Preface

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Note on Language

The objections to the inclusive usage of the word “man”, and corresponding masculine pronouns and possessives, are well known; this is a live question in any discussion of Romans 7 and related literature. I have avoided such usage in formulating my own arguments. But this has not always been possible when discussing the work of earlier scholars, where the licence to paraphrase is necessarily constrained. In discussion of Genesis 2-3, it appears to me impossible to avoid “man” and masculine forms to correspond with אדם.
**Introduction**

This dissertation attempts a reading of Romans 7:7-25 with reference to its intertextual echoes of Genesis 2-3. The topic is hardly a new one, but the exegetical potential of two such richly intriguing passages is not easily exhausted. The questions raised in what follows touch on a vast array of long-standing critical discussions, and this is a fairly small-scale study; its approach will be basically exploratory rather than forensic or in any way exhaustive. The exegesis is undertaken in the context of a reflection on Romans’ pragmatic purpose, a question indissoluble from that of the “view of the law” at stake in 7:7-25. It is hoped that attention to Paul’s reading of Genesis will cast some light on the function of this passage within the letter as a whole, and within the social context to which it was addressed.

A great deal has been written about Romans 7, including much debate about the presence or absence of Adam. Some of this literature is reviewed in the second chapter. It is not my intention to “prove” that Paul was indeed invoking the Garden of Eden in the reflections of his ἐγώ; I shall assume this to be the case and offer a reading on that basis. The plausibility or otherwise of readings constructed in this way seems to me the only really meaningful test of such an alleged connection. It will be emphasized as the study proceeds that this particular layer of intertextuality by no means excludes other scriptural echoes, particularly those of Exodus 20 and Numbers 11. Rather, the simultaneous engagement of different scriptural voices is central to the function of the passage.

This introductory chapter addresses two foundational matters, firstly the purpose, occasion and audience of Romans, and secondly intertextual methods of reading Paul. Next follows a selective review of critical literature on Romans 7. Then the exegesis proceeds by reading Genesis 2-3 on its own terms, assessing the coherence of Adamic typology between Romans 5 and 7, briefly analysing the structure of 7:7-25, and examining a number of specific echoes of the Eden story; finally we review whether this process has cast any light on the passage’s purpose and function.
Purpose, Occasion and Audience

Letters like Galatians or the Corinthian correspondence immediately confront the reader with the historical particularity of their implied audience. Paul launches unapologetically into the thick of current controversies, responding explicitly to his critics and detractors, defending his brand of Christianity against the alternatives which threaten it. In these overtly contentious letters, Paul’s construction of his readers’ current situation is never far from the surface, and from there modern reconstructions proceed with relative ease. But Romans does not fit this pattern so well; of all the New Testament letters, it is the least obviously particular. Just what Paul is trying to achieve here is not immediately clear. It is his most systematically structured letter, his most comprehensive in theological scope; because it potentially answers so many different questions, it is hard to infer what particular questions it is addressed to. Yet like every act of communication, it is pragmatically contingent by definition: if Paul had no reason to write the letter, he would not have done so.

Exegetes try to reconstruct this purpose on the legitimate premise that the better we understand why Paul was writing, the better we will understand what he says. In this section I will consider scholarly consensus and disagreement on the purpose of Romans. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt a comprehensive review of this debate in the literature.¹ It has livened up considerably since the advent of the New Perspective three decades ago, and it is to that period that I will, selectively, attend.

Historical Context

There is widespread agreement that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, during a winter in the mid to late 50s AD,² in anticipation of a visit to the Roman church. He is shortly to travel to Jerusalem, delivering aid collected in Macedonia and Achaia (15:25f), after which he will stop at Rome en route to beginning his new mission in Spain (15:24, 28). This letter therefore comes late in his missionary career, after he has completed his

¹ Besides which it would be redundant after Jewett’s recent and thorough work (Romans, 80-91).
² E.g. Byrne, Romans, 8f, preferring early 58; Moo, Romans, 3, preferring 57; Jewett, Romans, 21, specifying the winter of 56-57; Bruce, “Debate”, 177, preferring early 57; Lampe, From Paul, 14, and Fitzmyer, Romans, 87, specifying no more precise date.
work as “apostle to the Gentiles” preaching from Jerusalem to Illyricum (15:19, 23). Paul excuses his previous neglect of the Romans by the priority of evangelizing virgin territory (15:20-22), and consistently with this maxim, it is only the prospective Spanish mission that provides him with a reasonable pretext for visiting Rome.

How and when Christianity first reached Rome is uncertain, but clearly it was well established by the time Paul wrote. It is highly likely that Christians were party to the synagogue disturbances which prompted the “edict of Claudius” expelling the Jews from Rome, probably in 49 AD. This suggests that Roman Christians before 49 were not entirely separated from the synagogue, however dissident they may have been within it. After the edict, such Roman Christianity as endured must have been predominantly Gentile (ethnically, not necessarily theologically), until Claudius’ death in 54 permitted the return of Jews to Rome. By the time of Nero’s persecution in 64, Christians were conspicuous as a distinct movement, large enough to come to public notice. Between 49 and 64, then, Roman Christianity had separated from Judaism.

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3 Bornkamm ("Last Will") sees Paul’s own history as the principal contingency behind Romans, identifying his opponent as the abstract “Jew” who “represents man in general” (28), and questioning whether study of the early Roman church can elucidate the particular content of this communication (20). Bornkamm is surely right to emphasize the maturity of Paul’s ideas in Romans, but his neglect of the letter’s social contingency is less fruitful than the alternatives discussed below.

4 15:20 is identified by Jewett (Romans, 85) as a “noninterference principle” which would prevent Paul from “interfering” with the Roman church. If correct, this would exclude the possibility that Paul seeks to change the Christian practice of his readers. However, in its immediate context, 15:20 serves as an excuse, justifying Paul’s absence heretofore (15:20f is the antecedent of ∆ιὸ in 15:22). The avoidance of “building on another’s foundation” is in order to maximize efficiency, not minimize pique. This principle derives from the same apostolic authority which justifies Paul’s letter (15:15f); it does not qualify or limit that authority. Jewett’s conclusion that Paul’s aim here is “to convince the Romans that he is a plausible candidate to carry the gospel to Spain, despite repeated delays” (923), mistakes the Spanish pretext for the letter and visit for its motivating cause. Cf. Jervis (Purpose, 163), who finds “no evidence that Paul was concerned either with the doctrine or practice of his addressees”, a conclusion which is skewed by her exclusive focus on the opening and closing of the letter, where Paul diplomatically expresses respect for his correspondents.

5 Acts 28:13-15 locates pre-Pauline Christians in both Rome and Puteoli. Lampe (From Paul, 9f) has shown that this major trade axis is a highly plausible route for Christianity’s first arrival.

6 Lampe, From Paul, 11-16; the date is based on the close agreement of the fifth-century historian Orosius with Acts 18, the earliest witness; cf. Jewett, Romans, 18f, and Watson, Paul, Judaism 167-71. This interpretation against Lüdemann, Paul, 164-66, who identifies Suetonius’ account of Jewish disturbances “at the instigation of Chrestus” with the suppression of the synagogues in 41, as recorded by Dio. Lampe (15) and Watson (171) make a more plausible case that Dio refers to a separate event.

7 Dunn (Romans 1-8, 1) argues that Tacitus does not imply this separation any earlier than 64, a reading dismissed as tendentious by Watson, who points out that Christians must have been “a ‘distinct entity’ for some time” to be “already generally known and hated” as such by 64 (Paul, Judaism, 174n).
At the time Paul wrote we cannot be certain how far this separation had proceeded, but his letter postdates the five-year banishment of the Jews, which had most probably stimulated a major realignment. In the absence of their erstwhile Jewish-Christian leaders, Gentile Christians must have formed new social structures outside the synagogue, and the Jews who returned after 54 would have found Roman Christianity a very different animal from what they remembered, probably meeting in houses as per Romans 16. This period of Gentile-Christian independence is the most likely turning point in the evolution of a separate Christian movement in Rome.

However, this separation along ethnic and structural lines does not necessarily imply a corresponding theological divide. It is clear from Rom. 14:1-15:13 that there was a theological divide among the Christians Paul was addressing—or at least that he considered this probable enough to warrant discussion—but we cannot be certain how closely the faultlines of “weak vs. strong” and “Jew vs. Gentile” should be identified with one another. On the one hand, some returning Jewish Christians may have come to identify with Pauline “strong” Christianity during their exile. The Jews greeted in ch. 16 may well be among this number. On the other hand, early Gentile recruits to Christianity probably came predominantly from among the σεβόμενοι, and would not necessarily have automatically abandoned all aspects of the ritual law in the absence of ethnically Jewish Christians. In fact, however urgent it had become

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8 The inclusion in Romans 16 of Prisca and Aquila, who according to Acts 18:2 are Jewish, and Andronicus, Junia and Herodion, identified as Paul’s “kinsmen”, proves that some Jews had returned to Rome by the time of the letter. And of course Paul could not himself have proposed a journey there while the banishment was still in force.

9 Wiefel, “Jewish Community”, 95f. Jewett (Romans, 62-66) modifies the traditional interpretation of this chapter to include not only “house churches” with a wealthy patron, but “tenement churches” meeting in the lower-class accommodation on the upper floors of insulae, with a more egalitarian structure of leadership. (In this he follows the social analysis of the chapter by Lampe, From Paul, 153-83.)

10 Against Dunn, Romans 1-8, l; Nanos, Mystery, 68-75.

11 Dabourne (Purpose, 72) raises the possibility that Paul did not directly know of such a conflict in Rome, but knew from experience elsewhere that it was likely to arise; Karris (“Occasion”) sees 14:1-15:13 as “part of a letter which sums up Paul’s missionary theology and paraenesis” (84) and not contingent upon a particular Roman problem. By contrast, Lampe emphasizes the second-person addresses in ch. 14 as evidence for a concrete situation (From Paul, 73).

12 Lampe (From Paul, 13) maintains against Lüdemann (Early Christianity, 201) that Prisca & Aquila were Christians before they left Rome and met Paul. In either case, Rom. 16:4 strongly suggests that by the time of the letter, they were associated with Pauline Christianity.

13 Nanos (Mystery, 50-56) points out that “righteous Gentiles” in this period were expected to adhere to certain standards of ritual purity short of circumcision, equivalent to what would become known as the “Noahide Commandments” in the rabbinic period, and very similar to the “apostolic decree” of Acts 15:28f. Although his hypothesis (39) that this is the sense of τύπος διδαχῆς in Rom. 6:17 is implausible—
by the time of the letter, the dispute over table fellowship may well have predated the edict of Claudius, perhaps provoking the intra-synagogue disturbances which led to it.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Implied Audience & Purpose}

It is necessary to distinguish between our historical reconstruction of the situation addressed by Paul’s letter and the construction of that situation in the text itself. The implied audience of Romans is if anything a more fraught question than its actual audience. There are enough clues in the text, especially in the more overtly “epistolatory” beginning and end, to establish that at least Paul’s most immediate address is to Gentiles, a conclusion now generally accepted.\textsuperscript{15} But it is disputed to what extent, or in what connection, Jewish Christians are also addressed, and also how great a divide Paul envisages between church and synagogue. The question of the letter’s purpose is closely related to these matters; its intended effect upon its readers depends on its construction of them and their situation.

One extreme in this debate is represented by Mark D. Nanos, who cannot imagine any separation between church and synagogue at the time of Paul’s letter. On Nanos’ reading of Romans, the consistent addressees are certain Gentile Christians who represent not a distinct social entity, but rather a problematic group within a predominantly law-abiding church. These radical Gentiles (unlike some other Gentile Christians) no longer wish to observe the limited ritual requirements of the “apostolic decree”, and so are to blame for the disruption witnessed in 14:1-15:13. Paul writes to put them back in their place.\textsuperscript{16} This account of Romans’ implied audience relies on an implausible reconstruction of the historical context (see above on the increasing separation between church and synagogue); among its dubious exegetical props is the identification of the “weak” in 14:1-15:13 as non-Christian Jews.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Lampe, \textit{From Paul}, 70.
\textsuperscript{15} Jewett (\textit{Romans}, 70n) gives some examples of this consensus. The main verses in question are 1:5f, 1:13, 11:13 and 15:15f.
\textsuperscript{16} Nanos, \textit{Mystery}, 35f, 75-84.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 118; as both Watson (\textit{Paul, Judaism}, 180n) and Jewett (\textit{Romans}, 87) observe, this means overlooking 14:9 where the common “Lord” of weak and strong is identified as Christ.
Stanley K. Stowers’ conclusion is in one sense the opposite of Nanos’, although he agrees that only Gentiles can be considered the letter’s implied readers. He believes that Paul writes to persuade Gentile Christians striving for self-mastery that they will not achieve it through the Mosaic law, as some of them have been falsely persuaded.\(^{18}\) In part, this conclusion follows from Stowers’ unnecessarily rigid distinction between “encoded” (i.e. implied) and “empirical” readership. Paul explicitly addresses himself to “Gentiles”, a fact from which we may not be diverted by our historical reconstructions, on methodological principle.\(^{19}\) But Stowers’ category of “implicitly encoded readership” is too narrow. We can only know what Paul’s language is capable of encoding by reference to its historical context, i.e. its interaction with other texts, including those we have referred to above. It is possible, and I believe highly plausible, that such historical investigation will suggest a more ambivalent and complex encoding of readership than Paul makes explicit.

A more moderate position is that of James D. G. Dunn, who while agreeing with Nanos that separation from the synagogue was not an established fact by the time of Romans, argues that the process was underway, and that Jewish Christians were an increasingly vulnerable minority. The audience envisaged by Paul is a mixed community, “well into the process of developing its own distinct identity over against the Jewish community from which it had emerged”.\(^{20}\) The letter’s purpose is the harmony of Jews and Gentiles within this increasingly distinctive church.\(^{21}\) Correspondingly, Dunn interprets Paul’s polemic against “works of the law” as directed specifically at those “boundary-marking” regulations that could prove divisive.\(^{22}\)

That Romans sometimes seems to address Jews (e.g. 2:17, 4:1, 7:1) is in tension with its more overt Gentile orientation.\(^{23}\) Dunn resolves this tension by postulating a

\(^{18}\) Stowers, Rereading, 36.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 21f & 29f.

\(^{20}\) Dunn, Romans 1-8, liii.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., lxi.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., lxxif.

\(^{23}\) Many interpreters take this to be subsidiary rhetoric within a predominantly Gentile-addressed letter. E.g. W. Campbell considers the main target to be the “anti-Judaism” of some Gentile Christians (Paul’s Gospel, 21f); Byrne understands law-righteousness to be the “fall guy” against which inclusive Christian identity is established, rather than an actual present danger for some Roman Christians (Romans, 19); Jewett sees the Jewish-Gentile (or more precisely weak-strong) tension as a liability which Paul must dissolve before he can hope for fruitful support for his Spanish mission (Romans, 89);
single complex group of addressees, all of whom are addressed at once. Although not altogether implausible, the option of a “mixed community” seems to me less satisfactory than that of a “divided community”, advocated principally by Francis Watson. On this thesis, Paul recognizes two distinct groups of Christians in Rome and differentiates his address to each group, while ostensibly directing his letter to Gentiles for diplomatic purposes.

Watson argues that the “weak” and the “strong” Roman Christians are separate parties, distinguished by observance of the Mosaic law. 14:1-15:13 responds to a real conflict between the parties concerning table fellowship, and reveals the immediate purpose of the letter to be the reconciliation of that dispute and its theological cause, so as to “lay the foundations of a future shared communal identity”.24 The inclusive or mutual addresses of this section (e.g. 14:13) show that Paul is not concerned only with the “strong” or “theologically Gentile” Christians; nevertheless he addresses that party openly (e.g. 14:15f) in confidence of a hearing among them. His authority with the “weak” party is less well established, and he addresses them only elliptically.25 If his urging for common Christian identity is successful, it will mean a sharper breach between church and synagogue, as that identity will be grounded not in law observance but in faith.26

The “divided community” thesis has not gone unchallenged.27 But it is appealing, firstly since it accounts for the complexity of the letter’s implied audience in a way which is consistent with what we know about early Roman Christianity from other sources, and secondly since it interprets the letter as a theologically coherent

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24 Watson, Paul, Judaism, 177. In his emphasis on the centrality of 14:1-15:13 for understanding the letter’s purpose, and on the divisions reflected there, Watson follows Minear, Obedience.
25 Watson, Paul, Judaism, 178f.
26 Ibid., 180-82.
27 E.g. Jewett (Romans, 85) considers that in 14:1-15:13 “Paul seeks coexistence between groups that retain their distinctive ethnic and theological identity”. But 14:1-15:13 envisages a single community eating (and so worshipping) together, a community that is certainly tolerant of some difference, but whose common identity is grounded in the strong accommodating the weak (15:1). The reverse possibility, that the weak should “bear with the failings of” the strong and just give up on food laws, is not countenanced by Paul. Two permanently contrasting theological identities is not part of the plan. W. Campbell (Paul’s Gospel, 129) disputes that Paul intends to finalize the separation between synagogue and church, since he clearly wants the “marriage” between Gentile Christians and the “Jewish community” to continue, but this argument depends on the conflation of Jewish Christians with non-Christian Jews. Paul advocates “marriage” with the former; he expects the ultimate inclusion of the latter (ch. 11) but for now does not consider them socially contiguous with the church.
whole, in which the pragmatic purpose intelligibly corresponds to the persistent themes of God’s impartiality, the primacy of faith and the marginalization of the law. For these reasons, a “divided community” will be the working understanding of Romans’ implied audience accepted in this dissertation.

We have already noted that, in all probability, the division in Rome did not strictly follow ethnic lines, but included some Jews among the “strong” party and some \textit{ex-seβ\omicron\epsilon\omicron{	extcircled{o}}} Gentiles among the “weak”. From hereon in, when we speak of “Jewish Christians” and “Gentile Christians”, these terms will be understood in a “homomorphic” and theological sense, as broad labels for the respective parties, based on their corporate ecclesial practice rather than the prior religious affiliations of individual members.\textsuperscript{28} The application of the term “Christian” to a period predating its attestation is of course a theological decision, presupposing continuity between the congregations addressed by Paul and those who would later accept this name for themselves. The question whether these early Christ-believers would embrace such a distinctive identity, or would remain a divergent cousin of the synagogue, is precisely what is at stake in the epistle.

Method: Biblical “Intertextuality”?\textsuperscript{29}

This study will interpret Romans 7:7-25 with reference to Paul’s use of scripture,\textsuperscript{29} concentrating particularly on the significance of the Adam story in Genesis 2-3. There is nothing novel about attending to Paul’s scriptural “citations” or “Old Testament background”; his interaction with scripture is so obviously central to his writings that exegetes in all generations have had to address it somehow. But the degree of priority this is accorded in interpreting Paul, the extent to which implicit as well as explicit references are considered, and above all the method by which the interpreter structures the conversation between Pauline and pre-Pauline texts—these are all open questions, which have received considerable attention over the last two decades.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. Jewett, \textit{Romans}, 71.

\textsuperscript{29} By “scripture” is meant what Paul considered scripture, i.e. the books now comprising the church’s Old Testament. I prefer this term because “Old Testament” is anachronistic for a period before the formation of the Christian canon, and “Hebrew scripture” is inappropriate since Paul principally follows Greek translations. However, his references sometimes betray access to texts other than the LXX as we know it (see e.g. Porter, “Paul and his Bible”, 120-3). There is one strong echo in our passage (that of “desire”) which recalls the Masoretic Text of Genesis, but not the LXX.
The most influential scholar in this recent discussion has been Richard B. Hays, whose *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (1989) prompted a widespread reappraisal of approaches to Paul’s exegesis. Dissatisfied with the proliferation of studies which reductively analysed Pauline “midrash”, Hays borrowed from developments in literary studies, and proposed as a more fruitful alternative the category of “intertextuality”. This concept had been pioneered by Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, for whom it meant the dependence of all texts upon others for the potential to signify anything; no discourse takes place outside the structure of such intertextual conversation. But this is not quite the sense of intertextuality meant by Hays. Whereas “Kristeva and Barthes are interested in describing the system of codes or conventions that the texts manifest”, his study is limited to specific relationships between specific texts. This means his approach is less removed from the historical-critical paradigm than Kristeva and Barthes’, for whom diachronic concerns are unimportant.

At the same time, Hays’ method is more than just a renewal of source-influence studies under a fancy name. He is concerned with the shape of Paul’s faith, which is “inevitably intertextual in character”, being situated within the narrative and symbolic logic of scripture. In terms of method, this means he concentrates not only on explicit citations, but also implicit “echoes” or allusions, and without limiting himself to instances where conscious authorial intent is demonstrably plausible. In this he draws upon literary critic John Hollander (*The Figure of Echo*, 1981), who popularized the term “echo” for the more or less explicit presence of earlier texts in later, and whose interest is in their effect rather than in systematic categorization or judgements about intentionality. In particular, Hollander attends to transumption

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30 Although Hays’ book generated a wave of interest in biblical intertextuality, he was not the first biblical scholar to make this connection. He acknowledges his debt to Michael Fishbane, whose work on inner-biblical exegesis, although restricted to the OT canon, was an important precursor (*Biblical Interpretation*; “Inner Biblical Exegesis”). Some biblical scholars had been employing intertextual analysis in its poststructuralist sense, e.g. Phillips, “History and Text”. A volume of theoretical and exegetical essays on *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings* (ed. Sipke Draisma) was published in the same year as *Echoes*.


32 Ibid., 16. Hays acknowledges the influence of nonscriptural sources, but that is not his focus.

33 Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, ix.
or metalepsis, synonymous terms for the trope by which an echo carries more reverberations from its original context than is made explicit.\(^3\)

This hardly constitutes a precise method; Hays describes it as “less a matter of method than of sensibility”.\(^3\) Nevertheless he adopts some procedural constraints: acknowledging that some echoes are so faint that they are effectively at “vanishing point” and cannot be usefully analysed; identifying five possible paradigms within which potential intertextual meaning might be tested; and nominating seven criteria for what can be considered an “echo”.\(^3\) But these matters receive little attention in the body of *Echoes of Scripture*.\(^3\) The book’s real contribution is not in establishing a new set of ground-rules, but in shifting the focus of attention from the identification and classification of Paul’s *Vorlage* to the *effect* of his interaction with them, and the nature of his hermeneutics.\(^3\)

In recent years there have been a number of intertextual studies of Paul substantially dependent upon Hays.\(^9\) Most adopt the terminology of “echo”; many follow his criteria for identifying echoes, with more or less qualification.\(^10\) Most significantly influential is Hays’ sense of “intertextuality”, unashamedly diachronic, attentive to metalepsis and therefore to the sense of the “echoed” text in its scriptural context. This has proven a fruitful approach to reading Paul and so continues to generate interest; but it has not gone unchallenged.

Even before *Echoes of Scripture*, Ellen van Wolde took issue with “trendy” biblical scholars who were keen to adopt the terminology of “intertextuality”, but unwilling to accept its theoretical implications. Introducing this category “becomes significant only when it causes a change in our understanding of texts”, not just in the

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\(^3\) See his Appendix (*Ibid.*, 133-49) for the history of these terms.


\(^10\) As Sanders observes (“Paul and Theological History”, 53) with respect to the seven criteria. Hays acknowledges that the criteria “implicitly undergird”, rather than explicitly justify, his discussion of specific examples (*Echoes*, 29).

\(^9\) Cf. Wagner, *Heralds*, 9, contrasting Hays’ approach with that of Dietrich-Alex Koch, Christopher D. Stanley and Timothy H. Lim.


\(^10\) E.g. Abasciano (*Paul’s Use*, 22-4) singles out volume and thematic coherence as “especially weighty” criteria.
labels with which we identify sources.\footnote{Van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality”, 43.} Intertextuality, as it is understood in literary studies, is a synchronic and reader-oriented approach to reading texts, but this does not accurately describe most allegedly “intertextual” biblical studies; van Wolde herself advocates an authentically reader-oriented mode of exegesis.\footnote{Ibid., 48.} Similarly William Scott Green, reviewing *Echoes of Scripture*, insists that intertextuality is really the reader’s work, and that the “larger purpose” of such analysis is “to undergird and underscore an ideological position about the fluidity of all textual meaning”.\footnote{Green, “Text’s Work”, 61-63.}

A more recent critique is offered by Thomas R. Hatina, who unlike Green and van Wolde is not himself sympathetic to the ideological agenda of poststructuralist criticism, but shares their concern about its language being naively imported.\footnote{Hatina, “Intertextuality and Historical Criticism”.} Hatina locates most biblical scholars within the “historical” reading paradigm, concerned with diachronic “influence” rather than synchronic “intertextuality”. To use “intertextuality” as virtually a synonym for “allusion” is to ignore the poststructuralist context in which the word was coined and belongs, with its correspondingly fluid concept of “text”.

This [altered sense of the word] would, of course, pose little problem if the term was not so thoroughly saturated ideologically and if the disciplines of biblical studies and literary criticism were not brushing up against each other in an already small world where interdisciplinary approaches to research are the norm.\footnote{Ibid., 42. Another doubter is Stanley E. Porter, within a broader plea for terminological precision in discussing the New Testament’s use of the Old; according to Porter, “intertextuality appears to be the same as echo, which closely resembles allusion” (“Use”, 85—see also his recent “Allusions and Echoes”). The most virulent critique I have come across is from George Aichele and Gary A. Phillips, who indict Hays’ (and others’) “restrictive” sense of intertextuality as perpetuating “the primacy of certain (usually Christian) texts over against secondary (usually Jewish) precursors” (“Exegesis”, 7f). It takes an especially wilful misreading to construe *Echoes of Scripture* as anti-semitic—see Hays, “On the Rebound”, 83, against the charge of supersessionism. A different criticism of Hays’ approach has recently been advanced by Brevard S. Childs, who while affirming the value of Hays’ readings in themselves, questions his concentration on scripture’s metaphorical and allusive potential at the expense of historical (geschichtliche) meaning: “In spite of Hays’s repeated denials that he is disregarding the nonmetaphorical content of the Bible, it plays no significant theological role in his exegesis” (*Church’s Guide*, 39).}

Needless to say, these protests have not convinced the practitioners of “intertextual” biblical studies, who continue to believe that the category is a helpful one and that interdisciplinary etiquette can accommodate two distinct but related senses of the
same term. An exception is Shiu-Lun Shum, who despite modelling his study partly on Hays, remains deeply suspicious of the intertextual method “in view of its latent denial of authorial intentionality and its ahistorical nature”, preferring to describe his own work as “a modified source-influence approach” (Paul’s Use, 15). I am not sure that Shum, or for that matter Hatina, fully understand the distinctive sense of “intertextuality” in Hays and others. Ciampa notes that the distinction is actually present within literary criticism, between American-based studies, generally more attentive to particular textual sources and to the author, and their European counterparts, which tend to ignore the author and “stress the anonymous and infinite nature of intertextual relationships” (Presence and Function, 25n).

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48 Keesmaat, Paul and His Story, 48-51.
49 Other studies in the Hays mould have continued to respond to the critics of intertextual biblical analysis. Wagner rejects Porter’s insistence on “methodological rigor” as “crucial for certain purposes, [but failing] miserably as a strategy for reading literature” (Heralds, 11n). Abasciano agrees with Hatina that “intertextuality, as a poststructuralist concept, is incompatible with New Testament historical criticism”, but denies that this is the only sort of intertextuality available for discussion (Paul’s Use, 19).
50 Craig A. Evans advocated this development of Hays’ method in his response to Echoes of Scripture (“Listening for Echoes”), and Hays in turn acknowledged the value of attending to Paul’s interpretive context (“On the Rebound”, 70-73).
Sibylline Oracles and the Qumran literature; Wagner and Abasciano stop short of devoting whole chapters to non-Pauline interpretive traditions, but do compare them systematically with Paul.\(^5\)

Francis Watson’s *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* takes such intertextual analysis one step further. Watson arranges a “three-way conversation” in many respects similar to the studies just mentioned, but distinctively, he follows the structure not of a particular Pauline passage, but of scripture itself, principally the Torah.\(^5\) Pauline and non-Christian readings of various texts are compared, and the texts themselves examined separately in their scriptural context. The aim is to illuminate Paul’s own writings via the conversations in which he participated, and Watson’s conclusions go beyond mere analysis of Paul’s exegesis to a reappraisal of his theological *modus operandi*: “Paul’s ‘view of the law’ is his reading of a text...His ‘theology of justification’ is a scriptural hermeneutic.”\(^5\)

This is a bold and fascinating study, but because of its very scope, it cannot exactly be taken as a model of an interpretive method. The comprehensiveness of Watson’s approach makes it difficult (and pointless) to replicate, unless perhaps some scholar were moved to attempt a refutation on the same scale. The book’s theological theses are indissoluble from its mode of analysis; to challenge Watson on Paul’s “view of the law”, it would be necessary to show how an alternative could make better sense of his reading of the Torah as a whole. For this reason, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* is less likely than was *Echoes of Scripture* to spawn much methodologically consanguineous offspring. Of course, that does not mean it has nothing to teach us about reading Paul intertextually, in particular the relationship between intertextual and historical conversation.

Reviewing *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, J. Louis Martyn writes (not disapprovingly) that the intertextual conversation set out by Watson “is a modern construct that in its own right happens for the first time in this book”.\(^5\) Which is literally true as far as it goes, but does not quite do justice to the nuance of the book’s approach. Watson explicitly acknowledges that his talk of “conversation” is

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\(^5\) Also, initially, the Book of the Twelve.


\(^5\) Martyn, “Review”, 428.
metaphorical for “our own attempts to retrace the way between the scriptural text and its Pauline and non-Pauline interpretations”, but elsewhere claims that his various texts “already participate” in this “ongoing conversation”. Is there a real conversation or not? Is it a modern critical construct or a historical fact?

Like Hays, Watson is not content with a simplistic notion of intertextuality as merely historical or ahistorical. His conversation is a metaphor, but that does not abstract it from concrete historical reference. On the contrary, he is concerned with how a particular social reality, viz. the “common origin” of Judaism and Christianity, is “constituted intertextually”—not merely reflected and preserved, but constituted intertextually. Paul and his rival interpreters were engaged in debates about a text, which took place in their own texts, and it is only through those texts that we have access to the social realities that they both shaped and reflected.

The limitation of the “three-way conversation” as a metaphor is not that it did not really happen, but that it is only accessible to us when reconstructed as a four-way conversation, in which we participate. When a modern interpreter structures this conversation into a new text, as Watson has done, he neither baldly imposes a new relationship onto old texts, nor forensically uncovers an inertly pre-existent one. Rather, by addressing new questions to the texts, he opens up the old conversation to include a new interpretative community—a community which ultimately stands on the same continuum of text and interpretation as the earlier texts themselves.

Echoes of Scripture, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, and many of the other studies mentioned in this section show that there is more than one fruitful way to read Paul intertextually. Both “two-way” and “three-way” studies have proven very successful. The scope of the present study is determined not so much by methodological preference as sheer exigency—in the short space available, it has been possible only to focus on the two voices of scripture and Paul. In order to be

55 Watson, Hermeneutics, 17.
56 Ibid., 2.
57 Ibid., 5n.
58 So Martyn misses the point when he calls for a sequel to Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, a complementary volume which would focus on “hermeneutical conversations in which Paul was literally involved with other flesh-and-blood interpreters of scripture in his own time and place” (“Review”, 432). As Watson rightly points out in his “Response” (467), this would mean discussing a historical reconstruction rather than the texts on which the reconstruction is based, a procedure potentially less “securely grounded in historical reality”.
59 See Watson, Hermeneutics, 4.
genuinely attentive to the former, it is necessary to listen to it first in its own context. So, after a review of relevant literature, we will undertake a brief study of Genesis 2-3, before proceeding to its relationship with Romans 7:7-25.
Literature Review

The literature on Romans 7 is voluminous and could never be comprehensively reviewed in such a short study as this. What follows is a selective survey of recent debate, beginning with Kümmel. Earlier interpretive history has been omitted only because of the limits of space.

In 1929, Werner Georg Kümmel published the monograph on *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus* that would prove so influential for the subsequent interpretation of this chapter. He is primarily concerned with the “Subjektfrage”, i.e. who is represented by the first person singular in 7:7-25, and sets out to counter the view (widespread in his day) that Paul speaks autobiographically in these verses. Kümmel understands the structural purpose of ch. 7 to be an apology for the law, demonstrating that the real guilt for the human condition rests with sin. Paul sets up a contrast between the hopeless subject of ch. 7, who is under the law, and those of ch. 8, who are not; the former cannot be Christian, since Christians are no longer under the law (6:14, 7:6). Present-tense autobiography, with or without typological force, is therefore excluded; so is a recollection of Paul’s prechristian life, since the moral frustration of 7:13-25 is not consistent with his righteous pharisaic past, as described in his own letters and elsewhere.

Kümmel’s own view is that Paul speaks here, from Christian perspective, in the name of nonchristians, depicting through a representative first person their struggle with sin and yearning for redemption. 7:7-13 draws on a psychological fact (the stimulation of desire by prohibition) to illustrate humankind’s fall into death—it employs the aorist tense because this is a past event. 14-25 by contrast describe a present fact, the continuing state of unredeemed humanity under the law. But no particular time is implied by the ποτέ of 7:9, any more than a particular subject is implied by the first person singular. The reference in both cases is general.60

Kümmel’s reading remained definitive for some time after his work. He is surely right to insist on the text’s rhetorical force at the expense of strict autobiography, and on the importance of comprehending the structural function of

this passage in context. But his polemic excludes a wider scope of alternatives than his positive argument necessarily requires, Adamic allusion being a case in point. Identifying ἐντολή with Ex. 20:17 leads him to reject any allusion to Gen. 2:17, which need not follow; reading it as a particular example does not exclude the possibility of a narrative metaphor as well. Nor is it sufficiently conclusive to assert that Adam’s story could not show the sinlessness of the law, when Paul’s purpose may be more complex than mere apology. On the pivotal question of identifying the ἐγώ, we will see that more recent scholarship has challenged Kümmel’s exclusion of all autobiographical reference, but has in general accepted that it has some rhetorical, representative function.

Rudolf Bultmann shares Kümmel’s objections to a narrowly autobiographical interpretation of Romans 7, and his insistence instead on the representative role of the ἐγώ, but unlike Kümmel he understands the passage to depict Jewish existence in particular, and so necessarily to be “applicable to Paul’s life as a Jew”. On these grounds, given Paul’s avowedly “blameless” past, the problem described cannot be an inability to literally fulfill the commandments. Rather, it is the sin of self-righteousness or “boasting”, the confidence that one is able to achieve salvation through obedience, that defeats the law-respecting subject of Romans 7. Ἐπιθυμία in this context means not merely desire to transgress the law, but desire to fulfil it.

This rather implausible suggestion rests upon a ruthless generalization. For Bultmann, the law represents the encounter of humans with God’s limiting demand, and so is the foil to our will for self-definition. Its “cultic-ritual” requirements are to be distinguished from the “ethical”; it is in the latter sense only that it can be called ἄγια καὶ δικαία καὶ ἁγιαθή (7:12), and in this sense, the Torah is merely a specific instance of a general phenomenon. On the grounds of 2:14f, Bultmann effectively equates the Gentile conscience to the Jewish law, with respect to “ethical” requirements; the difference is merely the “shape” that God’s demand has taken. So the particular cultural and religious context of Paul and his readers serves only to illustrate broad existential categories.

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61 Ibid., 87.
62 Bultmann, “Romans 7 and Paul’s Anthropology” (1932; ET 1967), 34.
Bultmann’s most brilliant and most controversial assertion about Romans 7 concerns its anthropology—he diagnoses rival interpretations as dependent upon a basic misconstruction in this regard. A “subjective anthropology”, which identifies the θέλειν of Romans 7 with the subject’s determinative consciousness, is foreign to Paul:

Rather Paul regards humanity as transcending the sphere of its own consciousness. This is very clearly expressed in Paul’s own view that man wills and acts under the lordship of either the flesh or the spirit. . . . There is no third alternative.  

Flesh is not a power opposed to the will; rather it is the condition of the whole man, will and action, in his dividedness. The conflicting subjects in Romans 7, “I” and “sin”, represent the paradox that although man is always the subject of his own actions, he never succeeds in achieving his true nature as created and willed by God; “insofar as he does not achieve it, he has not acted in his distinctive nature”.  

Bultmann (and in a different way, Barth) carries exegesis in Luther’s tradition to its extreme conclusion, in which the immediate, Mosaic sense of “law” all but disappears. This would continue to be widely accepted until the advent of the New Perspective in the late 1970s. In due course we will see that careful attention to Paul’s particular cultural and religious context is more fruitful; but for now it should be noted that a certain measure of generalization is warranted by the text. For instance, Bultmann is in my view correct that the underlying Adamic analogy in 7:7-25 at least suggests a more universal scope of reference than the Jewish subject who is in immediate focus.  

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64 Bultmann, “Romans 7”, 37.  
65 Ibid., 39.  
66 Barth, Romans (6th ed. 1928; ET 1933). In Barth’s use, “the law” becomes virtually equivalent to “religion”, of which the Torah is the “highest and purest peak” (243). He considers our passage to show the reality of religion, which when not “romantic” can only bring perception of our absolute separation from God, “a situation as real after the episode on the road to Damascus as before it” (270).  
67 One earlier doubter was Krister Stendahl, who criticizes the “introspective” emphasis on boasting at the expense of Paul’s theme here, the law; the problem as Stendahl understands it stems from Augustine through Luther and infects much Western exegesis (“Introspective Conscience”, 1963). For a response, see Espy, “Robust Conscience” (1985).  
68 Bultmann, Theology, I.250. Another scholar in this tradition is Günther Bornkamm, who insists that 7:7-25 can only be spoken from, not about—in effect, the reader must participate in the text’s “I” (“Sin”, 1950, ET 1969). Even though this confession of “Adamic man” is a “backward look”, Bornkamm considers it to have enduring significance for the Christian. It is the “precipitous foundation” of the new life described in ch. 8; ch. 7 describes unredeemed life in a way that only the redeemed can understand.
Stanislas Lyonnet is a leading advocate of a “salvation-historical” reading of Romans 7, in which the implicit reference to Adam is crucial. The question centres on the past-tense verbs in vv. 7-13; against the problematic autobiographical readings (whether of Paul’s childhood or his pre-Christian life), Lyonnet proposes that their reference is to be found in Israel’s history. But if this is so, χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ can hardly mean the time before Sinai, since despite 5:13, scripture describes both sin and judgement during that period. Rather, the only time of which it can truly be said that “I lived” is before the fall, and it is this event rather than Sinai that marks the first great epochal shift in Israel’s history.

To the objection that Paul could only have the Mosaic law in mind here, Lyonnet responds that even scriptural texts (e.g. Sir. 44:19-21) attribute law-obedience to pre-Mosaic characters. The quotation in v. 7 is not a problem: the specific commandment against desire can stand representatively for the law, and desire for sin par excellence. That this is a plausible Jewish reading of Genesis, Lyonnet deduces from similar references in the Targum Neofiti, from which Paul departs in that he does not regard Israel as freed from desire by Sinai. Rather, for Paul, the first age of salvation history is the period before the fall, and the Mosaic law belongs in the same age of salvation as the fallen Adam.

Lyonnet’s arguments remain a touchstone for an Adamic reading of Romans 7. Among those who develop it further is Ernst Käsemann, who judges that the story told in 7:9-11 “can refer strictly only to Adam”, as the prototypical recipient of the law. Every subsequent person is implicated in Adam’s story and his fate. The “factual” work of the law, i.e. its provocation of sin, can only be adequately illustrated and explained through the story of its archetypal operation. The reference of this section (7-13) is thus to those under the Torah, though described as is possible only from the perspective of the redeemed looking back.

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71 Ibid., 218f.
73 Käsemann, Romans (1973; ET 1980), 196.
74 Ibid., 197.
75 Others endorsing an Adamic reading include Barrett, Romans (1991 (1st ed. 1957)), 133f, Lambrecht, Wretched “I” (1992) and Brian Dodd, Paradigmatic “I” (1999).
The following section (vv. 14-25), however, broadens the scope. Vv. 14-20, while immediately referring to the “pious Jew”, can also be applied to Gentiles after 2:14ff. This is not about ethics or psychology—if it were, it would be hopelessly pessimistic—rather, v. 14c stands as its heading: πεπραμένος υπὸ ἁμαρτίαν. The existence described here is subject to demonic enslavement; the shift to the present tense in v. 14 represents the perpetual continuation of Adam’s story.76

In vv. 21-5, the language shifts again, and the particular problem of Torah observance recedes into the background, in favour of the general “pious” human existence which it represents. Käsemann proposes that the use of the terms νοῦς and ἐσω ἄνθρωπος, which draw upon Greek tradition, is precisely for the sake of this widening focus. To interpret them dualistically, as if Paul simply adopted their traditional meaning, is to misunderstand both this purpose and Paul’s anthropology, by which “reason, too, is subject to the power of the flesh”.77 Rather, Paul shows here that even Greek religion falls under the same indictment as the Mosaic law and the Adamic commandment—it ultimately produces the hopelessly self-centred person, seeking their own salvation and failing in the very attempt.

This exposition of existence “sold under sin” stands in stark contrast to what follows in ch. 8; the juxtaposition illustrates respectively the two halves of 7:6b, ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος. Käsemann identifies a persistent schema operating here—cf. 1:18-3:20 vs. 3:21-31, and chh. 9-10 vs. ch. 11—“It always concerns the eschatological break and the miracle by which what is not is called into being”.78 In this way he maintains both that ch. 8 stands over against ch. 7 as the final word on Christian life, and that Christians can nevertheless be addressed by ch. 7; a dialectical solution not unlike Bornkamm’s “precipitous foundation”.79

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76 Käsemann, Romans, 202-4. Käsemann broadly accepts Bultmann’s transsubjective reading, while modifying some details.
77 Ibid., 207.
78 Ibid., 210.
79 A more recent reading in the tradition of Lyonnet and Käsemann is offered by Ben Witherington. He identifies the ἐγώ in 7:7-13 straightforwardly with Adam, via the technique of προσωποποίησις (see below on Stowers), and in 14-25 with those who are now in Adam (rather than Christ) (Romans (2004), ad loc.). It confuses the matter to suggest that Israel’s experience is also invoked, since “Paul is addressing a largely Gentile audience who did not identify with Israel” (190n). I agree that Adam’s relevance to Gentiles is part of his function here, but Witherington oversimplifies the audience addressed by ch. 7, neglecting the address in 7:1, the necessity of defending the law per se for Jewish Christians, and above all the passage’s strong echoes of Exodus and Numbers. Witherington in fact demonstrates the incompleteness of an exclusively Adamic reading.
C. E. B. Cranfield advocates a more straightforward interpretation. He insists that the ἐγὼ who speaks in 7:14-25 is representative of Christian experience; to deny this is simply to fail to appreciate the full seriousness of God’s command and our contending egotism. The inner conflict depicted in these verses is in fact only possible for the Christian, who truly perceives the goodness of God’s law and the power of sin, by virtue of the inner operation of the Spirit. But vv. 7-13 have a more general reference, drawing upon Adam’s story to illustrate the relation of humanity with the Torah, as in 5:14. Throughout the whole passage, the use of the first person indicates not autobiography as such, but Paul’s personal involvement with the situation described.

Cranfield’s commentary on these verses is in many respects illuminating, but his reading of the Christian’s situation as πεπραμένος ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, a matter which underpins the whole interpretation, is most doubtful. He views chh. 7 and 8 as “two contemporaneous realities of the Christian life, both of which continue so long as the Christian is in the flesh”. The further one progresses in holiness, the more one is conscious of sinfulness. Cranfield follows Bultmann in identifying “flesh” with “dividedness”. However whereas for Bultmann, the division is between the person’s true nature under God and the self-assertion that characterizes their striving for it, for Cranfield, it is between the complementary realities of chh. 7 and 8. This seems to me to accord both conditions an ontological equivalence, in contrast to Paul’s apocalyptic disjunction between them. Surely ch. 8 is the alternative to being “in the flesh”, and finally determines the Christian’s “now” (8:1).

Despite their other differences, James D. G. Dunn is not far from Cranfield in this reading. For Dunn, the tension between 7:7-25 and the surrounding passages is emblematic of the eschatological tension that characterizes the whole of the church’s

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80 Cranfield, Romans (Vol. 1 1975), I.341f and elsewhere throughout this section. As Meyer notes (“Worm”, 68), this relies on the doubtful presupposition that the Spirit operates only in Christianity, not in Judaism.
81 Ibid., I.343f.
82 Ibid., I.356.
83 Cf. also Ibid., I.377f on 8:2. For Cranfield, the distinction between the two states that are in conflict in the Christian is simply that “the former is destined to pass away, the latter to be fully realized hereafter”.
84 For the following, see Dunn, “Rom. 7,14-25” (1975), Romans (1988), I.374-412, and Theology (1998), 472-77. Dunn questions Cranfield’s analysis that only Christian experience can be described in 7:14-25 (Theology, 476n).
life. Christians, living between Christ’s resurrection and his parousia, partake simultaneously of the “already” and the “not yet”; they live within the overlap of the old age and the new, the old man and the new; both are present to them, making competing claims. This tension is inescapable until they are entirely conformed to Christ in the death and resurrection of their bodies. It is expressed by Paul in various binary alternatives, e.g. 6:15-23, 7:6, 8:5-11. In this context, the function of 7:7-25 is partly to defend the law, but moreover to establish that both alternatives are present for Christians, and that statements like 7:5f which might imply otherwise are not to be taken as literal facts.

Dunn’s interpretation has a schematic evenness which is somewhat troubling. In a telling phrase, he insists that “we must preserve the Already/Not yet balance in Paul’s soteriology.” Can Paul truly be said to have such a balance at all, when his account of the old age and the new is so cataclysmically unbalanced? According to Dunn, the Adamic ἐγώ set up in vv. 7-13 persists in the autobiographical, representative ἐγώ of vv. 14-25, overlapping and in irresolvable conflict with the willing ἐγώ. But Adam too was in conflict with his better will; he could not (in Bultmann’s terms) act according to his true nature. The conflict is not between redeemed and unredeemed states in any sort of equal tension; it is the conflict itself, Adam’s bind, from which we need to be redeemed.

Ulrich Wilckens gives Rom. 7:7-25 the title “Die Vergangenheit: Ich unter dem Gesetz der Sünde und des Todes”, as against 8:1-17, “Die Gegenwart: Wir im Geist des Lebens”. But the antithesis is more thematic than literally chronological. The theme of the former passage is the law of God, and therefore God himself; not me and my condition, nor the psychology or anthropology of sin. Hence the desperation of v. 24: it is God’s law that can’t deliver me, so God can only be invoked as redeemer against himself. This invocation is only conceivable for one who has experienced redemption in Christ, God’s own act but outside the law—v. 25a answers v. 24, and

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85 As Gundry points out (“Moral Frustration”, 244n), Dunn confuses believers’ conformity to Christ’s death, on the one hand, with their death as the consequence of Adamic sin, on the other.
87 Dunn, Romans, I.404f; Theology, 476.
88 Another sympathetic to Dunn’s reading is Wenham, “Christian Life” (1980).
89 Wilckens, Der Brief (Vol. II 1980), ad loc.
hermeneutically governs the whole passage, which depends upon ch. 8 to be intelligible.90

So there is still a sense in which ch. 7 reflects Christian experience; so far as Christians see their struggle reflected in the “mirror” of this chapter, the promising words of 8:1 apply to them. But what is experienced as present is, through Christ’s eschatological saving act, made past for the Christian. In the new mirror of ch. 8, their present in the risen Christ shows them the real possibility and obligation to do good. Ch. 7 can therefore not be reduced to a permanent state of simul iustus et peccator.91 So, like Dunn, Wilckens has a dialectical rather than strictly chronological understanding of past and present; unlike Dunn, he does not see the claim of the two “eras” on the Christian as equally real.

Brendan Byrne shares with Käsemann the view that 7:7-25 and 8:1-13 must be interpreted together, and calls the construction a “diptych”.92 7:14-25 describes an enduring condition which results from the narrative in 7:7-13, and constitutes an “ethical impossibility” as a foil to the “ethical possibility” of 8:1-13—the earlier passage must not be read in isolation from the later. Paul’s object in 7:7-25 is for his readers to recognize that the ἐγώ’s hopeless position under the law could potentially be applied to them, and so to be persuaded that law-righteousness is not a feasible option. As a summary of the passage’s overall thrust, this is quite consistent with the thesis followed here of a divided audience in which law-observance is a real threat, even though in Byrne’s view the law functions in Romans as a rhetorical “fall guy”.93

Byrne agrees that Adam is invoked in the narrative part of ch. 7 (vv. 7-13), but not in such a way as to exclude Israel at Sinai—“It seems Paul wants his audience to hear the ‘I’ speaking in tones evocative both of Adam and Israel”.94 The observation that different layers of scriptural reference are not mutually exclusive is important. I shall argue below that superimposing echoes of Sinai and Eden is a deliberate part of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in this passage. On the fraught question of the continuing applicability of 7:7-25 to Christians, Byrne (like Wilckens) resists a simply

90 Ibid., II.100. But Wilckens, like so many others, can sustain his interpretation only by rejecting v. 25b as a gloss (II.96f).
91 Ibid., II.117.
92 Byrne, Romans (1996), ad loc.; “Adam, Christ” (forthcoming). I am not sure whether he was the first to use this word to describe the contrast.
93 See n. 23, p. 8, above.
94 Byrne, Romans, 218. He places increased emphasis on Adam rather than Sinai in “Adam, Christ” (n40).
chronological approach. In his view, Paul aims “to depict the situation of anyone who finds himself or herself confronted by the demands of external law without the aid of the grace of Christ”, beginning with the law of Moses but not restricted to that alone.\footnote{Byrne, \textit{Romans}, 226. Cf. Fitzmyer, who emphasizes the importance of remembering Paul’s own Jewish and Christian perspective when making any generalization of the ἐγώ’s experience (\textit{Romans}, 465).}

Byrne considers the contrast between the two frames of the diptych to be encapsulated by the rival “indwellings” of sin (ch. 7) and the Spirit (ch. 8), and he accordingly analyses the structure of 7:7-25 in line with the threefold recurrence of “indwelling sin” (vv. 17, 20, 23, the last implicitly). Although I do not agree with a subdivision on this basis (see p. 54, below), he is surely right to emphasize the correspondence of these verses with the indwelling Spirit of 8:9. An advantage of this reading is that it highlights the persistence of Adamic typology implicitly into ch. 8; the legacy of Adam persists in the “body dead through sin”, and it is as “Last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) that Christ offers the alternative “life because of righteousness” through his Spirit.\footnote{Byrne, \textit{Romans}, 240. Similarly Byrne reads the “subduer” of 8:20 as Adam (Ibid., 258). His “Adam, Christ” discusses the persistence of this typology throughout chh. 5-8, a theme also pursued by Grappe—see p. 35, below.}

Heikki Räisänen takes issue with two moves made by Bultmann and his followers in interpreting ἐπιθυμία. Firstly, that desire is the paradigmatic sin, since the essential desire is “to be like God”. Against the Adamic reading of Lyonnet and others, Räisänen objects that ἐπιθυμία in the Genesis passage is \textit{sexual}, and the reference to “being like God” is incidental, and not emphasized by later Jewish commentary. Secondly, he questions whether such essential desire expresses itself “nomistically” in zeal for the law, which for Bultmannian interpreters becomes in fact the governing sense of the word.\footnote{Räisänen, “Ἐπιθυμία” (1979; ET 1992), 100-05.} Räisänen compares every other use of ἐπιθυμία/ἐπιθυμεῖν in the Pauline corpus, and finds that its sense is invariably “antinomistic”—to find the opposite meaning in Romans 7 is a most improbable procedure.\footnote{Ibid., 106-11.}

Räisänen is equally unpersuaded by a moral reading, and concludes that 7:14-25 simply fails to prove its thesis that the non-Christian subject is “sold under sin”, another instance of Paul’s rash over-generalization.\footnote{Räisänen, \textit{Paul and the Law} (1983), 112f.} Furthermore, it is unclear and
perhaps self-contradictory whether vv. 14-25 describe the consequence of the preceding verses, or their prerequisite condition.  But Räisänen's evidentiary standards are hardly commensurate with Paul's project here. He sets out to illustrate, not to prove; to illuminate through narrative, not to demonstrate cause-and-effect. The move from the past to the present in v. 14 (not mentioned by Räisänen) indicates that the following verses represent another level of the unfolding argument, showing through representative experience what took narrative shape in vv. 7-13.

Another scholar to question the emphasis on Adam is Douglas Moo, who insists that the Mosaic law is exclusively in focus during Romans 7. Paul understands the law to have a specific temporal delimitation, beginning with Sinai; in 5:13f, Adam is explicitly excluded from the age of the law. But the temporal sequence in 7:7-12 does fit the theological pattern Paul associates with the law: the law arrives, sin comes into reckoning and death results. It is consistent with this pattern if these verses refer to Sinai, granting that “life” and “death” do not have their fullest theological sense if that is so.

So like Lyonnet, Moo observes a pattern of salvation history represented in the narrative of vv. 7-12, but there the similarity ends; the two solutions identify quite differently the stages of history in question. This matter is discussed more fully in the section on “Reconciling Romans 5 and 7”, below. Suffice it for now to note that although Moo's objections have considerable force against an exclusively Adamic reading of the passage, in which the Mosaic law is not considered at all, they are less strong if the Genesis story is understood to have analogical reference to Sinai. The theological pattern he describes, which has a temporal, narrative shape, in fact provides a plausible explanation why Adam need not be excluded from our interpretation, by setting out the framework within which such an analogy might work.

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100 Ibid., 142f.
101 Moo, "Israel and Paul" (1986).
102 Moo himself acknowledges the possibility of allusion to the Genesis story, even suggesting the experience depicted in Romans 7 "to some extent recapitulates" it (Romans (1996), 439). So it is unclear to me why he resists the Adamic interpretation so strongly, rather than simply qualifying the way in which it can operate. Others unpersuaded by Genesis parallels include Fitzmyer (Romans (1993), 464), who dismisses total identification between the ἐγώ and Adam, without considering the possibility of metaphor or analogy, though he does admit an allusion in v. 11; and Jervis ("Commandment", 2004), who contends that ἐντολή means Christian paranesis, used by sin post-baptism in the way the Torah
One of the more idiosyncratic interpreters of Romans 7 is Robert H. Gundry.\(^{103}\) On the understanding that ποτέ in 7:9 refers to Paul’s childhood, before he came to know the law on becoming a bar mitzvah (anachronistic terminology, of course), Gundry identifies ἐπιθυμία as exclusively sexual desire, first experienced at the much same time as adult responsibility for law-observance. This suggestion, narrowly constricting the field of the passage’s reference, has not commanded much support;\(^{104}\) but Gundry’s more substantial contentions do not actually depend on it. He rejects interpretations which identify 7:7-25 with Christian experience, or even with pre-Christian experience described from a subsequent Christian perspective; the immediacy of the language requires the subject to be conscious of their dilemma. The “mind” and “inner man” do not refer to redeemed consciousness, or the believer with the Spirit, but rather the “moral monitor” which is common to Christian and pagan alike, as the letter’s first two chapters show.\(^{105}\) Gundry’s position is that Paul’s pre-Christian experience is described here, an illustration of moral defeat which contrasts with the surrounding passages. But his objections to a “salvation-historical” Adamic reading are narrowly chronological, and do not really deal with the possibility of analogical narrative representation.

It is unsurprising, in view of its theme of inner conflict, that Romans 7 features prominently in Gerd Theissen’s psychological study of Paul’s theology. Theissen considers it obvious that 7:7-25 and ch. 8 elaborate respectively the two possibilities of 7:6, the oldness of the letter and the newness of the Spirit; the passage’s psychological interest lies in the transition between the two, i.e. from the unredeemed to the redeemed state, and specifically in the corresponding “transformations in experience and behaviour”.\(^{106}\) In accordance with his established method, Theissen considers this via learning theory, psychodynamic and cognitive approaches; here I focus on the last.

Within this scheme, Romans 7-8 offers the possibility of a renewed self-understanding through a change in the subject’s assumed role, from Adam to Christ.

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\(^{103}\) Gundry, “Moral Frustration” (1980).

\(^{104}\) Watson (Agape, 154f) argues that Paul follows the LXX in interpreting the tenth commandment in a paradigmatically sexual sense—not exclusively so.

\(^{105}\) Gundry, “Moral Frustration”, 236.

\(^{106}\) Theissen, Psychological Aspects (1983; ET 1987), 222.
where identification with a traditional “role” is understood to enable a reordering of experience and perception.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 251f.} Paul speaks in Romans 7 in the role of Adam, not because he literally was “once without the law”, but because assuming the role of Adam enables him to interpret his own unredeemed experience as typical for unredeemed humanity. By setting up the contrast between rival laws in 7:21-3 and 8:2, Paul identifies the subject’s inner conflict as the clash of two rival norms—what Theissen (following Hans Thomae) calls an “existential conflict”, resolvable only by a complete realignment of life, the adoption of a new role.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 257f.} Christ, appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh (8:3), precisely the location of the “other law” that overcame “me” in ch. 7, presents an alternative role with which the self can be identified and through which experience can be interpreted: this constitutes a “cognitive restructuring of the self-image”.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 265.}

Although he speaks of ch. 7 as retrospective, Theissen’s analysis transcends the chronological, and provides a framework for understanding how the contrast between redeemed and unredeemed states can continue to illuminate Christian self-understanding. To that extent, the language of cognitive psychology proves fruitful. But it is clear that Paul means to describe something more than a merely psychological phenomenon, and a theological exegesis must presuppose that to be possible; so Theissen’s reading remains only a partially explanatory metaphor, albeit an intriguing one.

J. A. Ziesler agrees with both Bultmann and Gundry that Paul’s quotation of the tenth commandment in 7:7 governs the following passage, but disputes the particular sense each attributes to the prohibited “desire”.\footnote{Ziesler, “Tenth Commandment” (1988).} Rightly, in my view, he rejects both Bultmann’s nomistic striving and Gundry’s exclusively sexual lust. It is Ziesler’s contention that Paul quotes this particular commandment because it is uniquely apt for the point he wishes to make, viz. the law’s incapacity to command our total allegiance. Whereas the prohibitions against killing, stealing, adultery and so on are faithfully observed by many a Jew, “Thou shalt not desire” is distinctive in two respects: firstly, no quantity of intention can finally extinguish desire and so fulfil the
commandment; and secondly, by naming apparently benign intentions “desire” and thus revealing them as sin, without doing anything else about them, the law arguably makes my condition worse. Since this suits his argument, Paul uses the tenth commandment to exemplify the whole law.\textsuperscript{111}

Thus far I am in agreement, but hesitate when Ziesler describes this as a “faulty” paradigm for the law.\textsuperscript{112} That the relationship between commandment and law is not a literally exact correspondence, and that this partly accounts for the difficulty of the passage, is true enough. But to imply that there is something illegitimate about Paul’s proceeding here seems to me to miss his point. The tenth commandment, like Adam’s commandment to which it analogically relates, exemplifies the ultimate hopelessness of law-obedience as a way to salvation, a matter already demonstrated in the earlier part of the epistle. Paul has no need to prove this point again here; rather, he illustrates it from within, using language of the tenth commandment to show that the contradiction he perceives as a Christian is consistent with what the law says on its own terms. A single problematic commandment is sufficient to demonstrate this possibility. In my view there is no reason this procedure should count as “faulty”.

An instructive review of the various exegetical approaches to 7:14-25 is offered by Mark A. Seifrid, along with his attempt to circumvent their difficulties. Seifrid rehearses objections to the fictive, transsubjective, pre-Christian and Christian autobiographical identifications of the ἐγώ, before proposing his own solution: that here, in contrast with ch. 8, Paul depicts himself “from the limited perspective of his intrinsic soteriological resources”.\textsuperscript{113} This is in keeping with an established pattern of Jewish penitential texts, biblical and extrabiblical, in which the writer tacitly acknowledges the wider context of God’s mercy even when it is not in immediate view. The hopelessness of ch. 7 is an accurate portrayal of humanity’s condition, considered intrinsically, and as such is not limited to non-Christians or to the pre-conversion period of Paul’s life. Through his representative use of the first person, Paul “invites his audience to enter into the same self-judgment which he has made.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 47-9. Ziesler acknowledges that an Adamic allusion, if present, strengthens his case, and is willing to entertain it, but without finally adjudicating the matter.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 49-51.
\textsuperscript{113} Seifrid, “Subject” (1992), 320.
Only in this manner will he gain their adherence to his claim that the Gospel alone is God’s power for salvation.” Seifrid concludes that the purpose of this passage corresponds closely to the first five chapters, viz. to establish that justification is extrinsic, by faith alone; the difference is that, in the present rhetorical context, Paul aims to convince Jewish Christians that they must indeed live free from the law.

Seifrid’s identification of a “limited perspective” in 7:7-25 is most helpful. Many exegetical problems fall away on this understanding, which admits the complexity of attributing apparently non-Christian experience to a present-tense believer, without reducing the redeemed and unredeemed states to ontological equivalence. It also makes clear the theological coherence between this passage and chh. 1-5, which (as Seifrid is quick to point out) suggests a more central place for Paul’s “doctrine of justification” than the New Perspective has tended to allow. Less satisfactorily, Seifrid appears to consider Jewish Christians the addressees of the whole letter; if we are right to imagine a divided Christian community in Rome, his analysis of the passage’s purpose will prove incomplete.

An growing interest in recent scholarship has been Paul’s interaction with his Graeco-Roman context. Stanley K. Stowers proposes a reading of 7:7-25 as προσωποποιία, “speech-in-character”, an established rhetorical form which Paul’s education would have taught him to recognize and produce. He shows how the introspective use of the first person, musing on their happy past, present condition and future plight, is consistent with classical models, and insists that Paul’s original audience would have recognized the convention. Origen did so, and further identified the subject matter as ἀκρασία, “lack of self-mastery”; in these respects he read Paul more sympathetically than subsequent generations of dogmatically benighted Christians.

I see no reason to dispute Paul’s conformity with προσωποποιία in Romans 7, nor to doubt his or his readers’ consciousness of it. But what follows from this is another matter. Stowers, concurring with Origen, considers self-mastery to be the contested theme of the passage (in fact the whole epistle). The character that Paul adopts is victim to his passions, internally divided and prey to ἀκρασία; in this, he

114 Ibid., 324f.
115 Ibid., 332f.
116 Stowers, “Romans 7.7-25”, and Rereading, 258-84 (both 1994).
resembles the typical “other” of Greek culture (exemplified by Medea, barbarian and woman), and the typical “other” of Judaism, the Gentile (exemplified by the catalogue of 1:18-32). We have already noted that Stowers considers the implied audience of Romans to be exclusively Gentile; it is such a σεβόμενος who speaks in the ἐγώ of ch. 7. The rhetorical purpose is to persuade those tempted to law-observance as a means of self-mastery that it will not do; Gentiles can only attain this end through Christ.

Substituting “self-mastery” for the traditional “justification” may well be more appropriately classical language, but it falls far short of the apocalyptic contest that preoccupies Paul. And to exclude Jews altogether from the ambit of those Christians still trusting in the law seems to me most implausible (see the section on “Purpose, Occasion and Audience”, above). There is no reason Paul could not use established rhetorical techniques, and even draw on stock characterizations of the “other”, in service of a broader and more disruptive theological programme than Stowers considers likely.

Another scholar emphasizing Paul’s continuity with the Graeco-Roman world is Troels Engberg-Pedersen. In particular, Engberg-Pedersen discusses Paul’s use of contemporary philosophical traditions, devoting a substantial monograph to the connections between Pauline and Stoic patterns of thought. He finds in the two a common model of personal transformation from an individualist stage, through experience of an external higher good (e.g. God, Christ or reason), to participation in a new community constituted by the shared relationship with that external good. One consequence of this conceptualization is a distrust of Luther’s simul iustus et peccator, since Paul, like the Stoics, is concerned with a progression from one state to another; any simultaneity is a temporary phenomenon which can in principle be overcome, rather than a necessary characteristic of this life.\footnote{Engberg-Pedersen, Stoics (2000), ch. 2. The model, abbreviated I→X→S, is represented in diagrammatic form on p. 34.}

Engberg-Pedersen certainly succeeds in demonstrating how his model fits ch. 7. Ch. 6 has shown that, in principle, Christians are to be totally without sin; chh. 7-8 show that faith in Christ is the only way this can be achieved. Within this, 7:7-25 illustrates consciousness of sin for the person under the Torah, in three steps of recognition: that willing does not match action (7-13); that this split corresponds to a
split within the “I” (14-16); that the split extends even into the law itself, as perceived by the divided “I” (17-20).118 In terms of the Stoic model, this means the I→X→S movement cannot be completed where the “X” is the Torah, because the divided “I” can never entirely identify with the “X”.119

Finally, Engberg-Pedersen agrees with Stowers that the phenomenon under consideration here is appropriately termed ἀκρασία, and that Paul keeps close company with his philosophical contemporaries in discussing it. His interpretation of Romans 7 (and 8) is most stimulating, even though he does not ultimately persuade in every particular. Some of his proposals will be discussed in the exegetical chapter below; suffice it here to say I find his “contextual” reading of Paul considerably more sympathetic than Stowers’.120

Francis Watson has approached Romans 7 from a number of different angles. Here I mention the most recent, his “three-way conversation” between Paul, scripture, and intertestamental & rabbinic literature (discussed above with respect to method), and his lately revised interpretation of Romans (et al.) as social-pragmatic texts.121 In the former work, although its focus is explicitly intertextual, the Adamic background to Romans 7 receives little attention. Instead Watson concentrates on another scriptural allusion, of comparable importance but less widely noticed, viz. the events following Sinai that are described in Numbers 11.122

“At the coming of the commandment, sin sprang to life and I died”—the story told in 7:7-11 is modelled upon the Israelites in the wilderness, who rebel after receiving the law through Moses. The particular aspect of rebellion in focus here is the people’s clamouring for a decent meal, to which God responds with a glut of

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119 Engberg-Pedersen, Stoics, 245f.
120 Emma Wasserman (“Death”, 2007 and “Philosophers”, 2008) argues that Paul makes use of Platonic rather than Stoic discourse in Romans 6-8, the plight of ch. 7 being extreme immorality or “death of the soul” rather than ἀκρασία. “Sin” personifies the non-rational parts of the soul, and “death” is a metaphor for its total enslavement. Although I am not competent to adjudicate between Stoic and Platonic readings of Paul, I find Wasserman’s treatment of his language use, including “sin” and “death”, unnecessarily reductive. For example, there may be more to Paul’s theology of baptism than an “analogy for a moral-psychological transformation brought about by God’s work in Christ” (”Philosophers”, 403), notwithstanding an analogical aspect to his meaning. (Wasserman’s monograph on the same subject appeared too late for inclusion in this study (Death, 2008).)
121 Watson, Hermeneutics (2004) and Paul, Judaism (2007), respectively. In addition to these, one third of Agape (2000) is devoted to “desire” in Romans 7 and Freud.
122 Though spending longest on Numbers, he notes allusions in Romans 7 to all five books of the Pentateuch (Hermeneutics, 508n).
quails; their motivation is “desire” (ἐπιθυμία in the LXX), and their reward death. Both in Numbers 11, and in the retelling of the story in the Psalms (77 and 105, LXX), the sequence is law→desire→death. Paul blames this trajectory on the misappropriation of the tenth commandment by sin, and interprets the present experience of life under the law as its personal re-enactment: Israel’s story is recapitulated in the life of the representative Israeliite who speaks as “I”, in such a way as to define the shape of “my” continuing existence. (An element of autobiography is perfectly consistent with Paul’s rhetorical strategy here.)

In *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, Watson turns his attention more directly to the Genesis background of our passage. This by no means contradicts the other analogues discussed in *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (although it does seem that he has come to reappraise its significance somewhat). There is more than one layer to Paul’s intertextual reference here:

In Romans 7:7-12, it seems that the (individualized) Sinai event is interpreted with the help of motifs borrowed from Genesis. Events in the garden are superimposed on events in the wilderness that are themselves made contemporary and individualized.

He proceeds to set out systematically the correspondences between Genesis and Romans; details will be taken up in the exegetical chapter below. For now let us note his important point that it is Genesis, and not the other scriptural allusions, on which the use of the first person singular depends. Adam is an essential ingredient in Paul’s “individualization” of the Sinai narrative.

And finally, Paul himself speaks in this narrative, but in the assumed persona of a man under the law—precisely as he wrote to the Corinthians, ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὁν ἄντός ὑπὸ νόμον (1 Cor. 9:20). To what extent this accurately reflects his past we cannot know, but he can only speak so by virtue of his past. To imagine that Phil. 3:6 and other such examples disprove any autobiographical reference here, as Kümmel...
and his followers have done, neglects the rhetorical malleability of autobiography.\textsuperscript{126} It will be clear in the following chapter that Watson’s reading, sensitive to both intertextual echoes and pragmatic circumstances, has been foundational to my own interpretation of Romans 7:7-25.

Lastly, two fairly recent studies show that enthusiasm for Adamic typology in Romans continues undimmed in at least some quarters. Christian Grappe proposes that the Eden story is persistently in view throughout the whole of chh. 5-8, via an intertestamental reading of Genesis summed up in 4 Ezra 3:4f: God gave Adam a \textit{dead body} which was made to live in God’s presence through the \textit{Spirit of life}.\textsuperscript{127} 7:7-25 (especially v. 24) represents the former side of this binary thematic unit, in contrast with ch. 8 (especially v. 2). So the Adamic typology of ch. 7 is not structurally isolated, but contributes to the dynamic process of transformation evoked by the juxtaposition of these chapters. Perhaps Grappe is a trifle relentless in his detection of Adam throughout chh. 6-8, but he does show that it is at least possible to read more persistent echoes of Genesis than are usually acknowledged. In his view (and mine), this complements rather than competes with the allusions to Sinai.\textsuperscript{128}

Hermann Lichtenberger is remarkably thoroughgoing in his identification of ch. 7’s \textit{ἐγώ} with Adam.\textsuperscript{129} Adam’s story is told in vv. 7-13, and its recapitulation in the story of every human “I” in vv. 14-25; in the tradition of Bultmann and Kümmel, Lichtenberger sees here a depiction of the universal human condition. This hopeless situation remains an “impossible possibility” for Christians, unimaginable within the scheme of life in the Spirit, but nevertheless still a factual possibility. So Lichtenberger concludes that Romans 7 and 8 describe two “possibilities of existence”, and are not to be reduced to a temporal sequence or a contemporary ambivalence; still the two are not equally valid.\textsuperscript{130} This is an important reservation, distinguishing him from e.g. Dunn and Cranfield. The first interpreter to try to resolve this problem by simplifying it was, he claims, the unknown redactor who added v. 25b. So

\textsuperscript{126} Watson, \textit{Paul, Judaism}, 290; on this last point see also \textit{Hermeneutics}, 377f. Jewett (\textit{Romans}, 441; 2007) similarly observes that Kümmel’s evidence is not sufficient for the radically exclusive conclusions he draws from it.
\textsuperscript{127} Grappe, “Qui me Délivera” (2002).
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{129} Lichtenberger, \textit{Das Ich Adams} (2004). This study is really a “three-way conversation” in that it includes extensive comparison with readings of Genesis 2-3 in intertestamental and rabbinic literature.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 268.
Lichtenberger joins the long rank of interpreters who opt for an amendment here in spite of the complete absence of textual evidence.\textsuperscript{131}

This review of relevant literature helps to situate my exegetical contribution by outlining the parameters of debate in recent scholarship. I am indebted to these various approaches, and will revisit particular controversies where my approach casts light on them in what follows.

\textsuperscript{131} As Byrne points out (Romans, 233), it is actually more plausible to doubt the authenticity of v. 25a, since there is some textual variation at that point, and it could conceivably be the insertion of a pious scribe in response to v. 24.
Exegesis

Genesis 2-3

In order to take a fresh look at how Romans 7 is illuminated by the story of Adam, we must first take a fresh look at that story on its own terms and in its own immediate context. So we proceed now to a brief study of Genesis 2:4b-3:24. Once again, the exigencies of this project limit what follows to an almost cursory glance, which can hardly do justice to such a rich passage. No attempt has been made to survey the relevant critical literature with any thoroughness; these are my own relatively unrefined thoughts. It is also important to note that, although the focus here is on Genesis per se, the questions we bring to the text inevitably reflect our overarching interest in Paul’s interpretation. No Christian reading of Adam and Eve can ever elude the influence of Paul; it would be more than usually idle to pretend otherwise in such a study as this.

Within the wider scope of Genesis, this story belongs to the “primeval” epoch of the first eleven chapters, as distinct from the economy of covenant and election beginning with ch. 12. The genealogies bridge this divide, and the covenant is anticipated throughout the earlier chapters, but the primeval stories have a more universal aetiological focus, addressing the basic relationship between God and creation that precedes the particular election of Israel. Acknowledging that these are not “historical” in the same sense as the patriarchal stories does not make them any less “real”; quite the reverse. In the case of chh. 2-3, as Westermann rightly emphasizes, the story’s existential concern with enduring separation from God is only fully appreciated when its primeval frame of reference is recognized.

Most modern interpreters agree that the “priestly” account of creation concludes at Gen. 2:4a, and that of the “Yahwist” begins in the second half of the verse. New narrative blocks clearly begin at 3:1 and 4:1, but chh. 2 and 3 share strong thematic links and whatever their source history, they appear here as a diptych, paradise given and paradise lost. Some elements recurring at beginning and

\[132\] Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 276f.

\[133\] E.g. von Rad, Genesis; Westermann, Genesis 1-11; Brueggemann, Genesis. Those who see v. 4 as a unity belonging with the J account include Hamilton, Genesis 1-17 and Wenham, Genesis 1-15.
end do form an inclusion (e.g. the tree of life), but attempts to detect a thorough chiastic structure are forced.\textsuperscript{134} A simple two-act, four-scene structure fits the text more sympathetically: creation of man and garden (2:4b-17); creation of animals and woman (2:18-25); temptation and sin (3:1-7); judgement (3:8-24).\textsuperscript{135}

2:4b-17: Creation of Man and Garden

The successive subordinate clauses in the long opening sentence all anticipate and depend on the beginning of v. 7: \textit{וַיִּיצֶרּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם}.\textsuperscript{136} For J, man is God’s first creature, apparently as necessary for plant life as the rain; whereas for P, man and woman are the culmination of his “very good” work.\textsuperscript{137} The complementarity of the two stories Bonhoeffer considers indispensable—the relationship between creator and creation cannot be wholly represented from either perspective alone. “The first account is about humankind-for-God, the second about God-for-humankind”.\textsuperscript{138} In examining our anthropocentric passage with its anthropomorphic God, it is worth bearing in mind that canonically it does not stand alone and self-sufficient.

The various trees in the garden are characterized by two sorts of attractiveness, for sight and for food (v. 9). At this point in the narrative, that simply qualifies God’s creation as good; later precisely this goodness will compound Eve’s temptation (3:6). Even the serpent does not seem to be inherently evil (וּםעָר can mean “prudent” as well as “cunning”—Prov. 12:16, 23). What is created beautiful is inexplicably corrupted through the perversion of its own goodness. This is doubly apparent when the J account follows hard upon the repeated benedictions of P.

There are two trees in the middle of the garden according to 2:9 and 3:22; between these verses, for the main bulk of the story, only a single tree is in view (the tree of knowledge). For this reason it is widely supposed that different sources are

\textsuperscript{134}As e.g. in Wenham, \textit{Genesis 1-15}, 50f. This places excessive emphasis on the “central” scene, 3:6-8; i.e., it effectively subordinates ch. 2 to ch. 3, whereas their structure is really complementary.

\textsuperscript{135}This follows Brueggemann (\textit{Genesis}, 44f), who mentions the “scenes” rather than the “acts”, rightly noting the parallels between the outer two scenes and between the inner two.

\textsuperscript{136}\textit{Von Rad, Genesis}, 77. The LXX takes v. 4 as a unity and so begins with the main clause \textit{Αὕτη ἡ βίβλος…}

\textsuperscript{137}The traditional sigla are used here for convenience and imply no judgement about the continuity of pentateuchal sources.

\textsuperscript{138}Bonhoeffer, \textit{Creation and Fall}, 72.
reflected here. In any case, the effect is an internal tension within the final text. Why is the tree of life included at all? Why is the simple, single-tree motif which runs through most of the story framed by this complicating detail?

The conclusion may hold a clue. 3:22 reflects an enduring reality (just like the punishments preceding in 3:14-19). Despite our knowledge of good and evil, humankind does not live forever. The serpent lures Eve with the desire to “be like God” (3:5), in whom knowledge and life are both complete; a single temptation represented by a single tree. But what is offered as a whole is really only a fragment; the serpent’s suggestion is in itself deceptive, a fact unknown to Adam and Eve at the moment of temptation, but not to the reader who remembers that the story began with two trees. *Knowledge and life are separable*—our desire to be like God burdens us with the one without endowing us with the other. That Adam and Eve think they are accessing the lot while partaking only of the tree of knowledge represents, within the canonical redaction, the very hopelessness of their endeavour.

2:8 and 15 are doublets, separated by the business of the four rivers; as the text stands, v. 15 has the effect of recommencing the narrative where it was broken off for a digression. The digression itself forms a link between the primeval gifts of life and abundance, and their flowing out into disparate times and places—hence the inclusion of historically familiar rivers (Tigris and Euphrates) alongside the apparently legendary (Gihon and Pishon). (In this function it is not unlike the genealogies, especially that of Abraham in ch. 11.) But the placement of vv. 10-14 is curious, as it separates the acts of creation and vocation/commandment (15b-16)—the gratuity of creation itself, the “gift” whose wide circulation is represented by the rivers, from the unfolding of God’s purpose in creation from v. 15. It is a conceptual rather than temporal distinction, given the resumption in v. 15 where we left off. When Paul posits a time “before the commandment”, he expands this idea temporally, but he does not invent it *ex nihilo*.

Vv. 15b-17 introduce the norms by which man is to live in Eden, distinguished by Brueggemann as vocation, permission and prohibition. It is proper to emphasize that the commandment (vv. 16f) has both positive and negative force, but Bonhoeffer

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139 See e.g. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 212.
140 See Ibid., 215f and Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 45f.
141 Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 46.
is surely right that for Adam, even the prohibitive commandment can be experienced only as grace—it represents the limit of life as a creature, which is to say it represents the creator himself.142 At this point in the story, the boundary of creaturely life is still truly perceived as a gift, the shaping of life by God. It is not imaginable that the boundary could be transgressed, not from the unrecoverable perspective of innocence which the narrator postulates here. And yet, the reader cannot but perceive a boundary as inviting transgression. What Adam at first receives as graceful provision must appear to fallen eyes as “negative” denial. Precisely this condition—our inescapable ambivalence towards “the law that is for life”—is explored through the theme of knowledge in this story, showing that such ambivalence was not part of the creator’s intention.

2:18-25: Creation of Animals and Woman

It is of course necessary to account for the creation of animals, and their successive presentation before the man for naming is at one level just J’s equivalent of the “dominion” conferred on man and woman in P (1:28). But more distinctively in this account, the successive creation of animals and woman reflects on the meaning of 2:18, “It is not good for man to be alone”. Dramatically, 2:19f is a moment of disappointed suspense: Adam is to name one of his fellow creatures as companion, but as the procession passes and the different kinds are iterated by the narrator, the expectation fails and he remains alone. No new creature of the dust can alleviate the aloneness of man, for reasons that are apparent only in view of the actual solution.

Woman is the completion of creation according to J. Without her, man is not merely alone but unfinished. The point here is not that the female is secondary to the male; rather, male and female are created at precisely the same moment. Until God forms the woman, there is neither male nor female, there is only man, undifferentiated and irretrievably alone. Vocabulary is problematic at this point of course. The first man whom we for convenience call “Adam” was always אָדָם, and always remained so; but he was not אִישׁ until the creation of אִשָּׁה. She too is אָדָם.
although not explicitly named as such in our passage. Unlike Adam and the animals, she is not formed directly out of dust, since she is not a new creature. The culmination of God’s creation is to divide אָדָם, the man of earth, into two, אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה.  

Only this can relieve man’s aloneness. As a monad he was incomplete; as a couple they are one complete flesh. Hence the aetiology of sex and marriage in v. 24 as the reunion of what has been divided. But the creation of sex is the type rather than the sum total of the solution: it creates the possibility for human community, a whole race of אָדָם proceeding from one another and not from dust; it is in the plenitude of humanity that God’s creation of man and the world is crowned and completed.

3:1-7: Temptation and Sin

The origin of evil is not explained by Genesis 2-3; it is not even considered. The text provides no external cause, no manipulation behind the scenes. To understand the serpent as somehow representing or disguising Satan is to impose on the text an alien dualistic mythology, where the unfortunate Adam and Eve are torn between two contrary powers, quite robbing the story of its force. As von Rad observes, “the narrator is obviously anxious to shift the responsibility as little as possible from man”; the serpent is not a mythological object but a narrative device by which the “impulse to temptation” stands outside the human person.

The story is illustrative and interpretive rather than explanatory, and in these verses the focus is on the way in which the goodness of creation is perverted. All the narrative pieces, the actors, props and scenery, derive straight from the scenes of blessing and grace just passed, so this scene is heavily ironic; nothing is intrinsically evil, but all is twisted out of shape. The first example is the description of the serpent as וּמָעָר, which as noted above is not necessarily a pejorative word, but in this context immediately acquires that sense: what God created prudent now acts out of cunning.

143 But see 3:19bc and 3:24, where Eve is clearly included in Adam’s fate.
144 The verbal connection is, of course, lost in Greek. The LXX renders שָׁרֶץ as ἄνήρ in v. 23 but ἀνθρώπος in v. 24.
145 Von Rad, Genesis, 87.
Not of course through outright falsehood, but through the twisting (or economical use of) the truth.

So his initial question draws on God’s actual prohibition but misrepresents its breadth; Eve’s response is accurate but again exaggerates (by mentioning touch). But how the truth is twisted matters less than the fact of the conversation itself—God’s commandment is no longer simply taken for granted, but is the subject of clarifying discussion by his creatures. The serpent and Eve set themselves up as arbiters of God’s word, not by opposing it but by interpreting rather than obeying.

The serpent’s response in vv. 4f is disturbingly close to the truth. God had promised death to follow upon transgression (2:17), but afterwards Adam and Eve do not immediately, literally die—in that sense the serpent is right.\(^\text{146}\) And to the extent that they obtain some sort of knowledge, he is right that they “become like God”. But what is finally obtained is a mere parody of what he suggests and what Eve desires. The sequence eat-eyes-knowledge is repeated three times in vv. 5-7, as follows:

\(^5\)…in the day that you **eat** of it,

\(^6\)And when the woman saw that the tree was good for **food**, she took of its fruit and **ate**, and gave some also to her husband with her, and he **ate**.

your **eyes** will be opened,

and that it was pleasant to the **eyes**, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**

and you will be **like God**, **knowing** good and evil,

and a tree to be desired to make one **wise**, **and they knew** that they were naked.

\(^7\)Then the **eyes** of both were opened,

The crescendo collapses into anticlimax: the cumulative effect is a devastatingly ironic contrast between the sort of knowledge desired by Eve (הַשְׂכִּיל, “have insight” or “prosper”, 3:6) and what is actually attained, the consciousness of nakedness.

The narrator chooses this one realization as emblematic of how Adam and Eve are transformed. Despite modern scepticism about Augustinian readings of this passage, there is no dodging the central symbolic connection between sex and knowledge, further emphasized by the first euphemistic instance of יד in 4:1, “And Adam knew his wife Eve...”. The contrast between 2:25 and 3:7 epitomizes their new

\(^{146}\) Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 88.
knowledge as sexual shame and self-consciousness that necessitates hiding from one another, and presently from God. The tree has admitted them to a knowledge based on the separation and discrimination of difference, a rift within the “one flesh” of 2:24; hereafter, to “know” will imply uncovering what is hidden (sexually or otherwise), in place of an open and constant communion with one another and with God, in which no interposing barrier was necessary. The text interprets enduring human alienation by poignantly illustrating the unity that is out of reach.

3:8-24: Judgement

After hiding themselves from one another, Adam and Eve proceed to hide from God, and by shifting the blame, from the full reality of what they have done. The first stage of the ensuing judgement is the verse pronouncements of vv. 14-19, in which aetiological and theological comment are closely interwoven. The serpent is cursed and consigned to the dust from which he was formed, virtually a partial withdrawal of the blessing implicit in creation. But von Rad rightly cautions against a literal preoccupation with the aetiology of the anguine race. The serpent has a symbolic function in the dialogue with Eve, and so here—we need not see in him the embodiment of an extrinsic actor or principle to agree that, in the unending conflict now decreed, “man’s relation to the evil with which he has become involved becomes vivid”.

Both woman and man are punished with physical hardship in spheres that are, in the text’s world, definitively their own, respectively motherhood and agricultural labour. This element of judgement appears to be entirely punitive and to have no theological purpose beyond the aetiology of certain kinds of pain. Their other penalties are more interesting—Eve, whose desire in 3:6 prompted her transgression, is now afflicted with desire for her husband. Desire begets desire and becomes its own punishment, and now is directed at the one who rules her. The inequality and frustration of this relationship is in stark contrast with that depicted in 2:24.

147 Von Rad, Genesis, 92f.
148 The LXX omits both references to Eve’s desire. In 3:6, “attractiveness to the eyes” is doubled (ἀρεστὸν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἰδεῖν καὶ ὡραῖόν ἐστιν τοῦ κατανοῆσαι); in 3:16, her “turning” (ἀποστροφῆ—inclination? obedience?) is to her husband. Insofar as “desire” in Romans 7:7 echoes this passage, the resonance is with the MT only.
Neither the man nor the woman is cursed as the serpent was—instead the ground (אֲדָمָה) is cursed because of the man (אָדָם), and he is consigned to return to it in due course. Can death therefore be regarded as the consequence of sin, as was promised in 2:17? Commentators are right to hesitate here, in view of the connection between 2:7 (man formed of dust) 3:17-19 (“to dust you shall return”). From the outset man has been closely identified with the earth from which he is formed, to such an extent that the axis אֲדָמָה–אָדָם has been called the “primary theme of the whole narrative”. The language in which man’s creation is recounted already carries intimations of his mortality, and it is at least possible to read its recollection in 3:19 as a revelation or reminder of an existing fact.

Still Brueggemann goes too far in claiming this passage is “not a reflection on death but on troubled, anxiety-ridden life”. The two themes are not mutually exclusive. If death in 3:19 had no “consequential” element, it would be confusingly placed to say the least, and the promise of 2:17 would be empty. Rather, “troubled” life and death are here located together, in the context of judgement. Just as the man’s agricultural vocation, which was benign in 2:15, is now a source of pain to him, so his constitution from the earth, benign in 2:7, now forebodes destruction. It can be said even of the close connection between man and earth that something inherently good in ch. 2 comes to betoken loss in ch. 3.

The canonical text already reflects on this ambiguity in the apposition of the following verses. Vv. 20f look forward to a future beyond the recent grim pronouncements: the naming of Eve is an immediate reaffirmation of life’s continuity in the face of death, and God’s provision of clothing shows his grace extending beyond judgement into a new dispensation. Most significantly, 3:22 returns to the tree of life, last seen in 2:9. Now it is made explicit, as it was not before, that for man to eat of this tree means immortality. There is no indication whether or not such immortality was originally intended for Adam and Eve. But the sense of God’s remark appears to be

\[149\] Von Rad, Genesis, 76.
\[150\] Brueggemann, Genesis, 42.
that, should they eat of it now, they would become like him with respect to life as well as knowledge, and it is that conjunction that must be prevented.

So the expulsion that follows in vv. 23f, and the corresponding loss of life, is preventative rather than expressly punitive (unlike the pronouncements of vv. 14-19). It is therefore not accurate to say of the whole canonical text that it treats death as a punishment for Adam and Eve’s transgression, although it is included among the consequences. Only in the context of the judgement he has brought upon himself, where he must live apart from God, is man’s “earthiness” experienced as curse rather than blessing; to put it another way, it is separation from God that changes the limitation of being a creature into the final negation we call “death”. Wenham cites a number of OT parallels where the language of “death” is used for such alienation, concluding that physical extinction was “the ultimate sign and seal of the spiritual death the human couple experienced”. Apart from God, the lives of Adam and Eve became a living death; though not entirely without hope, as God’s provision in 3:21 foreshadows, and as the rest of Genesis and scripture will go on to unfold.

Summary

Through the evocation of an inaccessible primeval epoch, Genesis 2-3 reflects on human experience of suffering and death and the inaccessibility of God. Two pictures of the world are juxtaposed: firstly as it is created, and then as it stands marred by transgression. The pathos of human life is therefore interpreted as permanent loss. It does not belong to the order of creation; it is a distortion of that order, a perversion of God’s intention. The story affirms the inherent goodness of God and his works, his presence within creation and provision for his creatures, the latent capacity of what is good to be turned to contrary ends, and the deliberate involvement of the human race in this contortion. But precisely as a juxtaposition, it is not an explanation; no bridge is provided to pass smoothly from 2:25 to 3:1. In ch. 2, creatures are obedient and creation is perfect; in ch. 3, they are not. The story depicts the means and method of

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151 Westermann notes that the sense of לָרָע וָרָע לָדַעַת in Genesis 1-11, 185, in which case it plausibly limits the way in which man has become like God, and the phrase can be glossed “with respect to knowing good and evil”.

152 Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 90.
rebellion, but provides no motive, and this inexplicability is central to its construction of the human-divine relationship.

Reconciling Romans 5 and 7

Romans 5:12-21 is the first appearance and the only explicit treatment of Adamic typology in the epistle, and is therefore foundational to our interpretation of ch. 7. It is not possible to undertake here even a cursory exegesis of the whole earlier passage, but its relationship with the later must be briefly examined. There is some apparent dissonance between the two which leads some commentators to reject or downplay the Adamic element of ch. 7; but comparison between their respective rhetorical contexts can, I think, show this to be an unnecessary expedient. The point of interest is Paul’s scheme of salvation history, and particularly the relative priority of Eden and Sinai in determining its course. To oversimplify brutally, ch. 5 insists that death precedes the law, whereas ch. 7 suggests the one arises with the other. In this problem of conflicting “epochs” 5:12-14 is especially complicit, and these verses will be our focus here.

The structure of 5:12-21 is somewhat tortured, and this more than anything else accounts for its exegetical difficulties. It is best to take vv. 13f and 15-17 as two successive digressions, which nevertheless steer back towards the main point, broken off in v. 12 and resumed at 18. The passage can then be set out and partly glossed as follows:

12 Therefore, just as through one person sin came into the world and through sin death, and thus death spread to all people in that all sinned—

13 For [indeed] sin was in the world before law, though [I grant you] sin is not reckoned in the absence of law, yet [nevertheless] death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s transgression (who was the type of the one to come)—

15-17 But it is not, “like transgression, like graciousness”...
[unlikeness of Adam and Christ]

18 So then, just as through the transgression of one [it turned out] for condemnation for all people,
so too through the righteous act of one
[iT turned out] for the acquittal of life for all people.
19 [ditto with respect to obedience vs. disobedience]
20 And the law came in, so as to increase the transgression;
but where sin increased, grace superabounded,
21 in order that just as sin reigned through death,
so too grace might reign through righteousness for eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Already by the end of v. 14, the full comparison between Christ and Adam is anticipated. The threefold differentiation in vv. 15-17, limiting the extent to which they can legitimately be correlated, is prompted by this first mention of typology, apparently pre-empting any misinterpretation in which the two men represent equal and opposite forces; the original comparison, broken off in v. 12, resumes smoothly from this in v. 18. Similarly the first digression which interrupts v. 12 is prompted by the reference to universal sinfulness; the reason for this interruption is crucial to understanding the passage.

As Cranfield observes, the interpretation of vv. 13f depends on which half of 13 is to be taken as a concessive aside. The gloss above shows I agree with his judgement that 13b is a concession;\(^{153}\) 13a reasserts 12, and 14 provides grounds for 13a. The “problem” with v. 12 is that it does not mention the law—it seems to imply that, in Paul’s scheme of salvation history, the axis of sin and death is independent of the Torah. Here as elsewhere, he anticipates an implicit objection from his law-observant critics (whether Christian or not).\(^ {154}\) He allows that the Torah is closely connected with sin, in terms of “reckoning”, but insists that the more critical connection between sin and death does not depend upon the Torah; witness the long history of mortality from Adam to Moses.

Whatever is precisely meant by “reckoning” sin (ἐλλογεῖν),\(^ {155}\) it is surely a lesser role for the Torah than its adherents would have claimed. Before Sinai, sin was

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\(^ {153}\) Cranfield, Romans, I.281-3. Moo’s objection (Romans, 330) that a “negligible aside” would not be answered at v. 14 with ἀλλά does not hold if 13b is an important concession, which is in fact what Cranfield suggests.

\(^ {154}\) It is possible, though not really necessary, to read the objection as arising from Paul’s own recent comment that “where there is no law there is no transgression” (4:15). The suggestion comes from Brandenburger—see Jewett, Romans, 376.

\(^ {155}\) The only other biblical occurrence is Philem. 18, with the sense of “charging to account”. Cranfield’s suggestion (Romans, I.282) that it must be understood here “in a relative sense”, since pre-Sinai death must have presupposed some degree of such “reckoning”, works directly against the logic of Paul’s
already present and already deadly; all that the law changed was its “reckoning”. The aside in vv. 13f, indeed the whole thrust of 5:12-21, must be understood as part of the polemic throughout Romans against the exclusiveness of the Torah in salvation history. With respect to the universal work of Christ, the decisive precedent is Adam, and the place of Moses is quite secondary.

The problem remains that this does not quite square with the putative Adamic analogy in ch. 7. It is worth rehearsing some of the objections that have been raised. Quite rightly insisting that the immediate reference of ch. 7 is to the Mosaic law, Moo asks, “How could Paul feature Adam’s experience in a discussion about a law which he presents [in ch. 5] as entering the historical arena only with Moses?” 156 That Adam is a “prototype” does not suffice since the commandment he encountered was substantively different from the Torah. Although the Eden story may more readily account for the use of the terms ἔζων and ἀπέθανον in Romans 7, Moo maintains that the reference is “with some hyperbole” to Sinai, and such parallels with Adam as remain “are due to the intrinsic similarity of the two situations”. 157

Since Moo recognizes the correspondence between the Eden and Sinai narratives, it is strange that he should insist so exclusively on the primacy of the latter. In fact, as Watson has shown, “life” and “death” in Romans 7 refer quite literally to Sinai and its disastrous aftermath; there is no recourse to hyperbole. 158 But it is precisely this fact which seems to contradict ch. 5: if “death reigned from Adam to Moses”, how can “I was once alive apart from the law...” refer strictly to the giving of the Torah and only obliquely to Adam? Moo is right to note that, if Eden is in view in ch. 7, there is some tension with ch. 5, but he seems to have located the problem in the wrong place.

On a different tack, Engberg-Pedersen cannot reconcile sin’s “coming into the world” in 5:12 with its “springing to life”, presumably from an existing dormant state, in 7:9; the references must be to two different occasions, Eden in ch. 5 and Sinai in ch.

opposition in these verses. Ἐλλογεῖν is what the law does with sin apart from promising death. Otfried Hofius understands this to mean that the law brings the charge of sin, which existed from Adam, into public account, making open and explicit God’s judgement but without substantively changing it (“Antithese”, esp. 195-9).

156 Moo, “Israel and Paul”, 124.
157 Ibid., 128.
This is perhaps a little over-scrupulous. It does not seem so unlikely that the narrative gradually teased out in 7:7-13, if applicable to Adam, could be summarized under the punctiliar rubric, “Sin came into the world”. Certainly, this would suggest Paul was imprecise about whether sin was non-existent or dormant before Adam received his prohibition. But some ambiguity at this point is hardly unreasonable, in view of the utter inexplicability of the event in question. Genesis provides no explanation or aetiology for sin, and so permits (perhaps mandates) agnosticism on the subject of its prehistory.

Engberg-Pedersen goes on to argue that, for Paul, the coming of the Torah brings the full recognition of sin as such, and so subjects the sinner to the understanding of their own transgression. This is equivalent to the “cognitive death” of ἀκρασία, and it is in that sense that the language of “death” in Romans 7 is to be understood. Such a definition surely cannot be exhaustive, although it is a plausible description of an aspect of the death in question. But even if one accepts that Adam is off the radar altogether, the connection with the story of the “tombs of desire”, in which death is unmistakably literal, will not allow for a solely or even primarily cognitive interpretation. Engberg-Pedersen’s reading succeeds in harmonizing chh. 5 & 7, but only at the expense of taking “death” differently in the two passages, and excluding Adam from ch. 7 on what seems to me insufficient grounds.

Lyonnet sees no inconsistency between the two chapters. Following Aquinas, he understands ἐλλογεῖται in 5:13 to refer to human, not divine imputation of sin. The Old Testament clearly shows that human sin before Sinai was indeed reckoned up and punished by God; and how else could Paul consider Gentiles who are “without the law” to be under God’s wrath? Though neat, this does emaciate the sense of ἐλλογεῖν a little too conveniently. Moreover, it does not solve the problem of consistency, unless either the experience of the ἐγὼ in ch. 7 is a merely “cognitive” affair—a matter of “human reckoning”—or Sinai is not the business of ch. 7 at all.

Objections to these possibilities have already been mentioned.

159 Engberg-Pedersen, “Reception”, 42f.
160 Ibid., 45.
162 The latter is Lyonnet’s view; see p. 21, above.
Nevertheless, Lyonnet is right to recognize that Eden, as treated in Romans, at
least threatens to eclipse Sinai. He rejects a three-stage analysis of Paul’s salvation
history in which humanity is relatively alive from Adam to Moses, and under the
tyranny of formal sin and death from Moses to Christ. Instead, his first stage is the
innocence and life preceding the fall, and the second stage of sin and death stretches
from Adam to Christ, substantively unaltered by the arrival of the Torah. If one had
to choose, Lyonnet’s scheme fits both chh. 5 and 7 better than the alternative, but it is
unclear why we need impose any three-stage structure at all. Another possibility,
which seems to me preferable, is that Paul tailors his presentation of salvation history
according to the rhetorical dynamics of each immediate context, changing metaphor
and intertextual allusion without departing from an essentially consistent position.

With ch. 5, Romans moves onto a broader playing field. Paul has successfully
shown that the story of Abraham, and therefore God’s covenant with Israel, is
accurately interpreted with the language of “faith” that he has learnt through Christ;
and consequently that the blessings of the covenant are now thrown open to faithful
Jew and Gentile alike. The shadow threatening the universal righteousness now
envisioned is universal sin; Adam’s indiscriminate curse jeopardizes Paul’s gospel just
as much as Abraham’s particular vocation. If Christ is indeed the saviour of the
nations as well as Israel, he must be shown to resolve the whole of salvation history,
beginning with what is primevally predicated of all people through the Eden story. So
“sin” becomes the watchword from ch. 5 to the early part of 8, just as “faith” has been
hitherto.

For this purpose, the typological contrast between Adam and Christ is
unmediated and absolute. Two epochs, or two corporate personalities, are baldly
juxtaposed, black against white, so that the new might be shown to utterly conquer
and displace the old. For the sake of this rhetorical move, to show the totality of
Christ’s defeat of sin, Paul’s perspective is not narrative but apocalyptic. There is in fact
no echo of the story of Eden whatsoever in ch. 5; it is reduced to a single event,
summarized in the word παράπτωμα, just as the work of Christ is summarized as

163 Ibid., 227f.
χάρισμα or δικαίωμα. The technique is characteristically Pauline; cf. his habit of invoking the whole gospel under the rubric of “the cross” or similar.  

In fact the only intrusion of narrative perspective into 5:12-21 is mention of the law in vv. 13f and 20f. The reason is clear. The historical situation of Moses between Adam and Christ poses a threat to Paul’s straightforward binary opposition; since the Torah must take its place in any plausible account of salvation, it would seem that simple apocalyptic will not suffice. In both instances, Paul’s response is to locate Sinai within salvation history in such a way as to render it irrelevant to the juxtaposition in immediate focus. Vv. 13f, we have seen, show that although the law introduces “reckoning”, it has no bearing upon the connection between sin and death. In the same way, v. 20 states that when the law increased the trespass, grace increased correspondingly: i.e. the law makes no substantive difference to the opposition between sin and grace, it only magnifies its proportions. It is important to realize that these verses are contingent on the main thrust of ch. 5, which is not narrative at all, and so they do not represent the whole of Paul’s salvation-historical account of the Torah. Their purpose is to make the single, negative point that whatever else may be said about it, the story of Sinai is immaterial to Christ’s total obliteration of sin as the new Adam. 

The form and context of 7:7-25 are quite different. This passage’s final rhetorical purpose can remain an open question for now, but it clearly concerns the connection between the law on the one hand, and sin and death on the other. We can readily acknowledge that in the first instance, this means the Mosaic law—such is the clear implication both of the address in 7:1 and the invocation of the tenth commandment in 7:7. Whether the Mosaic law is exclusively in question is another matter. It is also clear that Paul intends to exculpate the law from the blame for sin, in response to the false objections in vv. 7 and 13, but that does not necessarily mean that the passage is solely or even primarily an “apology for the law”.

Apocalyptic dualism by no means recedes after ch. 5: the following chapters are built on a series of such oppositions, death and resurrection, slavery and freedom, law and grace. Insofar as these have a “history”, it is a sudden and total

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164 The two instances of Adamic typology in 1 Cor. 15:21f and 45, and therefore all explicit mentions of Adam in Paul’s corpus, share the same apocalyptic perspective.
transformation at a pivotal moment, e.g. baptism. 7:7-13 is no different in this regard: the coming of the law is the definitive event which separates life from death. But, unusually, the focus here is the process of change rather than the sheer contrast of two states. That is, it adopts a narrative perspective, which differentiates it from what has preceded.  

One of the most striking things about this narrative is its very ambiguity. At no point does it identify straightforwardly the time, place and actors to which it refers. Various contexts are suggested with greater or lesser force; the closest approach to explicitness is the citation of the tenth commandment, immediately invoking Sinai, but even this is far from exclusive. The law “says” “thou shalt not covet” every time it is read or recalled, privately or publicly. At least, and in descending order of plausibility, the narrative can potentially be applied to Sinai, Eden, Paul, every Jew, every person. Such rich polyvalence is hardly accidental; had Paul meant simply and literally to tell the story of Sinai, he could easily have done so, and spared exegetes centuries of intricate wrangling over just who he meant by ἐγώ.

Deferring for now the question of how far the analogy really ought to be pushed, the first two possibilities in our list are so clearly signposted in the text as to be unmistakeable. If it achieves nothing else, the ambiguity of 7:7-13 effects an implicit comparison between Sinai and Eden. This has obvious implications for Paul’s construal of salvation history. It would seem he is less concerned here with delineating successive periods than describing a narrative pattern which is not restricted to any one historical moment, and is paradigmatically related to at least two. What applies in one sense to Eden applies in another to Sinai—in fact, applies in many different senses to both—and even if we stop there, it is clear that the detection of “contradictions” between this passage and ch. 5 is unlikely to prove decisive.

To take one example: we have seen that insofar as 7:7-13 describes the giving of the Torah through Moses at Sinai, it strongly evokes the subsequent events described in Numbers, where thousands died in consequence of their culinary desire. Paul’s “life” and “death” then apply literally to the Israelites mentioned in the

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165 Vv. 14-25 shift again to reflect on the state that endures after the narrative of 7-13, and effectively extend the earlier passage into the present tense. The ruminative form of these verses is not simply narrative or apocalyptic, though it contains elements of both. It is difficult to find a suitable label for the perspective here, but perhaps “existential” is the best option.
Numbers account; but equally there is a metaphorical sense, in which this unfortunate event is paradigmatic of other judgements of death occasioned by transgression of the Torah. And this is easily further extended to the sense of “my” “spiritual death” after encountering the law, developed in vv. 14-25. Consistently, the law becomes the occasion of death where previously there was life, but the terms “life” and “death” are applied broadly enough to include both the literal and the metaphorical—and to correspond to the opposition more starkly described in ch. 5.

Chh. 5 and 7 represent different styles of rhetorical imagination, in neither case literally temporal. Recognition of this fact dissolves the apparent inconsistencies between them, and shows a single coherent view of salvation history to be congruent with both passages.

**Romans 7:7-25: Structural and Thematic Overview**

Almost all commentators agree in dividing Romans 7:7-25 near its midpoint, but there is some dissent about precisely where the break is located. Most place it after v. 13, as in the Nestle-Aland (NA) text, but a notable minority, including Wilckens, Moo, Watson, Jewett and the UBS text, place it after v. 12. The disagreement arises because there is more than one layer to the structure here, and different criteria suggest different divisions. The case for the NA structure rests principally on the tenses of the verbs. Apart from the introductory question in 7:7, the main verbs in vv. 7-13 are all in the past tense, suggesting a single narrative unit; the present commences in v. 14. Another consideration is that the μέν … δὲ structure begun in v. 12 and broken off in 13a is in effect, though without an actual δὲ, completed in 13b. In favour of the UBS structure, 7:13 introduces a new rhetorical question, which usually implies a new stage in the argument (e.g. 6:1, 15, 7:7). A number of commentators, recognizing the complexity of this structure, opt for some qualification in their analysis.\(^{166}\)

The second half of the passage describes the enduring consequences of the event narrated in the first half—that is widely acknowledged, and seems to favour a division based on tense. Against this, Watson points out that the participle

\(^{166}\)E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, I.376 and Moo, *Romans*, 424 both take v. 13 as pointing in two directions, though Moo follows UBS and Dunn NA in the internal division of their commentaries. Cranfield, *Romans*, I.341f has a three-paragraph (7-12, 13-23, 24-25) structure overlaid with two parts (7-13, “of mankind generally”; 14-25, “of Christians”). See below on Engberg-Pedersen.
κατεργαζομένη in v. 13 anticipates the present-tense κατεργάζεσθαι in 17 and again in 20. But the imperfective aspect of the participle is not decisive, since it is governed by the ἐγένετο which persists in ellipsis from 13a (“Did the good then become death for me? By no means—rather, [it was] sin…”). And equally the participle recalls the aorist κατειργάσατο in v. 8. The lexical correspondence is important, but it shows a thematic connection between v. 13 and both what follows and what precedes. The case for calling this verse a “bridge” is well made by Engberg-Pedersen, who notes that it completes the answer to the question of v. 7, but in the two ἵνα clauses, points forward to what is described in 14-25. This seems to me the most satisfactory description; if for analytic purposes one has to choose, I favour the NA, as the thematic criteria are in this instance less clear-cut than the syntactic.

Another contested point is the internal division of vv. 14-25, and here too Engberg-Pedersen is most instructive. He argues that if the common division after v. 17 is accepted, 18-20 are little more than a repetition of 14-17, a casual redundancy unusual for Paul; but that if the beginnings of vv. 16 and 17 are given their full weight, the former (εἰ δὲ) brings the first paragraph to a close, and the latter (νυνὶ δὲ) introduces a contrast. The first point (14-16) is to emphasize the agreement of the ἐγώ with the law, in spite of “perplexity” (οὐ γινώσκω) at the inability to obey it; the second (17-20) is more radical, postulating an internal division between sin and that part of the ἐγώ that does not identify with sin. A third move in 21-3 shows the enslaving victory of sin over the resisting part. Structurally, this is a persuasive analysis, though it need not necessarily yield Engberg-Pedersen’s conclusion that Paul is talking about ἀκρασία.

With these considerations in mind, the whole passage can be set out in the following way:

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168 Engberg-Pedersen, “Reception”, 39f.
169 For the following see Ibid., 46-9.
So what shall we say—the law is sin? By no means. But I would not have known [experienced] sin except through the law. For I would not have known desire had not the law said, “Thou shalt not desire”.

But sin, seizing a bridgehead through the commandment, wrought in me every desire. For apart from the law sin is dead.

Indeed, I was once alive apart from the law, but at the coming of the commandment, sin sprang to life and I died; And the same law that is for life turned out in me to be for death.

For it was sin that, seizing a bridgehead through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

So, on the one hand, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good—

Did the good then become death for me? By no means. Rather, it was sin, that it might be revealed as sin, working death in me through the good, that sin might become superlatively sinful through the commandment.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin.

For what I do, I do not recognize. For what I will, I do not do, but what I hate, I do.

If then what I do not will, I do, I agree with the law that it [the law] is good.

But now, it is no longer I that do it, but sin dwelling in me.

For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is in my flesh. For willing but not doing good lies within my reach.

For the good I will I do not do, but the evil I do not will, I do.

And if what I do not will, I do, it is no longer I that do it, but sin dwelling in me.
So then, I find this [with respect to the] law: for me willing to do good, [only] evil lies within reach.

For I delight in the law of God insofar as my inner man, but see another law in my members warring with the law of my mind and imprisoning me in the law of sin that is in my members.

Wretched man that I am— who will save me from this body of death?

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, as for myself; in mind I serve the law of God—in flesh, the law of sin.

A number of threads are intertwined through this passage: law and sin; good and evil; life and death; flesh, mind and spirit; knowledge and desire. One reason for this complexity is the passage’s rich variety of scriptural echoes; the many layers to its meaning partly correspond to the different voices it recalls. A comprehensive thematic analysis would be of doubtful value, and it may be that the most constructive exegetical procedure is to focus on one particular layer at a time, as I shall attempt in the next section. But a brief overview of the movement in emphasis may be worthwhile.

a The initial problem, arising out of 7:1-6, is the identification of law with sin.

A The immediate response is to clarify the nature of the law-sin connection as knowledge. The verbs εἰδέναι and γινώσκειν are used interchangeably, making it impossible to distinguish between cognitive and experiential knowledge. This paragraph introduces both the problem and the guiltlessness of the law, expanded respectively in B and C.

B Expands upon the problem of the law, and defines the consequence of the law-sin connection as death.

C Expands upon the guiltlessness of the law, fixes the blame squarely on sin.

d The identification of the law as “good” in v. 12 shifts the focus and prompts a new problem, the identification of good with death.

D (i) Summarizes the answer given in 7-12, viz. that sin is the guilty party and death the consequence, but here “good” is identified with the innocent party. (ii) Anticipates the consequence/purpose of sin’s action as both the revelation and the magnification of sin, detailed in the following paragraphs.

E Personal assent to the law as good and spiritual; corresponding failure to recognize my own actions.

F This means that indwelling sin constitutes an alternative “I” with which I do not identify. Sin within me does evil while I will good.
This in turn amounts to an alternative law: within me (my flesh/members), the law of sin conquers the law of God.

This situation, from which Christ is the only rescue, is properly called “death”.

The above is at best a skeleton of the argument, which might help to give bearings in what follows. The theme of “knowledge” is highly complex and widespread throughout the passage, and cannot really be represented in such a schema. It will be taken up in the following section. It should also be noted that multiplicity of scriptural and thematic layers does not mean there is no central thrust to Paul’s argument here. After examining the particular echoes of the Adamic analogy, we will return in the concluding section to the question of the passage’s pragmatic function.

Romans 7:7-25: Echoes of Genesis 2-3

Paradise

The narrative recalled in Romans 7 is basically that of Genesis 3, rather than 2. But we have argued that the two chapters form a complementary whole. To what extent is the “paradise” half of the diptych echoed in Romans? Does Paul do violence to the balanced structure of Genesis by invoking only the latter part of the story? Or could echoes of the former part be carried across more distinctly than is usually acknowledged?

One possible echo of Genesis 2, thematic rather than verbal, is that “I was once alive apart from the law”. And yet this seems to contradict the general thrust of the chapter: Adam indeed lives at first without the law, but then 2:18-25 shows him and his wife living perfectly happily with the law. The turning point in Genesis is not the coming of the commandment but the conversation with the serpent; the part of the story that shows the benign possibility of the law is apparently passed over in Romans. Adam’s life before 2:16 certainly creates the possibility for Paul’s summary statement, but if this were all he had to say about ch. 2, we would have to acknowledge a major shift of emphasis unbalancing the Genesis diptych. 170

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170 We have already noted that Paul’s “expansion” of the time before the commandment into an apparently distinct era has some precedent within Genesis 2, in the interruption of the main story to discuss the four rivers in 2:10-14. See p. 39, above.
However, reverberations of Genesis 2 do not quite disappear after Rom. 7:9. The concise phrase “the commandment that is for life”, though hardly an explicit echo in itself, within the context of the Eden allusion does invoke the former half of the diptych. Genesis 2 shows that within God’s unperverted design, his commandment does not evoke death but is part of the benevolent dispensation which enables life. The omission of the tree of life from the prohibition makes this especially clear—it is knowledge, not life, that is forbidden, even though the couple will fail to appreciate the distinction. What is illustrated through narrative in Genesis 2, Paul condenses into a single phrase, an explicit statement of the law’s purpose. And the irony which in Genesis emerges from the contrast between chh. 2 and 3, the perversion of good creation (including the commandment) to tragic ends, is expressed in Romans through the wordplay around life and death (especially 7:8b-10): the law that is for life ends up giving life to sin and death to me. Paul gives different expression to the same inherently creative purpose of the law that is depicted in Genesis 2, together with its same permanent inaccessibility in a fallen creation.

Eve and Adam

There is one very obvious difference between Genesis 2-3 and Paul’s recollection of it—Paul neglects to make any mention of Eve. Or rather, he subsumes the two human protagonists into one, who is named Adam in ch. 5 and ἐγώ in ch. 7. The reason is of course the typological correspondence between Adam and Christ, the first man and the last; Paul happily names Eve (alone) in 2 Cor. 11:3, where this typology is not in view, but 1 Cor. 15 (where it is) follows the pattern of Romans 5. The point is of interest in Romans 7 not so much as a particular verbal echo, but as an instance of Paul’s selectiveness in which echoes are heard distinctly and which remain faint overtones. We overhear not two narrative roles but one—what effect does this have?

It has been noted that אָדָם in Genesis 2-3 implicitly includes Eve; the word is ambiguous, referring both to the man and to mankind. Paul’s “Adam” stands for the prototype of the race, and to that extent it is similarly inclusive, since the role is shared by the man and the woman of Eden.\textsuperscript{171} Throughout the Genesis story, there is

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{171} See n. 143, p. 41, above.}
an ongoing interplay between the wholly representative אָדָם and the distinct roles of אישׁ and אִשָּׁה; the ambiguity disappears in Romans along with the lexical differentiation, and the emphasis falls squarely on the former, universal sense. The narrative in 7:7-13 includes events that are particular to the woman (being deceived) and to the (undivided) man (receiving the commandment); Paul’s use here of the first person singular rather than the name “Adam” facilitates the absorption of the two roles into one.172

Käsemann rightly argues that the first person replaces the name because of Adam’s “corporate personality”: “The fate of every person is anticipated in that of Adam”.173 This is the key to the fusion of roles in 7:7-13. The man and the woman are of no interest as individuals; Adam is of interest only as a corporate individual, i.e. one representing in his person human community en masse. In Genesis, this corresponds to what I have called the “undivided” Adam, of whom God says “It is not good for man to be alone”. By the end of ch. 2, the dramatic tension of Adam’s aloneness has been resolved with the sexual differentiation which completes creation. It is the couple, the figure of realized community, rather than the corporate individual that is responsible for the fall.

Paul’s combination of narrative roles has the effect of aligning Romans 7 more closely with the apocalyptic perspective of ch. 5 (and, for that matter, 1 Cor. 15); the accent falls on Adam/ἐγώ as “undivided”, the individual who incorporates the potential for the whole human race. This contrasts with the narrative logic of Genesis 2, where creation is completed with Adam’s division into man and woman before the fall. But the contrast does not amount to a conflict, because of the ambiguity of the term אָדָם in Genesis. Even in ch. 3 the man retains this name, and with it, echoes of his role as universal prototype. This ambiguity is exploited by Paul to bring the whole narrative of Genesis 2-3 into typological correspondence with Christ.

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172 The absorption proceeds differently in Romans 5, where the perspective is apocalyptic and distinct narrative roles irrelevant. All that is predicated of this Adam is two ontological facts, sin and death; there is nothing in this to distinguish between the man and the woman of Genesis.

173 Käsemann, Romans, 197.
Sin and the Serpent

How strongly does “sin” in Romans 7 echo the serpent in Eden? We have already noted two qualifying considerations in the Genesis passage. Sin as such has no place within it, and it is misleading to make the serpent a representative of any external power. Still the correspondence is unmistakeable. Like the serpent, Paul’s “sin” is the actor that provokes human failure and death through “deceiving me”—an explicit echo (ἐξηπάτησέν με, Rom. 7:11; ἠπάτησέν με, Gen. 3:14 LXX). In other words, the roles of sin and the serpent are closely identified with one another; the interesting exegetical question is how the absence of sin from Genesis 2:3 affects our interpretation of its correlate in Romans 7.

I have emphasized that Genesis 2-3 does not attempt to explain the events it describes. The action of the serpent upon Adam and Eve gives a narrative impulse for what follows, but just how the cheerfully obedient creatures of ch. 2 (including the serpent) become the self-willed rebels of ch. 3 is a mystery. It is precisely this discontinuity which theologians, Paul among them, call “sin”. The difference is that in Genesis, the category is not named—there is only the fact that good creation is perverted. Sin in Genesis is the silence between ch. 2 and ch. 3. For Paul, the silence is as it were “hypostatized”, given a name and a role in the drama. The mystery is no less on that account, but it does alter the way in which the story is told. Rather than identifying them with one another, it would be more accurate to say that sin displaces the serpent; the role played in Genesis by a part of falling creation is in Romans played by a third party. And the role is accordingly magnified—whereas the serpent merely deceived, sin positively kills.

In this reworking, Paul both interprets Genesis and differentiates his own gospel from it. His reading is redemptive. In its own terms and immediate context, the Eden story laments a harmony in creation, a unity between creator and creature, which is permanently lost and unattainable. In Romans 7, the situation is more hopeful. The rift between God and the world is attributed to a named external power—and such a power can, in principle, be overcome. Within the broader context of Romans, of course, there is no doubt that it has been overcome. This “solution” remains implicit in ch. 7 (except for v. 25a), but it is reflected in the very way Paul recasts the problem in terms of an identifiable, personified enemy.
We might go further, and suggest that the “hypostasis” of sin invoked in Romans 7 is itself no more than the shadow of Christ’s victory. Writing from the perspective of accomplished salvation, Paul knows that the empty gulf between Genesis 2 & 3 has been bridged; a previously untamed breach can now be named and its dimensions defined. To put it differently, Paul knows that Christ has conquered, and for the metaphor of conflict to work, he has to have conquered something, a personal enemy rather than shapeless darkness. The deceiving, enslaving sin which is so busy in Romans 7 must be understood as part of this broader metaphorical framework. Silence in Genesis becomes substance in Paul, so that Christ might be shown to have reconciled the otherwise unnameable, unthinkable breach between creature and creator.

Desire

Paul’s treatment of “desire” in Romans 7 stems explicitly from the decalogue. But its resonance with Genesis 3 (MT, not LXX) also requires attention. Desire arises in Eve when the serpent prompts her to question God’s prohibition (Gen. 3:6); it is in precisely this misappropriation of the commandment that sin’s role in Romans corresponds to the serpent’s (Rom. 7:8, 11, echoing Gen. 3:13). The association between the commandment and the origin of desire is a distinctive overtone of Eden, rather than Sinai (Exodus 20) or its aftermath (Numbers 11).

Of course Paul’s collapse of prohibition and desire into a single event contrasts with the chronology of Genesis, but not with its causal hierarchy: the life-giving commandment is perverted through the deceit of sin/the serpent, yielding desire and finally death. A greater difference is Paul’s omission of the not unimportant moment when Adam and Eve actually eat. The desire which in Genesis precedes transgression becomes in Romans the substantive transgression itself; i.e. it is interpreted as a breach of the tenth commandment. It is in this correspondence between Eden and Sinai that the echoes of Eve’s desire become significant.

The tenth commandment, at least in the abbreviated form which Paul cites, is so general that it can plausibly stand for the whole cornucopia of the law’s

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174 See n. 148, p. 43, above.
proscriptions; such is the implication of its arousing “every desire”. And as Ziesler observes, an embargo on inclination rather than the visible performance of misdeeds is uniquely difficult to comply with; no other commandment could so clearly demonstrate the law’s impotence to produce complete obedience. It is widely recognized that οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις in Rom. 7:7 has some such generalizing force, standing not just for desire per se but for the prohibitive law as a whole. But this strengthens rather than weakens its connection with Genesis 3.

We have noted that the distinctive echo of Genesis here is the law’s role in originating desire. In part, this is a functional relationship: in some way, the commandment acts as the instrument of sin/the serpent, whether by suggesting the idea of transgression, or creating a previously unavailable category of transgression, or identifying previously benign acts as transgression, or whatever. In this respect, Genesis serves as an analogy for Exodus-Numbers and the experience of the ἐγώ; in each case, a particular catastrophe is stimulated by a particular commandment, the problem originating with or through the prohibition. That at least is how Paul interprets the Exodus-Numbers event through the lens of Genesis.

But the relationship has a contextual as well as a functional aspect: the primeval context of Eden is a persistent overtone in Romans 7, amid the stronger echoes of Sinai. The unique canonical place of the pre-patriarchal stories enables them to speak distinctively of the universal relationship between creator and creatures, interpreting even the particular economy of Israel. Desire is privileged as the original transgression, as the paradigmatic response of created humankind to a benevolently imposed limit. Ziesler and others are right that the language of the tenth commandment is especially suited to the general, representative sort of transgression described in Romans 7. But no less powerfully, although less explicitly,

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175 See p. 29, above.
176 The point of Lyonnet’s article “Tu Ne Convoiteras Pas” is specifically to show that the citation of the decalogue does not exclude reference to Eden. He identifies rabbinic traditions in which Eve’s desire is considered the first and paradigmatic sin, and argues that the contexts of Eden and Sinai were less strongly contrasted among Paul’s Jewish contemporaries than some modern interpretations would suggest.
177 On the possible interpretations of this connection, see Räisänen, Paul and the Law, 141 and Engberg-Pedersen, “Reception”, 41-5.
the primeval analogy invests the prohibition οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις with universal typological force.\textsuperscript{178}

Knowledge and Death

Most of the echoes discussed so far are concentrated in the first half of our passage (7:7-13), within the narrative kernel that directly recalls Eden. We have noted that the second half (13-25), moving into the present tense, ruminates on the enduring consequences of that narrative. As the mode of discourse shifts, the Eden story is no longer directly echoed, but it remains the presupposition of what follows. For want of a better term, vv. 13-25 might be called an existential reflection on the situation of the ἐγώ whose history has just been told. Quite apart from the continuing thematic connections, this existential concern in itself mirrors Genesis 2-3, which addresses through narrative the enduring condition of death and alienation from God.

The lethality of knowledge, the main thematic echo of Genesis to persist in the second half of our passage, is first introduced as defining the connection between law and sin. Vv. 7-8a (section A in the analysis above) shows the dangerous double force that Paul attributes to knowledge: the cognitive reception of the commandment’s content becomes a guilty awareness of what it forbids. In Genesis, of course, knowledge is what is prohibited, and what Eve desires. Paul retains the sense of knowledge as transgression—the innovativeness of his interpretation is that knowledge is also associated with the reception of the commandment. In knowing the commandment not to desire, \textit{ipso facto}, I know desire. The knowledge of the law defeats itself by becoming transgression.

This underlies the hopelessness of the knowing subject in vv. 13-25. His knowledge includes both the cognitive assent to the law’s goodness (14, 16, 22) and the awareness of his own condition in which such assent is useless (14, 18, 21, 23); such is the futility of a knowledge which is divided against itself, able only to recognize and not to attain the goodness for which it aims. In vv. 14-16 (section E),

\textsuperscript{178} A fainter echo of Eve’s second encounter with desire (3:16) is also possible here. This desire, occurring in the context of judgement, is characterized as an affliction, a curse imposed from without rather than an act of will. If this is overheard in the arousal of “every desire” in me (Rom. 7:8), its effect is perhaps to associate desire not only with the act of transgression, but also with its consequences—but this is getting close to Hays’ “vanishing point”.

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this dividedness is expressed in practical terms as a contradiction between the will/mind and action. The result: ὃ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω. My translation of γινώσκω as “recognize” reflects the breakdown of personal integrity described here—I no longer recognize my actions as my own, I no longer recognize my true self in them. But of course it also means simply “know”, underlining the grim irony that all that my knowledge of the law has finally produced is the failure to know myself.

In the following section (vv. 17-20), the knowing and willing subject is set in opposition to the rival subject of indwelling sin; on this basis Paul returns in vv. 21-3 to the original object of knowledge, the law, with the devastating conclusion that the ἐγώ finally knows two laws, irreconcilably striving with one another. This is the inevitable consequence of sin’s first intrusion, via knowledge of the law, in v. 7; in the power of sin, knowledge can only bring division, even to the law itself. It is instructive that, when Paul summarizes the problem in v. 25b, he opposes obedience in the flesh to obedience in the mind. Why not “spirit”, which is the usual opposite to flesh? Surely because it is precisely knowledge that is here shown to be hopeless. When the flesh/spirit antithesis comes to the fore, it will be in the more promising context of ch. 8.

The knowledge under consideration in Romans 7 is of and about the law, and derivatively of sin (desire); in Genesis 2-3, it is the “knowledge of good and evil”. It is hardly coincidental that Paul’s ἐγώ finds himself torn between good and evil, his will in one camp and his deeds in the other. He has fallen victim to Adam’s curse of discrimination. We recall that Adam and Eve, in reaching out their hands for knowledge, obtained only a parody of what they desired, symbolized by sexual self-consciousness. Their godlike knowledge in fact separated them from God and from one another. It is a mistake to read Romans 7 as exclusively sexual—the analogy of Numbers 11 invokes gluttony rather than lust—but sex, where knowledge entails desire, remains a governing metaphor for the “every desire” which is aroused. The metaphor derives at least partly from Genesis, and the alienation and dividedness which accompanies Adam and Eve’s knowledge of nakedness finds its echo in the hopelessly torn ἐγώ.

179 Hence the ambiguity of εὑρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον—what the ἐγώ discovers with respect to the law is in fact itself another law.
And, of course, the bifurcation means death. The interior antagonism described in Romans 7 reaches its climax in the wretched cry of 7:24, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The irreconcilable division of the self means precisely death—in fact defines the sense of “death” throughout this passage. In this way Paul returns to the recollection of Eden, and completes the answer to the question of v. 13a, explaining how sin made the good to be death for me. Knowledge of the good brought knowledge of the evil that is in my flesh, and the resulting rift within myself is my “death”. It would be a mistake to infer from this that Paul refers only to “spiritual” rather than “literal” death. Rather, he describes here in narrative terms the apocalyptic power associated with Adam in ch. 5; it is death in all its fullness, death as a state of life and as the end life, from which the miserable ἐγὼ needs deliverance, and to which life in Christ is the only alternative.

The tragedy of Genesis 2-3 is that Eve and Adam, in choosing knowledge, exclude themselves from life. While they perceive a single temptation—to be like God—in the fruit of a single tree, in fact they become like God only in knowledge, and they are banished from Eden lest they now partake of the strangely hidden tree of life (3:22f) and complete the operation. They know good and evil, but in their newfound separation from God and one another, this can bring them only sorrow. Death in Genesis 2-3 means alienation—man’s earthy mortality, the constitution of אָדָם from אֲדָמָה, is not a curse until he is banished.

In Romans 7, there is no direct reference to the scene of judgement in Eden, and transgression and consequence are telescoped into a single moment: “Sin deceived me and through [the commandment] killed me”. This brings into sharper focus the conjunction of knowledge and death. The whole trajectory of the Eden story is invoked here, but reinterpreted as definitive individual experience. The sting of death, which in Genesis 3 is revealed as alienation from God and one another, in Romans becomes alienation from the self, pathetically summarized in the words ὃ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω. Paul interprets the fate of Adam and Eve as that of the archetypal subject’s encounter with the law, in such a way as to leave no doubt that knowledge of “the law that is for life” in fact produces nothing but death.

Watson points out that this treatment effectively identifies the Torah with the tree of knowledge, causing the “Mosaic coordinates” of life and death, good and evil to
“collapse in on one another”. To this I would add that the ambiguous separation of the two trees in Genesis, echoed only indirectly in Romans, complements Paul’s undermining of the Torah’s legitimacy. The tree which to Eve seemed to be complete and sufficient was not so—the reader of the whole Eden story knows that the knowledge she desires is in fact quite separate from life. It is the deceit of sin that life can be attained by simply knowing “the law that is for life”.

Conclusions

We finally return to the basic question: what exactly is going on in Romans 7:7-25? What function does the Adamic allusion serve? Who is being addressed, and who is to recognize themselves under the rubric ἐγώ? What is the relevance and pragmatic function of the passage for the different groups among the audience of Romans? A minor study like this can hardly hope to resolve such hoary old chestnuts, but it is possible to sketch out a few relevant implications of the preceding discussion.

For a start, it will not do to summarize the passage with Kümmel as an “apology for the law”. It shows both that the good law brings death, and that the good law brings death, the accent falling squarely on the latter; the benignity of the law is eclipsed by its futility. If these verses’ main purpose is apologetic, they are a very indifferent success. Precisely in the way he reworks Genesis, Paul depicts the law as intrinsically rather than incidentally fruitless. He aligns Adam’s prohibition with the tenth commandment, cited in a sufficiently abbreviated form to stand for the law’s prohibitions in general. He interprets Eve’s experience of desire as the original and paradigmatic response to prohibition, and in view of the tenth commandment, represents such desire as transgression in itself. Knowledge of the law, i.e. cognitive reception and assent, becomes with seeming inevitability knowledge of desire, i.e. guilty experience. The cumulative effect is rather to discredit the law as a way to life than to defend it; the acknowledgement of its inherent goodness is subordinate to the general emphasis on its fruitlessness.

This is consistent with the thesis of a divided Roman community as the letter’s audience. The distinctively Christian identity to which Paul invites both Jews and Gentiles to adhere cannot be grounded in law-observance, indeed must categorically

\[^{180}\text{Watson, Paul, Judaism, 285-7.}\]
reject it as a means of salvation. The primary thrust of 7:7-25, the law’s delivery of death rather than life, forms part of the letter’s broader argument to this end. But here it is distinguished from the law’s essential life-giving purpose with a carefulness that suggests sensitivity to the concern of Jewish Christians, those who have most to lose in the abandonment of law-righteousness. There is an apologetic undercurrent to 7:7-25; the law is defended more fully here than in the preceding chapters, and yet the repudiation of its efficacy could hardly be more total.

In 7:1, Paul explicitly flags that at least the following verses are addressed to Jewish Christians, “those who know the law”. So it is unsurprising that his argument here is couched in partly defensive terms. It is necessary to satisfy law-observant Christians that a community united by faith, rather than works of the law, does not in principle reject the law itself, and with it the history of Israel’s covenant; equally, this group must be convinced that the path of works is finally and utterly closed. So Paul’s most devastating verdict on the law—that it in fact produces death—is made simultaneously with an eloquent defence of its inherent goodness, and the disjunction between purpose and effect is shown to be absolute. It is only in this very qualified sense that the passage can be called apologetic. The enduring misapprehension of such careful scholars as Kümmel is a tribute to the power of the argument’s defensive strain.181

Romans 7:7-25 shows both the innocence and the fruitlessness of the law, and fixes the blame for this quandary squarely on sin, which is personified on the model of the serpent. By attributing to this distinct agent a failure which in Genesis arises silently and mysteriously from within creation itself, Paul reworks the Eden narrative to admit the redemptive possibility that he knows in Christ. Sin can be and has been overcome; the reader of ch. 5 knows this already, since the story of Adam is embraced and transformed in that of Christ. Genesis 2-3 is a diptych, paradise given and lost, and while Romans 7 invokes the first frame in its positive treatment of the law per se, its narrative is focussed on the second. But the redemptive possibility is never far from the surface, and it erupts with full force in ch. 8. There, within the first four

181 Of course, the ostensible address to Jewish Christians in 7:1 is not really exclusive; whatever Paul says here, with Jewish Christians in immediate focus, will be “overheard” by Gentile Christians in the background. For this group, the apologetic strain may have the very different purpose of counteracting any lurking supersessionist hubris. In that secondary sense it anticipates 11:17-24.
verses, the impossible bind of the ἐγώ is dissolved, with the proclamation of sin’s defeat, the fulfilment of the law in Jesus Christ, and the participation of Christians in this victory through the Spirit. Paul reverses the order of the Genesis diptych, to depict in Romans 7-8 paradise lost and regained, and so claims Christ to be the restorer of creation itself.

This is made plain in ch. 8 through overtly cosmic language; but in fact the problem illustrated in ch. 7, despite its deceptively modest first-person pronoun, is no smaller in scope than the solution which follows. The primeval context of Eden is elliptically invoked through Paul’s retelling of Adam’s story. Before Christ, only one person can be said to have embodied the whole human race, the “undivided” Adam of Genesis 2; and it is this single figure, representing both the man and the woman of Eden, who lurks behind Paul’s hapless ἐγώ. By using the first person singular, Paul was not concerned only to bequeath generations of forensic exegetes the amusement of an intractable ambiguity. He used a form of language that could stand for Adam in the full force of his “corporate personality”. Adam stands in the garden before God, man as creation, and the story of his failure is the only sufficient type for the equally universal redemption of Christ, man as new creation.

In this sense, Paul’s recourse to Adamic typology in ch. 5 is as necessary as the Abrahamic typology of ch. 4. In the first three chapters, he proposes a reading of Israel’s Torah through faith, which will fail unless it proves consistent with the story of Israel’s paradigmatic forebear. Abraham is no digression but an inevitable challenge to Paul’s argument, on which he must fall down or else o’er-leap. The same can be said of Adam. If Paul’s gospel is really as universal as he claims, and salvation is available now to all the nations, Christ must be shown not only to fulfil the covenant with Israel, but to overcome the curse afflicting the whole creation through its universal forebear.

The typological juxtaposition is stated baldly in 5:12-21, but with only incidental reference to the law. It is not until 7:7-25 that Paul teases out the implications of the Adam’s fall for Israel specifically; by superimposing echoes of Sinai and Eden within the narrative of the one ἐγώ, he implicitly claims an analogy between the two. Israel’s experience with the Torah recapitulates Adam’s with the commandment. It offers no way out of the earlier curse, but rather shows all the
more clearly that Israel shares the common fate of humankind, condemned through sin to death.\textsuperscript{182}

Chh. 5-8 act as a whole in their treatment of the universal problem of sin and deliverance from it. Christ’s displacement of Adam as the new prototype does not remove the threat of sin, but it does enable believers to share in his death to sin, and in obedience to a new master (ch. 6). The “catch” for Jewish Christians is that this transferral also means their dying to the law (7:1-6). 7:7-25, by showing the common plight of Israel and humanity as a whole under sin, provides further grounds that the law can no longer be a distinguishing category among the baptized. In this way, as well as by debunking the law’s effectiveness, these verses support 7:1-6, and complete Paul’s appeal for “those who know the law” to relinquish their confidence in its works. At the same time, by illustrating so bleakly the common curse of sin, they summarize the problem to which the cosmic redemption of ch. 8 is the solution.

In view of such breadth, we might well seem justified in giving the widest possible scope of reference to the term ἐγώ. Are Christians to see themselves in this image? A helpful approach to this familiar question is suggested by Engberg-Pedersen’s interpretation of 8:1-13, in which he argues “Paul is basically making an appeal to the self-understanding of his addressees”.\textsuperscript{183} The paean of life in the Spirit is not merely a description, but an exhortation; Paul writes with the object of bringing his readers to see themselves in these terms. I agree, and would add that the same is true negatively of 7:7-25. So the answer to our question is given by Paul himself in 6:11: “You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”. For Christians to see themselves in the ἐγώ of ch. 7, still under the law and thus imprisoned by sin, is to fail in the conversion of the mind to which Paul calls his readers. This is precisely the temptation which Rome’s Jewish Christians must overcome.\textsuperscript{184}

Paul’s immediate concern is with the division in the Roman church over the continuing efficacy of law-observance. It seems unlikely to me that he envisaged a

\textsuperscript{182} Grappe makes the similar suggestion that as a consequence of Adamic typology, the ἐγώ of Romans 7 is deliberately universal; perhaps what is predicated of Adam here applies “to the Jew first, but also to the Greek” (“Qui me Délivera”, 492).
\textsuperscript{183} Engberg-Pedersen, Stoics, 251.
\textsuperscript{184} This view of the relationship between chh. 7 & 8 is at least partly compatible with Theissen’s “transferral of roles” and Seifrid’s “limited perspective”.
secondary application of his words, where Christians who feel no temptation to observe the Torah nonetheless see themselves as prisoners of a moral law, caught in the same irresolvable conflict with sin as the ἐγώ of ch. 7. But even if it was not Paul’s intention, this reading does plausibly follow from his own marginalization of the Torah. By aligning Israel’s particular experience of law and transgression with the universal paradigm of Adam, he opened the door for others to recognize their own stories in the same pattern. Readings like Dunn’s and Cranfield’s show the readiness with which the predominantly Gentile church has embraced this option.

Whether such readings are finally fruitful is another matter. If we are right to see the contrast of chh. 7-8 as imperative rather than indicative, then Christians should see in the ἐγώ at most a temptation to be overcome, a vision of the “old man” who is left behind in the renewal of the mind. The law of sin may appear differently in a church no longer divided over Torah-observance, but it is to be rejected nonetheless absolutely in favour of the law of the Spirit of life. To recognize in Romans 7:7-25 an enduring aspect of Christian existence may be “realistic”, but only at the expense of the radically new reality within which Paul invites Christians to think and live.
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