful identity (verses 14-19; c.f. Gal 3:26-29). It is precisely having this master identity in Christ as fellow believers that underlies the frequent uses of “in Christ” and “in the Lord” in Rom16:1-1341 (i.e. “receive her in the Lord,” “my fellow workers in Christ,” etc.).42 Christ is thus an incorporating persona, joining new members to a spiritual body of which he is the head. (Col 1:18; 2:19). Paul therefore reflects Christ’s statement that believers being in him produces oneness with each other (John 17).

The union of Jew and Gentile is built out of the theme in Eph 1 that Christ is the sole agent through whom God is bringing all things together into oneness (verse 10). In this passage, as we saw earlier, Paul holds up Christ as the only instrument by which God accomplishes this plan which includes the plan of salvation (verses 3-9).43 At the same time, the first verse affirms Paul’s conditional understanding of being in Christ, for it is the “saints who are faithful” (i.e. believers) who are said to be “in Christ.”

The book of Ephesians also brings out the reciprocity feature of being in Christ, for Paul prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith” (3:17). Just as Paul gained the condition of being in Christ through faith, so Christ dwells in the heart of the believer by faith. A similar point is made in Col 1:27 (“Christ in you the hope of glory”). Like John and Christ, Paul sees those who are in Christ as having Christ in them.

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38 This is the same Greek word as John 15:15, “without me you can do nothing.”
39 Greek: ἀθέος (atheas), Godless.
40 C.f. John 15:18-20; 16:33. They were in the world, not in Christ.
41 Barclay notes that “in Christ” or “in the Lord” occurs ten times in the first thirteen verses of Romans 16. See, Barclay, 106.
42 John likewise pursues this theme. In 1 John 2:6, we know we are in Christ if we walk as he walked. This is immediately followed by a discourse on keeping the commandment to love each other, which in turn produces fellowship (chapters 2-3). In chapter 4:13-16, 21, to abide in Christ is to abide in love, and to love his brother.
43 Colossians, much like Ephesians, sees Christ as the sole agent through whom God reconciles all things into harmony (1:19-20). Additionally, the experience of salvation is first described as being secured “in Christ” (verse 12-14), then is reversed to Christ in you (verse 26-26), again much like Ephesians. Lincoln declares the in Christ motif in Ephesians is primarily instrumental in usage, meaning, “through Christ’s agency.” See Lincoln, 21.
With What does Paul Contrast Being “in Christ?”

We have saved one final issue for discussion. With what does Paul contrast being: “in Christ?” Many argue for contrasting it with an “in Adam” motif. This view is not without problems. First, Adam rarely appears in the New Testament, and then usually in reciting history. In the three New Testament books most focused on soteriology, he is only mentioned in Romans, making no appearance in Galatians or in John. Why is Adam missing in these two books if an “in Adam” motif is indispensible to our understanding of salvation?

Furthermore, the only verse in the New Testament with “in Adam” (or a cognate) is 1 Cor. 15:22, commonly translated, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” How are we to understand the phrases ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ (en tō Adam – in the Adam) and ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ (en tō Christō – in the Christ)? We have two fundamental options for translating the Greek: the locative (in Adam/Christ) or the instrumental (by means of Adam/Christ). By what means shall we determine the translation?

The answer lies in the context. The text in question is the latter half of a parallelism started in verse 21. The first half of the parallelism uses a Greek construction expressing agency: ἐν σώσει (en sōsei) “as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.” Rom 5:12 uses the identical Greek phrase as 1 Cor 15:21 (“through a man”), and communicates the same message as 1 Cor 15: Sin and death entered the world through the agency of one man. Since the first half of the parallelism communicates agency, we should understand the second half to also express agency. Thus, verse 22 should be translated, “For as by means of Adam all die, so also by means of Christ shall all be made alive.” There is no locative sense from which to create an “in Adam” motif.

To what then does Paul contrast being: “in Christ?” To be in Christ is the opposite of being “in sin” or “under sin” (Romans 6:1; 7:14; 8:1, 3), the cognate of being “in the flesh” (Romans 7:5; 8:8), and the rare phrase, “in Judaism” (Galatians 1:13-14). Paul also contrasts being justified by (ἐν [en]) Christ with being justified by (ἐν [er]) the law (Gal 2:17; 3:11, 14 – both are instrumental usage). Ultimately then, being “in Sin” or “in Christ” constitute the two, main and contrasting motifs in Pauline literature, representing the two reigning spiritual powers in Paul’s theology. The first causes acts of sin, the second acts of righteousness (Rom 5:17, 21; 6:12-14). Thus, when we are joined to Christ, we are delivered from the dominion of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13).

Conclusion

We have seen clear evidence that Paul uses the “in Christ” motif in the same way that Jesus does. He takes the same conditional view of being in Christ, showing its connection to justification by faith. He also includes the reciprocal relationship of both being in Christ while having Christ in you, and clearly sets this in a context of total dependence on Christ by faith. Thus, like Christ, Paul combines objective and objective in a holistic unity, which is denied by Sequeirá. Finally, for Paul being in Christ produces unity and fellowship among the believers, just as Christ taught. Thus it indeed appears that Paul received the “in Christ” motif from Christ himself, as did John. It is highly unlikely that Paul would take unauthorized liberty to tamper with Christ’s teaching by introducing unique interpretations, not recognized by the other apostles. Thus I question the veracity of Sequeirá’s dualistic interpretation, believing we are most prudent by staying within the bounds set by Christ. I believe Sequeirá thus fails to agree with or capture the holistic essence of the “in Christ” motif.

44We have already seen that “in Adam” does not occur in Romans 5 (see fn 23). A mis-translation by Augustine of Hippo (circa 400 A.D.) is responsible for this confusion. Augustine’s mistranslation of the Greek phrase in verse 12, ἐφ’ Ὡ̣ (eph ho), as “in whom all have sinned.” This was the dominant translation for over 1000 years. See Jerry Korsmeyer, Evolution and Eden (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 25. This phrase is properly understood to mean, “because,” and is used by Paul three other times (2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:12 and 4:10), in each case it meaning, “because.” Romans 5:12 is saying that Adam is the agent through which the power of sin gained control of the world, and thus, all men have sinned because they under sin’s power and dominion (c.f. Rom 3:9; 6:12-22). The fact that all men sin is proof that they are under its reign and power.

45See fn 3. Here, διὰ ἄνθρωπον (dia anthropou – through a man) in both clauses.

46Like Ephesians, Paul here depicts “in the flesh” as the believer’s life prior to conversion in contrast to the present, now reality of being in Christ in Romans 8:1. This “now” versus the “past” contrast is noted in Barclay, 110.
In practical terms, this motif is ultimately about being under the present rulership of Christ. Those who are “in Christ” are both justified by faith and ruled by grace and righteousness, that is, they are governed by the Christ who dwells in the heart by faith. These individuals abide in Christ through his word, daily eating his flesh and drinking his blood through Bible study, prayer, meditation, and risk-taking dependence on Christ. Thus, they can act like new creatures, not because they feel like new creatures, but because they are new creatures by faith in Christ’s promise. The “in Christ” motif is the experience of total dependence on, and living one’s life in the faith reality of Christ. This is the “in Christ” motif that I believe Paul intended to expound those in the early church.
DEAD MEN WALKING: ADVENTISM AND PAUL’S TEACHING ON DEATH TO SIN AND NEWNESS OF LIFE IN ROMANS

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Within the Seventh-day Adventist tradition of biblical and theological understanding, represented particularly in the writings of Ellen White, believers can and must be victorious in the struggle against sin. What takes place in the believer’s life is a product and mirror image of the victory of Christ over Satan in the Great Controversy, the overarching theme in Adventist thought.

Within Adventism there are various ways to express the vanquishment of sin in the personal lives of believers. Perhaps none is more potent than the concept in Ellen White that through the power of Christ believers may overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to sin (MH 175).

How does this teaching comport with the apostle Paul? Do his soteriological emphases support or contravene this victory motif in Adventist thought? In seeking an answer to these questions, this essay will investigate the themes of death to sin and walking in newness of life found in Romans 6. These themes are prepared for in Romans 5:12-21 and amplified in Romans 7 and 8. Thus, notice will be taken of elements in these chapters as well.

The Relation of Romans 5:12-21 to Romans 6:1-14

A proper foundation for understanding Romans 6 is found in the concepts contained in Romans 5:12-21. That there is a fundamental connection between these two sections can be seen in the following.

1. Paul’s statement in 5:20 that where sin abounded grace superabounded sparks the discussion in Romans 6 through the question in verse 1: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”

2. Romans 6:14 with its declaration that sin will no longer have dominion over believers because they are no longer under law but under grace restates the content of 5:20-21. There the introduction of the law at Sinai, far from stopping sin, as Judaism taught, was the occasion of sin’s deeper manifestation in the form of multiplied transgressions of the revealed law, a situation overcome by the revelation of God’s superabounding grace at the cross.

3. The same dualistic pattern of thinking made prominent in chapter 5 through the parallels between the corporate Adam and Christ figures is developed further in chapter 6 under the form of “two lordships.” As in chapter 5, there are two inclusive men who embody in themselves and in their acts the old and new eons, so in chapter 6 there are two dominions to which we can belong, two masters we can serve: sin which leads to death, or Christ who leads to life.

4. The concept of sin as a ruling power, which is basic to Paul’s argument on death to sin in chapter 6, is first introduced in Romans 5:12. Adam’s sin is not merely a personal event with a personal result but an event which inescapably affects every human being.

5. It is not coincidental that Romans 5 and 6 end with an almost identical thought. For 5:21 it is that “as sin reigned in death, grace might reign...to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23 declares; “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

6. The concept of “newness of life” in Romans 6 is prepared for in the multiple mention in Romans 5 of life as the eschatological gift of God (17, 18, 21). And, the eschatological life which is the effect of righteousness in Romans 5 (dikaiosin zoei in 5:18 = “lifegiving justification”), is the life which leads to the concrete fruits of righteousness in Romans 6. Thus both chapters complement each other.
7. Each chapter protects the other from misunderstanding. By means of the idea of the inclusive man in chapter 5 it is seen that salvation does not reside in the freely willed acts of human beings but in a person and event existing outside of them. This could make it appear, however, that salvation is a kind of automated process, a fate which comes on humans without any involvement on their part. Romans 6 implicitly rebuts this notion, for while salvation is the accomplishment of the inclusive man Christ, human beings must personally participate in the event of salvation through baptism into Christ. On the other hand, Romans 5, by locating the source of salvation in Christ, precludes understanding baptism, as a second or magical event inaugurating salvation. Romans 5 keeps our focus on the historicity of salvation in Christ.

8. Closely allied to the previous point, Romans 5:12-21 implicitly raises a question which is answered in chapter 6: how does the effect of the Cross/Obedience of the one man, Jesus Christ, proceed to the many? With respect to Adam, his deed works itself out in the experience of the race by a sort of inevitable necessity, whereas the result of Christ’s deed is experienced only by an act of appropriation, (an indication that true freedom is found only in Christ). This is suggested by verse 17 where Paul says that “death reigned through the one man [Adam],” but does not parallel this by saying that “life reigned through the one man Jesus Christ.” Rather, Paul completes the comparison by declaring that “those who receive (hoi lambanontes)...the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Thus, sin and death are the lot of mankind from the start; righteousness and life must be accepted. Union with Adam and his legacy is natural to us; union with Christ and his saving deed is a result of incorporation. There is no need to be baptized into Adam to belong to him, but we must be baptized into Christ to belong to him (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:26-27). Thus, Christ’s deed points forward to baptism and back to Christ’s deed. Salvation history and personal existence are firmly tied together. Salvation achieved is to be salvation received. Therefore Romans 6 follows logically from Romans 5.

Inasmuch as Romans 5:12-21 and chapter 6 are linked, the perspective of chapter 5 is important for gaining access to the thought world of chapter 6. Romans 5:12-21 deals with the victory of Christ over all the effects of Adam’s disobedience. From him we are bequeathed sin, condemnation, and death. The picture of this inheritance begins in 5:12, which contains the negative first half of an unfinished comparison. This verse declares, “Just as sin came into the world through one man, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—...” Clearly Adam is the fountainhead for sin and death. However, the particular phrase, “all have sinned” should not be construed as “all have sinned in Adam.” When Paul wanted to, he used “in Adam,” as shown in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as all die in Adam.” In 5:12, however, he omits “in Adam” and uses the identical phrase he employed in 3:23 to summarize the actual sins of all mankind from Adam on. Paul wanted to stress that mankind’s personal sins were a consequence of Adam’s sin, as the “and so” connecting Adam’s sin and ours makes clear.

Thus, there is an inseparability between what Adam did and what we do. Adam influenced the course all of us have taken. This is what Paul means in Romans 5:19 when he declares that through the disobedience of Adam many (all) became sinners. This refers not to the imputation of Adam’s sin to us, as some contend, but to the fact that we become persons who actively participate in sin. We ratify our connection with Adam by our sins. This is confirmed by the immediately following verse (5:20) which emphasizes the abounding of sin as transgression, a term which refers to a deliberate violation of God’s revealed will.

It is very important to note the role of Moses and the law in 5:12-21. Adam and Christ are the principle players, but we do not grasp the argument of the passage if we do not see that the coming of the law at Sinai cut history into two periods: from Adam to Sinai and from Sinai to Christ. What is the purpose of this division? It is to show how strong the power of sin was in these periods as a foil for demonstrating the far greater strength of Christ’s grace at the Cross.

In the period from Adam to the giving of the law at Sinai, Paul asserts, sin was in the world, but “sin is not counted” in the absence of the revealed law (5:13). The sense of “sin is not counted” is explained by 4:15 which, referring to Sinai, says that where there is no law, there is no transgression. Thus, between Adam and Sinai sin was not counted as transgression, a deliberate strike against the revealed will of God. Notwithstanding (alla) this fact, says Paul, death reigned like a king from Adam to Moses, “even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam.” For Paul all transgression is sin, but not all sin is transgression; it takes the revealed law to make it so. The question then becomes, why did people die from Adam to Moses? Paul’s answer amounts to this: people died because sin (which pays it wages in death, 6:23) was present. Where sin is, death is. And why was sin present? Because Adam brought it into the world (5:12). Inasmuch as what he did has ramifications for all who
come after him, he is a type of the one to come, Christ (5:14), though the nature and effects of what they brought is altogether dissimilar (5:15-17).

Between Moses and Christ sin’s power is seen in an even more formidable way. One might have thought—and Jews did—that the advent of God’s law at Sinai would stultify sin, would be the antidote to it. The contrary is true. With the law sin was stimulated into operation, and multiplied transgressions against God’s explicit revelation resulted (5:20). This thought is taken up in 7:5 with the statement that in the realm of “flesh” the sinful passions are aroused by the law. And again in 7:8: “Sin seizing an opportunity in the commandment [‘You shall not covet’] produced in me all kinds of covetousness” (cf 7:11). Paul can even say elsewhere that “the power of sin is the law” (1 Cor 15:56). Such statements as these made it necessary for him to raise the question whether the law was sin (Rom 7:7) and to offer an apology for the law (7:7-25).

In summary, then, of the two stages of sin in Romans 5:12-21 Paul teaches that sin is so powerful that it kills even in the absence of the revealed law (7:13), and so virulent that when that law is introduced, sin manifests itself as deliberate violation of it (5:20). All of this is the foil for the explication of the overwhelming greatness of the work of Christ. He does not start with a clean slate, as did Adam, but with the cumulative history of sin’s operation and the intensified reality of human transgression. This entire actuality Christ overcame by one act of righteousness accomplished through his obedience at the cross (5:19). The “how much more” (5:15) of Christ’s deed vanquished the disastrous results of Adam’s deed. Sin, condemnation, and death were replaced by righteousness, acquittal, and life. Lost in Adam, but how much more saved in Christ is the message of Romans 5:12-21. This victory motif is carried over into Romans 6.

Romans 6:1-14

Romans 6 does not introduce a new subject but a new way of talking about the old one of justification by faith, dealt with in 3:21–5:21. Instead of employing forensic language, Paul turns to the mystical or participationist language of union with Christ, so he might elucidate the meaning of his teaching on justification contra those who objected to it. The objection is immediately tied to Paul’s daring statement in 5:20 that the abounding of sin against God’s law was met by the superabounding of God’s grace. In 6:1 Paul asks, “What then are we to say?” (a phrase used to introduce false deductions from his teaching, 3:5; 6:15; 7:7; 9:14.) “Should we say, ‘Let us continue in sin that grace may abound?’” Historically speaking it is clear that this objection arose from Jews, who had slandered Paul with saying, “Let us do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8). In other words, does not Paul teach that sin has a positive role in the functioning of the divine economy which opens the door to moral anarchy?

Though the objection arose with Jews, as 3:1-8 shows, another stream may well have flowed into it from Gentile Christians, such as some in Corinth, the more than likely city from which Paul wrote Romans. Here the statement of continuance in sin represents not an objection to Paul’s theology but a (false) espousal of it in terms of libertinism. What the Jews charged against Paul’s teaching these Gentiles exhibited in their lives.

As the “spiritual,” gnostic-like members of the Corinthian church saw it, there was no resurrection of the body in the future (1 Cor 15:12, 35) because it had already happened sacramentally (cf 2 Tim 2:18). They had entered a heavenly reign with God (1 Cor 4:8), as speaking in angelic tongues testified (13:1) and baptism and the Lord’s Supper guaranteed (10:1-11). With their radical, realized eschatology, they believed “all things are lawful” (6:12), even concourse with prostitutes, for the spiritually transformed person could not be endangered by any physical practice (6:12-20).

Thus, some must have reasoned, if one could not be made righteous by keeping the law (Rom 3:20-21) and the ungodly were being declared righteous (4:5), this means that sin is no longer a problem but rather a plus. Paul’s doctrine of the justification of the ungodly implies the justification of ungodliness. Legalists would be repulsed by such a position and libertines would be attracted. In either case the cross would win no victories, and the church would have no saints.

At rock bottom “let us continue in sin” proceeds from the sarkikos (natural or fleshly) man who either does not understand the gospel of grace or misappplies it on the moral level. The person behind the statement is not one who expresses an innocent misunderstanding but one who exhibits a wrong relation to the gospel. He proceeds under the assumption that there exists only a continual dialectic between sin and grace. This would alter the whole meaning of redemption. Grace would not be the definitive power which determines the entire life in terms of the
concrete actions of existence. Such a position places grace at the perimeters of life and makes Christianity the bearer of a legal fiction, namely the pardon of criminals who continue in their criminality, and who then, instead of being prosecuted, receive the approbation of the judge. This view is not only the reduction of Christianity to a message of forgiveness alone, but the reduction of forgiveness to an act which contains no power of renewal. The gospel, then, provides a way to quantitatively extend life in the eternal world but not a way to live qualitatively new lives in the present world.

When Paul said that the abounding of sin was met by the superabounding of grace he was talking in salvation-historical terms. The abounding took place after Sinai and the superabounding at the Cross. But the objection transposes these historical realities into existential ones and offers us a continual dialectic between sin and grace with the implication that sin was not fundamentally conquered by grace at the Cross. The Christian, however, is called upon to participate in Christ’s victory, not to again create the sinful conditions which made that victory a necessity. To allow sin to reign that grace may come is really to reject what God has done (Rom 8:3-4). This is a form of righteousness by works that is especially evil, for it would earn God’s grace by sinning! This is a complete inversion of the meaning of grace and sin. So whether one sees in Paul’s teaching an invitation to a panic or a party, the gospel has been unrecognized and thrown into disrepute. In Romans 6–8 Paul shows that dying to sin and living for God is the evidence of grace.

Paul’s Thesis

In 6:2 Paul thematically spells out the meaning of his emphatic “God forbid” in verse 1. In the form of a question he notes a fact which his subsequent argument will endeavor to explain. He asks, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” The peculiarity of believers is that they have died, and died in a particular relation—to sin. Paul does battle with those who urge that we remain in sin in the service of grace not with ethical instruction, but with an appeal to memory, not with a “you ought” but what “you are.” The ethical question is solved on the basis of an event which, like a pillar, stands forever fixed at the beginning of the Christian life. The decisive event is our death. By means of the aorist tense of “died” the emphasis is placed on the definitive break with sin which constitutes the identity of the believer.

How does Paul define sin so that his concept of dying to sin may be clarified? In terms of Jewish thought the understanding of sin’s nature is raised to its highest pitch in Paul’s letter to the Romans. It is interesting and significant that while Paul describes sin as a deed in Romans 1:18–3:20, in the penultimate conclusion of his argument in Romans 3:9, he says that his description proves that all human beings are huph hamartian, “under sin.” This is a preliminary indication of what Paul will develop fully in Romans 5:12–8:3, viz, that while sin always expresses itself in deeds, the total meaning of sin encompasses more than deeds. Mankind’s sinful actions are the product of living under the rule of an evil, enslaving power. It is precisely as a personal power that sin is presented in Romans 5–8. In this section, Paul constantly uses hamartia in an absolute sense, without qualifiers, and in the singular (except for 7:5). He does not think so much of “sins,” ie, of individual acts of wrongdoing, but of a force which takes hold of people, a lord who rules over them, a domain in which (note the en aute, “in it” of Rom 6:2) humans are confined as slaves. In this construction hamartia should be spelled “Sin,” with a capital S, rather than “sin.”

Sin is pictured as something which enters the world (5:12) and proceeds to exercise authority over man both as king (5:12-13, 21) and as lord (5:12, 14), and to whom therefore men yield themselves in obedient service (6:6, 12, 13). Like a harsh tyrant or wicked taskmaster, sin holds people in slavery (6:6, 16-18, 20; in 7:14 humans are “sold under sin”) and pays them wages (6:23). Like a demon sin can dwell in a person (7:17, 20), deceive that person (7:11), as the serpent deceived Eve (Gen 3:13), and finally effect death in the person (Rom 7:11, 14; 6:16, 23). Its suppression of man can be produced by the imposition of its own law (7:23, 25; 8:2) or, by virtue of its subversive character, by working its destructive purposes through God’s law (7:8, 11, 13; cf 1 Cor 15:56: “The power of sin is the law”). It can lie dead or dormant (Rom 7:8) or suddenly spring to life (7:9), stirring the sinful passions to action (7:5-8). Sin as a power stands over against and opposed to God (6:10, 11, 13, 32) and, like a criminal, is condemned by God (8:3).

Obviously Paul is personifying sin. However, while sin is not understood as an objectively existent being, the idea of the objectivity of sin must not be lost as it is by making the whole experience something which arises only by the action of man. Paul’s personification teaches something very vital about sin, which has a profound
bearing on salvation. To picture sin objectively, as a power, is to say that the self of man is involved with, or has been grasped by, something larger than himself and that, because of this, the “I” has been rendered impotent to effect the good that it would (as in Rom 7:14-25) and to please God (Rom 8:8). Man no longer has the capacity to be the true subject of his own actions. To speak of sin as a power expresses the paradox that sin is something I do and yet which precedes my doing and determines it, and that in sinning it is I who sin, yet not I myself. This paradoxical emphasis on “I, yet not I” is found in Romans 7:14-20, according to which it is the “I” that does the evil, and yet is said to be sold under sin (7:14) which dwells in it and is responsible for the evil (7:17, 20). Thus, in acting man is really reacting to the power of sin which has hold of him.

By heredity and environment man is not able to extricate himself from the overpowering milieu in which he finds himself. He is like an alcoholic who wills to take the next drink, but who does so out of a necessity which constantly impinges upon him and yet is a part of him. This necessity came to birth through the desire which led to willing and hence taking the first drink, and from that time on the necessity has directed the willing so that the man has become a slave to himself, for it is his self against which he has turned and which has turned against him. It is like this with the man in Romans 7. The same “I” wills the good and performs the bad. The same “I” which says that it is carnal or fleshly and sold under sin (7:14) and knows “that nothing good dwells within me,” disassociates itself from indwelling sin. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that man is split and is dominated by something within the self which, at the same time, does not really represent the self. Under the power of sin, and hence sinning, all that man can say is “I, yet not I.” What man in this situation needs is a new self at the center or a new center of the self. The “I, yet not I” must be operative again, but this time not in respect to sin but in respect to Christ. Man under the power of sin and hence at war within himself needs to die to his old self so that a new self may be born. He needs to have the “I, yet not I” experience described in Galatians 2:20 by the words: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the Son of God.” The existential determination of life is no longer to be the “I” directed against itself and under the necessity of sin (Rom 7:14-25), but it is to be Christ or the Spirit dwelling in the believer and empowering him to put to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:9-11, 13).

Returning directly to 6:2 Paul is saying that sin cannot reign as king over one who has died. To be dead to sin and to live in sin are not only mutually contradictory, but the first state decisively cancels out the second. The believer, then, has been freed from the lordship of sin.

Baptism into Christ

In order to vindicate and explicate his thesis of freedom from sin’s dominion through death, Paul appeals to the significance of baptism. By means of baptism “into [eis] Christ” we are transferred from the realm of sin to the rule of Christ and brought into intimate union and fellowship with him, our new Lord. By being baptized “into Christ” we come to be “in Christ,” Paul’s favorite idea for expressing the new order of salvation in which we live and move and have our being. As a result of this union, Paul admonishes: “Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11).

The use here of the imperative of logizomai, which can mean “count” or “reckon,” as in Romans 4, does not mean “think as if you are” or “imagine.” Rather, it is a call to count on, rest assured, be convinced, that when one is joined to Christ, who indeed died to sin and lives to God (6:10), the same is true for the believer. In other words, “Take stock of the new reality you have in Christ. Appropriate and apply to yourselves the event of salvation.” The usage of logizomai is like that of Romans 8:18: “I consider [logizomai] that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” There is no uncertainty here. This understanding of logizomai fits the “we know” of Romans 6:6 and 9 and the “we believe” of verse 8.

According to 6:3–4, to be united with Christ means that we are united with his death, burial and risen life. It is readily apparent that Paul unfolds the meaning of baptism in terms of the events which the kerygma announces. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 he presents the earliest Christian confession of faith we possess. He transmitted to the Corinthians as of primary importance that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.” Baptism is not a saving event in itself but a channel to Christ. In the baptismal event the Christ event is present, and we are made contemporaneous with the cross and resurrection. To the questions of the gospel song: “Were you there when they crucified my Lord, when they laid him in the tomb, when he rose up from the grave?” the answer is Yes! Christology is the basis for
anthropology. That Christ died to sin’s dominion and permanently lives to God (6:9-10) is the ground of the Christian’s death to sin and living for God (11).

“Burial” is used in 6:4 as confirmation of the reality of Christ’s death. It is not employed because Paul was meditating upon the meaning of immersion, but because the early Christian confession announces it. The gospel was poured into the old wineskin of ritual immersion and gave it new meaning. From a bath it became a tomb where Christ and the Christian lie awaiting resurrection.

Indeed, Christ was raised and, by virtue of our union with him, we now walk “in newness of life,” that is to say, “in the new state which is life itself” (genitive of apposition). Both “newness” and “life” are eschatological terms. The life of the age to come and the new creation are here; the old has passed away (2 Cor 5:17). All of this affects the moral walk of the believer. Not to be missed is that “newness of life” is interpreted by the parallel phrase “newness of the Spirit” in Romans 7:6. The Holy Spirit, which brings the gifts of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), is the guide and power of the new ethical behavior of believers “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4).

No More Slaves but Combatants

A radical statement is made in 6:6 which unfolds the meaning of verse 2. Paul declares, as a matter of Christian knowledge, that our old man (self) has been crucified with Christ so that the “body of sin,” that is, “the body as controlled by sin “might be destroyed.” According to 6:12 the body is not destroyed, for the mortal body remains, and sin is not destroyed, for it still makes its pitch. It is the bond chaining the body to sin that has been severed.

The result of this, says Paul, is that we need to no longer render the service of slaves to sin. Death—and crucifixion means this, not a gradual dying—brings freedom. Verse 7 offers support: “For he who has died is freed from (dedikaitai apo) sin.” The fact that the verb for being justified occurs here does not mean that we are dead to sin only in terms of a legal status rather than experientially. A word does not define a context, but is defined by it. Contextually, a larger understanding of justification is required, which is just what Paul has been arguing since the objection to his teaching on justification in verse 1. The meaning of dedikaitai apo as “freed from” is made certain by the twice occurring explanatory parallel in 6:18 and 22, where the specific Greek word for freedom is used in the phrase, “having been set free from sin.” The context is the same, severance from sin, and the construction is the same, a verbal form with apo (eleutherohen, cf Rom 8:2, 21). One may also note the same construction in Acts 13:39 where dikaiou apo means “freed from.”

If, then, 6:2 asks how the believer can “any longer” (eti) live in sin, 6:6 responds, “no longer” (meketi) a slave to sin. This raises a significant question, for 6:12 summons believers to not let sin reign in their mortal body by obeying the body’s lusts (epithumiai). Why the imperative when the indicatives prior to 6:12 declare believers dead to sin? Is Paul contradicting himself? Didn’t he himself ask how it was possible for believers to live in sin once they had died to it? Has Paul been theorizing until verse 12, but now is coming down to earth again and facing reality? Is the imperative the answer to the problem of sin after all? If so, what Paul said of sin as a power which enslaves is false, and humans really can of themselves do the good, which flatly contradicts the picture of man desiring to do the right and falling in defeat before the law of sin in Romans 7. And Paul would have to be wrong in 8:3 when he speaks of “what the law was powerless to do in that it was weak through the flesh.”

There exists not contradiction but continuity between what Paul has said in 6:2-12. Paul builds the imperative on the basis of the indicative. Unless the chains of sin’s enslavement are off, there is no possibility of thwarting sin’s ever renewed appeal. Death to sin brings a new potentiality to fight against sin. Not freedom from the struggle but freedom for the struggle is what death to sin means. Romans 6 propounds freedom from sin as ruler so as to fight against sin as enemy. It declares freedom from sin’s sovereignty so as to resist sin’s solicitation.

The reason sin can make further overtures to us, according to Paul, is that we still have a “mortal body,” i.e., a body belonging to the old eon. We are a new creation living in an old world, and thus the old epithumiai (desires) are still felt. Sin wishes to translate these desires into deeds. But, as Roman 8:13 shows, if we by the Spirit put to death the deeds which the body, with its desires, otherwise would do, we will live. Or, as Romans 8:2 puts it, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” Indeed, to paraphrase 8:3-
4. God has done what the law could not do by sending his Son into the realm of flesh to condemn sin so that what the law justly requires (love, according to 13:8-10) might be fulfilled (come to expression) in us by the indwelling Spirit which empowers our new walk in contrariety to the flesh. A fleshly experience is still a possibility, but no longer need be an actuality.

This means that there is a Christian warfare which freedom makes possible. In this war Romans 6:13 challenges us not to yield our members as hopla (instruments or weapons) of unrighteousness in sin’s service, but to yield ourselves and our members to God as weaponry of righteousness in God’s service. Can this war be won? Romans 6:14 declares that sin will not have dominion over us, for we are no longer under the resources of law, which could only give knowledge of sin (3:20) and condemn it (4:15), but never deliver from it. Rather, we are under the resources of grace which both forgives and gives the power of a new life. The Christian is one who is discharged from the impotence of law (Rom 7:6; 8:13) and granted the potency of grace. This gives victory over the defeat of the man under law in Romans 7:14-25, whose life is bounded by the trinity of “I,” sin, and law, and who needs the new factor of the Spirit to deliver from the inexorable law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). Instead of helplessness and wretchedness under law (7:24), he needs the experience of “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25.) The significance of which has already been indicated in 6:17. Here the identical phrase: “Thanks be to God,” occurs in the sense of gratitude for freedom from sin’s slavery. Romans 7:7-24 does not define normative Christian experience but a situation of slavery (7:14) and captivity (7:23) under law which is all the more evident by the fact that, despite the most intense recognition of the goodness of the law and the desire to do it, failure is the result. The person of Romans 7 needs deliverance through Christ from the “body of death” which, contextually defined, is the “body of sin,” that is, the body dominated by sin, a situation undone by being crucified with Christ (6:6).

Conclusion

The thrust of Romans 5–8 supports the Adventist contention that victory over sin is possible. But what Adventism needs to learn is that as the law cannot justify so it cannot sanctify. This can be accomplished only “in Christ.” In him death to sin and walking in newness of life will be expressed as giving our bodies “as living sacrifices” (Rom 12:1). In terms of the specifics of Romans 12–15 (the practical section of Romans to which the arrow of Paul’s theological argument has been flying), this means we will live peaceful lives in community with all others and will be characterized by that love which never hurts our neighbor or gives evil for evil, which exhibits humility before and non-judgmentalism of others, which puts away debauchery, dissension, and jealousy, which maintains good citizenship, and which welcomes all others as God in Christ has welcomed us.
CYBERSEX, SOLIPSISM & PAUL’S NOTION OF BODY


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“1 found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go”
-the woman, Song of Solomon 3:4

“If God is dead, somebody is going to have to take His place.
It will be megalomania or erotomania,
the drive for power or the drive for pleasure,
the clenched fist or the phallus,
Hitler or Hugh Hefner.”
Definition

Cybersex is sex in cyberspace, the computer-generated visual, auditory and tactile environment of virtual reality. It is computer-mediated sexual contact with a real or simulated person or persons, using human-machine interfaces including dolls and genital interfaces like vibrators.1

Examples

- Realdoll, a multi-million dollar corporation out of Santa Marcos, California, sells ‘state-of-the-art life-size silicone sex dolls... endowed with the measurements of supermodels’2 and shipped in coffin-sized boxes for US$6500 - 20,000.
- These dolls can be hired in Japan, reportedly taking business from live call-girls.3
- A 1992 magazine showed a man and woman with VR helmet, sensor gloves and gendered genital attachments, the woman with mechanical hands over her breasts. Yet over a decade later, that vision is not technologically possible. Wired magazine reports only gendered vibrators that interact via Internet4.
- And ‘interactivity’ in CR-ROM games is clumsy, unconvincing “fondling” which, I’m told, makes you wonder if you’re a man or a mouse.
- Customers, says an industry spokesperson, are typically men ‘who don’t have intimacy in their lives’, but that ‘doesn’t mean they’re not searching for it’. And ‘technosexuality’ will soon be socially acceptable.5
- Pop culture already portrays that future. Online chat rooms eagerly discuss cybersex. One gushed: ‘I’d never leave my apartment... I’d vote for Bill Gates for President. Think of the money that could be made.’ The cartoon character Dogbert is more cynical:

  ‘I can predict the future by assuming that money and male hormones are the driving forces for new technology. Therefore, when virtual reality gets cheaper than dating, society is doomed.’6

Yest history suggests that today’s sci-fi fantasy can be tomorrow’s mass-market technology.

Artificial Intelligence guru Ray Kurzweil, recipient of MIT Inventor of the Year Award and eight honorary doctorates, predicts, in The Age of Spiritual Machines, virtual sex by 2009, though without realistic touch, “admittedly an important limitation”. Kurzweil believes full touch will take another ten years, at which point virtual sex will become “a viable competitor to the real thing”, safer and eventually even “better” - that is, providing stronger and as-yet-unknown physical sensations7 (note, merely physical sensations).

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1 ‘Sex in virtual reality incorporating a visual, auditory, and tactile environment. The sex partner can be a real or simulated person.’ Kurzweil, p.401, Glossary. www.dictionary.reference.com offers: “Sex in a computer simulated virtual reality, especially computer-mediated sexual interaction between the VR presences of two humans. This practice is not yet possible except in the rather limited form of erotic conversation on MUDs and the like. The term, however, is widely recognised in the VR community as a ha ha only serious projection of things to come.”
3 Jennings p.66
4 September 2004 reports from Wired magazine are of the Sinator, a vibrator which females can allow to be controlled by someone else on the Internet, especially a man with a corresponding sleeve-style vibrator named Fleshlight which transmit force and frequency of thrusting over the Net to the Sinator. This is far from rocket science. Gina Lynn, ‘Ins and Outs of Teledildonics’, 24 Sept 2004, www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,65064,00.html
5 Fiona Patten, director of Body Politics (and formerly of Eros Foundation), Australia’s adult industry consultancy group, in Jennings p.67
7 p.185
Kurzweil prophesies that rape will be unknown, as users could log off; sex-workers will be replaced by machines; and in group sex each recipient will experience identical sensations. He wonders what all this will do to marriage and commitment - "the definition of a monogamous relationship will become far less clear" and the technology "will introduce an array of slippery slopes". Yet he promises romance: 'Stroll with your lover along a virtual Champs Elysees'.

As a Christian I would like to know: 1. Will this be possible? 2. Will it be good (in a moral and experiential sense).

1. **Will it be possible?**

The question is: Can humans be replicated and even improved upon? Kurzweil simply quantifies human brain-power - 20 million billion calculations per second - and extrapolates growth-rates in computer processing speed. By 2019 he believes a $1000 computer will match the human brain; by 2029, 1000 human brains. Hence he writes of 'The Evolution of Mind in the Twenty-First Century'.

Kurzweil also calls this 'evolution by other means', 'faster than DNA-based evolution', which had a 'blind' or 'mindless watchmaker'; silicon-based consciousness will be created by humans - a 'mindful watchmaker'. Though he gives no account of how humans got mind from a material universe. He speaks of copying the 'design' of the human brain, which took 'its original designer several billion years to develop'. He says 'the purpose of life - and of our lives - is to evolve', and so we must be careful to guide evolution well. You've noticed he has design, purpose and morality without reference to a God.

I can only refer you to the book *Are We Spiritual Machines*, in which

- mind philosopher John Searle questions whether computers really think at all or merely process.
- Geneticist Michael Denton argues machines are not fully analogous to humans: there are 'elusive, subtle, irreducible "vital" difference... between the two categories of the "organic" and the "mechanical"', and that these properties, human intelligence and human nature, may never be replicated. He uses concepts of holism and irreducible complexity.
- William Dembski mounts a brilliant critique
  One may well question whether machines will ever be made in our image.

2. **Would it be good?**

A first question is why super-sentient computers would need us, any more than we need Cro-Magnon man or evolution's other discards. In *Terminator II*, they kill us. In *The Matrix*, they use us as batteries.

Five serious critiques seem apparent:

a. **Sensual critique**

Computer scientist Sherry Epley objects based on the senses. Epley, surprised how often men at VR conferences ask how soon they can have sex with a computer, writes, "I'm not at all afraid that a machine will replace me, I'm just

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8 p.187
9 p.187
11 p.16
12 p.32
13 p.53
14 p.79
amazed that some men want so little out of sex.” Epley says, “I want it all” - sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. (One could ask whether that is all.) Sight and sound are easy, thanks to 3D games, and the French perfume industry has designed an electronic nose, but touch is extremely difficult because it includes our perceptions of temperature, weight, resistance, texture and motion’, and ‘we are years away from even the most rudimentary experiments on the delicate sense of touch required for sexual pleasure.’ Epley does not think machine sex will ever provide the sensory stimulation another human body can.16 (If she is right, theistic arguments from design could well be constructed at this point. Evidence for God based on sexual pleasure - now that’s a marketable argument.)

Even if a machine could produce better sensory stimuli, Epley doubts whether users of virtual sex will find the earth moves for them. Why? Because ‘everything is pre-programmed’; it would fall as flat as trying to tickle yourself.

b. Solipsism critique

Porn scholar Linda Williams’s monograph *Hardcore* is upbeat about future virtual sex, but raises issues that may doom it:

‘If true interactivity is to be defined as communication with the difference and unpredictability of an “other” (as opposed to interacting with the sameness of oneself), the interaction with this female “piece of a[...] in a software package” would seem to be the height of solipsism.’17

Solipsism means ‘in philosophy, the view or theory that only the self really exists or can be known. Now also, isolation, self-centredness, selfishness.”18 I think and feel, therefore I am - but I’m not sure about you. The philosophical base is Descartes, and technology built on Cartesian dualism may inevitably lead to solipsism, just as a culture which so emphasises individual experience may lose the ‘other’ and thus worsen its own loneliness.19

Williams writes:

“Where a real sex partner might surprise you, the woman on the screen has no independent agency. The paradox of these interactive games would seem to be that the greater the simulation of the agency of the “other”, the more the real sense of the other is missing.”20

Humans have independent agency, the free will which, for all it has cost the human race and God, may be part of the image of God in us. Can a machine have subjectivity? Can mind emerge from mere matter, consciousness from material?

Perhaps the logical end of materialism is the sexbot - a thing with some of the traits of a person, but none of their free choice to be accommodated by ‘my’ selfishness. Technology may be more controllable (for some), but it allows a flight from true intimacy. It allows, in Buber’s terms, an I-It relationship and may preclude Ich-Du.

c. Wholism critique.

Is cyberspace itself inherently dualistic?

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16 Even cyberpunk pioneer William Gibson, who in derides “the meat” in favour of an online Platonistic mind, nonetheless credits the flesh with its ways of knowing. In *Neuromancer* he describes a sexual encounter in these terms: “It was a vast thing, beyond knowing, a sea of information coded in spiral and pheromone, infinite intricacy that only the body, in its strong blind way, could ever read... and then he was in her, effecting the transmission of the old message.” London: Grafton, 1986, p.285

17 Williams, 1999, p.312

18 Shorter Oxford Dictionary

19 If “immediate experience is held to be the only thing that is directly known, solipsism is a consequence hard to avoid.” Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley (eds), *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, 2nd ed.* London: Fontana, 1988, article “Solipsism”, p.797

20 Williams, 1999, p.312
Margaret Wertheim calls it ‘a repackaging of the old idea of Heaven but in a secular, technologically sanctioned format’\(^{21}\), and it’s a Platonic heaven where disembodied data flows freely, unlimited by the flesh; a world beyond the physical, yet undeniably real; a virtual paradise for the questionably virtuous. It’s seen as a place where secular digital souls can pass without judgment. Robotics guru Hans Moravec predicts the possibility of uploading entire human minds into computers to live on in a meatless Platonic heaven forever\(^{22}\) - at least until the next system failure. Human interface hardware is being designed, yet many theorists dream of life online as the ultimate.

But what of the body?

Exciting research in contemporary sciences and theology explores a wholistic anthropology\(^{23}\).

(i) Some theorise that abstract concepts have their basis in bodily experience. ‘German psychologists have observed that children who cannot walk backwards cannot subtract’, and those who cannot balance have not had the bodily experience of the equals sign\(^{24}\), and so perhaps ‘cognition has no ultimate foundation or ground beyond its history of embodiment’.\(^{25}\) (Adventists have seen this about death, but what about in life?) Hubert Dreyfus argued that we have a human mind because we have a human body\(^{26}\).

(ii) Researchers describe multiple bodily intelligences: Polynesian navigators knowing they were near land from the feel of the waves - not a calculation nor deduction as ‘valorized in the Western intellectual tradition... [but] a kind of intelligence inseparable from the body.’

(iii) And not all mind may be situated in the brain. Studies of violin virtuosi note countless micro-decisions about the pace, pressure and angle of bow and fingers, decisions made so fast that the nerve signals would not have time to make a return journey to the brain, and so these decisions are made in the spine or even in the limb, so that one could say, ‘The hand is thinking by itself\(^{27}\) and not all the mind is sited in the brain. And so some argue that ‘consciousness... is a physiologically distributed bodily thing, and arises from the interdependence of parts in a decentralized system.\(^{28}\).

(iv) Laboratory rats with their entire forebrain excised are still able to ‘walk, run and even maintain their balance to some extent’ and of course to practice law - no, I made that last bit up.

One Christian therapist wrote, “Biology is a process of information transduction. Mind and Body are two ways of conceptualising this single information system.”\(^{29}\)

Penny protests Platonic domination of language, calling humans “biopsychosociospiritual”, an attempt to describe the ‘holon’\(^{30}\).

\(^{21}\) 1999, p.23
\(^{22}\) [in Mind Children, quoted in Wertheim, 1999, p.20-21
\(^{23}\) Lakoff & Johnson, Philosophy In The Flesh: The Embodied Mind And Its Challenge to Western Thought; Russell, Murphy et al, Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action; JP Moreland and Scott Rae, Body and Soul, Nancy Murphy, Whatever Happened to the Human Soul?
\(^{24}\) p.39-41
\(^{27}\) Penny (1997) p.38
\(^{28}\) p.39
\(^{30}\) Doug Sotheren, “From Invidivudal Cell to Relational Body...”, p.13
This model steers between mere physicalism or materialism or reductionalism and traditional dualism. And it is familiar to the Genesis tradition which describes sex with the deceptively simple word ‘to know’. Yada yada yada.

d. The individual self critique
Hugh Hefner wrote of cybersex:
“She creates a character, who climbs into a hot tub and performs outrageous acts on your noncorporeal body. Is she a she? Does it matter? Concepts of male and female are so old-fashioned, so analog. On the Internet everyone is beautiful.”

Media reports credit cybersex with ultimate “electronic liberation” - sex free from one’s race, class, gender, name and body. So one cannot say that cybersex is playing with yourself - in fact it’s playing without your self. Sociologist Sherry Tuckel wrote,
‘The Internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of selves that characterize postmodern life.’

But such slippery constructions of self make relationships problematic. Being unselfed, how can one know oneself or be true to oneself? And how can one know or be true to another? How can a multiphrenic self be intimate or make a commitment?

e. The unequal power critique
Part of intimacy is respect for the subjectivity, desires and selfhood of the other, as Huwiler has shown of the Song of Songs. Since technology is so controllable, it may never allow this.

f. Beginnings of a Biblical theology critique
The Song of Songs praises whole-person love, based on wholistic anthropology. The woman says:
“I found him whom my soul loves:
I held him, and would not let him go” (3:4)
The LXX translated psyche and it is easy to read this through a Platonic lens - two immortal souls in Ideal love - but the Hebrew word nepesh knows nothing of that.
It means a whole person, a personality, a life, a being, an individual, oneself. It dies, and has physical dimensions including appetite, desire, hunger, wish and even throat.

32 Jon Casimir in A Boy and His Mouse, excerpted in “Oh, Oh, Oh Online”, Sydney Morning Herald, Sept 13, 1997 Icon p.6-7
34 Elizabeth Huwiler p.242 has shown how the Song of Songs ‘presents a view of male-female sexuality which is neither exploitative nor hierarchic. Both the man and the woman act on their own initiative as well as in response to each other.
37 Lexicons include a meaning of nepesh as “deceased person, dead body David J.A. Clines (ed.), The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001
38 G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (eds), Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974, article Nephesh
39 TDOT p.504-505
Paul’s concept of wholistic love, countering the Platonic imbalance of a previous age, is relevant here. In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, he quotes a number of Corinthian slogans and contradicts them:

13 (You say,) “Food for the stomach, and the stomach for food, and God will do away with both of them.”

This slogan infers that God is interested only in the immortal part of a person, while ‘the body is morally irrelevant’ because ‘sin occurs on a different “level”’40. This is classic dualism, perhaps proto-Gnosticism. And its wrong eschatology (destruction of the soma) causes a wrong ethic (the body’s actions don’t matter).

Paul counters:

But the body is not for sexual immorality, it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

‘It is inconceivable that such a statement could come from [a dualist like Seneca [for example]. For him the soul, the spirit, could glorify the gods, but this is impossible for the contemptible body which always threatens the purity of the spirit.”41

Paul does not privilege psyche or pneuma over soma42

Next he corrects the wrong eschatology:

14 And God resurrected the Lord and will resurrect us by His power.

Note the systematics. The resurrection of Christ guarantees the believer’s bodily resurrection, and thus highly values the body.44

15 Don’t you know that your bodies are parts of Christ’s body? So would I remove parts of Christ’s body and make them parts of the body of a prostitute? Never!

And then Paul references Old Testament theology / anthropology:

16 Don’t you know that person who joins a prostitute in intimacy is one flesh (with her)? For ‘the two, it is said, will be one flesh’. 17 But the person who joins the Lord in intimacy is one spirit (with him).

Using one word of the relationship both to Christ and harlot - kolllao = to join, to bond, to glue, to bind indissolubly - Paul infers sexuality is not just a bodily matter but a whole-person (including spiritual) matter.

He also dramatically offers the choice45, ‘To whom will you join yourself?’46 Kollao is used in LXX of Solomon’s joining to unbeliving women who turn his heart to other gods. (1 Kings 11:2)

18 Run from sexual immorality!

A practical advice which probably alludes to Joseph.47

Then another slogan is quoted:

(You say,) “Every sin a person may commit is outside the body.”

And Paul counters:

But the person who sins sexually sins against their own body! 19 Or don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you,

40 Thiselton, p.472
41 Sevenster, Seneca, p.76; in Barrett p.153.
42 Dale Martin writes that ‘Paul reverses the supposed hierarchy of bodily and “spiritual” modalities attributed to persons in the psychology of much Graeco-Roman thought, as if “higher things” (as against food, drink and sex) related more closely to “spirituality”. Thiselton p.473
43 Thiselton p.468
44 Later (1 Cor 15) he will describe the resurrection body, which is improved, but retains its identity. Dahl’s ‘somatic continuity’. See Thiselton p.464
45 Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.251
46 Thiselton p.467, “To whom will the believer “stick”?”
47 ‘Run’ a possible allusion to the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39 and Jewish tradition. B.S. Rosner, ‘A Possible Quotation of Test. Reuben 5:5 in 1 Cor. 6:18a’, JTS 43 (1992), 123-127;
• For Paul, the body is not the prison of Platonic thought, but a shrine. Rosner writes, ‘Paul could be saying ‘don’t go to the temple (to use prostitutes), you are the temple!’ whom you received from God,
• Again not by works but by grace and you do not belong to yourselves? 20 You were purchased at great cost.
• Clearly the cross - grace that is anything but cheap.
So reveal God’s glory in your body.
• Gordon Fee writes ‘in most Western churches, where sexual mores have blatantly moved toward pagan standards, the doctrine of the sanctity of the body needs to be heard anew within the church... Those who take Scripture seriously are not prudes or legalists at this point; rather they recognize that God purchased us for higher things’. This passage does anything but devalue sex. It recognizes the psychosomatic-spiritual bonding inherent in sex between two whole people.
• Gordon Fee calls this ‘one of the most important theological passages in the NT about the human body. It should forever lay to rest the implicit dualism of so much that has been passed off as Christian’. Clear wholistic anthropology is important to Christian systematics, as Adventists have begun to see in connection with the state of the dead (with its implications for hell and God’s character, and for spiritualism); with bodily health as part of gospel restoration; and with eschatology and more. Yet wholism affects our doctrine of sex also - but we’re not meant to talk about that in church, gagged as we are by the dead hand of Plato. Yes, vestigial dualism still at times stops Adventists from teaching all the Biblical counsel of God on sexuality.

In Conclusion

Cybersex will likely be very popular and profitable, despite critiques I raise. Many caveats raised by recent research into pornography also apply to cybersex, which moves from ‘looking lustfully’ to ‘committing adultery in one’s hard-drive’ (but that’s another paper). Prostitution, adultery and other sexual sins are still popular despite Christian critiques, and porn sites still earn a tithe of all the money spent over the Internet. Christians should respond to yet another new technology not with knee-jerk moral outrage, but with Scriptural principles and clear reasoning from what it means to be human and to love. And we should take this opportunity to have a conversation about human nature, origins and purpose which underlie ethics, taking the apologetic chance (with gentleness and respect). And who knows, we may even point people towards better experience - the love of a Triune God and of a spouse with body, mind and spirit.

48 Tertullian: ‘In Platonic language indeed the body is a prison, but in the apostle’s it is ‘the temple of God’ because it is in Christ’, Treatise on the Soul, 54:5, in Thielson p.479
49 B. Rosner, Temple Prostitution, p.345, in Gregory J. Lockwood, 1 Corinthians, Concordia Publishing House, p.220
50 Fee p.266
51 Fee, p.251
52 Steve Kettman, “1,001 Arabian Nights” in Wired News
53 Will some churches define virtual monogamy as not using virtual images or animated avatars of anyone but your spouse (Matthew 5:28)? Will some churches’ permit computer-mediated sex between a married couple while one spouse is away or injured? Will other churches proscribe all online sex because it has no chance of procreating?
THE HOLY LAW AND THE LAW OF SIN:  
THE IDENTITY AND FUNCTION OF THE LAW IN ROMANS 7:1-8:11

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Romans 7 is notoriously convoluted. Among its difficulties are questions about the point of reference of the passage, a rather confusing initial illustration and apparent shifts in terminology, especially in the use of the word νόμος. This paper will focus on the last of these three questions: what does Paul mean in Romans 7:1-8:11 when he refers repeatedly to νόμος, or “law?” In order to do this, it will be necessary to examine Paul’s use of the word νόμος and, more briefly, his use of ἐντολή. The latter of these two terms will be considered first.

There are six occurrences of the word ἐντολή in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, more than in any other single chapter in the New Testament. These all occur in verses 8-13, with a single occurrence in each verse. The first, in Romans 7:8, is clearly a reference to the tenth commandment of the Decalogue. The others may be less specific, but they can all be fairly translated “commandment,” equivalent to the Hebrew נְצַר (mitzvah), with the understanding that a mitzvah is a concrete instance or particularization of the Torah. But if Paul thus uses ἐντολή in a thoroughly Jewish sense, as the equivalent of נְצַר, the situation is less obvious when attention is directed to Paul’s even more frequent use of the word νόμος.

The vast majority of commentators hold the view that in this chapter Paul seems to use νόμος in several different senses. The remark of J. Barmby on this point is typical: “The senses in which the word νόμος is used in this chapter require to be perceived and distinguished, its usual sense . . . not being uniformly retained.” This view is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Paul uses νόμος with a variety of modifiers in Romans 7 and 8. For example, he speaks in Romans 7:22 of ὁ νόμος τοῦ θεοῦ (the law of God), but in Romans 7:23 he speaks of ἐπεροτ νόμος (a different law), which he subsequently calls ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας (the law of sin). He also uses the expression ὁ νόμος τοῦ ἀνδρὸς (the law of the husband) in Romans 7:2. And in Romans 8:2 Paul uses the expression ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ (the law of the spirit of life

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1. This problem is particularly acute in Romans 7:7-25.

2. Romans 7:1-6

3. The parameters of this investigation extend beyond Romans 7; the identification of νόμος continues to be problematic through the early verses of chapter 8.

4. The comments of N. T. Wright in the New Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), vol. 10, are an exception to this. Dr. Wright treats all references to νόμος in this passage as references to the Torah. James D. G. Dunn’s Romans 1-8, vol. 38 in the Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) is less emphatic on this, but also does not identify any of the occurrences of νόμος in this passage with anything other than the Torah. Karl Barth’s Shorter Commentary on Romans (London: SCM Press, 1959) is less decisive on this point, but he too does not clearly identify any of the references to νόμος as something other than the Torah. Douglas J. Moo also asserts that “. . . νόμος refers to the Mosaic Law throughout this context.” on page 218 of his Romans, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House: 2000). However, Moo retracts from this general assertion on page 249 when dealing with Paul’s expression “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” in Romans 8:2. Moo identifies this latter law with the “. . . authority or power exercised by the Spirit.”

5. J. Barmby, "The Exposition of Romans" in The Pulpit Commentary, (New York: Funk & Wagnells, 1913), 43:190. Some of the more recent commentators are less candid on this point but still indicate that certain occurrences of νόμος in Romans 7:1-8:11 do not have the same referent as other uses of the same word. For example, Douglas J. Moo's Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996) identifies most uses of νόμος as "the Mosaic law" but says, with regard to the first occurrence of this term in Romans 8:2, "... the nomos of the Spirit cannot, then, refer to the Mosaic law." (p. 475).
in Christ), and even seems to say that the law saves us from the law. It must be asked then, are there indeed several different senses to the term νόμος in Paul’s use in this chapter, or does the apostle use this term with more consistency?

There are twenty-three occurrences of the word νόμος in the seventh chapter of Romans, and an additional five occurrences in the first few verses of Romans 8, which are part of the context of Romans 7. Of these twenty-eight occurrences, several are indisputable references to the Torah (Torah), the five books of Moses whose instruction is the basis of Jewish theology. For example, the third occurrence of νόμος in Romans 7:7, which refers to the law which says "Do not covet!", is in this category, and consequently so are the five logically connected occurrences of this word in Romans 7:7-9. The expression ὁ νόμος τοῦ θεοῦ (the law of God) in Romans 7:22,25 and 8:7 must also be understood as referring to the Torah or to some part of it. In addition, few would question the equation of νόμος and Torah in the following verses: 7:4,5,6,12,14,16,23 (the second occurrence in the verse); 8:3 and 4.

The five occurrences of νόμος in Romans 7:1-3 present a particular problem. They all seem to refer to the same thing, namely to that law which dictates that a married woman may not consort with any man other than her husband unless and until her husband is dead. Those who say that this refers to the Torah and cite such passages as Exodus 20:14 and Leviticus 20:10 in support of their position must face the objection that the Torah, in Deuteronomy 24:1, implies the permissibility of divorce, thus making it possible for a woman who has been married to consort with another man during her husband’s life. It is possible to see in Paul’s rather unusual expression ἡ ἐναντόν γυνή (literally, "the hounded woman") an evasion of this problem.

The adjective ἐναντός is found nowhere else in the New Testament though it is used in six places in the Septuagint: twice in Numbers 5:20-29, the passage which describes the ritual trial of a suspected adulteress, Proverbs 6:24 and 29, both of which refer to unfaithful wives, and in two statements in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (9:9 and 41:23) which forbid casual association with the wife of another man. Whatever else may be implied by the adjective ἐναντός, it clearly refers to a woman who is married at the time of reference, and not to a woman who had been married but was no longer (on account of a divorce). It is a fact that the Torah (in Deuteronomy 22:22, a verse that has been inconvenient for both Jewish and Christian exegetes) allows no exception to the general rule that a woman who is currently married may not have relations with any man except her husband. It is also possible to assume simply that Paul is dealing only with the basic principle (the inviolability of marriage) and not with the exception (divorce). In either case, there are no insurmountable obstacles to seeing the five occurrences of νόμος in Romans 7:1-3 as references to Torah, and understanding the expression "the law of the husband" to mean the instruction of the Pentateuch regarding the status, rights and duties of husbands, particularly in relation to their wives, and to the status, duties and rights of wives, particularly in relation to their husbands.

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6 There are more occurrences of the word νόμος in Romans 7 than in any other chapter in the New Testament. In fact, there is no complete book of the New Testament other than Galatians and (the rest of) Romans which has as many uses of the word νόμος as are found in this single chapter.

7 There are also two occurrences of νόμος in Romans 6, but they are not subject to the same discussion and ambiguity of interpretation as the twenty-eight occurrences of this word in Romans 7:1–8:7.

8 See Appendix B.

9 The more customary way of speaking of a married woman would be ἡ γυνῆ ἡ Ἴσ农户, or, more simply, ἡ γυνῆ ἡ Ἴσ农户, an expression which Paul uses in I Corinthians 7:34.

10 In its context, the verse seems (rather unreasonably) to impose capital punishment on a married woman for being raped, even though a betrothed woman who attempts to resist rape is (quite reasonably) held guiltless for what has happened.

11 Accordingly, Paul’s expression "τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἕναντός" (the law of the husband) in Romans 7:2 should be understood on the analogy of the Pentateuchal expressions "γνώτιτ τὸν ΔΗΜ" (the law of the
This leaves only six occurrences of νόμος in Romans 7:1–8:11: one occurrence in Romans 7:21, two (the first and third occurrences) in Romans 7:23, one (the second) in Romans 7:25 and both occurrences in Romans 8:2. Of these, three fall in the expression ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας (the law of sin). This expression is found in Romans 7:23 (iii), Romans 7:25 (ii) and Romans 8:2 (ii). This expression may be understood on the analogy of ὁ νόμος τοῦ ἁμαρτίων of Romans 7:2. The "law of sin" is not the "principle of sin," that is, the principle on or by which sin operates or the principle which is sin itself, but the Torah insofar as it regards or relates to sin, and particularly insofar as it defines the relationship between sin and the sinner, and authoritatively decrees that the sinner is inextricably bound to his sinfulness, in a connection which can be broken only by death. After all, this is precisely the problem which Paul, through his confrontation with the risen Christ, found in the Torah, and which he discovered to be resolved only by divine grace.

There remain three occurrences of νόμος as yet unexplained. If the preceding view of ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας is adopted, the first occurrence of νόμος in Romans 7:23, ἔτερος νόμος (a different law) can be seen as equivalent to ὁ νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας. In addition, the occurrence in 7:21, εὑρίσκω δὲ τῶν νόμων (I discover, then, the law), without actually adding the qualifying genitive τῆς ἀμαρτίας, is nevertheless also "the law as it regards sin." Indeed, the declaration which follows is nothing other than a summary of that "law of sin:" τῷ θέλοντι έμοί τοι τὸ καλὸν ... έμοί τὸ κακὸν παράκειται (to me, desiring to do good, ... evil presents itself).

Paul is thus telling us, "I, of myself, may wish to dissociate myself from sin, but I, of myself, am not able to do so since the law (i.e., the Torah) has declared me to be a sinner and has also decreed that, and by myself, dissociate myself from my sinfulness."

The final occurrence of νόμος in this passage is the first occurrence in Romans 8:2, ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ιησού (the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus). This should also be interpreted on the analogy of ὁ νόμος τοῦ ἁμαρτίων, and refers to the Torah as it regards or reveals the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is a function which Paul has already ascribed to the Torah in Romans 3:21, when he speaks of the righteousness from God which is apart from the law, though the law and the prophets testify to it.

In this way, it is possible to understand every occurrence of νόμος in Romans 7:1–8:11 as a reference to the Torah, the instruction given by God to Moses, which discloses His holy will, reveals the truth (albeit an uncomfortable truth) about the sinner, and authoritatively binds him to his sinfulness, and which, though unable to set him free from sin, foretells the liberation which was to come through Jesus Christ. This function of the law with regard to sin has already been intimated in Romans 6:14, where Paul tells the reader that sin cannot rule over him because he is not under law but under grace. The implication of this is that, in the first place, if he were under law, sin would be his master, and, in the second place, without grace, it would be impossible for sin to be displaced as master, since the law is incapable of performing this role.

Having identified the νόμος of Romans 7:1–8:11 as the Torah, let us examine the role which Paul attributes to it. The law is, of course, holy, just and good (Romans 7:12), a revelation which has God as its origin and which belongs to God (Romans 7:22, 25i; 8:7). Paul had known this as a Jew and he was by no means prepared to abandon this belief even after his conversion. And yet, though it identified sin (Romans 7:7) and exposed it for what it is (Romans 7:13), and though it even gave witness to the solution to the sin problem (Romans 3:21), the law was unable to resolve this problem because of the weakness of humanity (Romans 8:3).

nazirite) and "κρατησμός τῆς παραβάσεως" (the law of the leper) found in Numbers 6:13 and Leviticus 14:2, respectively.

12 This is to say that τοῦ ἁμαρτίων is neither an epexegetical genitive nor an appositional genitive but rather a descriptive genitive.

13 The case has been made here that Paul uses νόμος consistently in Romans 7:1-8:11 as an equivalent for the Hebrew תֵּבָנָה. It has not been shown that Paul always uses νόμος in this sense, or even that he always does so in the epistle to the Romans. Such a claim might be examined, though it would obviously require a more extensive presentation. Nevertheless, in this review of Paul's understanding of the law, appeal will be made to some passages in Romans which have not been covered in this article. Those passages from outside Romans 7:1-8:11 which are cited here are instances where the equivalence between νόμος and תֵּבָנָה is generally uncontested.
But Paul's view of the law in Romans 7 is not exhausted merely by stating that the law is insufficient for the resolution of the problem of sin. The involvement of the law in this problem is overt and active, for the law is precisely the authority which intervenes to give sin its real power (Romans 7:11). Sin is inert without the law (Romans 7:8). It must be observed that the inertness of sin in the absence of the law is a matter about which Paul is somewhat ambivalent. Even though Paul has already stated that no calculation of sin is made in the absence of the law (Romans 5:13; 4:15), he hastily adds that whether the law is present or not, death is still present, even among those whose sin is not like Adam's transgression (Romans 5:14). Thus Paul seems to say at some points that the law is the means by which sin brings us to death (Romans 7:11, 13b), and at other times that the law cannot be blamed for this, and that sin itself is at fault (Romans 5:14; 7:13a). This occurs because the law functions on two levels. On one level, it is a revelation of an objective fact—at sin and death are innately connected (Romans 6:23a). On the second level, the law acts with authority to decree to the sinner that he cannot casually disconnect himself from his sinfulness. The "law of sin," that is, the law as it regards sin, and more especially, the "law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2) says that a sinner is inextricably bound to his sin (Romans 7:21-23) in the same fashion, for example, as a married woman and her husband, and that this bond can be broken only by death. And this is, in fact, the meaning of Paul's analogy in Romans 7:2-3. The sinner is bound to his sin, and will remain so until he dies in sin, or until the "old man" (the husband of Paul's analogy in Romans 7:2,3) is crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6).

It should be noted that in all this, Paul does not discuss the content of the Torah. His concern is with the function of the Torah, and the relationship of the Christian with the Torah. It is true that Paul refers elsewhere to the content of the Torah (e.g., Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:5,6). There is no doubt that in his own practice Paul made a distinction between those parts of the content of the Torah which he considered useful and obligatory and those parts which he considered unnecessary. But to make such a distinction between useful or necessary and inconvenient or unnecessary parts of the Torah is a practice which is neither particularly Pauline, nor even particularly Christian. It is certain that most Jews in the first century did exactly the same thing. But though Paul, like all of the rest of us, made a distinction between those parts of the Torah which he thought useful and those parts which he thought unnecessary, this practice must not be confused with the theological concerns about the law which Paul expresses in Romans 7. Here, Paul is speaking of the function of the Torah. He is concerned to inform his readers of the incapacity of the Torah to separate the individual from his sin. The Torah declares the truth about the sinner, and acts with authority to bind him to his sinfulness, but it can do nothing to rescue him from sin's power.

In this light, the famous quest for the identity of the "I" who speaks in Romans 7:14-25 becomes almost irrelevant. Paul is not concerned with when events of this passage occurred, or to whom (or at least those questions concern him so little that he doesn't bother to answer them). His concern is with the fact that these things have happened and do happen. It is not necessary to resolve the question of whether Paul suffered, prior to his conversion, from a troubled conscience, or whether, after his conversion, he continued to struggle with sin. The point is that Paul now sees that even if his conscience did not bother him before, it ought to have. Regardless of whether he understood it, the Torah did, in fact, declare him to be inextricably bound to his sinfulness, however, and with whatever great efforts, he may have tried to escape from it through the observance of the Torah, both in its

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14 E.g., "Honor your father and your mother!" (Exodus 20:12, cf. Ephesians 6:1-3)

15 E.g., the rules in Exodus 12:43,48 and elsewhere which require non-Jews to be circumcised if they wish to participate in the covenant, cf. Galatians 5:2-6

16 Indeed, the major criticism of the Pharisees against their compatriots, and their major reason for isolating themselves from the common people (the so-called עַלְמָנִים, or people of the land) was that the vast majority of these less learned Jews were not rigorous in the observance of the law. And yet, even the Pharisees allowed numerous exceptions to the observance of the law. For example (at a somewhat later date) the Babylonian Talmud indicates that in the interest of saving life one may violate all of the commandments of the Torah except those forbidding idolatry, sexual immorality and bloodshed (Tractate Yoma 82a).
moral and cultic aspects. Not only does Paul now know this to have been true of himself, but he also knows that it was true of others as well, both Jews and non-Jews. The fact that non-Jews were outside the covenant community was so self-evident for Paul to prove it, though, to present a complete argument, he did take the trouble to state that the gentiles were under divine wrath because of their sins (Romans 1:18-32). Furthermore, the Torah, by granting the promises and the covenants to Israel (Romans 9:4,5), effectively declared the non-Jews to be outside the community of the covenant, and ineligible to receive the promises. At much greater length, Paul proves that the Jews were also under wrath, and were declared to be so by that very means which they had placed their confidence (Romans 3:19,20). Thus in Romans 7, Paul must face the fact that it is not only the non-Jews whom the Torah declares to be separated from God (or, to use the words of Ephesians 2:12, "... foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God...") but the Jews as well. The entire race is involved in the problem of sin (Romans 3:23; 5:12-14), from its first member to its most recent, and from the paradigmatic example of humanity before God (the Jews) to every individual case which might be met on the streets of Rome (the non-Jews).

We may summarize Paul's view of the law in Romans 7 thus: in the conflict between sin and obedience, law has a role to play. It makes the sinner conscious of sin (Romans 7:7, cf. Romans 3:20) and reveals and decrees that he, as a sinner, is bound to his sinfulness (Romans 7:2,3,21-24). It enables sin to bring him to death (Romans 7:7-9,11) and exposes the true nature of sin (Romans 7:13) by giving sin a pretext to effect its concrete realization in the form of specific transgressions against specific commandments (Romans 7:8, cf. Romans 5:20). It even testifies to the solution of the problem of sin (Romans 8:2, cf. Romans 1:22; 3:21), though it is entirely unable to effect this solution (Romans 8:2, cf. Romans 3:20), since, as Paul always affirms, the solution to the problem of sin is found only in Jesus Christ.

The law which fulfills this function is the Torah, the five books of Moses, considered either in their totality (e.g., Romans 7:2) or in part (e.g., Romans 7:2). It is uniquely for this corpus of sacred literature that Paul reserves the word νόμος in Romans 7:1-8:11. Attempts to identify other entities, such as the power of sin, the power of the Holy Spirit, legalism or the general principle of law, with any or all of the occurrences of νόμος in this passage detract from the unity and clarity of Paul's message in this epistle.

APPENDIX A
A PARAPHRASE OF ROMANS 7:1-8:11

7: 1 Brothers, don't you know (for I am speaking to men who know the Torah), that the Torah has control over someone only as long as that person lives? 2 For example, a woman who has a husband is bound by the Torah to the husband while he is alive: but if the husband dies, she is released from the Torah as far as it relates to husbands. 3 So then if, while her husband is alive, she is joined to another man, she will be considered an adulteress: but if her husband dies, she is released from the Torah, so that she is not an adulteress, even if she is joined to another man. 4 In the same way, brothers, you also were made dead to the Torah through the body of Christ, so that you could be joined to someone else, that is, to the one who was raised from the dead, so that we might be productive for God. 5 When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were enabled by the Torah, worked in our bodies to produce death. 6 But now we have been released from the Torah: we have died to the thing which used to control us, so that we function in a new way by the spirit, and not in the old way of the letter. 7 What can we say then? Is the Torah sin? By no means. However, I would not have known what sin is, except through the Torah. I would not have known what it meant to covet without the Torah saying, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin took advantage of this and through this Mitzvah produced in me all sorts of coveting. Without the Torah sin is dead. 9 Without the Torah I

17 It was particularly through the cultic aspects of the Torah that many Jews of Paul's era believed that their sins were atoned. This issue is discussed further in Appendix C.

18 One of Paul's concerns in Romans 2:1-3:31 is to establish that the Jews are a paradigm of moral humanity, and that what is true of their relationship to God is also true with regard to the non-Jews (cf. Romans 3:19,20). This prepares the way for Paul's conclusion that what is true with regard to the relationship of the Jews with the Torah (namely, that the Torah is incapable of saving them, as Paul has shown in Romans 7) is also true of the relationship of the non-Jews to the Torah. The idea of a parallel between the relationship of Jews to the Torah and the relationship of non-Jews to the Torah (at least as regards the universal disobedience of both groups) is not unique to Paul (cf. the comments attributed to Peter in Acts 15:10).
used to be alive: but when the Mitzvah came, sin came to life, and I died, 10 and I discovered that the Mitzvah, which was supposed to lead to life, produced death. 11 Sin seized the opportunity, misled me through the Mitzvah and also killed me through it. 12 So, the Torah is holy, and the Mitzvah is holy, and righteous, and good. 13 So did something which is good become death to me? Not at all. But sin, in order for it to be shown to be sin, caused my death through something which is good, so that through this Mitzvah sin could be revealed as completely sinful. 14 We know that the Torah is spiritual: but I am fleshly, sold under sin. 15 I don't understand what I am doing: I don't do what I really want, but I do what I hate. 16 But if I don't want to do the things I am doing, I thereby acknowledge that the Torah is good. 17 So now it is not I, myself, doing these things, but they are being done by the sin which lives in me. 18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there is no resident good: I am able to desire to do good, but I can't accomplish it. 19 I can't do the good things I want to do, but I end up doing the evil things I don't want to do. 20 But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am no longer the actor: it is the sin which lives in me that is doing these things. 21 So I find that the Torah indicates that I can't escape from evil, even though I want to do good. 22 Inwardly I am thrilled with God's Torah: 23 but I see a different side of Torah in my body, making war against the Torah which my mind accepts, and bringing me into captivity under the Torah as it regards sin which is in my body. 24 What a miserable man I am! Who will rescue me out of this moribund body? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I, of myself, in my mind, serve the Torah of God; but in the flesh I serve the Torah as it regards sin. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. 9 For the Torah, as it presents the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the Torah as it presents the inseparable link between sin and death. 3 For what the Torah could not do, because it was weak on account of the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the appearance of sinful flesh and for sin, condemning sin in the flesh, 4 so that the just requirement of the Torah could be fulfilled in us, who do not behave according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 5 For those people who are living according to the flesh do the things the flesh suggests; but those who are living according to the Spirit do the things the Spirit indicates. 6 For the mind controlled by flesh is death; but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind of the flesh is antagonistic to God; it is not subject to the God's Torah, and it fact, it cannot be: 8 those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. 10 And if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin; but your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of God who raised up Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you.

APPENDIX B

THE MARRIAGE ANALOGY IN ROMANS 7:1-4

In the opinion of the present writer, the analogy with which Paul begins this chapter is one of the most widely misunderstood passages in the epistle to the Romans. The analogy is based on the situation of a married woman whose husband dies, and who is then free to marry again (Romans 7:2,3). But in his application of this illustration, Paul says that the Christian reader has died to the law and is now free to be associated with Christ (Romans 7:4). Many interpreters have understood Paul to be saying that before conversion one is married to the law (which is represented by the husband in the analogy). But in the application, it is not the law which dies (though some commentators have tried to wrest this meaning from the passage anyway). 2 In any case, many commentators find this illustration confusing and inconsistent. Their comments range from relatively mild statements like that of E. P. Sanders, who says "The analogy which Paul employs is . . . imperfect." 3 to some absolutely withering criticisms such as C. H. Dodd's rather well-known remark in his Epistle of Paul to the Romans:

The illustration . . . is confused from the outset . . . Broadly speaking, what seems to be in Paul's mind is the idea that a man was wedded to the Law (which means wedded to Sin), but by death he is free to be wedded to Christ. Thus 'Law' plays a double part. The whole story is an example of the

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working of a law, and at the same time, 'Law' is a character in the story! To make confusion worse confounded, it is not Law, the first husband, who dies: the Christian on the other hand is dead to the law. The illustration, therefore, has gone hopelessly astray. The only tertium comparationis that remains is the bare fact that, in one way or another, death puts an end to obligations. We shall do best to ignore the illustration as far as may be, and ask what it is that Paul is really talking about in the realm of fact and experience.  

Dodd apparently makes this statement in all seriousness, as though one really could understand what Paul meant without knowing what he said. Even those commentators who attempt to defend Paul with regard to this passage generally do so by agreeing with Dodd that the only purpose of the illustration is to establish the point made in Romans 7:1, that the authority of the law over a person ends at that person's death. Nevertheless, Dodd does have some constructive comments to offer: "The law of the husband means, according to current legal phraseology, that section of the code which regulates the rights and duties of husbands, much as we speak of "the law of property." The law of the husband refers to the law, as it regards husbands, and in particular, as it pertains to the relation of husbands and wives. What Paul is saying is that the relationship between husband and wife is governed by law, and that this legally determined relationship can only be broken (according to the law) by the death of one of the spouses. Paul then applies this analogy to the subject which he had discussed in Romans 6. If human beings are involved in a legally determined relationship which, the law decrees, can only be ended by the death of one of the members of this relationship, it must now be determined who is the husband (whose death brings to an end the legal obligations), and who is the wife (whose legal obligations are ended by the husband's death)? C. E. B. Cranfield denies that the reader should attempt any such application of the illustration, on the grounds that the word ὀπίσω (usually translated "thus"), with which Romans 7:4 begins, has the function of drawing an inference and not of applying an analogy. When the whole clause is examined, however, this claim does not seem as logical as it might have appeared at first. Paul does not say merely "Thus ..." but rather, "Thus, my brothers, you also died to the law ..." In saying this, he does seem to be comparing the death of the husband (in the illustration) with the death of the Christian as he is incorporated spiritually into Christ's bodily death (cf. Romans 6:2-7). The inference, then, which is drawn by ὀπίσω is that the same permanence which is found in the marriage bond is also present in a relationship in which the Christian is (or was) involved. Karl Barth affirms that the Christian is represented twice in the analogy, by both the husband and the wife: "... as long as we (the husband) live in the flesh as that old man, we (the wife) are governed by the law, that binds him,

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4C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. (London, Hodder and Stoughton: 1932), pp. 100-101. Dodd apparently makes this statement in all seriousness, as though one really could understand what Paul meant without knowing what he said.


7It should be noted that acceptance of this position effectively rules out any interpretation which would equate 'the law of the husband' with the husband himself, despite Dodd's attempt to have it both ways.

8Cranfield, Romans, pp. 334-335.
and therefore ourselves, we are in fact bound to become sinners properly speaking because of the law, and to be accused as such by the law. This view is echoed by John A. T. Robinson.

This concept is not surprising if the context is noted: in the previous chapter Paul had already introduced the idea that one both dies and lives through Jesus Christ. When Paul says, in Romans 7:1-6 that one both dies (as the husband in the analogy) and lives (as the wife), he is therefore repeating what he has said in chapter 6 regarding the death of the Christian to sin (Romans 6:2), in contrast with his or her resurrection and the new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4,11). But in chapter 7, Paul has made an additional observation: he also asserts that the Christian has died to the law (Romans 7:4), and that death has released him or her from the law (Romans 7:6).

APPENDIX C
CULTIC AND MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS IN SECOND TEMPLE AND POST-TEMPLE JUDAISM

Although observant Jews in the first century certainly believed that righteousness was measured by obedience to the Torah in its moral aspects, it was particularly through the cultic aspects of the Torah that many Jews of Paul's era believed that their sins were atoned. A well known anecdote in the Avot D'Rabbi Nathan illustrates this point:

Once as Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed after him and beheld the Temple in ruins.

"Woe unto us!" Rabbi Joshua cried, "that this, the place where the iniquites of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!"

"My son," Rabban Johanan said to him, "be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

Joshua's cry reflects the desire for cultic atonement, still a grave concern in the generation which followed the war with Rome. Yohanan's response (and the readiness with which his view was received by the Jewish community after the destruction of the second temple) reflects the increasing shift in focus from cultus to ethics in post-temple Judaism. Commenting on this incident, Jacob Neusner remarks,

"Yohanan's treatment of the verse, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice," was consistent with the contemporary hermeneutic. In biblical times hesed had meant (in part) the mutual liabilities of those who are friends and relatives, master and servant or any relationship of joint responsibility. In relationship to God, hesed meant acts of conformity to the covenant between man and God. Hosea meant that God demanded loyal adherence to his covenant rather than sacrifice. By Yohanan's time, however, the word had acquired a different connotation. It meant mercy or an act of compassion or loving-kindness. . . .

Yohanan thought that through hesed Jews might make atonement, and that the sacrifices now demanded of them were love and mercy. His choice of the verse from Hosea gave stress to the ethical element of his earlier trilogy of the study of the Torah, doing the commandments and acts of loving-kindness.

In Christian texts, the same issue is reflected, for example, in the incident in Matthew 9 in which Jesus sitting as a guest in the home of a man who was ceremonially defiled as well as morally culpable, cites the same passage from Hosea:

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth.

"Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"


On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."\(^3\)

Repeated remarks in the Epistle to the Hebrews make it clear that the first-century Christian community continued to confront the questions of cultic purity and cultic atonement at least until the loss of the second temple.\(^4\)

\(^3\)Matthew 9:9-13.

\(^4\)See, e.g., Hebrews 8:1-10:24
Righteousness Apart from Law: The Anti-Separatist Theology of the Apostle Paul

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The Pauline teaching of righteousness by faith apart from law is essentially a radical ethical demand to embrace the other as part of one humanity owing allegiance to one God. It emerges from Paul’s determination to preach a gospel that does not require Judaizing Gentiles, or maintaining gender, class and racial separation. This does not become apparent in light of the reformation theological assumptions that continue to blur the Pauline teaching on righteousness and law. Reformation theology places justification by faith at the center of Paul’s theology. Justification becomes exclusively a forensic term that claims justice from God for the individual sinner while it overlooks the larger ethical issue of justice in community. Thus reformation theology renders this very radical and potent teaching by the apostle Paul impotent. It silences the voice that demands that we treat each other as brothers and sisters regardless of religious/social differences. Within the Seventh-day Adventist community this refined version of the Pauline teaching tends to mask a decided separatism1 that ironically repeats the very religious attitude which Paul intended to correct by his teachings on righteousness apart from law.

While my topic emerges from Romans 3:21 (“but now divine righteousness apart from law [χρήσις νομοῦ δίκαιον ὑποθέτηι] has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify”), my frame of reference is on the Galatian controversy2 that sheds greater light on the nature of the problem. My argument is that Paul is wrestling primarily with cultural issues out of which his theology emerges.3 When he speaks of righteousness apart from law, he does not speak as a Christian bashing Judaism as a legalistic religion. Rather, he speaks as a Jew of the Pharisaic tradition (who lived and died convinced that he was living out Judaism)4 engaged in cultural criticism.5 What was the nature of the cultural problems that Paul set out to answer, and what answers did he offer? In this brief discussion I hope open a dialogue on the practical nature of the theology of the apostle Paul, which will lead us to examine the separatist position of Seventh-day Adventism, and its practices of inclusion/exclusion.

Legalism?
Indeed the “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) triggered by the work of E.P. Sanders6 cannot be ignored. It challenges the long held assumptions that lie behind the reformation theology of Righteousness by faith. Sanders presents lengthy and compelling arguments that the extant Palestinian literary material does not reflect a legalistic pattern of religion, but reflects what he terms “covenental nomism.” This system, according to Sanders affirms that “election and ultimately salvation are considered to be God’s mercy, rather than human achievement.”7 It maintains that the law does not earn Israel salvation, but is required as a means by which Israel participates in God’s gracious salvation. Terrence Donaldson has developed a work that views Paul within the framework of Jewish proselytism.8

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1 In this paper, I use the terms separatism, and particularism interchangeably.
2 The letter to the Galatians reveals the concrete social problem that motivates Paul’s polemic on righteousness and law. Roman’s seems to be a letter sent to prepare his audience for his anticipated journey to Rome. It seems to serve as a defense of his radically inclusive Gospel.
3 This calls into question the discussions of “pure theology and pure theory” that do “not do justice to the historical and sociological context in which Paul was writing.” See Francis Watson, Paul Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach, Society for new Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1, en passim.
5 Boyarin, a scholar of the Talmud argues that when Paul is taken “seriously as an internal critic of Jewish culture, the value of his work for cultural criticism can be revealed.” Ibid, 12. My intention here however is not to label Paul’s statements as sociological vis a vis theological, or vice versa. The study makes clear that theology has no objective meaning if it not emerging from or is not in dialogue with concrete situations.
7 Sanders, 422.
8 Terrence Donaldson, Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional world (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).
He builds on the work of William Wrede, Albert Schweitzer and most significantly E.P. Sanders\(^9\) to advance the thesis that Paul’s judicial language is “peripheral and derivative” calculated to defend the Gentiles as being included in the covenant relationship between God and Israel. From a twenty-first-century Christian theological perspective this may appear as a non-issue. However, the argument for Gentile inclusion from the first-century Judaic historical perspective is radical. Central to Donaldson’s conversation is Sander’s argument that Paul does not oppose legalism, but covenantal nomism.

The problem that Paul addresses therefore may indeed not be one of legalism, but one of identity, based on particularism.\(^10\) Proselytizing becomes necessary in light of covenantal nomism. By the first century, the teachings of the early church cannot be defined as a religion separate and apart from Judaism. The earliest disciples taught a Judaism that embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of Jewish Messianic hope. Thus, as the Galatian correspondence reveals, when Paul converted Gentiles, some believers demanded that they be proselytized. Male circumcision marks initiation into the covenant community, and signifies that one will live as a Jew. The cultural conflict\(^11\) that ensued gave rise to Paul’s argument on Righteousness and law.

**Righteousness as Radical Monotheism**

Paul argues that it is not membership in a particular community that qualifies one for righteousness, but membership in the community of humanity which has only one God.\(^12\) He does this by pointing to the common plight of all humanity, both those with the law (Jews) and those without the law (Gentiles) (Rom. 1:18,ff; 3:9,ff.), and by asserting a radical monotheism that recognizes only one God of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 3:21-30). By his redefinition of righteousness, Paul asserts that the covenant community extends beyond the people of the Torah to all who embrace the crucified and risen Christ as the agent through whom God brings salvation to the whole world. Therefore, one does not have to subscribe to Judaic practices in order to be included among the elect (neither does one have to repudiate ones Judaism (Rom. 3:21)). The Galatian correspondence assumes\(^13\) that this particularism motivates differentiation at other levels such as gender and class (Galatians 3:28). This for Paul is the work of law/flesh. Paul appeals to a higher law which is embodied in spirit. Christ represents the spiritual life (“...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” [Galatians 2:20]), and the glue that binds all humanity as one, owing allegiance to one God.

**Law as Boundary, Faith in Christ as Inclusion**

If we agree that Paul is not arguing against legalism, but covenantal nomism, then it becomes less problematic to identify the law by which some may have sought to obtain righteousness in the Galatian context and similar contexts. Identifying this law may in turn lead to a full understanding of the righteousness apart from law (\(χωρίς νομον δικαιοσύνη\)) of which Paul speaks. Paul’s use of the term “law” (\(νόμος\)) is not homogenous. There

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\(^10\) Eung Chung Park, explains that “the fundamental logic of Jewish particularism is based on monotheism and election.” This particularism functioned as an organizing principle of theology and political ideology in Israel as in other parts of the world. See, *Either Jew or gentile: Paul’s Unfolding Theology of Inclusivity* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), 11-12.

\(^11\) In the dominant Greco Roman Culture uncircumcision was the norm to the extent that it threatened Jewish identity and survival. For summary and extensive reference on the issue see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 405-559, *en passim*.

\(^12\) This is the central thesis in Paul’s cultural critique. Boyarin explains that the major grounds for this critique lies in the fact that “the culture itself was in tension with itself, characterized by a narrow ethnocentrism and universalist monotheism.” Citing Hengel, Boyarin argues that Paul seems to have reinterpreted the “universalist tendencies within biblical Israelite religion in light of Hellenistic notions of universalism.” Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the early Hellenistic Period*, Trans., John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974), cit., Boyarin, 52.

\(^13\) Paul’s Platonic mode of allegorical interpretation makes a decided dichotomy between flesh and spirit, in which spirit precedes flesh. Circumcision symbolizes the ethnic body and “commitment to historical Israel” (Boyarin, 15). This assumes then that identities that are bodily or historical such as gender or economic class are like circumcision “according to flesh.”
are two major uses of the term reflecting the Jewish/Hellenistic eclecticism apparent in the Septuagint. As it relates to righteousness apart from law, he refers to the Torah, and specifically the Judaic cultural codes that epitomize it (Romans 2:12, ff). As it relates to a moral obligation on the part of both Jews and Gentiles, it indicates universal principles that are the result of what Emmanuel Kant may refer to as natural Theology. This law is not written down, and this is the law to which Paul appeals as necessary for both Jews and Gentiles. His conversation on law reveals a conflict between law as principle, and law as code. Torah, the code, served as a boundary marker for the people of Israel, the community of the righteous; and circumcision took on symbolic weight as signifier of that boundary. When Paul declares that there is righteousness "apart from law" therefore, he is declaring that there are no boundaries. He declares that the community of the righteous extends outside a particular ethnic/religious community to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The "works of the law" therefore refers to membership in historical Israel. In this context, justification does not function as a forensic term. Rather, it refers to the right to participate in the community of the righteous even if one does not bear certain physical marks or carry out certain practices. In the old paradigm, circumcision initiates one into that community, in the new paradigm, faith in Christ initiates one into the community. In the new paradigm, righteousness by faith is about radical inclusion. In Romans this takes on practical ecclesiological significance as Paul tries to "construct a church structure" that is egalitarian in character in a largely diverse community that seemed to lack structure and unity.

"In Christ": The Spiritual as the Authentic

The religious system of covenantal nomism excludes not only Gentiles from the ranks of the righteous, but also women. The possibility for this increases because, in spite of its repudiation of legalism as we have traditionally understood legalism, covenantal nomism is in strict Pauline terminology "according to flesh" (κατὰ σαρκίν). In Galatians, it becomes obvious that the question of circumcision extends beyond Jew versus Gentile, to also male

14 The convenient division between Judaism and Hellenism with reference to the influences on Paul's thought may not be at all helpful in Pauline Theology. I agree with Calvin Roetzel, that there was no unenlightened Judaism, or any part of Hellenism not affected by Judaism in the first century. See Clavin J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1998), 6. Also Wayne A. Meeks has pointed out that in the first century the line between Hellenistic and rabbinic Jews were considerably blurred. See Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 183), 33.
15 For detailed discussion on Paul's use of the LXX, see, Ibid, 7, ff.
16 Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans, Theodore M.Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1934 [1960]).
17 Where Paul uses νομός to convey Greek shades of meaning, it refers to principle rather than code.
18 This is the argument of Daniel Boyarin. See Boyarin 39-50. Boyarin however does not see Paul's objective here as creating a new religion called Christianity, but of bringing about cultural reform in an ethnocentric community.
19 According to Francis Watson, "The antithesis between faith and works is...not a clash between two great opposing theological principles. It must be instead interpreted sociologically; it expresses the sectarian separation of Pauline congregations from the Jewish community." See Watson, 134. Watson's sociological interpretation of the faith/works antithesis is consistent with what I have argued so far. However, his dismissal of the theological label oversimplifies the Pauline rhetoric. Paul is a Pharisee offering a theological answer to a social question. A thorough analysis of the sociological context lends itself to an accurate understanding of the theological solutions that Paul offers.
21 In her very recent research on gender and covenant in Judaism, Shaye Cohen evaluates a diversity of answers by Jewish sources regarding the inclusion of women among the righteous in light of male circumcision. Those answers range from an admission that circumcision is an "essential marker of Jewishness," to a denial that it has anything to do with women. However, she has not identified any cogent explanation as to how women can be included and fully participative in the covenant a community where male circumcision is the indicator of entrance into this relationship between God and human beings. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?: Gender and Covenant in Judaism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
22 This is evident not only in the covenant that required male circumcision, but also in the structure of the temple. The temple structure marks off a clear boundary not only against Gentiles, but also against women.
versus female. Paul’s allegorical interpretation23 of the Sarah Hagar narrative reflects a spiritual answer to a social problem, which he reduces to a problem of the flesh. In this philonic24 interpretive style typical of his time, he downplays the literal and physical as symbolic and temporary, and elevates the spiritual as the truly meaningful and eternal. Boyarin argues that Paul “describes historical Israel’s existence as carnal, physical, material, and literal,” and therefore regards the hermeneutical principles by which it identifies itself as also carnal.25 In an era when one’s social standing was fixed at birth, and boasting about ones social standing was the norm,26 Paul advocates a radical identity that relegates the corporeal and the historical. For him, the authentic self is a spiritual self that identifies with the Christ,27 rather than with a particular community, gender, or social status. The “In Christ Jesus” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) and “in (the) Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ) clauses28 signify this authentic identity and the antithesis to Israel’s literalism. In this state, the self transcends particularity, and becomes a universal self that is capable of true unity.

Seventh-day Adventism and the Question of Separatism
The overarching issue in Seventh-day Adventist theology is not legalism, but separatism.29 In Pauline theology this is an indicator of works of flesh. Seventh-day Adventism invests in an identity of special election. Crucial to that identity are the doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the prophetic gift of Ellen White. According to Leroy Froom, these three doctrines “formed the base of a coordinated system of truth.”30 James White described it as “harmonious in all its parts,” thus to destroy one is to destroy an entire system of truth31 which identifies the church as the remnant of prophecy.

The Problem of Literalism and Separatism
In many aspects the spiritual significance of these doctrines has had to yield to a literalism that serves as insurance for their reliability. The idea of a literal sanctuary in heaven supersedes the spiritual application of Hebrews - “Christ is not entered into a man-made sanctuary that is only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself....” (Hebrews 9:25; cf. 8:5)32 The emphasis on the literal aspect of Sabbath keeping as a marker of the elect33 eclipses

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24 See footnote # 23.
26 Witherington, The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 18
27 See Galatians 3:26-29 and I Corinthians 11:11-12.
28 In the Greek version, the absence of the definite article in these clauses lends them a profound significance in that they indicate a state or quality that is Christ-like. The state is a spiritual state into which Paul assumes the believer has entered. See Galatians 3:28 and I Corinthians 11:11.
29 After the 1888 Bible Conference the Seventh-day Adventist Church developed a doctrine of “righteousness by Faith based on the classical reformation doctrine and on its identity as the true remnant who keep the “commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.” This hybrid resulted in an identity that displays a kind of “coventional nomism.” Even though the church asserts that Christians are saved entirely by the grace of God, it also stresses obedience to the law of God as the proper response to salvation. The keeping of the seventh day Sabbath, a commandment disregarded by the vast majority of Christendom functions as a significant marker of the remnant who will bear the seal of God and escape the final plagues shortly before the return of Christ.
32 The book of Hebrews appears to follow the Platonist model of allegorical interpretation used by both Philo and Paul. That Christ entered into heaven itself suggests that the earthly sanctuary represents the very dwelling place of God, and allegorically it can have no physical form.
33 Seventh-day Adventists identify the seal of God in Revelation 7:3; 9:4 as the fourth commandment. This is because it bears the creator’s name, title, and domain, which are significant elements in a sovereign’s seal.
the principle of liberation inherent in Sabbath. The Spiritual gifts of Ellen White, rather than being an indication of the gender impartiality of Spirit, become a marker of Seventh-day Adventist separatism and exclusivity.\textsuperscript{34} Prophecy in Seventh-day Adventism, rather than being an instrument of God’s vindication of the oppressed has become for the most part, the means by which it proves its special election.

Full participation of women in Seventh-day Adventist clergy has become taboo because of the threat it poses to the separatist identity of the denomination.\textsuperscript{35} In this regard the literal/historical interpretation of the female body as subordinate to the male (I Cor. 11:4-10) conveniently supersedes the Pauline “ἐν κυρίῳ” clause (I Cor. 11:11) that functions as its spiritual/allegorical antithesis.\textsuperscript{36} The Seventh-day Adventist anxiety for its survival as the one unified true church of God has smothered its true convictions\textsuperscript{37} regarding community participation as far as gender. Is the community forcing God’s hand – working it out on its own terms? What role does Spirit play?

\textsuperscript{34} The movement reads the question of the “testimony of Jesus” in Revelation 12:17 also described as the “faith of Jesus in Revelation 14:12 in light of Revelation 19:10: “Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” In 1851, James White drew on Joel 2: 28, 29 to explain that the remnant experienced the last day outpouring of spiritual gifts. From this he concluded that the “spirit of prophecy” was an identifying mark of the remnant church. He further concluded that the “spirit of prophecy” was present in the Seventh-day Adventist church through the ministry of Ellen G. White.

\textsuperscript{35} In both the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the issue of women’s ordination became a scapegoat in the denomination’s struggle to protect its identity, from the inroads of liberalism, whose hermeneutical principles are inimical to the fundamental doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism. As a result, women’s ordination shifted from being a genuine issue in Seventh-day Adventism to becoming a symbol of alliance with liberalism. Because of this association of women’s ordination with the enemy of the denomination, resistance to women’s ordination ultimately became a symbolic display of denominational loyalty. See Olive Hemmings, “Sacred texts and Social Conflict: The Use of Bible in the Debate over Women’s Ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” (PhD. Diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2004).

\textsuperscript{36} Raoul Dederen who presented the argument for women’s ordination at the Utrecht quinquennial convention of the Seventh-day Adventist church, presents as his starting point Galatians 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus), as “the overall principle of scripture” regarding women’s status. His argument seems to break down in face of the opposition however, as he attempts to concede to the concept of male authority. According to him, the difference between the terms used in Galatians 3:28 regarding male, and female and those used in I Corinthians suggests that the headship role of the male is to be exercised only in his capacity as the husband. Dederen argues that in I Corinthians 11 Paul uses the terms ἀνδρός (man or husband) and γυνή (woman or wife), while in Galatians 3: 28 he uses the terms ἀρσενός (male) and θηλασ (female). By this he concludes that in the arguments for headship/authority, Paul is referring to husbands over his wife. Dederen quotes verses 8 and 9 of I Corinthians 11 (“For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for the woman; but the woman for man.”) as an example of the use of the Greek terms for husband and wife. Yet he stops short of verse 11-12 (which seems to oppose verses 8 and 9): “Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.” Here the same terms for husband and wife are used. Dederen makes no commentary on this verse that appears to overturn all that Paul is saying so far on male headship. This oversight in his hermeneutics unmask his own attempt to make an argument without threatening the conservative position of the church by which it maintains its separatism. See Thirteenth Business Meeting, General conference Bulletin 1995 – No. 07, Adventist Review, 7 July 1995: 23-31.

\textsuperscript{37} The fundamentalist faction in Seventh-day Adventism vehemently opposed to women’s ordination includes the two major figures who lead the move towards the ordination of women at the 1973 Camp Mohaven Conference. These two were the major forces driving the denomination towards the ordination of women in the 1970s, and the two major forces who lead the resistance against it. One of these figures was the most prominent biblical scholar in Adventism at the time, Gerhard Hasel. His argument for Gender mutuality based on Genesis 1-3 opened the Camp Mohaven document. The other figure is Gordon Hyde who convened the Mohaven conference. He, along with Hasel, represents the twin pillars of Adventism that steer the progress of the Church – biblical scholarship and church administration. This dramatic turn around seems to have been due to the rise of neo-fundamentalism in response to liberalism during the 1980s. As in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the denomination’s powerful joined the larger cultural war, in order to safeguard its status as the true church. See Hemmings, 1-34.
This is not a critique of Seventh-day Adventist belief system. Rather it is a re-examination of what appears to be a narcissistic attitude towards this system that does not reflect the spirit of the gospel. It is a re-examination of my own attitude, because I am a member of the community.

Summary and Conclusion
Paul’s theology of righteousness apart from law emerges from a cultural criticism through which he sought to justify his mission to the Gentiles, and promote a non-hierarchical community in which all are free to participate. Thus the issue he addresses is not legalism in the traditional sense of the term, but covenantal nomism, which defines Judaic particularism. Paul solves this problem of religious/ethnic separatism posed by covenantal nomism through allegorical interpretation. This hermeneutical approach places the literal and corporal in subjection to the spiritual. This spiritual approach effectively undermines group particularity, gender and class hierarchy, and opens up the community of the elect to all who believe in the risen Christ. Christ represents the spiritual, defined by faith which alone can initiate one into the community of righteousness. An approach to righteousness short of this model lends itself to idolatry, where one’s relationship to the community (represented by its creeds/doctrines) takes precedence to one’s commitment to the cause of righteousness/justice. Seventh-day Adventism struggles with this problem of particularism marked by a literalistic approach. Seventh-day Adventist doctrines in and of themselves need not pose a problem. However, when bare literalism is applied to the extent that the community censures or ostracizes those who take a second look at it, Spirit is no longer the primary driving force in community interaction. It becomes a community of works of flesh. A community that truly believes must embrace what H. Richard Niebuhr refers to as a radical monotheism by which “the value center is neither closed society, nor the principle of such a society, but the principle of being itself.”

If it is indeed a community of faith, it does not rely on its dogmas, but on “the source of all being for the significance of the self.” Through the Philonic allegorical interpretation, Paul redefines the self as a spiritual self set free by faith in Christ. This self is the authentic self that rises above the taboos, the arrogance, the prejudice, the fear, and the violence that emerges from the fleshly and literal. The spiritual transcends ethnic, gender, and class specificity, and exists as a universal self – a “responsible self” as Niebuhr puts it. Here the center of value does not reside in the self, but in the one God who is the source of all. Only in this state can it realize unity. In a world torn apart by claims to special election, and literalization of sacred texts, this Pauline interpretation of the gospel is more relevant than ever. This gospel calls all communities of faith to join in a common human struggle for understanding, justice and peace.

39 Ibid.
41 Idem, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*. 
The Sabbath in Colossians

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Introduction

Paul’s reference to the Sabbath in Colossians (2:16) is a constituent element of his sketch of the Colossian heresy (2:6-23). This polemical material cannot be properly understood without grasping his profound Christological response to the heretical philosophy. The sharply drawn contrasts of Colossians were doubtless influenced by the polemical setting of the epistle; in less contested circumstances, the apostle may have treated the issues in a more balanced and evenhanded manner.1

The Colossian Heresy

The apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians while in prison (4:3, 10, 18);2 Epaphras, the founder and member of the church at Colossae (1:7; 4:12), reported to Paul the presence of troublemakers who were propagating a false teaching that threatened the well-being of the community. The identity of the opponents is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty. Scholars typically propose three possibilities: (1) interloping visitors from the outside; (2) local adherents of one of the rival cults of Colossae; or (3) members of the church itself.3

The overall contours of the false teaching cannot be reconstructed in detail. Paul’s descriptions of its beliefs and practices tend toward the general and the negative.4 The instigators taught an empty and deceitful “philosophy”5 that was built on human traditions which were in accordance with the “elemental spirits of the world” and not Christ (2:8). This philosophy was constituted of the following elements: (1) certain ascetic practices of “self-abasement” (ταπεινωφορούμενος; 2:18, 23) and “unsparing treatment of the body” (ἀφελεῖς σώματος; 2:23);

1 The contrasting portraits of the law in Galatians and Romans are apt examples. For an excellent discussion of the similar and dissimilar treatments of the law in the two epistles, see J. Paul Sampley, “Romans and Galatians: Comparison and Contrast.” In Understanding the Word: Essays in Honor of Bernhard W. Anderson. JSOTSup 37. Edited by J. T. Butler et al (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 315-339.
3 Johnson, 396.
4 For an analysis of the central issues of the trouble at Colossae, see the scholarly essays found in Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity. Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies. Revised Edition. Edited by Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975). Not all scholars believe there was a so-called “Colossian heresy.” Morna Hooker argues that Paul’s repeated emphases of the steadfastness of the Colossians’ faith (1:18; 2:1-6) as well as the lack of explicit evidence that the community had fallen prey to erroneous teaching suggests there was no false teaching that seriously threatened the community (“Colossians.” In Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible. Edited by James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 1404-1405; idem, “Were there False Teachers in Colossae?” In Christ and Spirit in the New Testament. Studies in honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule. Edited by B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley [Cambridge: University Press, 1973], 315-331).
5 Unless otherwise indicated, scriptural translations are my own.
6 Fred Francis’ treatment of the exegetical difficulties of 2:18 remains the best resource. He has demonstrated that ταπεινωφορούμενον (humility) was a technical term of the opponents that indicated asceticism and mystical ascent (“Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18.” In Conflict at Colossae, 167-171.)
these practices involved rules for food, drink and perhaps abstinence of sexual activity (2:16a, 21); (2) certain ritualistic practices that promoted the observance of festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths (ἐορτῆς ἢ νεομήνυμα ἢ σαββάτων 2:16b) as well as the worship of (or alongside) angels and visionary experiences (2:18), and (3) the belief that deliverance and protection from the cosmic powers (the “elemental spirits of the world,” τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου; 2:20), which established the cosmic order and fate of individuals, was vital and necessary. Scholars have interpreted these distinctive features in numerous ways. Some identify the false teaching as some type of Judaism; or Gnosticism; or a pagan mystery cult; or a syncretistic philosophy that drew elements from a number of religious movements.

An analysis of the primary exhortations of the letter, especially Paul’s entreaties for the Colossians to be “perfect in Christ” (τέλειων ἐν Χριστῷ 1:28; 4:12), suggest that the issue at Colossae concerned the troublemakers’ understanding of perfection (maturity) in the sight of God, especially its character and foundation.

They [opponents] saw perfection as the achievement of new levels of spiritual status, marked by observance of law, sexual asceticism, and, above all, initiation into the higher mysteries of visionary experiences . . . Christ was for them only a beginning; to be fully mature before God meant taking on more elaborate and visible forms of religious observance, including the experience of higher planes of ecstasy. On the basis of their greater spiritual maturity, furthermore, they could “judge” others (2:16) and even seek to “disqualify” them (2:18, suggesting disqualification from a race).

There was thus a crisis of confidence within the community, a view that the person and work of Christ were insufficient for perfection; the agitators maintained that the path of spiritual maturity required more than what was found in Christ. The errant teaching appears to be making inroads for the apostle asks, “Why do you submit to regulations as though you are still living in the world?” (2:20b).

**Paul’s Response to the Colossian Heresy**

Paul combats the beliefs and practices of the false teaching by exhorting the Colossians “to remain in the faith, established and steadfast, not moving away from the hope of the gospel which you heard” (1:23). Specifically, the community must grasp more fully the true character of the gospel, the nature of the believer’s new life, and, most importantly, **the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ.**

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7 Francis, 171f; Col 2:18 is difficult to translate and interpret – μηδὲς ἡμῶν καταφαρακεμένοι θέλων ἐν τατιειπορούναι και θρηκείες τῶν ἀγέλων, ἀ ἐκδικεσε ἐμπληκτῶν, εἰκῇ φυσιούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ. Literally, “Let no one defraud/rob/disqualify you of your prize, by humility (i.e., self-abasement) and worship of angels, what he has seen upon entering, being vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh.”


9 J. J. Gunther notes that the errant teaching has been construed in at least forty-four different ways (St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings. NovTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3-4).


13 Lohse, 128-131; see also Fred O. Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18.” In *Conflict at Colossae*, 163-195; idem, “The Background of EMBATEUEIN (Col 2:18) in Legal Papyri and Oracle Inscriptions.” In *Conflict at Colossae*, 197-207; Furnish, 1092.

14 Johnson, 395.

15 Ibid, 396; see also, Fred O. Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18.” In *Conflict at Colossae*, 163-195; idem, “The Background of EMBATEUEIN (Col 2:18) in Legal Papyri and Oracle Inscriptions.” In *Conflict at Colossae*, 197-207.

16 Johnson, 395-396.

17 Victor Paul Furnish, “Colossians, Epistle to The.” In *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol. I. Edited by David Noel Freedman (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 1090f; see also Wilson, 215-216. The gospel is “the word of truth” (1:5), a
The pre-eminence of Christ is highlighted in the magnificent Colossian hymn (1:15-20); in this hymn Paul delineates a mind-stretching cosmic Christology that depicts Christ as preexistent with God:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; 16 for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 18

Christ is God’s Agent of creation as well as the goal of creation; he is also the Sustainer and Redeemer of creation. 19 The salvation proffered by such a Christ cannot possibly be supplemented by a philosophy that demands certain mystical, ascetic and ritualistic practices. Christ is the “substance” (2:17), and thus the “clue to ultimate reality . . . the judge of every religion, and the touchstone of morals (3:5, 11, 15-16, 24).” 20 United with Christ, believers have access to “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). The Colossians must realize that they have “fullness of life” (2:10) in Christ; they must not seek, nor can they find elsewhere, the path toward perfection. 21 Consequently, a proper understanding of the polemical units of Colossians can only be obtained within the overarching context of Paul’s profound Christological response to the Colossian heresy. For, “Christology is at the heart of Colossians.”

The Sabbath in Colossians 2:16-17

In the preceding context of 2:16-17, Paul sketches the implications and efficaciousness of Christ’s death and resurrection for the lives of believers with some striking metaphors (2:8-15). Believers have been “circumcised with the circumcision of Christ” (2:11), buried in baptism with him as well as raised and made alive with him (2:12, 13); their trespasses have been forgiven (2:13); the “certificate of indebtedness (χειρόγραφον; i.e., the record of sin) that

“mystery which has been hidden from the ages and the generations” (1:26); God has now revealed this mystery to humankind, which is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27); the impact of the gospel is universal, for “it is bearing fruit and growing in all the world” (1:6) by God’s commissioned herald, the apostle Paul (1:23, 24). Paul is in some sense, through his sufferings, “filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, that is the church” (1:24). J. B. Lightfoot argues that Paul’s sufferings do not have a sacrificial efficacy but a ministerial utility: “it is a simple matter of fact that the afflictions of every saint and martyr do supplement the afflictions of Christ. The church is built up by repeated acts of self-denial in successive individuals and successive generations. They continue the work which Christ began. They bear their part in the sufferings of Christ” (Colossians and Philemon. [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997], 82-83). The believer’s new life is a result of God having rescued them “from the dominion of darkness and transferred (them) into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13); believers have died to their former life (3:3) and have come “to fullness of life” in Christ (2:10); they have “put off the old self, with its practices and put on the new self, the one being renewed in knowledge after the image of the One who created him” (2:9, 10). The Colossians’ new life, their redemption (1:14) and reconciliation (1:20, 22) has come entirely through the salvific work of Christ.

18 RSV.
19 Elements of this cosmic Christology are found elsewhere in the epistle. For example, in 2:9 Paul affirms anew that “all the fullness of the deity dwells bodily in him”; the declaration that “Christ is all and in all” (3:11) alludes to his role in being the one who created all things; he is not only the “head” of the church (1:18), but also “the head of all rule and authority” (2:10); the creedal statement in 1:13 further highlights the cosmic elements of Christ’s sovereignty, for “it sets the ‘kingdom’ of God’s beloved Son over against ‘the dominion darkness’ from which believers, since their baptism, have been delivered” (Furnish, 1091).
20 Johnston, 661.
stood against us with its ordinances/decrees" (δογματικον) has been wiped out, nailed to the cross” (2:14);23 God “has disarmed the rulers and authorities, by boldly exposing them, triumphing over them in him” (2:15).24

In light of Christ’s salvific work, Paul exorts the Colossians: “Therefore do not let anyone pass judgment on you in eating and in drinking or with respect to a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths”25 (2:16; Μὴ οὖν τίς ἡμῶν κρίνεται ἐν βραδείᾳ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἡ ἐν μέρει γορήθη καὶ νεομερίας ἢ σαββάτων). The Sabbath, mentioned in v.16b, is part of a phrase which includes three terms that were used to comprehensively describe the annual, monthly, and weekly sacred times of Israel’s religion (Exek 45:17; Hos 2:11; 1 Chron 23:21; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Isa 1:13-14; 1 Macc 10:34).26 There were annual ceremonial Sabbaths that Israel was commanded to observe (Lev 23:6-8, 15, 16, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 37, 38).27 However, it is untenable to interpret the word σαββάτων (2:16b) as a reference to the annual ceremonial Sabbaths and not the weekly Sabbath because the ceremonial Sabbaths were “never designated” with the simple plural of σαββάτα”.28 Additionally, it is tautological to suggest that σαββάτων refers to the ceremonial Sabbaths since the word “festival” (ἐορτής) already incorporates such ceremonial Sabbaths.29 Σαββάτων thus refers to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.30 Given that Sabbath observance at Colossae was for the sake of the elemental spirits of the universe, it is possible that in 2:16, Paul is not condemning “the use of sacred days or seasons . . . (but) the wrong motive involved when observance of these days is bound up with the recognition of the elemental spirits.”31

The ritualistic practices of festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths “are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance/reality is of Christ” (2:17 ὁ ἐστιν σκία τῶν μελλόντων τὸ δὲ σῶμα τῶν χριστιανί). If Paul is condemning the superstitious “bad religion” that the false teachers are propagating, the “shadowy things” of 2:17 (festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths) may be the sacred times which were constituent elements of the false teaching; or they may be the shadowy things in and of themselves apart from Christ.32 Notwithstanding, such a nuanced interpretation is untenable given the sharp Christological contrasts Paul sketches in his epistles. For example, in Phil 3:8 he considers all aspects of his former life in Judaism as “loss” and

23 Dunn, who believes that δογματικον refers the law, the commandments of Moses, aptly interprets 2:14: “the expunging of the record confirms that none of these transgressions is any longer held ‘against us.’ That does not mean, however, that the underlying decrees or regulations cease to have force, that is, that the law no longer functions as God’s yardstick of right and judgment . . . It is simply that the record of transgressions has been erased – another way of saying ‘he forgave us all our transgressions’” (The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, 165-166).

24 While there is debate regarding the subject of 2:15 (God or Christ), O’Brien makes a good case for God as the subject (Colossians, Philmemon, 126-129).

25 The plural “Sabbaths” (σαββάτων) was often employed to refer to a single Sabbath (Dunn, 174; see also Wilson, 219).

26 Dunn, 174-175; see also, Samuele Bacchiocchi, From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Christianity (Roman: Pontificia Gregoriana University, 1977), 358-360; Bruce, 114-115; Hooker, 1408; Lightfoot, 99; Loehse, 115; O’Brien, 139; William E. Richardson, “A Study of the Historical Background and the Interpretation of Colossians 2:14-17” (M.A. Thesis, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1960), 73-77; Robert W. Wall, Colossians & Philemon. IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 121; Wilson, 216, 218-219; N. T. Wright, Colossians and Philemon. TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1986), 119. Paul Glem argues that the phrase – “festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths” – is a catch phrase that does not refer to the observance of the Sabbath, but to the sacrificial system, i.e., “the weekly, monthly, and yearly sacrifices prescribed by Moses” (“SABBATON in Col 2:16,” Andrews University Seminary Studies 19 [1981]: 195-210).


28 Bacchiocchi, 359.

29 Ibid, 360.

30 As Bruce aptly comments, “the omens prbandi lies on those who argue that the weekly sabbath is not included in this reference. When the sabbath is mentioned in the OT or the NT with no contextual qualification, the weekly sabbath is intended (The Epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians, 115, n105).

31 O’Brien, 139. Similarly, Bacchiocchi argues that Paul is not attacking “the principle of Sabbath-keeping but its perversion” (362-364); Ralph Martin also believes that what moves Paul “here is the wrong motive involved when the observance of holy festivals is made the badge of separation and an attempted means of securing salvation out of fear and superstition. It is bad religion that Paul attacks” (Colossians: The Church’s Lord and the Christian’s Liberty [Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1972]), 90.

“rubbish” (σκύβαλον) now that he has obtained the “surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”; in 2 Cor 3:14-15, Paul states that the Israelites’ present day readings of the old covenant are “veiled readings,” because only “in Christ” is the veil that “lies upon their hearts” set aside (καταργείται); unveiled readings occur only “in Christ.” In Galatians 3:24, the law is declared to be “our disciplinarian/custodian” (παιδαγωγός); now that Christ has come (v.24b), (and faith, v.25a), “we are no longer under the disciplinarian/custodian” (v.25b).

The shadow/substance contrast is characteristically employed by modern scholars to speak of the transitory nature and annulment of the sacred times — including the Sabbath — given the dawning of the new age. For example, Lohse argues that “it becomes apparent under the sign of the fulfillment in Christ that the regulations are merely shadows of things to come... since reality is with Christ alone, the shadowy appearances have lost all right to exist.”

However, it is possible to interpret the shadow/substance contrast in a more positive sense. The contrast between shadow and substance alludes to Platonic thought, particularly the famous allegory of the cave. Plato understood the heart of all reality to be the realm of forms and not the shadows which they cast upon the world and are perceived by our senses. The cave is the visible realm, the area accessible to perception; outside the cave is the intelligible realm, the area accessible only by reasoning; “the objects here are more real or true than the artifacts in the cave, since they are the originals of which the artifacts are likenesses.” For Plato, reality is graded or ordered; the shadows are thus “less real... than the artifacts that cast the shadows, and the artifacts are less real than their originals” (i.e., the perfect forms):

The Form is “completely” real, or “purely” real, or “perfectly” real... it is “more real” than its sensible instances, which are said to “fall between the purely real and the wholly unreal,” because their state is such that “they both are and are not.”

While Platonic scholars continue to debate the precise relation between forms and their perceptible namesakes, the namesakes do participate/share in the intelligible form. There is a kind of descending scale of reality, from the perfectly real forms to the “dimmer” reality of sensible things. The sensible objects of the physical world are real, albeit less real than the perfect form itself.

If Paul is appropriating Plato’s classical doctrine of forms, one must construe the shadow/substance contrast of 2:17 along similar lines. The Sabbath, part of the sacred times of Israel’s religion, has not been abolished or annulled; on the contrary, it is simply a “dimmer” reality of the perfect form, Jesus Christ. In a graded and ordered reality, even as light in the world is dispersed in a descending scale of illumination and brilliance, the shadowy Sabbath is less real when compared to the ultimately real, Christ. Just as the new covenant “outglories” and outshines the old covenant (2 Cor 3), likewise Christ “outglories” and outshines the Sabbath.

Such a construal of the Sabbath might suggest the continuing validity of the two other sacred times mentioned in 2:16b – festivals and new moons – for Christian believers. However, Paul’s reinterpretation of the

33 Lohse, 117. Dunn likewise maintains that the sacred times “are the provisional, inferior copies whose inadequacy is now evident in the light of the real” (The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, 177); O’Brien also argues that “Christ and his new order are the perfect reality to which these earlier ordinances pointed. These prescriptions of days gone by were but a shadow. They have lost any binding force. Since the reality is here, the things of the shadow no longer constitute a norm for judgment” (Colossians, Philemon, 141).
34 O’Brien, 139; see Plato, Republic, 514a-518b. LCL. Translated by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935); see also Dunn, 176.
35 Lohse, 116; see also Dunn, 176-177; O’Brien, 139.
37 Ibid, 63, n.4.
40 Plato, Republic, 515d, 516a, 517d-e, 596e-598d; Symposium, 210e-211b. LCL. Translated by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925); Phaedo, 74b-c. LCL. Translated by Harold North Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).
41 Vlastos, Metaphysical Paradox,” 44.
Passover festival in his ethical exhortations to the Corinthians suggest otherwise (1 Cor 5). The Corinthians are exhorted—“let us therefore celebrate the festival (i.e., the Passover) not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). A striking metaphorical reinterpretation of the Passover has taken place to indicate a recurrent celebration:

In its first instance it reflects the prolonged seven-day festival, during which the Jews were forbidden to eat anything unleavened. In the same way, on the basis of the crucifixion of Christ, God’s people are to keep an ongoing feast of the celebration of God’s forgiveness by holy living.  

Paul’s adaptation of the Passover festival in 1 Corinthians suggests that the annual Jewish festivals are not binding upon Christian communities. One could also infer from the apostle’s reconfiguring of the annual festivals, that he also understood the monthly festivals, the “new moons” (νεομήνιας), in a similar fashion.

**Conclusion**

As “Lord of the Sabbath,” Jesus asserts that the seventh-day Sabbath is to be “a period of joy and refreshment” for humankind (Mk 2:27-28). In Hebrews 4, the author speaks of the blessings of salvation as having been prefigured in God’s “Sabbath rest” at creation. The Sabbath rest “refers to the place or state that God entered after completing the works of creation. The same heavenly ‘rest’ awaits faithful Christians.” In the creation account of Genesis, God rests, blesses, and hallows the seventh day (Gen 2:3). As a memorial event of creation, the seventh-day Sabbath is a “palace of time,” a day in which we abstain from work so that we might experience, “tranquility, serenity, peace, and repose.”

Of course, such winsome notions of the Sabbath are not present in Colossians. Notwithstanding, given the thorny social setting of Colossians - a community that has failed to fully grasp the supremacy of Christ and is enamored with a heretical philosophy, of which the Sabbath is a constituent element – to speak of the Sabbath in such positive terms could have lead to the possibility of the believers not fully appreciating Paul’s admonitions. The apostle chose not to nuance his understanding of Israel’s sacred times of festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths in such a context. Indeed, when Paul sees a community distorting a delicate balance, he feels compelled to emphasize “the neglected pole” in order to bring about “equilibrium.”

Colossians offers “a comprehensive vision of truth – cosmic and human, spiritual and material, divine and mundane – whose focal point is Christology. The theology of Colossians is at every point Christological, and it is the success of the author in disclosing Christ as the centre of all reality that integrates and energizes the letter.”

One could infer from the epistle’s sweeping claims for the cosmic Christ – his all-encompassing work, “including

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43 Just as the Israelites were called “to put away leaven” out of their houses and eat only unleavened bread during the seven day festival of the Passover (Ex 12:15), likewise, the Corinthians are called to clean out the “old leaven” (the sexually immoral man) so that they might be a “new lump/batch.” Because Christ “our Passover” has been sacrificed, the community is already, “unleavened bread” (1 Cor 5:7).
44 Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 218; see also J. Paul Sampley, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians.” In *The New Interpreter’s Bible*. Vol. X (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 847-851. Chrysostom aptly captures the continual dimension of the festival: “It is a festival, then, the whole time in which we live... the whole of time is a festival to Christians, because of the excellency of the good things which have been given... the Son of God... freed you from death and called you to a kingdom”; quoted in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 406.
the creation, sustenance, redemption, and renewal of all that is in the world"50 - that, in the presence of Christ, "all/everything" (\(\pi\)\(\varepsilon\)\(\gamma\)\(\iota\)\(\omicron\)\(\kappa\)\(\iota\)\(\omicron\)\(\nu\)\)\(\varphi\)\(\omicron\)\(\nu\)\(\omicron\)\(\iota\)\(\omicron\)) else is shadowy. However one construes the reference to the Sabbath in 2:16 – whether it refers to the ceremonial Sabbaths, the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, a perverted use of the Sabbath, or the Sabbath disconnected from Christ – in comparison to the key of ultimate reality, Christ, the Sabbath is fundamentally "shadowy" in nature.

Under no circumstances will Paul allow God’s salvific work in Christ to be undermined: "to add new practices and regulations to the gospel is to suggest not only that believers are disqualified unless they adhere to them but also, more fundamentally, that what God has already done in Christ is deficient."51 Believers must remember that Christ is "the head of all rule and authority," in whom "all the fullness of deity dwells bodily"; if they are in Christ, they possess "fullness of life" (2:9-10).52 The path to spiritual maturity will not come by elaborate ascetic and ritualistic practices, but by the Colossians' increasing acknowledgement of God’s gift to them in Christ – "the grace of God in truth" (1:6).53 Failure to grasp this essential truth severs one from "the head" (2:19a) and suggests that one is more comfortable in a cave staring at the "shadows."

50 Thompson, 148. These claims are universalistic – Christ’s all-encompassing work in creation and redemption and assertion to be Lord as well as particularistic – God reveals himself in Christ and requires faith in him. Thompson draws out the profound implications of these claims in a pluralistic culture of many religions: “Paul’s repeated emphasis in Colossians on the revelation of the mysteries of God in Christ demonstrates that his theological starting point is what God has done in and through Christ and who Christ is in relationship to God. To say there are many equally valid ways to god is not to make God more generous, but simply to make God generic. And a generic god, a god known apart from Israel’s story and apart from the narrative of Jesus, is simply not the God of the Bible (Ibid, 182). Similarly, N. T. Wright argues, “To assert today that the one Creator God has revealed himself fully and finally in Jesus Christ is to risk criticism on the grounds of arrogance and intolerance. The mission of the church, however, does commit the Christians to the proposition that there is no truth to be found in other religions. Colossians 1:16 implies that all philosophies or religions which have some ‘fit’ with the created world will thereby reflect in some ways the truth of God. It does not however, imply that they are therefore, as they stand, doorways into the new creation. That place, according to 1:18, is Christ’s alone” (N. T. Wright, Colossians and Philemon, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 79.


53 Johnson, 397.
Romans 7:7 “What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 7:8 But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. 7:9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived 7:10 and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 7:11 For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment deceived me and through it killed me. 7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. 7:13 Did what is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. 7:15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 7:17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 7:19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 7:21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 7:23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Few passages in Paul’s writings have received as much attention as Romans 7:7-25 or generated a wider divergence of interpretations. The passage speaks of a profound struggle, a conflict that lies deep within the human condition, and it contains some of the most pathetic exclamations in all of Paul’s letters. Beyond that, however, everything seems open to question. 1 What is the nature of the conflict? What factors are at war with each other? Where does this conflict occur? Should we interpret it autobiographically or theologically? And when does this conflict take place? Is it a pre-conversion or post-conversion struggle? Does salvation resolve it or precipitate it? Interpreters have taken many paths into this thicket of problems. Let’s start with the central theme of the passage, namely, Paul’s concern with the law.

Romans 7:7-25 in context

In Romans 1-8 Paul lays out the plan of salvation in great detail. In 1:17-3:20 he claims that divine condemnation rests upon all human beings—on Gentiles, who sin without knowing the law, and on Jews, who sin in spite of knowing the law. In 3:21-31 the apostle presents his central thesis that God offers salvation as a gift, quite apart from human works, in particular, works of law. In chapter 4 Paul provides scriptural support for this thesis and in chapters 5 through 8 he answers some important questions that his thesis raises. He discusses death and life in chapter 5; sin and sanctity, in 6:1-7:6. In 6:1-23 he shows that sin is disposed of with the law, and in 7:1-6 he shows that the law is disposed of with sin.

This sets the stage for Paul’s central concern in Romans 7:7-25. From everything said so far, it is clear that sin and the law are closely related, and this raises serious questions. Is there something sinful about the law? Are sin and law practical equivalents? This is the question Paul raises: “What then shall we say? That the law is sin?” And it is the conclusion he immediately rejects. “By no means”2 As this exclamation indicates, the purpose of what follows is to clarify the relationship between sin and the law. 3 Paul wants to prevent anyone from concluding from his remarks in 7:1-6 that “the law is sin.”4

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1 According to James D. G. Dunn, “The function of Rom. 7.7-25 is one of the most disputed issues in NT studies” (The Theology of the Apostle Paul [Eerdmans, 1998], 472).
2 Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptural quotations are from the NRSV (Oxford University Press, 1989).
3 W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, The Epistle to the Romans, The International Critical Commentary (Scribner’s, 1895), 179.
The relation between sin and the law

There is a sharp disjunction between the essential nature of the law and its actual function in human life. As the formal expression of God’s will, the law is holy, just and good (12); in itself it promises life (10). As it functions in concrete human life, however, the law leads to death (10), and the reason for this discrepancy is sin. As the expression of God’s will, the law’s functions are to prohibit and condemn sin, and when the law enters the domain of human affairs, where sin is dominant, sin seizes these functions of the law and uses them to to secure and complete its domination of human beings. By using the divine commandment to obtain victory over human beings, sin renders the law, which is holy and good, an instrument of death. Sin is much more than the moral failure of an individual; it is an active and enslave power.

In Romans 7 Paul weaves together the themes of law, sin, and death, interpreting each in relation to the other two. Though inherently good, the law results in death by virtue of its appropriation by sin (10). This does not mean that the law brings death; sin brings death through the law. Since sin and death each derives its power over humanity from the other, their relationship is one of “reciprocal complicity.” Death gets its grasp on humanity through sin; conversely, sin reigns by death, which is its normal end.

Death, like sin, depends on the law for its existence. The law connects with death by virtue of its introduction into the realm of sarx, the Greek word for “flesh,” which suffers from a number of misleading English translations. Essentially, sarx is the natural sphere of human activity, the sphere where humans understand themselves in terms of the visible and demonstrable. The problem is that sin now dominates the sphere of normal human activity, and as a result it is now the domain of death. As a result, the law, which ought to lead to life, becomes the servant or instrument of death.

Whose conflict? The psychological answer

All this sets the stage for the most famous part of the passage, the portrayal of a person who finds a horrifying gulf between what he intends and what he achieves. It is a conflict that utterly bewilders—“I do not understand my own actions”—and deeply distresses him—“Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” But where does this conflict take place? Who is being described, and by whom, or from what standpoint? The prevalent answers to this question fall into two major categories, the autobiographical-psychological and the salvation-historical.

Those who take the first approach regard Romans 7:7-25 as “a direct psychological analysis of the experience of salvation from sin.” More specifically, they construe the passage as a description of Paul’s own inner struggle, grounded in painful introspection. They take at face value Paul’s use of the first person singular pronoun, and they believe that the pathetic cry of dismay—“Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (24)—could only be uttered by one who had experienced this struggle; himself.

Those who agree that Paul is describing his own experience in these verses disagree, however, as to whether this struggle took place before or after the apostle’s conversion, and the divergent answers to this question have a long history in the Christian Church. The Greek fathers generally referred the experience to the unregenerate person, while the Latin fathers and the Reformers referred it to the experience of the regenerate. More recent interpreters tend to locate the struggle depicted here in Paul’s pre-conversion experience. For C. H. Dodd, this passage describes Paul’s inner state when he set out for Damascus, portraying “the momentous beginning of his Christian career.”

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5 These are simply the negative side of the law’s positive function as the expression of God’s will (Guthrød, “Nomos,” TWNT [ET], IV, 1073-74).
6 W. Grundmann, “Hamartano,” TWNT (ET), I, 311.
7 And by virtue of its connection to sin, death, too, is a power that makes its victims prisoners and sets the seal on their lost state (Gnther Bornkamm, Paul, trans. D. M. G. Stalker [Harper & Row, 1969], 125).
9 As “lower nature,” for example, in the New International Version.
10 E. Stauffer, “Ego,” TWNT (ET), II, 358.
11 C.H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Fontana Books, 1959), 123.
12 Sanday and Headlam, 186.
13 Dodd, 125.
14 Sanday and Headlam, 184-5.
15 Dodd, 125.
According to the autobiographical-psychological interpretation, verses 7-13 describe stages in Paul’s growing consciousness of sin, and verses 9-11 illuminate this awakening with an allegorical interpretation of Adam’s fall. There were thus two stages in Paul’s pre- conversion experience: a period of relatively happy ignorance, followed by a sharp conflict between the law and his sinful passions waking to activity. The first stage represents a happy childhood, before any awareness of sin. With the dawn of moral consciousness, however, the growing boy found desires in himself which stood in direct conflict with the law of God. He was plunged into moral perplexity by the radical discrepancy between his aspirations to keep the law and his inability to do so (15). The idea that this struggle with temptation is an internal, subjective one finds support in the fact that the one commandment mentioned here (7) is the only one in the Decalogue which could be fulfilled only by an internal attitude of mind.

W. D. Davies believes that Romans 7.7-25 reflects the Rabbinc doctrine of the Two Impulse, according to which every person experiences a conflict between an evil impulse and a good impulse. Just as Paul divides his life into a period of relative innocence when sin lay dormant and a period when the commandment came and sin sprang to life, the rabbis discussed the different stages of human development. The evil impulse enters at birth and reigns alone for thirteen years, during which an individual was not morally responsible. At the age of thirteen the good impulse enters and thereafter the struggle between the two is unceasing. For Davies, Romans 7 gives us Paul’s account of his struggle with the evil impulse.

According to the autobiographical interpretation, verses 21-25 depict a tragic division within Paul’s personality, specifically a split between his willing and doing, which drives him to the depths of despair. What presumably accounts for the intensity of this internal struggle is Paul’s extraordinary commitment to the Pharisaic ethic of legalism, which drove him to seek aspirations he could never achieve, viz., faultless obedience to the law. When he failed to attain this objective, he began to doubt the validity of his endeavor and questioned the law as a source of righteousness. Thus, Paul’s disenchantment with legalism as a Pharisee served as direct preparation for his encounter with the Gospel, which provided a “new and better solution” to his pre- conversion problem and filled the “vacant place” created by the failure of his attempts to keep the law. On the autobiographical-psychological interpretation, Paul’s pre- conversion and post- conversion experiences are united by a common disillusionment with legalism. The Gospel provided a solution to his Pharisaic problem. Paul’s pre- conversion failure to achieve righteousness by keeping the law psychologically prepared him for the Gospel. The law was thus valid as a “salutary and necessary discipline” and the Gospel “supplemented” the work of the law.

But not all who interpret Romans 7 psychologically refer it to the Christian’s pre- conversion experience. Many see it as a description of Paul’s experience after he accepted Christ, and a paradigm of the struggle that all Christians encounter as they strive to live Christ-like lives and discover that they are far from perfect. Those on the Christian path need saving grace as much as they ever did, and they realize this more and more as time goes by. In this vein, G. C. Berkouwer insists that the subject of Romans 7 is “not the natural man as seen by the believer, but the believing child of God as by the grace of God he has learned to see himself.”

James Dunn takes a similar position. The existential anguish of 7.14-24, he argues, “sounds like an experience Paul knew only too well.” Furthermore, the conclusion of the section, which directly follows the exclamations of victory—“So then I myself with my mind serve the law of God, and with my flesh the law of sin”—would be entirely confusing if it described a past state. And finally, the notion that the divided “I” continues in and through the process of salvation fits nicely with the “already-not yet” tension characteristic of Paul’s eschatological schema.

At different times in his career, Hans LaRondelle endorsed each version of the autobiographical-psychological interpretation. In his 1966 lectures at Andrews University Seminary, LaRondelle located the struggle in Paul’s pre-

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16 Dodd, 123-4
17 Dodd, 128; Sanday and Headlam, 186.
18 This is a universal human dilemma. Both Aristotle and Ovid describe the experience (Dodd, 130-31).
19 Dodd, 127-8

20 W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (Harper Torchbooks, 1955), 27.
21 Davies, 23-24.
22 Dodd, 131.
23 Sanday and Headlam, 187.
24 Sanday and Headlam, 188-9.
26 Dunn, 476, 475.
conversion experience. "In Romans 7," he stated, "Paul reveals how Christ Jesus has at last opened his eyes from the deep and infinite dimensions of the law of God, so that life under the law is brought to light as a hopeless situation of death."22 This passage reveals that "not only the corrupt heathen, but also the man with high morals and good will with God's law in his hands and mind, can offer no victory over sin to God and is ... just as lost before God as the immoral heathen."23

Within a few years, however, LaRondelle's position had changed completely. Instead of a pre-conversion experience, he saw Romans 7 as the experience of one who is living the Christian life and who realizes that the struggle with sin is unceasing. When Paul asserts, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin" (14), he is not giving "an objective theological analysis, but the confession of his dramatic new-covenant experience (vv. 9-12), which he presents as a continuing reality."24 And the radical self-condemnation, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it" (18), "can only be given to him who is conscious of the radicality of divine forgiveness."25 Thus interpreted, LaRondelle believes, this famous passage in Paul provides the antidote to all perfectionism.26

Attractive as it is in our introspective age, the psychological interpretation of Romans 7 raises serious questions, whether we apply it either to Paul's pre- or post-conversion experience. For one thing, it is at odds with the overall argument of Romans, where Paul shows no interest in personal experiences and confessions, nor in the moral evolution of the individual soul.27 Instead of our developing moral consciousness, Paul's explicit concern is the course of salvation and the situation of human beings with respect to it.

A greater problem is the fact that the autobiographical view contradicts Paul's own evaluation of his preconversion experience. According to Philippians 3:6, Paul the Pharisee regarded himself as "blameless" with respect to righteousness under the law. By his own estimation, Paul's attempts to keep the law were completely successful, and he derived nothing but pride and satisfaction from them. In this sense, Paul's legalism was a success, not a failure.

Furthermore, the notion that Paul as a Pharisee experienced the law as a stimulus to sin is at odds with the Rabbinic view, according to which the study of the Torah is precisely what stems the influence of sin.28 And finally, there is no evidence that Paul ever regarded his conversion as a psychological turning point. Instead, his interest in it lies purely in the theological insight which it brought.29

Whose conflict? The theological answer

Those whose approach to Romans 7 is theological rather than psychological view this passage in the context of salvation-history. They note that Romans frequently refers to three great stages of history: before the giving of the law, between the giving of the law and the Christ event, and after the Christ event. And they construe Romans 7:7-25 as an analysis of humanity during the second of these periods, that is, in the age of the law.30

On this view, the use of "I" in this passage is not necessarily an autobiographical reference. Paul elsewhere makes use of "I" when it is clear that he is not primarily referring to himself (1 Cor. 13; Rom. 13).31 Similarly, the "I" of Romans 7 refers not to any one man in particular, but to humanity in general.

The salvation-historical interpretation takes the "commandment" of verse 9 as a reference to the Decalogue, rather than to the prohibition of paradise, and it draws important parallels between Romans 7 and Romans 5.32 Both chapters are concerned with a "history that shapes human nature." Romans 7, however, narrows down the sum total of humankind—the "all men" included in the Adam-Christ correlation of Romans 5—to the experiences of a single "I". Thus understood together, the two passages, Romans 5:12-21 and Romans 7:7-25, are mutually corrective. The

22 Hans K. LaRondelle, Righteousness by Faith: Seminary Lectures in Justification and Sanctification by Faith in Christ Held in the Fall of 1966 at Andrews University, 89.
23 Ibid., 88.
25 Ibid., 225.
26 Ibid., 212.
28 Davies, 22
30 Staufi, "Ego," TWNT (ET), II, 359
31 Staufi, "Ego," TWNT (ET), II, 358
32 Schrenk, "Entole," TWNT (ET),II, 550-51. Besides Schrenk, others making this connection include Bornkamm, 125; Bultmann, "Romans 7," 157; and Staufi, "Ego," TWNT (ET), 358-9.
latter prevents Adam-Chrest from being misunderstood as mere speculation, and the former prevents Romans 7 from being misunderstood as a mere analysis of the inner life.\textsuperscript{41} In this view, the statement, “I once was alive apart from the law” (9) refers to the situation of humanity in general before Moses’ time (5:12-14), when sin was dead (8). But once the law, i.e., the Mosaic Law, entered human history (5:20), by its nature holy and good (12), what in itself promised life actually resulted in death (10).\textsuperscript{42}

Rudolf Bultmann adds an important note to the salvation-historical interpretation of Romans 7.\textsuperscript{47} As he sees it, Romans 7:7-25 not only gives us a “picture of the objective situation of man-under-the-law.”\textsuperscript{49} It describes this situation “as it appears to the eye of one who has been freed from the law by Christ.”\textsuperscript{48} In other words, it is a post-conversion analysis of a pre-conversion situation.

According to Bultmann, subjective interpretations of Romans 7 miss the whole point of the passage. Paul’s overriding concern is to show that the situation of sinful humanity is utterly desperate. And one of the things that make it so desperate is the fact that human beings under the law are pathetically ignorant of their predicament. Sin has so blighted their perspective that they think they can gain righteousness by keeping the law. Not only are their efforts doomed to fail, not only can no one attain righteousness by works of law, but the very intention to do so is a sin. As Bultmann interprets Paul, legalism, the attempt to gain righteousness by keeping the law, is not merely a good idea that turns out to be impractical. It is mistaken in principle. In fact, its very premise is sinful.

On this reading, the ou ginosko of verse 15—“I don’t know”—reflects the sinner’s failure to comprehend his own situation. What the sinner “doesn’t know” is the fact that his very attempt to achieve righteousness through the law is sinful. And since this insight appears only to the eyes of Christian faith, it cannot refer to an inner division Paul experienced while attempting futilely to serve the law as a Pharisee.\textsuperscript{50}

For Paul, then, the most pathetic victim of sin is not a person suffering the results of obvious transgressions. Nor is it the struggling would-be saint, who repeatedly tries and fails to live up to the law’s ideals. Instead, the most pathetic example of sin is the good person, the moral person, who believes that his legalistic goodness, the goodness achieved by his efforts to keep the law, actually improves his standing before God. That person is the most pathetic of sinners. That is that wretched person of whom Paul speaks.

After all, the insight that our performance always falls short of our aspiration is available to any reflective person, as Ovid’s frequently cited observation attests—“I see the better, I do the worse.” And the Jews were well aware that it was sinful to transgress the commandments of the Torah. These insights are hardly peculiar to Christian faith.

Instead, the “shock value” of this passage lies in the fact that it contradicts all the conventional wisdom of Paul’s day and ours. It is not an insight available to human beings generally, and—this is Paul’s point here—it is specifically obscured to human beings under the law. Paul’s radical contention is that human beings are sinful, not only in their violations of the law, but precisely in their attempts to keep it. Thus Bultmann writes:

The way of the law is wrong, not because in consequence of transgressions it does not lead to the goal, but because its direction is wrong, for it is the way that is supposed to lead to “one’s own righteousness” (Rom 10:3). It is not merely evil deeds already committed that make a man reprehensible in God’s sight, but man’s intention of becoming righteous before God by keeping the law .... \textsuperscript{51}

Once we see this passage as a description of “sin” from the perspective of “salvation” everything falls into place. Since a person under the law is unaware of her true situation, “the willing” described in verses 15-20 cannot refer to conscious acts of volition. It is not a subjective, or conscious, movement of the will, but, in Bultmann’s words, “the trans-subjective propensity of human existence as such.”\textsuperscript{55} And since the “bringing about” of verse 15 is

\textsuperscript{41} Bornkamm, 125,127
\textsuperscript{47} Bultmann refers to the “purpose of the law in the ‘history of salvation,”\textsuperscript{46} and he regards Romans 7:7-25 in unity with Romans 5:12-21 (“Romans 7,” 157).
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid 147
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 267.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 266-67.
\textsuperscript{55} Bultmann, “Romans 7,” 150.
trans-subjective, it refers not to the empirical deed of transgression, but to the result of the doing. For those who exist under the law, every deed, bad or good by conventional standards, has the same outcome: it leads to death. The split in humanity described in verses 21-25 is also trans-subjective. It is not a split between higher and lower elements in our constitution, or between inner and outer dimensions of our existence. It does not presuppose a naturalistic dualism whereby our ineffective doing is attributed to an inferior element, such as the “flesh,” while our willing is attributed to a higher element, such as the “mind” or “the inner man.” Instead, it refers to the fact that everything we intend or will to lead to life leads only to death. Everything undertaken by human beings under the law—whether relatively good or bad—is from the beginning directed against itself. Instead of leading to life, it leads only to death.

The salvation-historical interpretation as modified by Bultmann has several advantages over the autobiographical-psychological approach. First, it takes seriously Paul’s evaluation of his own pre-conversion experience. Philippians 3:6 gives us Paul’s pre-conversion account of his life as a Pharisee, and from this perspective, everything was fine. His attempts to keep the law were entirely successful. Romans: 7 give us Paul’s view of the same experience from the standpoint of Christian faith. And from this perspective his previous self-assessment was a dreadful illusion. He thought he was gaining life, when in reality he was headed for death.

The salvation-historical perspective thus provides an evaluation of legalism that is consistently and profoundly negative. For subjectivist interpretations, legalism is merely a practical impossibility, and it may even have positive pedagogical value. It can prepare people for the Gospel by showing them how hard it is to keep the law. For the salvation-historical interpretation, however, legalism is neither positive nor neutral; it is entirely negative. It is unutterably opposed to salvation as God’s gift to us in Christ, and it is therefore essentially, and incorrigibly, sinful. Interpreted as an emphatic critique of legalism, Romans 7 thus interpreted fits perfectly within Paul’s theological position as a whole.

Bultmann’s interpretation has generated considerable opposition over the years. For Hermann Ridderbos, Bultmann’s existentialism distorts his exegesis. The sin-producing effect of the law in Romans 7 refers, not to the attempt to establish one’s own righteousness before God, but to the sinful desire and the acts of transgression. A more thoroughgoing critique arises from advocates of the “New Perspective on Paul.” For these scholars, “Paul’s critique of legalism” has been drastically overstated. “Luther and his Bultmannian successors were … wrong in attributing to Paul an understanding of sin’s essence as keeping the laws ‘too well.’” Proponents of the “hard Lutheran understanding” fail to ask how any Jew, even Paul, “could ever have found keeping the Torah something worthy of blame.” In fact, some NT scholars maintain that Paul was opposed, not to keeping the law in general, but to attaching inflated importance to certain Jewish “identity markers,” such as circumcision, food laws, and sabbath observance.

The New Perspective has stimulated interest in the whole question of Paul’s Jewishness and, consequently, of the relation between Christianity and its Jewish origins. Does it provide a radical reinterpretation of Romans 7? Not unless we lose sight of the essential concern of the passage. The purpose of Romans 7:7-25 is to distinguish the law from sin and to clarify their relationship. The true antithesis, as Brendan Byrne notes, is not between gospel and law but between grace and sin. The law is good by nature, but sin uses the law and ultimately it kills us.

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56 Ibid, 155.
57 Ibid, 151.
58 Ibid, 155-6.
37 Byrne, 249.
38 As Beverly Roberts Gaventa puts it, “the most disturbing element in the resume of Sin is the claim made in ch. 7 that Sin is capable of exerting power even over the law” (“The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition” in Interpretation, July 2004, 234; emphasis original).
**Conclusion**

So, what is the sinner’s plight in Romans 7? Is there a conclusive argument for one interpretation or another, among the considerable diversity we have observed? Perhaps not; but what is frustrating from an exegetical standpoint may be encouraging from a personal one. Like the truth of all great literature, the meaning of Paul’s letters can never be wholly plumbed, or perfectly fixed. So, however unclear we are as to the sinner’s plight in Romans 7—whether we place it before or after conversion, whether we see it as a subjective or trans-subjective conflict—this very uncertainty enables each of us to see our own struggle with sin in the mirror it provides. Most important, there is one thing we can be certain of, viz., the solution to the problem. As Paul makes crystal clear, Jesus Christ is our only hope.

**OUTTAKES.**

To conclude, do terrible things. Sin not only kills us, it completely dominates our lives. It plunges us into a conflict that we are powerless to win and that involves all our acts and intentions, including our intention to keep the law.

It is a conscious conflict? Does it occur before or after conversion? How we answer these questions may depend as much on personal conviction as on exegetical considerations. Whether or not it is a conscious conflict, and whether this tragic conflict is not, however, a conscious conflict. It is not a psychological struggle. We are not even aware of it. In other words, sin leaves us so bad off that we don’t know how bad-off we are (17, 20). The plight of human beings under the law is such that we cannot even by intention escape the domination of sin. The desire to use the law in order to gain righteousness is not merely bound to fail. The desire itself is sinful. Our only hope is Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is another facet to the relation between sin and the law, and it is the most disturbing of all. We know that the law provides an occasion for violating its precepts: specific commandments incite specific transgressions. But the law also provides occasion for another sort of sin, namely, the endeavor to establish our own significance, to secure our lives by our own efforts. In other words, the law provides occasion, not only for the sin of violating its precepts, but also for the sin of trying to *keep* its precepts. In their self-centeredness, sinful human beings perceive the law as an instrument of self-assertion, or “boasting.”

From this perspective, we are sinners even when we “fulfill” the commandments—indeed, especially when we “fulfill” the commandments. How does it do this?

Because people view the law an opportunity for their own achievement and use it to establish themselves on their own terms, they bring the law into the sphere of *sark*, which is dominated by sin and death.

The view that legalism is not merely unworkable but completely mistaken derives from Paul’s understanding of the nature of sin. For Paul, the *sin* is our natural human desire to dispose of our own existence and to make claims for ourselves. It is our self-powered striving to under-gird our own existence and to procure salvation by our own strength. This striving finds expression in “boasting” and “trusting in the flesh.” Our fundamental sin is thus a “false oriented understanding of [our] existence.”

Those in sin are pathetically unaware of the fact that their endeavors to keep the law, regardless of the extent to which they fulfill the law’s precepts, ultimately result in death. As Paul describes them here, sinners are like someone with a fatal disease who feels perfectly healthy, or a patient who thinks he’s taking something to make him well, when it’s actually shortening his life.

Legalism is not a good idea that fails in practice. Legalism is mistaken in principle. This does not mean that Romans 7 has no autobiographical significance whatever, for Paul could hardly have avoided thinking of himself, specifically his pre-conversion self, when he analyzed humanity under the law. But it does exclude the view that this was Paul’s conscious experience as a Pharisee.

With Dunn we come full circle to the view that the plight of the sinner in R 7 is that of the converted sinner, who finds himself unable to fulfill the law, in spite of his best intentions.

“When Rom. 7,14-25 is applied to the Christian believer,” he writes, “every kind of perfectionism which proclaims a transformation into inherent holiness or the possibility of realizing ethical sinlessness before the glorious advent of Christ is judged and exposed as a dream.”

The real sin of human beings under the law, therefore, is not their failure to keep the law, but their intention to become righteous before God by doing so. What makes it impossible for them to attain righteousness by doing the works of the law is not then their inevitable failure, but the fact that they were never intended to do so.

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39 Bornkamm, 126.


54 Bultmann, *Theology*, I, 264; Romans 7, 156.

55 Bultmann, "Romans 7," 149.

ADVENTISM'S WRESTLE WITH ORIGINAL SIN

Nathaniel Gamble
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Adventism has always been a bit squeemish about the concept of original sin. While Adventism stands firmly behind M. L. Andreason's claim, "We do not believe in original sin", giving the impression that Adventism has settled its mind on original sin and the issues surrounding it, the only thing Adventism has settled on is the decision not to affirm or use the term "original sin." The truth of the matter is that Adventist theology is focused around two themes, the second of which is currently dependent on the first for purpose and stability. The second theme of Adventist theology is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is the idea of a cosmic rescue which gives Adventism its desire to proclaim "the truth" and "the gospel." But what is this rescue from? Well, the answer is simple—sin and evil, which leads us to our first theme in Adventist theology—Sin and Evil!

There are different details seen with the concepts of sin and evil, depending on which Adventist you talk to. But the basic facets of the theme run as follows: a) Adam sins, so sin and death enter the world; b) we are all condemned by God for being sinners (and rightly so) because now all of us have corrupt natures inherited from Adam at our births; c) there is no goodness at all in anyone, so anything we do "good" is actually evil and God is right in condemning us to death and judgment. For Adventism, Jesus' role in salvation and atonement operates within the realm of the sin-issue. Jesus is viewed as the great Savior; He comes to earth as God's Garbage Man and takes away all our sin. This is His great purpose in Adventism.\(^v\) Atonement functions in this fashion as well—it is the process of meeting the Law's demands of death on those who break it, allowing God to finally forgive the sins of humanity.

So what does any of this discussion about sin or evil have to do with original sin? A great deal, in fact. When Adventism speaks about sin in its theology, it is referring to the sinfulness of humanity—what is our present state of reality. The question Adventist theology asks concerning sin is not so much, "What is it?" but rather, "What is our state of being, and how did we become sinners?" It is obvious to Adventism what the answer is: we are sinners and filled with sin; we are born with a nature like Adam's after the Fall.\(^x\) But our focus on the issue of sin (which deals with other aspects like what it is; how it influences people; in what manner is it a power opposing God; etc.) is not a morbid fascination with evil; rather, it is a focus derived from long centuries of debate on this issue in the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions.

Historical Interpretation

The Pre-Augustinian Church Fathers did not use the term "original sin" in their sermons or writings; it was invented by St. Augustine in the fifth century A.D.\(^v\) The idea of what would later be known as original sin was constantly being considered and explored by the Church Fathers. However, no one really attempted to explain how people became sinners through Adam, or how people become righteous through Jesus. The reason for this was because of Scriptural evidence—no where in the Bible does it say how people are born sinners (it doesn't really say whether people are born sinners or simply morally neutral) or how God makes someone who believes in Jesus "righteous."\(^v\) They felt that it would be inappropriate to make the prophets and apostles, whose writings were Scripture and viewed as authoritative revelations from God, speak about things they had not elaborated on. We can see in Prudentius' poetry the most common explanation of universal sinfulness before Augustine: "Created pure through sordid union with the flesh it [the soul or person] fell into iniquity; stained by Adam's sin, it tainted all the race from him derived...no one is born sinless."\(^x\) When Augustine appeared on the theological scene, he purported that both the origin of sin and the original or first sin (which he alleged was actually mistrust of and separation from God) were to be found in Adam. "[O]riginal sin came through this one man... [S]in and death...passed from this one man to all men through propagation [sexual intercourse]."\(^x\) This interpretation was accepted by Christianity for a little over a millennium by both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches until the Protestant Reformation.

Within the Protestant Reformation itself we find two responses to Augustine (and consequently Roman Catholic dogma) on the doctrine of original sin—one from Martin Luther and the other from John Calvin. Luther fully accepted Augustine's teaching on the concept of original sin. He saw the validity in Augustine's proposition that humans were sinners (and thus sinful) because sin was transferred to them at the moment of conception.\(^x\) Calvin, on the other hand, seems to have taken a different position than that of Luther. Using the terminology of original sin, Calvin declared that people were sinners because Adam's sin had corrupted and tainted them with evil
influences, thus showing his agreement with Augustine and Luther. At this point, however, Calvin parted ways with traditional Augustinianism; he contended that sin had polluted our human *natures*, and that the true definition of original sin is “a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul.” It is true that Calvin did not openly state whether or not he rejected the traditional belief in original sin; nevertheless, those who followed after him appear to have developed this idea within Calvinism.

Anyone who is familiar with Adventist hermeneutical (i.e., sin) terminology will quickly realize how similar some of Calvin's language sounds. It is to Calvinism that Adventism traces its fascination with sin (much of our religious past is filled with good relations with Calvinism and Puritanism). Yet what has been our position on original sin if we claim to not believe in it, as M. L. Andreasen said? Historically speaking, the Adventist position has been quite dubious in its absence of any response to the issue of original sin; we have consistently left our confession of beliefs open to interpretation on this matter. This would not be such a terrible thing if it were not for the fact that Adventism has either said nothing on the subject, seeking rather to ignore it (and I guess hope it goes away), or spend enormous amounts of time on it because of an obsession with perfection, rather than a desire to understand human nature in a holistic way.

### Original Sin and its Interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Augustine/Luther</th>
<th>Pelagius</th>
<th>Calvin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sin is transmitted during sex from the parents to the zygote; it is inherited, and it is truly Adam's sin.</td>
<td>Sin is personal and individualistic; we're not born in sin, nor are we born with Adam's sin.</td>
<td>We inherit sinful tendencies and corrupt natures from Adam, but we're not born with Adam's sin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are born utterly sinful and lost at/from birth, condemned by God.</td>
<td>We are not born utterly sinful, nor are we lost at/from birth; however, when we do sin, we are condemned by God.</td>
<td>We are born utterly corrupt and lost at/from birth, condemned by God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's free gift, given by His grace, is through Jesus Christ; it takes away Adam's sin and our personal sinfulness at baptism.</td>
<td>It is by our acceptance of Jesus as the Lord and Example of our lives and our following of Jesus in discipleship that allows us to partake in His righteousness and eternal life.</td>
<td>It is by God's free gift, given by His grace through Jesus Christ, that our natures are transformed into something new and holy and we are made acceptable to God; righteous living does not justify us, but God does expect us to live different lives once we have accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us because we are now followers of Jesus.</td>
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The above chart demonstrates the different interpretations of original sin throughout Christian history; it is by no means an exhaustive analysis of any view, but serves only as a general background into the Christian dilemma of attempting to understand sin and evil in the world based on the most prominently held beliefs within Christianity concerning original sin. But the idea of original sin did not develop in a vacuum. It has been debated and thought about for at least as long as Paul's Letter to the Romans has existed. The proof text for original sin is found in Romans 5:12. Paul begins his first theological section (Rom. 1:18-3:20) discussing sin in the world and God's condemnation of it and its practitioners. The Apostle attempts to demonstrate that all people are sinners and can do nothing to alter their situation or deal with their sinfulness; the world needs God if it is to get out of the self-destructiveness of sin. Fortunately, God has a solution to the problem, which Paul talks about in 3:21-31—justification by faith in Jesus. This is the highlight and the goal of what Paul had been talking about for three chapters prior to this point.

But how did people become sinners in the first place? Paul doesn't think of this question initially; it comes to him only after discussing God's love in sending Jesus to die for humans. Both God and Christ loved us before we ever loved Them; and yet while we were still in rebellion by our allegiance to sin, while we were still hostile toward God, Christ died for us. This is an amazing thought to Paul (as well it should be to us)—the idea that God, in His loving-kindness and mercy, drew close to a humanity that did not love Him in order to rescue it from the blight of sin and death, is an awesome revelation!

Now Paul is ready to ask the question that all of Christianity has asked ever since Romans 5:12. Unfortunately for Christianity, however, Paul is not all that interested in that question. Paul identifies Adam as the instigator of sin in the world, and sin as the resulting catalyst for death in the world. The most revolutionary thing Paul does in verse 12 is not outline how people become sinners, but pick Adam out as the one responsible for the entrance of sin into the world. Two thousand years removed from Paul does not allow us to recognize the claim he is making. In a sense, he is breaking with traditional Jewish theology. Pre-Rabbinc Judaism had thought death entered the world through Adam, but had never ascribed the entrance of sin to him. By making this claim, Paul was basically saying that Judaism was wrong and Adam was the one who allowed sin into the world.

To Paul, how people became sinners was not all that important. The reason why he brings the subject up is to show how God transforms humanity back into His image through the means of what Jesus had done on the cross. Rabbi Jose (from around A.D. 150) taught that “God's kindness exceeds the measure of punishments that the greatness of the evil effects of Adam's disobedience for himself and his descendants deserve.” This is Paul's reasoning behind Rom. 5:12, and ultimately verses 13-21. Paul wanted to show how good God is in providing a way for people, who put their trust in Him through His Son Jesus, to be liberated from the effects of sin and evil in their lives. In fact, Paul goes on to talk about this in Rom. 6:1-8:17.

Paul Tillich has rightly said of the interest of the Early Church, “The question of salvation is the basis of the Christological question.” To the Early Church Fathers, salvation was an important matter to understand because of the One who was doing the saving—Jesus. By understanding Jesus, a person could understand the salvation He offered and the way He saved people. We can see from a cursory reading of Romans 1-8 that St. Paul views sin, justification, and the Law in this same manner: they only hold meaning insofar as they relate to who Christ is. In Rom. 5:12, Paul is concerned about how sin entered into the world and how people became sinners only so that he can go on and describe the reversal God enacts upon this sinful world through Jesus. Jesus is the heart of Paul's theology (as He was for all of the New Testament writers), and is the only Center which good Christian theology can be built around.

Thus, it is Christianity which has been asking a question that Paul never asked, and has attempted to make him ask it and answer it! Paul never really asks our question of original sin; at most, he hints at doing so in Rom. 5:12, but he never sticks around to answer it. He is too busy talking about the effects of Jesus' righteousness to deal with the problem of the origin of human sin and sinners. What is more, it is ironic that a discrepancy exists between the focus of Pauline theology and Adventist theology. Adventism has spent much of its time, along with other conservative Puritan-based groups, outlining what sin is and why God hates it, borrowing much from Paul's lists of sinful activities from Romans, Galatians, and his other correspondence pieces. However, Adventism has not done a quality job of balancing its presentation of sin and sinners under condemnation and God's grace and goodness revealed in Jesus Christ. The question of original sin, both the origin of sin and the issue of how people are born sinners, is a good question; it is just not Paul's question. We cannot continue to look to Paul as the ultimate Biblical authority on the issue of original sin. Instead, we need to treat Paul with more respect and stop trying to make him say what we want him to say; furthermore, we must stop trying to force the Apostle to answer a question he did not ask and did not answer. If we are to begin to think

2 The irony is that I'm not really making this up. Adventism has historically not been very creative in its investigation of the meaning of Jesus Christ. Jesus has served two primary purposes in Adventist theology--in making atonement by means of the cross and by ministering that atonement in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The good news, however, is that Adventist theology has begun to explore the implications of the other benefits of Jesus Christ/His centrality to Christian theology within the last few decades.

3 It should be pointed out that the Bible, neither Old nor New Testament, does not use the term "nature" with reference to human beings; this was a term coined by John Calvin during the Protestant Reformation.

4 It has been suggested by numerous sources (too many for me to remember) that the term "original sin" was coined by Tertullian in the 3rd century, and that Augustine borrowed the term and expanded a theology on it; it has also been suggested that the Church Fathers, specifically Tertullian, did believe in original sin, and that Augustine brought that teaching to the fore of the Christian worldview in the 5th century. However, no source, whether self-designated or authoritative, has stated where in Tertullian's writing this term is located or where the doctrine is discussed. Therefore, until further evidence is presented, I will stand by my statement, as informed by my personal research.

5 The terms "sinner" and "righteous" are a little enigmatic in Scripture; the Bible does give a general description of what these two terms mean and are, but the Bible writers did not feel a need to go in depth in their explanations of these two labels (most likely because they had already been in use for one or two millennia). Paul is probably the most troubling of authors who utilizes these designations. He uses these terms a lot throughout his letters, but his use presupposes that his readers know exactly what he's talking about (which may or may not have been accurate); when he uses them, he doesn't try to explain what he means with precision.


8 ibid, 296-297.


10 ibid, 121.

11 In his *Institutes*, Calvin appears to have broken with Augustinian, and therefore Roman Catholic, theology; however, Calvin may have actually maintained an Augustinian outlook on sin and human nature. The fact that should be kept in mind is that there was a tremendous backlash against the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Protestant Reformation, both within Protestantism and some Catholic circles, with a special animosity for anything papal; therefore, it is not surprising that much of what was Catholic was initially rejected by Protestantism primarily out of hatred, rather than because of a theological or practical difference of opinion.

12 Refer to quote on p. 1 of this article.


14 ibid, 4.

15 Along with many other things Paul says, this phrase is difficult to understand; we don't know exactly what Paul is getting at here. However, I will not be pursuing the implications of what justification means to Paul; this is another topic for another time.

16 Romans 4:1-5:11.

17 Rom. 5:6-10.


20 It is true that what Rabbi Jose said sounds as if Judaism was in agreement with Paul. But we have to remember two things about this statement: 1) Rabbi Jose said this about 100 years after Paul wrote Romans; he could have read what Paul said in 5:12 and been persuaded of Paul's theological position. 2) The Mishnah, Rabbinical theology and commentary on the Scriptures, was not assembled together and codified until A.D. 200, which means what Rabbi Jose says here is possibly a minority belief within Judaism. In order to ascertain what Rabbinical theology believed, we must read all that was said on the subject and form an opinion based on the majority voice. Of course, Rabbi Jose may not have even believed that Adam was the cause of a sinful world; he might just be using this as an analogy to prove a different point to his audience (i.e., context).

This is not the same as understanding what kind of nature Jesus had while on earth; this question was formulated later. What was on Paul's mind (and the Early Church Fathers') was the identity of Jesus of Nazareth—Jesus as the Christ of God. The understanding was not in what Jesus was (i.e., His "nature") but who Jesus is (i.e., His title(s), character, and mission).

This is the second time I have characterized Adventist theology, among other labels, as Puritan. While Puritanism has not really been seen in a positive light (and the term "Puritan" is used as a religiously derogative label by some Christian and non-Christian groups), I do not use the term reproachfully; I am simply admitting that Adventism, along with most North American conservative Protestant groups, developed in the United States from the Puritan stream that came over from the British Isles.

Paul spends three chapters in Romans delineating the dreadful predicament humans find themselves in without God. Then he spends five chapters talking about God's solution to the sin problem and what God does in the lives of those who turn to Him! (At this time, I would like to state that I include myself in the general category of "Adventism." It takes people, both clergy and laity, to give expression to Adventist theology; therefore, if Adventist theology is deficient in some way, I recognize and confess that I too had some part to play in this.) more constructively and honestly about the issue of original sin for Adventist theology, we must recognize the work of those who have come before us and listen to other thinkers, both ancient and contemporary, in order to build of reliable and Scriptural theology.
READING PAUL AS A WHITE, MALE, AMERICAN ADVENTIST

John Brunt
Azure Hills SDA Church

I am on the panel to represent a white, American male perspective. Yet the way I read (or didn't read) Paul as I grew up had more to do with a subset of that culture, my Adventist sub-culture. Where I grew up in Glendale, California in the 1950's there was no racial or ethnic diversity. My world was divided into two basic groups, Adventists and non-Adventists. I played with non-Adventist children in my neighborhood after school, but I knew they were different. They went to movies, ate meat, and went to football games on Friday night at the public high school downtown. During those games I could hear the shouts when touchdowns were scored, and I can remember feeling guilty for wondering which team scored them.

The Bible was central to us, but the way it was used meant that I did not read Paul. During the years from cradle roll to junior academy the Bible was a source of stories-exciting stories-each with a moral to teach us how we ought to live. My life was shaped by these stories, and I am grateful to the many Sabbath school and elementary teachers (mostly female) who taught them to me. But Paul's letters don't have many stories. Therefore I learned stories about Paul from Acts, but I can never remember reading Paul. I do remember in the seventh grade memorizing the route of all three of Paul's missionary journeys and his trip to Rome. I could recite Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, etc., in order, but I had no idea what Galatians or Philippians was all about.

When I went to academy we put away childish things and stories were replaced by "key texts." These texts from the Bible supported our doctrines so that we would be ready always to give an answer for the hope in us. The Bible was seen as one piece. It didn't matter whether the key texts came from Ecclesiastes (For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing) or Revelation (for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy), they provided us with the "the truth." Quite a few of these texts came from Paul. The most important was Romans 3:31 (Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.) We also learned texts about the second coming from 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15. But we didn't "read Paul," and I still had no idea what Galatians or Philippians was all about.

Finally, when I went to college I did "read Paul" for the first time, with great tutors such as Royal Sage, Walter Specht, and Fritz Guy. My Adventist background clearly shaped this reading. I had wonderful, loving Adventist parents and I never felt oppressed by my Adventism. But there was enough legalism in the package that I felt liberated by Paul's emphasis on grace. It had an existential impact that can only come to one who has known enough of legalism to feel the liberating message of grace.

Later in graduate school I would learn more about Roman civilization and come to see political dimensions in Paul's message that previously escaped me, and I would read Stendahl and recognize that my understanding of Paul had been read through the individualistic eyes of a Westerner. I learned about Paul's more communal society and saw the social dimensions of Paul's message. It was in doing pre-marital counseling for a couple where she was a white American and he was a Samoan, however, that I first realized how different American individualism is from a more communal culture. Yet even though Paul both lived in and was shaped by a different kind of culture, he also offered critique of it as well.

Finally, I have to admit that even my assessment of how my culture has affected my reading of Paul comes from within my culture and is, at least in part, influenced by it. Therefore I look forward to hearing how panelists from other cultures might critique even this assessment.
NOT SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND
Keith Augustus Burton
Life Heritage Ministries

I wonder how many people were as incensed as I when they read two of the Ellen White quotes in last week's Sabbath school lesson. I'm sure that most may have not even thought about the implications of her statement regarding the effect of Noah's curse on successive generations of Ham's sons. These weren't ignorant statements from the pen of the prophet. As a child of nineteenth century America, she knew exactly how her readers would have interpreted her words. She had probably read Genesis 9:25-27 hundreds of times, yet she still could not break free from the racist interpretive lenses she inherited from her compatriots.

Mrs. White is by no means an anomaly. All of us approach the text with spectacles prescribed by experience and culture. Although culturally nuanced readings sometimes amount to autobiographical musings of various social groups, the biases we take to the interpretive process don't always pull us further from the meaning. As is demonstrated by the two volume project edited by Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Reading from My Place), there are times when one's social perspective can aid in deciphering the author's intended meaning.

Passive Acceptance

Had I not been invited to participate in this panel discussion, I probably would have never reflected on my obvious journey in my encounters with scripture—particularly with Paul. I was raised in a home where the Bible was a central part of our existence. Bible reading was something the entire family did before breakfast and after supper. We were also encouraged to read individually, and each of us looked forward to the Christmas we would be rewarded with our own hardback illustrated King James Version by Collins publishers. I'm not sure if it was in that particular Bible, but I remember being drawn to a couple illustrations that had Black Bible characters. As a young man searching for identity, this was important to me. The scenes they depicted involved the baptism of the Ethiopian government official and the runaway slave, Onesimus, returning to his master Philemon. How else would a slave look? Weren't all slaves Black? My reading of the passages in Paul that dealt with slavery were also non-critical. The truth is, I can't even remember paying attention to them. I lived in a world where race permeated every institution. There were no Black pastors, doctors, lawyers, or teachers. My cousin's father was part owner in a business—but that was a junk shop.

Active Resistance

In 1974 my parents sent me to Jamaica for my six week summer vacation. This was my reward for progressing so well with my piano lessons. That trip changed my life—forever. I had never been in a Black world before. All of a sudden, I became aware of who I was. I returned to England a different person. The classical music that had afforded me the opportunity to be selected from among ten siblings to make the precious trip was now detestable to me. I was through with Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky and became mesmerized with the rhythms of Bunny, Bob, and Toots. Reggae was my thing, and the writings of Paul were anything but attractive. I didn't want to hear "Slaves be submissive," it was time for me to "Get up, stand up, stand up for my rights." I didn't want to hear about the "treasure in earthen vessels," I was "a true born African awaiting repatriation."

Informed Acceptance

Years later some supernatural events led me to respond to God's call on my life. Even after entering the academic path to ministry, I purposed to stay away from certain Pauline passages. I didn't mind the mandates in Ephesians 5, but I had no reason to go to chapter 6. I'm not sure what happened, but all of a sudden I found myself strangely drawn to Paul the person. Actually, I do know what happened, it was the love that my mentor, James H. Melancon, had for Paul. Just like the "Ole Time Religion," if Paul was good enough for Elder Melancon, he had to be good enough for me.

Fully aware of my cognitive dysfunction, I sought to vindicate the Apostle to the Nations from the manipulative grip of those fashioned under the Pauline Mandate. At first I stayed safe by dealing with his mystical dogma on salvation. That gave me plenty to shout about in my sermons. The "treasure in earthen vessels" was no longer about an escapist's pie in the sky, but the concrete faith that buoyed my ancestors. The more I studied about Paul, the more I grew to admire the man. He was not an establishment clone, he was a radical subversive who was at odds with the system. At times he got "in the face" of the hypocrites, as in Antioch with Peter. At other times, he exercised diplomacy, as with the opponents in Romans (Rom 14:1-15:13).

My admiration with Paul even crept into my Master's thesis, which focused on the social world behind the Church in 1 Peter, but gave me an opportunity to reexamine the haustafel in Colossians and Ephesians. I quickly discovered that when compared to similar statements in Aristotle and other Greco-Roman codes, Paul's version was unassumingly liberating. When he addressed the economic slavery on which the empire was built, he not only addressed the slaves, but broke social convention by instructing the masters on how to treat the slaves and even reminded them that they too were slaves (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). After seeing his admonition to slaves in its social context, I was led to take another look at his conversation with Philemon about Onesimus. With new lenses I was able to see that Paul really intended for Onesimus to emancipate the runaway slave (Phil 13-14), who—according to law—should have been sentenced to death. By evaluating Paul in his social setting, I had no problem in seeing what Paul was "really" saying to slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21: "if you have a chance to get free—go for it!"

Conclusion

Paul's rhetoric resonated with my reason, and I chose freedom over bondage. Not just freedom from the reign of sin in my life, but freedom from an oppressive interpretation of scripture. Paul is not a misogynous bigot who is insensitive to the rights of women, he is a prophetic voice who calls husbands to love and pamper their wives (Eph 5:25-29). Paul is not a card carrying comrade of the Ku Klux Klan who burns crosses on church lawns, he is a promoter of ethnic unity who recognizes the common humanity of all ethnic groups (Gal 3:28-29). Paul is not a rigid traditionalist who sees everything in black and white, he is a sensitive human who understands that the faith of each individual is between that person and God (Rom 14:22). There are still some things in Paul's writings that are difficult to understand, but I'm so glad that Paul himself—the one who looked like an Egyptian—is not beyond understanding.
"IDENTITY AND INTERPRETATION: HOW MY SPECIFIC CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AFFECTS MY READING OF PAUL"

Kendra Haloviak
La Sierra University

I realize, as this panel’s woman, I should probably immediately jump into my problems with the Pauline tradition’s assumptions about my gender. However, when I first encountered Paul, I was far more conscious of my identity as a “righteousness-by-faith” Seventh-day Adventist than my identity as a woman. This consciousness grew in the aftermath of Glacier View when, as an earlleen, I began reading the works of Paul. I really thought I had solved my denomination’s theological crisis when I came upon Galatians 2:21. “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.” What could be more clear? We could stop fighting! Dr. Ford could be re-instated.

In those days, I imagined Paul as much like Dr. Ford—proclaiming the good news, putting the law in its rightful place, challenging all who wished to add something to the sufficiency of Christ. Given the amazing grace of God, I was hopeful. Our church could repent, start over, celebrate salvation by grace alone. My identity as a “righteousness-by-faith” Adventist during a particular time and place (the 1980s; Takoma Park, Maryland) shaped my theological thinking for a long time. Paul’s writings, especially Romans and Galatians, made up my canon-within-the-canon.

A decade later, I went to graduate school and met people who hated Paul. Not because they were legalistic, law-loving Adventists, but because they were feminists. I was shocked to learn that Paul was a misogynist. But I was even more disturbed by challenges to my assumptions about Paul’s soteriology. Some of my peers hated Paul because of the substitutionary atonement theology accredited to him. I heard one graduate student proclaim: “oh that’s great news—God will kill one child in place of others. What an act of compassion and grace. No thanks.” While I felt I should be wrestling with the gender issues, I was actually more concerned with the picture of God reflected in my understanding of salvation by grace through faith.

James Dunn’s short work, The Justice of God, helped me read the words of Paul without hearing the voice of Dr. Ford. Paul was not an Adventist challenging the legalists. Paul was a Jew for whom God’s law was itself a gift to a chosen, elect people. Paul’s struggle was not the grace of God in contrast with the law, but the grace of God to include those who did not have the law. In other words, Paul’s struggle with “legalism” was a struggle with his theological commitment to election. Dunn argued that after Paul wrestled with the intersection of old traditions and new experiences, he embraced the earth-shattering idea that all people (Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female) are elected for salvation. Paul’s inclusive soteriology moved me to agree to participate in Sligo’s ordination service of three women pastors. As I knelt on the platform that Sabbath afternoon in September, 1995, I did so convinced that my local church acted in harmony with Ellen White, Jesus, and Paul.

Several years later, after making a presentation to women in ministry serving in the South Pacific Division, I noticed a young woman, a student at Avondale, sobbing on the back row of the conference room. I sat with her for awhile, wondering what was torturing her. When she could speak I learned that she had recently decided to drop her theology major and ministry plans because of Paul. Knowing this decision, someone had encouraged her to attend the women in ministry meetings, and now she was in agony all over again—torn between her sense of God’s calling of her and the others in the room, and her desire to be faithful to Scripture. We talked for a long time. During part of our conversation, I compared the undisputed letters with the pastorals. I tried to help her hear Paul arguing with the later Pauline tradition.

Currently I am not sure that that was the best approach. Rather than assume that texts will dictate the contemporary course of action on any given issue and then argue which texts will be given such authority (authentic Paul or the pastoralists?), we need to learn how to read all the texts as profound and prejudiced, full of insights and blind spots, the record of real people struggling to act in harmony with their emerging theological convictions. It seems to me that Scripture teaches us more about a history of ideas, a trajectory, a movement in a direction with twists and turns, corrections and clarifications, than it does any particular moment whose ethics get etched in stone.

Some of my students have no problem seeing the human Paul, the real person, who sometimes spoke with extraordinary insight, and other times exhibited weaknesses. At the beginning of this school term, I asked my students in Sacred Texts: The Christian Scriptures (NT Survey) class to write their reactions to the opportunity of having lunch with Paul. What did they think that would be like? One student said it sure wouldn’t take Paul long to decide what to get from the menu! Another student admired Paul’s sense of knowing what was God’s plan for him because she longed for that clarity. Several hinted that they would be intimidated, but would, hopefully, have the
courage to ask him questions. One student said that, given his ego, would we really have a conversation, or would he “argue his point until I agreed with him?” My students help me think about the nature of Scripture; this remarkable collection of God-inspired, human-created writings we refer to as “the Word of God.”

My journey with Paul parallels my journey with all of Scripture. My personal experiences draw me to specific passages with particular questions. My readings in community with others—literary critics, historians, students, lay people, members of ASRS—provide checks and balances, challenges and new possibilities to hear the texts again and again and again.
IDENTITY AND INTERPRETATION READING PAUL

Julius Nam
Loma Linda University

Paradox: Paul, like Jesus, is an enigma. He is both a bullheaded fundamentalist and a sophisticated liberal. And I love him for it. He confounds attempts at classification because he tries to be all things to all people. He understands the yin and the yang and the value of the paradoxical nature of God and the cosmos. In Paul, I am given permission to leave questions hanging, live with the irreconcilable, and not serve the idol of consistency and clarity. . . and still speak boldly about the things I am not fully certain or confident about.

Mars Hill: I receive permission to engage in my culture in a positive and respectful manner. Culture war is not one that Paul is really interested in fighting. Rather, culture is a resource. So, following the lead of Paul, I am led to look for evidence and expressions of God in my heritage. Paul forces me to look for the Gospel, for Christ, in the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths of Buddha, and the Five Virtues of Confucius. He also challenges me to venture into the dazzling disarray of beliefs, values and styles represented in myspace, youtube, and google as well as in ministries as diverse as Amazing Facts, Promise Keepers, Sojourners, and SDA Kinship. For sure, in Paul, there is a clear vision of Christ and there is untimped boldness in expressing that vision. At the same time, there is recognition (1) that Christ is and has been active in all cultures and religions throughout history, (2) that he and his vision are but a part of a whole, fulfilling a partial function, and (3) that we all know and prophesy in part, so we must treat one another with faith, hope and love. He is clearly bold and convicted, but he is also deeply self-aware and humble.

Creativity: I receive further permission from Paul to use the lessons learned from culture in shaping my theology and providing a contemporary version of the truth. In Paul, I find a wonderfully creative re-visioning of the Kingdom of God as taught by Christ, using the resources from his Jewish and Hellenistic heritage and audience. He is not afraid to re-define, re-imagine, and re-appropriate Scripture as he knew it as well as the life and teachings of Jesus. My sense is that one reason Paul was called by God for this task is that the disciples who had been with Jesus would forever be captured in the beautiful yet stifling shadow of their time with him. Essentially, Paul was called to take a step beyond Jesus in a way that did not negate Jesus. I’m now urged to go further than Paul in a way that is true to Paul and Jesus. All that was good for Paul and Silas cannot be good enough for me. So, I ask: Is it possible that we can disagree with the specific conclusions made by Paul in the best of Pauline spirit? Can we go beyond the particulars of Scripture in order to be biblical? Can we re-imagine the apocalyptic, following the inspired examples of Daniel, John, and Ellen White?

Praxis: Which is closer to Paul’s heart—the theological articulations or the practical exhortations? I don’t know. But what is closer to my heart are the practical, ethical teachings. Some have argued (in fact, a colleague of mine at Loma Linda has “emblazoned” in my mind) that the enigmatic yet sublime beautiful theological discourse in Romans 1-11 was really an elaborate introduction to practical section that follows in chapters 12-16. In fact, some have even somewhat playfully intimated that the fundraising intent that Paul betrays in chapter 15 was the real purpose of the book! I’m sure the book had more than one purpose, but it does seem like Romans 12-16 is really the climax of the letter. Or . . . perhaps this kind of reading is really a function of my pristine Asian mind corrupted by Western dualism. But really, I don’t look to Paul as that theological authority that explains the law definitively or that normative standard for orthodoxy on salvation. My reading of Paul leads me to surmise that he would be OK with using a different set of theological reasoning to get to the life in the Spirit that is the ultimate desire and passion of his writings. Along with ancient Asian sages for whom metaphysics takes a backseat to ethics (well, it’s this way: ethics is metaphysics), I find that Paul’s praxis makes the heart, essence, and totality of his theology.

Method: Paul’s method, for me, is his genius and mark of inspiration—one which I desire to imitate. How he lived the paradoxical nature of life and truth; How he related with Scripture and culture; How he re-visioned Christ and the gospel; and How, in the midst of it all, he captured the essence of the gospel as living, breathing, pulsating life of love.
CULTURAL IDENTITY AND PAULINE INTERPRETATION

Harold Weiss
Berrien Springs, MI

As a rioplatense of German ancestry, a Latino who received his higher education and pursued a career in the educational system of the United States, I am a double hybrid whose identity is somewhat ambiguous. That I am a Seventh-day Adventist who grew up in a predominantly Catholic culture and who felt comfortable and fulfilled his academic dreams in a Catholic institution has increased the ambiguity of my hybridity.

Reading Paul, I ask Paul questions from within different locations. As a student of Paul I ask, Who was Paul writing to? What were they concerned with? Why was he writing to them? How would his readers have understood what he wrote? As a rioplatense, I ask: Which Pauline themes are also central to my Latin culture? What would Paul say to my compatriots and me about our submission to Fate? Our authoritarian and hierarchical social structures? Etc. As a Seventh-day Adventist I ask: What does Paul mean by salvation? How does he view himself in God’s world? What does he consider to be the purpose of life on earth? Which is his moral compass?

Of course, I never ask all these questions at the same time. At different times I am particularly concerned with one of these sets of questions. In reference to the second and the third sets, however, I can only address them after I have more or less answered the first. Then, I have to ask two crucial questions: In what way what Paul says challenges my cultural and my religious views? Does Paul reveal unnecessary burdens in my cultural and religious baggage? I must also ask: In what way what Paul says reflects a blind spot in his own cultural and religious background?

Placing on the table the cultural locations of both the author and the readers allows us to recognize that there is more than one legitimate interpretation. This does not mean, however, that all interpretations have equal merit. It does mean that one must come up with criteria for their evaluation. I find helpful a set proposed by David Rhoads: literary cogency, historical plausibility, and ethical impact on various contemporary contexts. In reference to the last one, In what ways they may promote justice, respect and liberation, and in what ways they may lead to injustice, exploitation and oppression? I think we would agree that justice, respect and liberation are biblical standards that transcend the cultural limitations of particular biblical authors and readers of the Bible.
Greek One, third quarter. A student in the classroom, known for persistently challenging our veteran Professor (with fairly uncreative and covert attacks), is having a moment. “Yes, Ma’am,” he argued, “but the Apostle Paul says,” and he continues with whatever the Apostle Paul says. Several students anticipated a verbal slaughter- which we believed this student deserved. We won’t ever know if it was the cumulative effective of this one obnoxious student, or rather a career-long endurance of similar attacks which led the Professor to respond by lifting her hand to her face, pinching her nose, closing her eyes and sighing, “Oh bother, must we always speak of the Apostle Paul. It’s getting rather tiresome.”

Score one for Madelyn Haldeman, and for a few others who share the sentiment but dare not speak it. ‘The Apostle Paul’…we’ve heard enough already. In primary Sabbath School class, the missionary journeys of Paul adorned the walls. “Missionary, missionary goodbye,” we sang. “Who wants to be like the Apostle Paul,” the teacher asked? A row of fidgety boys stood every week, certainly up for the adventure, and hoping to be man enough for the task. Shipwrecked, imprisoned, out-to-change-his-world traveler. “Pick me,” the boys shouted.

I was never tempted. Indeed, for years I wasn’t aware of how excluded I was in my own Church. It was suppose to be enough that once per year, during Advent, the girls would have their turn acting out Mary, the pregnant, unwed teenager. Now there’s a role to covet! I really didn’t understand at the time, but from a young age I was “apauled.”

But so was my Father, who, when the first female elder was ordained in the Vancouver SDA Church, exited in protest. Any Sabbath that woman was on the platform, my Father left church. He, too, was “apauled.”

As was the well-intentioned theology major who pulled me aside in La Sierra Hall after I presented a lecture, to gently inform me that because to teach, is a male verb in Greek, I, as a woman, could not possibly teach him, a man. (Language teachers among us know that verbs do not carry gender- the student hadn’t figured this out). “Apauled.”

This student has company with a 13 year-old boy who asked me what I was doing on the first Sabbath at my current church, because his Dad told him women are never to be the preacher. “Apauled.”

As was the church member in South Africa, who, after asking if I did not agree that everyone would be better off if women just went back home and stayed there, proceeded to ask, “and what’s the problem with having slaves? Paul even tells them to get in line.” Apauled.

Like the mother of small children who has looked at the palm of her husband’s hand too many times as he yells, “You will submit!” Apauled.
And what about the college student who hides in the closet with her mother and sisters when Dad gets home—praying this will be a night without a beating? *Apauled.*

So is the Guyanese woman, disfellowshipped when her husband divorced her. Now, married to a man the Church was eager to convert and bring into membership, while she remains on the outside with permission to attend, but not to belong. *Apauled.*

And finally, I shall not forget the man who questioned my husband recently, “Please tell me she does allow you to be in charge at home, right?” *Apauled.*

If we took a few hours between us, we could fill them with just such appalling stories. For my female colleagues present and past, we never get far from the grip of this Apostle, who wears the well worn label, ‘eternal enemy of women.’ Almost without exception, each time we are challenged about our role in our own Church, we are beaten with Paul. The concerns spread beyond gender roles and women: marriage, divorce, childbearing, celibacy and chastity, dietary choices, law, law and more law, and the Gospel. It is an ugly fact that Pauline texts have been interpreted to justify a variety of beliefs and behaviors which not only destroy relationship, but actually *slay* the gospel.

There is clarity on a couple of issues, and perhaps, a call to action on a couple others.

First, clarity. We are not so special when it comes to making peace with Paul. Since Paul’s first interpreters, the Deutero-Pauline authors, and soon after, the Church Fathers, Paul has *apauled* us all. In 1 Corinthians 7, directions for marriage and single life are given¹. In 7:26 Paul writes of impending distress for the unmarried woman, probably a reference to the eschatological horizon, but Jerome, writing in the late fourth and fifth century, understands the impending distress of the unmarried woman to be swelling wombs and wailing infants; therefore it is best to remain single. About the same time, John Chrysostom’s compiled a rather lengthy list of marital woes, hoping to persuade the unmarried and widow to remain in their status:

> “Courting is one anxious day after another as the girls wonders what husband she will get- low-born, arrogant, deceitful, jealous, stupid, hardhearted? When the wedding day arrives, the woman’s anguish intensifies. Her pleasure diminishes as fear grows that she will fall far below his expectation. If she appears insipid from the starting line, when will she ever be the object of his admiration? Once that anxiety is eased, childlessness replaces it. And the worry of too many children. And the fear of miscarriage. If pregnancy is successful, the labor pain is sufficient by itself to overshadow the good aspects of marriage. The poor miserable girl…must also worry if her child will be damaged or crippled rather than perfect and healthy. From the first cry, the child’s upbringing will occupy every care. Will he die prematurely or change into something wicked? And if the couple has no children, the fear is that death will burst in and end their pleasure. There is knowledge that they must inevitably advance towards death…in the meantime there are long separations, illness, anguish. Marriage does not allow someone of health to be better off than a sick man.”

Trying, yet not succeeding, to make sense of the text, has a long history. We are not so special when it comes to making peace with Paul.

Second, there is more clarity when we accept the reality that Paul isn’t going anywhere. We aren’t finished with him, at least as Adventist Christians, and he isn’t finished with us. In one presentation yesterday, we learned that in the first eleven issues of our earliest Sabbatarian periodical, *The Present Truth*, 20% of the scriptural references

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¹ For the examples of patristic exegetes working on Paul, and for general insight on this topic, I am indebted to Sandra Hack Polaski, *A Feminist Introduction to Paul* (St Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2005).
came from the Pauline tradition. The year was 1850. Today, Seventh-day Adventist Christians hold twenty-eight fundamental beliefs. Twenty-seven of these find support, in part, from the Pauline tradition. We aren’t finished with Paul. He is with us for the long haul, as complex, as conflicted, as convoluted as he sometimes appears. He is us and we are him.

Our call, then, then, is to continue struggling with Paul, searching for readings which remain faithful to a gospel which is good news, freedom, justice, and shalom— even while we watch Paul himself struggle, at times, to find this good news. But is precisely here I can align myself, and even take comfort. For Paul sees himself in a process, while his interim ethic is not yet completely resolved, he is able to summarize, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.” (Gal 6:15, 16) And again, “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us and called to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:16-18).

New creation! Although Paul uses this phrase only twice, it seems to be at the core of it all. Recently made, fresh, unused, and unprecedented. New. And while the new is not fully realized, Paul is definitely not the old. Something has happened. God’s act in Christ draws the curtain on one reality, and brings about something brand new: being in Christ. Paul is eager for this new creation experience. Not only proclaiming new creation, but taking responsibility for birthing such creation:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom. 8:18-23).

Paul goes on to say that the Spirit intercedes with groans which words cannot express. Additionally, Paul understands we are in this together—that my creation experience and yours are undeniably linked. I am responsible to you and you are responsible to me. No one is to move through this metamorphosis individually; it necessarily happens in community. We could say more about this as Adventist Christians. We must say more about this—what it is to take responsibility for the new creation we are all becoming and how we create the environment for this biblical mandate to unfold.

Because we are in the process of becoming something new, I see in Paul that all topics of instruction or debate are really parenthetical, that is, all issues appear under the theme of becoming a new creation, because of Jesus Christ. So, really, headship is not THE topic. Women are never THE topic. Law is not THE topic. Idol meat is not THE topic. Divorce is not THE topic. Perhaps even in-group markers like circumcision are not THE topic, because for Paul there is only one topic: Christ, and him crucified. In the cross of Christ I glory. To be in this Christ alters everything experience, every conversation, every potential. It’s as if we can hear Paul saying throughout, “Did I tell you about Christ? Did I mention the Christ event...by the way, Christ...as I was saying, Christ. Christ, Christ,
Christ.” Therefore, we are in the process of becoming something new, and here is what this new looks like.

Because of this, Paul seems to be the most creative exegete, in company with the Jesus of Matthew 5, “You heard it said, but I say to you.” Paul, who understands that here and now is always on the move; Paul, always searching for a word on target in its contingent location; Paul, helping the community speak to the moment in which it finds itself. Because divorce doesn’t look the same everywhere. Because sometimes its time to speak, and other times its time to acquiesce. Because circumcision in this group is not the same as circumcision in that group. Because eating the meat here means something different than eating the meat there. Because in light of the maturing church, resources might be managed differently. The trajectory of the text is always pointing someplace beyond the community which birthed the text, leaning into the newness that is yet to be come.

New circumstances require new readings, and we must get busy. What about new readings enlightening our responsibility to creation? What about readings addressing the politics of power, or violence and war, or the politics of compassion around the globe, or scientific conversations such as genetics, or technology and the Christian life, or the visual world vs. the textual world, or the reconfigured experience of today’s nuclear family?

Our call to struggle with Paul is also our call to continue groaning with this new creation. We are not only giving birth, we are being birthed, by the Spirit. It is labor, friends. Slow, difficult, persistent, unrelentless work. Yet we are laboring together, towards birth, participating with God in God’s work. If there is “laboring crisis” in the Adventist community, at least from where I am positioned in the parish, it is the crisis of hermeneutics. The people in the pews need to know how to read ancient texts, which somehow we have bound in authoritative interpretations rather than in timeless principals. Most every debate in our community, hostile or friendly, will ultimately find its common denominator in how we read our sacred text.

We are supposedly thought-inspiration folks. When I was a young girl and the Oregon Camp meeting, I saw with my own eyes what thought-inspiration folks do with their ancient text. I saw a man with a patch over one eye and a hook for his hand—both apparently offensive to him.

What do we do with our Bible? Paul is as good of a place as any to do our work, to labor, to move towards birth. In Paul, the inconsistencies and tensions point to the growing edges and open possibilities. Rather than one authoritative read insisted upon fourteen million faithful, the tensions open up possibilities for us as they did for Paul. Maybe Paul went about as far as he could go with his mighty reversals, in his time and place. Yet there is a trajectory to follow. We are looking for readings which announce, “New Creation!” and readings which advance the well-being of all persons.

Don’t forget while in the classroom making rich theological points, revisiting our history, contemplating good and right conduct, engaging students in thoughtful conversation, inspiring and challenging—don’t forget while doing what you do best, you are teaching us how to read scripture. You are showing us, by example, hermeneutic technique. Every time you quote scripture, read scripture (for serious study or devotional purpose), every parenthetical text you place in support of a construct, you are teaching us what we can, should and must do with the canon. You are also teaching us what we
cannot, should not and must not do. What a humbling, amazing task. God uses human beings such as the ones gathered here to achieve bits and pieces of divine agenda!

When we, as a community, learn to acclimatize the gospel to the occasion, we are positively apauled. What does it look like to coordinate the trajectories and the growing edges of newness within each unique context? I have witnessed this on a few occasions. Once at the door of the sanctuary, at the conclusion of a worship service, when people of different ethnicities embraced, promising to forge a new future together which did not allow one a position of privilege over the other. Positively apauled.

On another occasion, I listened as a man confessed that he would never again make Paul’s submission passages, “my wife’s issue.” Positively apauled.

Or, I think of my own father, who regularly quoted 1 Timothy in Church Board and Nominating Committee. “An elder must be the husband of one wife,” he would conclude. Conversation over. Until the day I flew home to ask his permission, at age thirty-three, if I would still be welcomed as a daughter should I pursue theological studies. My father was unable to answer that question with words, though the shrug of his shoulders and a heavy sigh expressed much.

Fast forward, now, a few years, when I began speaking in churches, and then was hired as a Pastor. My father followed me around with his camcorder, and the proud smile of a new father. Once we even tried to persuade him to stay home, knowing he would feel uncomfortable at a women-only event. He sat on the front row with his equipment running, noticeably comfortable. Over time, my father was able to articulate that while he did not fully agree with my career choice, he could not see that any human has the right to block what the Spirit leads. My father now has dementia, and lays in a room at his care facility. He doesn’t remember my name, or most anyone else. One of the last times he remembered my name, I heard him say, “That’s my daughter, the Pastor.”

Positively apauled. By grace, as a community, may we be bold enough to lean into the newness of creation we are all becoming. May we be responsible enough to insist on an environment that nurtures such a birthing process. And may we be humble enough to see even our own raw edges in need of growth. God bless each, and all. Amen.
EARLY SABBATARIAN ADVENTIST USES OF THE PAULINE WRITINGS

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Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists have always prided themselves on being a people of the book. This idea stems from at least three major sources: democratization, primitivism, and restorationism. Together all three would play a role in the development of Sabbatarian Adventist theology. Thus the Protestant ideal of sola scriptura for these early Adventists meant a Restoration of the NT Church. It also created theological innovation and opportunism on an unprecedented scale—both within and outside of Sabbatarian Adventism. It was within this milieu that Sabbatarian Adventists would develop a distinct and Scripturally-based theology.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the use of the Pauline writings by early Sabbatarian Adventists. In constructing this paper I tried to come up with two primary benchmarks for comparison. The first group consisted of an earlier period from 1847-1850: (a) the pamphlet A Word to the "Little Flock" (1847) written by James White, Ellen White, and Joseph Bates, and (b) The Present Truth, Sabbatarian Adventism’s first periodical (1849-1850). The second point of reference was a selection of the Review and Herald in 1860. I began with the first five months of 1860 (beginning with vol. 15, no. 7 [Jan. 5, 1860] and stopped vol. 15, no. 26 [May 17, 1860]). This survey is not intended to be exhaustive. Instead, it serves as a sampling that is therefore illustrative of how the Pauline writings were used during this formative time period.

Use of the Pauline Writings 1847-1850

The years from 1847 to 1850 was an important one for the emerging Sabbatarian Adventist movement. This time period would be particularly focused on those beliefs that made them unique: the seventh-day Sabbath, the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, the non-immortality of the soul, and the gift of prophecy as manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. Of course, they were also Milerites who continued to eagerly look for the Second Coming of Christ. These distinctive beliefs would take shape during a series of conferences that lasted from 1848-1850.

A Word to the "Little Flock"

The pamphlet A Word to the "Little Flock," published and printed by James White, was the first booklet with a significant contribution by Ellen White. Joseph Bates up until that time had published several pamphlets himself and broadsides by the young prophetess. It would be the first booklet where all three founders of Sabbatarian Adventism would write about their beliefs.

The pamphlet contains 179 scriptural references, with an additional 10 references to the apocrypha, of which 18 are direct scriptural references to books they would have considered authored by the apostle Paul (the book of Hebrews, for example, was without question Pauline in their minds).

So what Pauline verses did they use (in order of increasing use)?

- The description of the "lawless one" being overthrown at the "splendor of his coming," 1 Thess. 2:8 (twice)
- The revealing of Christ in a blaze of fire in 1 Thess. 1:7-8 (twice)
- The sanctuary imagery of Hebrews 9 (three times)
- Description of arrival at Mount Zion and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant in Hebrews 12 (three times)
- The description of the Second Coming in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 (five times).

It seems that for at least James White, Ellen White, and Joseph Bates, that they were chiefly concerned with Pauline texts that described the Second Coming and the Sanctuary in heaven. This is not surprising since, as already mentioned, this was an extremely formative period for the development of Sabbatarian Adventist theology.

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2A complete list of citations to Pauline writings in A Word to the "Little Flock" (James White, 1849): 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 (4, 15, 20); 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 (4, 15); 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (7); 1 Corinthians 2:2 (5); 2 Corinthians 4:17 (16); 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (6); Hebrews 9:1-24 (18); Hebrews 9:4 (18); Hebrews 9:3-5 (16); Hebrews 12:22-25 (20); Hebrews 12:22-27 (7); and, Hebrews 12:25-27 (19)
Adventist theology would continue to be refined. By the latter end of these Sabbath and sanctuary conferences (1848-1850) James White would begin to publish *The Present Truth*, the first Sabbatarian Adventist periodical, which would provide a wider forum to publish their ideas and expound upon the unique doctrines that set them apart.

**The Present Truth**

*The Present Truth* was published by James White in Connecticut and Maine. The 11 issues represented a considerably larger corpus of Sabbatarian Adventist writing. It is therefore not surprising that there are many more scriptural references (475). Of these there are 95 references to the Pauline writings (20 percent). References to the Pauline writings that are referred to at least twice are indicated below:

- "THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS IS SOMETHING," 1 Cor.7:19 (twice)
- Christ rose again on "the third day" and no the seventh-day Sabbath, 1 Cor.15:3-4 (twice)
- 1 Cor. 16:2 is not evidence for the first-day being the Sabbath (four times)
- Contrast of the ministration of the old and new covenant, the ten commandments being unchanged, 2 Cor 3:7-18 (four times) [This was also a favorite text of Joseph Marsh]
- The doers of the law shall be justified, Rom 2:13 (twice)
- There is no transgression where there is no law, Rom 4:15 (twice)
- Rom 7:6 used by critics of Sabbatarian Adventism to prove that the law is dead (twice)
- The law his holy, Rom 7:12 (three times)
- The keeping of the commandments by Paul is not referred to as a little thing by Paul, Rom 14:1-6 (nine times) (especially vs. 3-6)
- Free from the condemnation of law under Moses, Gal 5:1 (twice)
- The ceremonial law in Gal 5:4 (five times)
- Eph 4:11-16, a key text for support of the "gathering time" theology (twice)
- Col 2:14-17, a key text quoted by critics that the seventh-day Sabbath was abolished. Sabbatarians argued that Paul did not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath because it is in the plural (eleven times), see p. 51 especially
- The priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (two compartments) in Hebrews 8 and 9 (14 times).
- Hebrews 10 (twice)

**Use of the Pauline Writings, 1860**

By 1860 Sabbatarian Adventism had begun to take more definite shape. While the church was still three years from formal organization, leaders discussed issues facing the denomination such as the ownership of church property and what name they would choose for themselves. Adventists were concerned about the looming problem of slavery. Theological issues, while still important, began to give way to other ecclesiastical issues. This section examines scriptural references to the Pauline writings ten years later (1860).

**The Review and Herald**

*The Review and Herald* was a venue for discussing doctrines and church life. Announcements were placed in the *Review* of upcoming speaking appointments for itinerant ministers. The periodical typically featured several theological pieces followed by a number of published letters/testimonies. Even the occasional obituary was an opportunity for testifying to the belief of the deceased in the second coming and the immortality of the soul. As a result this periodical was the main source of communication between scattered believers.

The corpus of literature under review becomes significantly larger over the earlier issues of *The Present Truth*. For this reason I have not tried to quantify all Scriptural references, but my overall impression is that the number of scriptural references to the Pauline writings did not change significantly from 1847-1850. Altogether I was able to find 244 references to the Pauline writings in the *Review*.

The largest portion of references had to do with the book of Romans (30 percent or 75 references⁴). It appears that Adventist writing on the Sabbath had been transcended to a deeper examination of the meaning of the

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⁴Multiple citations are indicated in parentheses. Rom 1:18-32; 1:25; 1:28; 2, entire chapter; 2:1; 2:7 (3); 2:8; 9; 2:12-16 (2); 2:13; 2:17-20; 2:25; 3:1-2, 9-10, 23-23, 27, 29-30; 3:3; 3:9-19 (4); 3:19 (3); 3:23; 3:29; 3:31; 4:7; 4:11 (3); 4:13 (2); 5:12 (2); 5:19; 6:1-2, 4, 6, 12-16, 18; 6:19; 6:23 (5); 7:7; 7:12; 7:22-25; 8:1-2; 8:4; 8:7; 8:9
law, and perhaps more significantly, the meaning of the “covenants.” For example, the use of Rom 2:12-16 focused on the law of God as the basis or condition of the covenants.

The Book of Hebrews received the second largest amount of attention with 35 biblical references. There are a surprising number of references to the two Corinthian epistles (32 references to 1 Corinthians; 11 references to 2 Corinthians). Many of these references were less theological and had to do with ecclesiastical issues. Eight other epistles receive most and somewhat equal attention: 2 Timothy (16 times), Galatians (15 times), Ephesians (12 times), 1 Timothy (10 times), 2 Thessalonians (10 times), Philippians (9 times), Titus (9 times), 1 Thessalonians (8 times), and Colossians (6 times).

The largest number of uses concerned Sabbatarian Adventist apologetics. After more than a dozen years Sabbatarian Adventists were becoming increasingly noticed by other faith traditions, and the number of debates with clergy increased. The question of Paul meeting on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:1-2) thus became a significant text to explain. Apologetics also had an internal dimension. J. M. Stephenson and a small group of Sabbatarian Adventists began to defect to the camp of Joseph Marsh—another former Millerite who searched for meaning after the Great Disappointment of 1844. They believed the millennium was still future and that the Jews would return to Palestine. This forced several Sabbatarian Adventist writers, most notably J. H. Waggoner, to respond to their criticisms—many of them originating from the Pauline writings. The issue at the center of their differences, according to Waggoner, was their understanding of the covenants. According to Waggoner, what the “age to come” Adventists did not understand was the law of God as the basis for the covenants.

A second striking theme is that of ecclesiology. The church was confronted with church organization. Many Sabbatarian Adventists, heavily influenced by Restorationism, viewed any organization as a step toward corruption, and ultimately, to becoming Babylon. Even the idea of taking a name was denounced in the strongest of terms. Thus, the Pauline writings were used to build consensus for church organization. The question of church finance, or “systematic benevolence” as it came to be known, was also a matter of grave concern. Texts such as 1 Tim 6:9 (the deceitfulness of riches) and Phil 4:12 (encouragement to give/donate) were used toward establishing a

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(2); 8:10; 8:13; 8:17; 8:23-24 (2); 8:34; 9, entire chapter (2); 9:6-8; 10:20, 21; 11:7-10, 20; 11:25 (2); 11:26; 12:19-20 (2); 13:1, 17; 13:8-9; 13:10; 15.


5 1 Cor 1:6-7; 1:10; 1:19-20; 5:5; 6:2; 7:19; 9:26; 10:32; 11:5 (2); 11:9; 11:14; 11:16, 22; 12, entire chapter; 14:3; 14:23-35; 14:33; 14:34-35 (2); 15, entire chapter (7); 15:4; 15:5-54; 16:1-2 (3); 16:22.


7 2 Tim 1:10 (4) life and immortality brought to life through the gospel; 2:23; 3:1; 3:1-5 (2) “in the last days perilous times will come”; 3:7-8; 3:13; 3:15-17; 4:1 (3) (kingdom set up at the judgment); 4:7-8 (2).


10 1 Tim 1:4; 2:5; 2:11 (3); 4:1-5; 6:4-5; 6:9; 6:16 (2).

11 2 Thes. 1:6-8 (2); 1:7-9; 1:8-9; 1:10; 2, entire chapter; 2:2-8 (2); 2:11-12.

2 Thes 3:1-2

12 Phil 1:23 (4); 3:19; 4:3 (2); 4:8; 4:12.

13 Titus 2:13 (3); 2:14 (2); 3:1; 3:1, 14; 3:2; 3:9.

14 Col 2:8; 2:14; 2:16-17; 3:3-4 (3).


system of giving. Another significant issue was the role of women. For example, Paul’s statements about women keeping silent in the church had to be reconciled in light of an Adventist prophetess (1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11). A third major theme is the heavy use of Pauline writings for Adventist proof-texting the doctrine of the non-immortality of the soul or conditionalism. They stressed texts such as Rom 8:23 (the redemption of our bodies), 1 Tim 6:16 (that only God has immortality), and Phil 1:23 (a proof text against those who believed that at death a person departs to be with Christ).

A fourth theme was the law in the Pauline writings. This was emphasized almost to the exclusion of the gospel and righteousness by faith. This is not to say that they did not believe in either of these doctrines, at least in theory. Instead, the large number of references to the book of Romans concerned Pauline references to the law. The moral law is still binding (Rom 8:9), we reap the wages of sin (6:23), the law convicted Paul of sin (7:7), the law is holy (7:12), and the entire world is guilty by the law (3:19).

A fifth and last theme were descriptions by Paul of the second coming. These passages lay at the heart of their fervent expectancy in the eschaton. This also played into Sabbatarian Adventist eschatology. References to the “man of sin” being the papacy (2 Thes.2:2-8) and the setting up of God’s kingdom at the judgment (2 Tim 4:1) were important aspects of Adventist eschatology. The time of the end would be a perilous time (2 Tim 3:1-5). Believers should watching for the coming of the Lord (1 Thes. 5:6).

Observations

Early Sabbatarian Adventists selectively utilized the Pauline writings. They were forced over time to increasingly confront the writings of Paul. While they had not completely ignored him, it does appear that their selective use made them vulnerable to attack. They were especially vulnerable to attacks by some like Joseph Marsh (a former Millerite) and those who partook of the “age to come” theology (J. M. Stephenson) who wished to discredit Sabbatarian Adventist beliefs.

A second observation is that early Sabbatarian Adventists used the Pauline writings as proof-texts. They were therefore able to emphasize the importance of the law in Romans but hardly notice his understanding of the gospel. There is not the systematic and in-depth study of the Pauline writings in contrast to the minute attention given to the apocalyptic writings of Daniel and Revelation.

So what would Paul say if he were alive today? Obviously I do not know. But if I were to hazard a guess, in light of Sabbatarian Adventism’s early Restorationist leanings, I think it would be to appeal to Sabbatarian Adventists to give equal attention to all the writings of Scripture, including the Pauline writings.

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Adventist Society for Religious Studies
Divine Worship
November 18, 2006

“Paul in Scripture and Song in Adventism”

WORSHIP

Scripture: Eph. 5: 18-20

“Do not Get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and fore everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Song:

We Gather Together

KREMSER arranger
Netherlands Folk Song, 1623
Arr. by Edward Kemper (1886-1914)

1. We gather to gather to ask the Lord’s blessing;
2. Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
3. We all do extol Thee, Thou Leader triumphant,

He chastens and has tussled His will to be known;
Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
And pray that Thou still our Defender wilt be.

The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing,
So from the beginning the fight we were winning;
Let Thy congregation escape tribulation;

Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own;
Thou, Lord, wast at our side; all glory be Thine;
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!
COMMUNION

Scripture: Gal. 6: 14-17
“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.”

Phil. 3: 4b-10
“If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death.”

Song:

154 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

HAMBURG L.M.

From a Gregorian Chant

Arr. by Lowell Mason (1792-1872)

1. When I sur-vey the won-drous cross On which the Prince of glo-ry died,
   My rich-est gain I count but loss, And pour con-tempt on all my pride.
   All the vain things that charm me most— I sacri-fi-ces them to His blood.
   Love so a-maz-ing, so di-vine, De-mands my soul, my life, my all.

2. For-bid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ, my God;
   Nor ever such love and sor-row meet, Or thorns com-pose so rich a crown?
   Did e’er such love and sor-row meet, Or thorns com-pose so rich a crown?
   Love so a-maz-ing, so di-vine, De-mands my soul, my life, my all.

3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, So row and love flow mingled down;
   What were a pres-ent far too small:
   What were a pres-ent far too small:
   What were a pres-ent far too small:

4. Were the whole realm of na-ture mine, That were a pres-ent far too small:

   What were a pres-ent far too small:
   What were a pres-ent far too small:
   What were a pres-ent far too small:

   What were a pres-ent far too small:
   What were a pres-ent far too small:
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PRAYER MEETING

Scripture: 2 Cor. 11: 21b-28; 1:7b-10

But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman—I am a better one: with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches.

Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation. We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again.

Prayer: Olive Hemmings
Song:

624  I Want Jesus to Walk With Me

American Negro Spiritual  Arr. by Eurydice Cusumano, 1984/1999

1. I want Jesus to walk with me. (walk with me)
2. In my trials, Lord, walk with me. (walk with me)
3. In my sorrows, Lord, walk with me. (walk with me)

All along my pilgrim journey,
When the shades of life are falling,
When my heart is aching,

I want Jesus to walk with me. (walk with me)

REVIVAL

Scripture:  Eph. 2: 1-10
You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.
Song:

Amazing Grace

1. Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me!
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And I once was lost, but grace my fears relieved;
3. The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secure;
4. Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
5. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to now am found, Was blind, but now I see.

Scripture: Rom. 12: 1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.
Scripture:  Rom. 1: 13-17

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish — hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'
Song:

457

I Love to Tell the Story

1. I love to tell the story Of unseen things above,
   Of Jesus and His glory, Of Jesus and His love;
   Thus all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams;
   What seems each time I tell it, More wondrous and thrice as sweet;
   Has passing and shrinking To hear it like the rest.

2. I love to tell the story, Because I know it true;
   I love to tell the story, It did so much for me;
   And when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song,
   It satisfies my longing As nothing else can do.
   And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.
   "Twill be the old, old story That I have loved so long.

Refrain

I love to tell the story; 'Twill be my theme in glory

3. I love to tell the story; 'Twill be my theme in glory
   To tell the old, old story Of Jesus and His love.
Scripture: 1 Thess. 4:13-18

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

Song:

216 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder

J. M. Black (1856-1938)

1. When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and there shall be no more,
2. On that bright and cloudless morning, when the dead in Christ shall rise,
3. Let us labor for the Master from the dawn till setting sun,

And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair; When the saved of
And the glory of His resurrection share; When His chosen
Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care. Then, when all of

earth shall gather over on the other shore, And the roll is
once shall gather to their homes beyond the skies, And the roll in
life is over, and our work on earth is done, And the roll is

called up yonder, I’ll be there. When the roll, ... is called up you

der. When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there,
When the roll is called up yon-der, When the roll is called up yon-der, I'll be there. When the roll is called up yon-der, When the roll is called up yon-der, I'll be there.

Song:

530  It Is Well With My Soul

Verse 1: When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like the sea, Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to despise, the cross, and I hear it no more: I shall trust and not be afraid.

Verse 2: My Savior, O the joy of my life, My Jesus, not in vain; The Christ shall come, and the Lord shall descend.

Refrain: It is well, it is well with my soul. It is well with my soul. It is well with my soul. It is well with my soul.

Verse 3: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! O my soul, O my soul, O my soul.
THE SPOKEN WORD

Introduction of Speaker: David Taylor, Jr
Speaker: Chris Oberg

"Apauld"

BENEDICTION

Scripture: Eph. 3:20-21
“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.”