

Romans: The Problem of Sin, Part 5b

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EXPOSITION: Chapter 6:1-23

The Definition of Sanctification

The problem of sin in relation to the Christian life is generally termed “sanctification” with the term found only twice in this epistle, here in ch.6 in v. 19, 22. The Greek word *hagiasmos* means consecration, purification; from *hagiazō* – to make holy, purify, or consecrate, which is from *hagios* meaning sacred or holy, rendered “saint”, “saints”, or “holy” in the NT. While it does carry ethical implications, it is primarily that which is holy or set apart, hence, it is not only a *condition* but more so a *position*; for example, the OT sanctuary, furniture, sacrifices, and sabbath are “holy” (LXX, *hagios*), they are set apart to the Lord (Ex 28:36; 30:10; 31:15; Lev 23:20). The NT “saint” (*hagios*) is one who, from eternity, is set apart to the Lord, that is, sanctified. Nonetheless, while justification is acquittal from the guilt and penalty of our “sins”, sanctification is deliverance from the power of “sin” itself, it is deliverance from “sinning”. As we will see, while grounded in the *judicial* it is also *experiential*.

Question 75 of the Westminster Larger Catechism defines sanctification:

Sanctification is a work of God’s grace, whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

The next three chapters (6, 7, 8) present a history of greatly confused exegesis, resulting in erroneous, or at best inadequate, views of sanctification that have been injurious to God’s people and the cause of Christ, which must be resolved. And this resolve can be supplied very simply from the hermeneutical principle of context.

The Context of Sanctification

As we sort to establish in chapter 5, the passage v.12-21 lays out the parallel between Adam and Christ which functions forcefully as the epicentre of the epistle. From chapter 1 the apostles’ thought leads up to it and then flows from it for the remainder of the epistle. It then provides the controlling force, especially behind the next three chapters (6, 7, 8). In the previous passage we have seen that Christ, as the new Adam, is the restart of history—indeed, the beginning of a new creation. He achieves the perfect obedience to the Creator God in which Adam failed, perfecting a new humanity in himself that can now fulfil the original creation mandate (Gen 1:26-28). Through his disobedience, rather than Adam reigning over the earth as God’s vice-regent, sin and death reigned over him. But now, in Christ, and through his obedience, the new humanity finally reigns, regaining dominion over sin and death, and hence, over creation (5:17, 21). The way this is achieved is through the believer’s solidarity with Christ as covenant head of the new humanity. Just as Adam served as such for his progeny, now Christ for his in the regeneration. Through conversion and baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection, the believer is transferred positionally out of Adam into Christ (6:3-10); but not merely as an individual, it is also corporate (5:12-21). Solidarity in Adam or in Christ involves solidarity with a corporate order of humanity, a covenant community; the former under the covenant headship of Adam and the dominion of sin and death, and the latter under Christ’s covenant headship and the dominion of righteousness and life. Therefore, all that follows in chs. 6-8 is conditioned by this reality, evidenced by the continued referencing in this new chapter of dominion (6:9, 14), reigning (6:12), and slavery (6:16, 17, 19, 20, 22).

Exegetical Confusion of Romans 6:6

Returning to the exegetical confusion surrounding this chapter, we find it focused in one verse, 6:6, which serves as the *locus classicus* for all the various sanctification theories: *We know that **our old self** was crucified with him in order that **the body of sin** might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* Get this verse wrong and one’s whole

understanding of the Christian life is wrong. And this is exactly what all the major modern translations do with this verse, including the ESV. They become interpreters rather than translators, reading their theological precommitments into the text. The KJV and NKJV as faithfully literal translations are among the few that get it right. I have bolded the two problem areas: 1) “our old self” and 2) “the body of sin”; the first is a both a translation and interpretation issue and the second only interpretation.

Let me explain. The Greek word incorrectly rendered “self” is *anthropos*, meaning literally “man”, from which we derive our English word “anthropology”, which is the study of human behaviour and societies. To confirm my claims let us consider the usage of *anthropos* throughout the NT: *anthropos* occurs 535 times in the ESV, predominantly rendered “man”, or alternatively, humankind, men, people, person etc. Only 4 times does the ESV render *anthropos* as “self”—in our headquarters verse, Rom 6:6, and its parallel passages in Eph 4:22-24 & Col 3:9, 10. Of the 5 other times the English word “self” is used in the ESV (totalling 9 times in all) it renders 3 other completely different Greek words. In other words, the ESV’s rendering of *anthropos* as “self” is radically out of sync with its normal NT usage: it is used only 4 times as “self” compared to 531 times as “man” or its various cognates (e.g. men, people etc.). One must then ask whether the context of Rom 6:6 demands the incongruous rendering of “self” rather than “man”. As we have already underlined, ch. 6 flows from the foregoing passage (5:12-21) where the apostle has taken pains to compare and contrast the two solidarities found in the “one *man*” Adam (*anthropos* in v. 12, 17) and in the “one *man*” Christ (*anthropos* in v. 17), serving as the fountainheads of two humanities or societies. Furthermore, in this light, the “body of sin” is not my physical body, but rather, the community of sin, the “body of Adam” in contradistinction to the “body of Christ” as the community of righteousness, of all those who are in Christ. This is confirmed by Ephesians 2:15-16, where Paul identifies the “new man” (v. 15) with the “one body” of Christ (v. 16). This “body of sin” is also described as the “body of death” (7:24) from which Paul desperately wishes to be delivered. It is not the physical body. The body, as created and fashioned by God, is not “of sin” nor “of death”. It is, rather, declared by God as “very good” (Gen 1:31); so much so that he sent his own Son to become man in bodily form and raised him bodily in the resurrection, foreshadowing the day when all men will also be raised bodily. God’s estimation of the human body is so high that not only his Son lives in one but also the Holy Spirit, who now lives in every believer: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor 6:19). Nonetheless, the body has become an “instrument” of sin, through “sin that dwells within me” (7:17-18), and must therefore be presented to God to now serve as an “instrument” of righteousness (6:13, 16, 19; 7:5, 6, 23; 12:1). Hence, the “old man” and the “body of sin” is the whole corporate order of Adam, including its behaviours. Clearly, the translators, in this case, have become interpreters, reading into the verse the most dominant and popular theories of sanctification.

I will explain these in a moment, but first, we must discover why they have come about. It is because, again, interpreters have ignored context and the flow of the apostle’s argument, that errors have occurred. They have not accurately discerned where the shift from the *judicial* to the *experiential* occurs within the apostle’s argument.

So, let us consider the development of his argument concerning sin. From 3:21–5:11 Paul explicates the Gospel answer to “sins” and their penalty. This breaks down to addressing them from 3:21–4:25, *judicially* (justification), and then, from 5:1-11, *experientially* (peace with God), when the Holy Spirit is introduced for the first time in the epistle. Next, from 5:12–8:39 he explicates the Gospel answer to “sin” as a power. This similarly breaks down to addressing it, from 5:12–7:6, *judicially* (positional solidarity), and then from 7:7–8:39, *experientially* (positional spirituality).

The erroneous theories of sanctification have missed the fact that 5:12–7:6 is *judicial*, rather than *experiential*, as they assume. Therefore, 6:6, so their argument goes, rather than teaching the believer’s *judicial* or *positional* transfer from the “old man” to the “new man”, from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ” (1 Cor 15:22), or from the “domain of darkness” to the “kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13), it must refer to an *experiential* inner crucifixion to sin in the believer. Rather than the “old man” being something I am in – that is, the corporate Adam – it is something in me. It is my “old nature” and all that I was before conversion. This explains why they have translated *anthropos* erroneously as “self” and have then argued for two natures coexisting in the believer, the old and new together. Furthermore, they misconstrue the “flesh” as the “old self”, as the old nature, as something in me rather than something I am in, as *experiential* rather than *positional*. Whereas, biblically, to be “in the flesh” is to be unregenerate (a non-Christian) – that is, in Adam – in contradistinction to believers who are “in the Spirit”, that is, in Christ (Rom 8:9). So, on their telling, as a believer I have living in me not only a new nature but an old nature and the Holy Spirit. Add to that mix the real ‘me’ and we have four of us living in there—quite a cocktail. This has led to much spiritual and psychological confusion for believers, resulting in religious striving; leading to asceticism, false spirituality and false assurance of salvation. One’s sanctification, if not salvation, becomes dependent on an ongoing inner crucifixion to sin.

The Theories of Sanctification

This brings us to the various theories of sanctification. They fall into three categories: eradicationist, counteractionist, and mortificationist. First, the *eradicationist*, which is the Wesleyan teaching of perfectionism, spawning the 19th century Holiness and Higher Life movements and 20th century Pentecostal movement. It claims that the root of sin is completely and instantaneously eradicated through a crisis second blessing experience subsequent to conversion. This view has lost traction and is no longer seriously believed. Second, the *counteractionist*, promoted and taught by the Keswick movement, maintains that the problem of “indwelling sin” (Rom 7:21), that is, the “law of sin and death”, must be continually counteracted by the “law of the spirit of life” (Rom 8:2). But like the eradicationist view, the counteraction of sin comes through a crisis experience of consecration – of “letting go and letting God” – culminating in the baptism or infilling of the Spirit. After the crisis comes a process of “sanctification by faith”, with unbelief as its hindrance. The believer is not to struggle against sin but rather rest in Christ and God will deliver him from sin. By faith, he or she is to “reckon” themselves as dead to sin because their “old self” – their sinful nature – has already died in Christ. This whole formula is known as the “normal (or victorious) Christian life”.

The flaws of both the eradicationist and counteractionist views are several: *first*, and foremost, they are not biblical, generally displaying an emphasis that pits devotion over-and-against doctrine, cultivating a false dependence on crisis experiences. They misread the biblical meaning of the “old man” and the “new man” (i.e. “self”), the “body of sin”, and of the “flesh”, as mentioned previously, with the latter misconstrued as the “old self”, and as an equally powerful nature to the new. The upshot of the misreadings is found in that the two natures – or, at least, the two driving forces of “flesh” and “Spirit” – coexist within the believer, both the old and the new together. The Bible nowhere teaches sin’s complete eradication nor counteraction. If the latter, it then implies that, in actual fact, “the flesh” (or the “old self”) is the dominant power, as once the counteraction of the Spirit stops, reversion to the “flesh” (or the “old self”) occurs. Hence, sin is not truly conquered, it remains the greater force and the believer is still enslaved to its dominion—the work of Christ is thus nullified; *second*, misreading the “body of sin” as my physical body – despite the protestations otherwise of those who teach it (Lloyd-Jones) – leads to dualism and asceticism, the relegation of the world of matter to an inferior status, and to pietism, a retreat from the world—from culture, politics, the arts, education, and so on; *third*, these views result in Pelagianism, the belief that man can autonomously decide to be either saved or sanctified, and this occurs through a self-engendered crisis experience; *fourth*, they result in elitism, the creation of two classes of Christians: so-called “carnal” (fleshly) Christians and spiritual Christians, those who have had the crisis experience of consecration and infilling of the Spirit and those who have not; *fifth*, the counteractionist teaching that the Christian can be free of “known sin” is an inadequate view of sin. Sin is both insidious and comprehensive in its effect, as Jeremiah warned, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer 17:9, NKJV); *sixth*, in the name of “the rest of faith”, it results in quietism—the believer is passive rather than active in concrete obedience to mortify sin. For a very helpful analysis of sanctification views, see [No Quick Fix: Where Higher Life Theology Came From, What It Is, and Why It's Harmful](#) by Andrew David Naselli.

So, this brings us to the third view of sanctification, *mortificationist*. This is the Reformed view, which does not posit a post-conversion crisis experience of consecration and counteraction of sin, or its instantaneous eradication, but rather, from the point of conversion, a definitive death to sin (Rom 6:2, 6) and a progressive mortification of the “works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19; see Rom 6:12-13):

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Romans 8:13, KJV (also Col 3:5)

Human nature, though fallen, is regenerated by the Spirit at conversion. Rather than an “old nature” and a “new nature” dwelling in the believer, he or she has one nature that is regenerated but in the process of renovation. And this occurs not only through regeneration but also baptism through which we enter into the factuality of Christ’s historical death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). This does not mean that we ought to be dead to sin, as in eradication and counteraction views, rather it means that we are already dead to sin (Rom 6:2, 6). Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we have been judicially and, hence, positionally transferred from the lordship of sin in Adam to the lordship of grace in Christ (5:17, 21). Christ as the “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45) was the terminal-point of the Adamic order of sin and death, and as the “second man” (1 Cor 15:48) the original-point of a new order of righteousness and life. In Christ’s death the “old man” – the Adamic corporate order of sin (“the body of sin”) – to which we belonged as the unregenerate has been terminated (Rom 6:6). Not only so, we have been transferred to

the “new man”, to the new Christian corporate order. Hence, we have already been “delivered ... from the domain of darkness and transferred ... to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13). This is the believer’s *definitive* death to sin; it is objective fact not subjective experience.

However, as stated above, in the Reformed view, sanctification is not instantaneous as with the eradicationist view, but definitive *and* progressive. It is definitive in that the believer has been judicially and positionally transferred from Adam to Christ. This is the case for both justification *and* sanctification:

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption

1 Corinthians 1:30

The believer is already positionally sanctified from eternity, set apart as a “saint” (*hagios*—a holy one). Nevertheless, that definitive work must be acted upon for growth in sanctification. Paul commands the Romans to “...reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:11, NKJV), and, hence, enabled to obey the apostle’s injunction in the next verse: “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body...” (v. 12). In Greek the word “reckon” is *logizomai*, meaning to take an inventory, i.e. estimate (literally or figuratively); to account, impute, number, reason, reckon. This forensic calculation is based on historical fact—the “once-for-all” death of Christ (6:10), in whom the “old man” – the whole corporate Adamic order of sin – that is, the “body of sin” is crucified and done away 6:6). And so, through baptism the believer is judicially transferred from that old order of sin into the new order of righteousness and life in Christ (6:3-6). Regardless of experience, even failure in sin, this is forensic fact and irreversible—Christ’s death and resurrection are “once-for-all”. Our heavenly account is now forever out of the red into the black. This is the scandal of God’s grace in the cross, and why Paul is falsely accused of Antinomianism, which he forestalls in this chapter (6:1, 15).

Now that the “old man” is judicially dead and we have thus definitively died, in Christ, to the penalty (3:21–4:25) and power of sin (5:17, 21), we no longer need live as though we remain under that power (6:2, 6, 11). Because we have been transferred from one domain to another, we can now obey Paul’s injunction to “put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man” (Eph 4:22, NKJV) and to “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24, NKJV; also Col 3:9, 10; Gal 3:27; Rom 13:12). Sin and righteousness are covenantal categories and therefore relational, vertically and horizontally. Sinners, as covenant-breakers, pursue their sin in partnership with other covenant-breakers. To put it colloquially, “It takes two to tango” or “Birds of a feather flock together”. To put it biblically, it is the “old man”—the Adam community of sin (“the body of sin”). However, the believer, as a covenant-keeper, having been transferred through baptism from the domain of the “old man” to the “new man”, from the community of sin to the community of righteousness, is free to “put off” the old practices and “put on” new ones consonant with the new community. This entails a progressive but, nevertheless, comprehensive behavioural change. How comprehensive, we are about to see.

The ‘How’ of Sanctification—Thinking Christianly

The Belief-System of the Adam Society

As Paul exhorts the Ephesians in reference to the “old man”, behavioural change occurs only as they are “renewed in the spirit of ... [their] minds” (4:23); and, likewise, exhorts the Romans to be “transformed by the renewal of ...[their] mind” (12:2). Because “the *mind* that is set on the flesh is hostile to God” (Rom 8:7) it must be renewed so as to “think the thoughts of God after him”. This realisation and, hence, learning to ‘think Christianly’ is crucial to the Christian project. Like the rest of the pagan world, the Romans and Ephesians thought in terms of the belief-system of the Adam society. Like their parents, Adam and Eve’s progeny – humankind – worships the *creature* more than the *Creator*. This dissolves the two categories into an immanentistic *Oneism* in which the creature – the natural world – is divinised. And this then provides the frame of reference for all non-Christian thinking. But how does man worship the creature?—Through raising autonomous reason above God and his verbal communication. In this way all humanistic predication is then based on the presupposed ultimacy and neutrality of reason. All argumentation is hence reduced to man’s mere assertion, to the claim of authority. It is so, because I say so. The living supernatural God of the Bible is thus expelled from the universe. And man is trapped within a closed naturalistic system—enslaved to the creature.

Nevertheless, the revelation of God to man is acutely clear to him. As we discovered in 1:18-25, in worshipping the creature,

man actively suppresses the clear knowledge of God. Regardless of all denials to the contrary, it is constantly being revealed through *creation* without (1:20) and *conscience* within (2:15). The result of this active suppression of God's knowledge is that "they became futile in their *thinking*" (1:21). This futility is made evident in that believing they would be free – raising themselves up as gods – they are made captive by their own belief-system and thence to their own lusts (1:24). Claiming to be wise they, instead, become fools (1:22).

The Law of God and the Adam Society

Therefore, to think Christianly demands repentance and conversion, an about turn from intellectual autonomy, entailing submission and obedience to God's revelation not only through creation and conscience but now through the Scriptures. They provide an objective standard for mankind's familial, civil, and social relationships. All that is necessary for man's salvation *and* sanctification is revealed in the Law, the Prophets, and the Apostolic writings: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16; also Rom 15:4; Jn 17:17; Ps 119:160). In their entirety – Law and Gospel – God has laid out his laws – also in their entirety (i.e. including civil law) – not only for the sanctification of individuals but also for society: "the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners" (1 Tim 1:8-11).

The Law of God, the Adam Belief-System, and Protestant Confusion

Nevertheless, Protestantism has been confused over its doctrine of sanctification. Despite paganism's closed immanentistic system, it has not been able to deny the transcendent. Under the influence of Hellenism, and it under that of the East, the early Christian mind battled with the notion of dualism. Reality, as the Greeks understood it, was bifurcated into two levels: the lower story of matter (the immanent) and an upper story of spirit (the transcendent), the lower inherently evil and the upper good. Salvation and sanctification therefore rescued the Christian from the lower story to the upper. Sanctification, hence, promoted retreat from the world and the body. Asceticism and monasticism were the result and created a false separation between secular (the world) and sacred (the church). However, Reformed Protestantism, while clarifying the doctrine of justification, has not fared much better than the early centuries in regard to the doctrine of sanctification. For example, the Westminster Confession's statement on sanctification, Chapter XIII, while excellent as far as it goes, contains no reference to the law of God as the standard by which the Christian or society may be holy to the Lord. Nonetheless, in Chapter XIX on the Law it does state in paragraph ii that "This law, after [Adam's] fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty towards God, and the other six our duty to man." But then confuses itself in paragraph iv, without any scriptural support, by saying that the "judicial laws" had "expired" with the OT economy. To add to the confusion, in the very next paragraph (v) it contradicts itself by saying "The moral law doth forever bind all" and in paragraph vi that it is a "rule of life" for all. The contradiction is that if a law is applicable to man how can it not also be applicable in his social and civil dealings. The universal moral law of God, the Decalogue (10 commandments), is merely a summary statement of the whole law. Likewise, the Great Commandment, in turn, is a summary statement of the Decalogue. Christ's response to the question as to "which is the great commandment in the law", summarises the whole law of God in merely two (Mt 22:36-39). Does this then nullify the rest? Of course not, how can they when they are summing them up. Furthermore, how, for example, does the eighth commandment, "You shall not steal", as a moral law, not have civil and judicial application? The so-called civil laws of the OT are merely concrete applications of the moral law. The law of God is an organic whole and cannot be separated. Hence, the civil law stands. Despite the church's troubled relationship with sanctification, it was the application of the law of God as its bedrock that provided medieval society with its success. No doctrine of sanctification can, therefore, ignore the role of God's holy law. It was given as the way of holiness or sanctification for Israel and for the nations (Dt 4:5-8; Is 2:2-4; Mt 28:18-20). As a prefix to all the laws of God, God's people were commanded, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). Immediately in the following verses various civil laws for the poor and disabled; prohibition of theft, slander and false witness; and for wage justice and judicial impartiality are enumerated. Holiness to the Lord clearly involves concrete behaviours governed by civil laws. And this, embedded in what is often called the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), dealing with cultic sacrifice and purity. God's people are set apart as holy to him. But this does not mean retreat from the world and the task of taking dominion. Law is the means by which man subdues the earth, bringing it under God's lordship, with Israel serving as a societal model for the nations (Dt 4-7; Ex 19:5-6; 1 Pet 2:5, 9). An inadequate doctrine of sanctification that ignores or rejects the law of God thwarts man's dominion task and his cultural mandate. Fortunately, a century before Westminster, the Formula of Concord (1577) was more definitive in declaring, "We believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a doctrine divinely revealed, which teaches what is just and acceptable to God, and which also denounces whatever is sinful and opposite to the divine will" (Article V, ii). In Article VI it enumerates the three uses of the law which can be summarised as to: 1) Curb sin for all men; 2) Mirror man's condition; and, 3) Guide the Christian in holy

living. Calvin also taught the three uses of the law in his Institutes (2.7), although in a slightly different order. Later Reformed scholars also affirmed the three uses but in the same order as the Lutheran Formula of Concord, defining them as: 1) the *civil* use, as a restraint on sin; 2) the *pedagogical* use, which confronts sin and points to Christ; 3) the *didactic* use, which is solely for believers, teaching the way of righteousness. Additionally, John Wesley saw no conflict, nor disjunction, between Law and Gospel (Sermon 25, "Sermon on the Mount, V," II, 2, 3).

The Law of God, Pietistic Sanctification, Impotent Apologetic and Authority

Despite this apparent consensus of the Reformed Protestant tradition concerning the three uses of the law, they are, "More honoured in the breach than the observance". Evangelicalism as a whole has deserted the law of God, for both the individual and the culture, as their definition of holiness. It has instead resorted to individualistic experientialism as the means to sanctification—to the "upper story"; to internalised and quasi-mystical co-crucifixion of the "self" with Christ on one hand, and on the other, to self-indulgent psycho-spiritual experiences—the former attempting to enter the "deeper life" – Christ's cross, the latter attempting to enter the "higher life" – Christ's crown. Both have resulted in pietism. This has then led to adopting humanistic law instead of the law of God for civil life. God's people have thus forsaken the field of battle, retreating from the world and the dominion task of building a godly culture. They have conceded defeat and await the second coming. They have no answers for cultural Marxism and its concomitant redefinitions of marriage, gender and family, and their prosecution through the legislature, the courts and state education, aided and abetted by a complicit media. Most attempts to stem the tide by Christians are rear-guard actions. Political activism, advocacy, legal defence of religious freedom, are all necessary but they are only reactive not proactive. Rather, the humanists and cultural Marxists are the ones proactively prosecuting their vision of society. Not until the Christian church recovers the truth of Paul's Gospel, of the ultimacy of the throne of God and, hence, the antithesis between two authorities – God and autonomous man – will she be able to proactively prosecute a cultural vision. Proclaiming this antithesis exposes the presupposition behind all humanistic thinking. And conversely, failing to do so, renders the church impotent in its evangelism and dominion task. At bottom every humanistic argument against God and his Gospel, regardless of its intellectual packaging (or lack thereof), reduces to one of assertion, to arbitrary argumentation. It is thus an appeal to authority, to autonomous reason. It is so because I think so. Man is at war with God. In rebellion against him, the bottom-line issue is one of ultimate authority—of man's presumed ultimacy. His primeval fall consisted of standing in judgement over God and his word, and as a would-be god, usurping his authority (Gen 3). This means that the Christian's apologetic must not only be grounded in God's authority but also articulate it. The apologetic that defends the faith assuming the authority and neutrality of autonomous reason fights the battle with the enemy's own weapons. One's starting premise determines one's conclusion; to argue on any premise other than the ultimacy of God will conclude with the creature. This is the folly of so-called "classical" or Thomistic apologetics. It spells certain defeat before the battle begins. On the other hand, Paul declares that his weapons are not those of "the flesh" but, rather, they are divinely powerful (2 Cor 10:4). Like David, the Christian is not to use Saul's armour to fight God's battles (1 Sam 17:38-39). Hence Paul declares:

For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to know* God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 1:19–21 (NASB)

The choice for Christian and non-Christian alike is between God's authority or man's, between God's law-word or man's own, hence, between *autonomy* (self-law) or *theonomy* (God's law).

Culturally Compromised by Misreading Romans

Misreading the Epicentre of Romans

The law of God is where the contemporary church, including much of the Reformed movement, is culturally compromised. And this is generally because they have misread Romans by locating its epicentre in 3:21-26, hence, centre-staging the *soteriological and personal*. The corrective of this commentary is that 5:12-21 is, in fact, the epistle's logical centre – its summit or watershed – from which the apostle's argument flows through chs. 1–4 on one side and through ch. 6 onwards on the other (see my comments 5:12-21). What effect does this have? It means that the whole epistle – and thus, the Gospel and God's plan for the world – hinge on the Adam-Christ analogy. This point is crucial, it cannot be overemphasised. Fail to apprehend it, and apostolic Christianity becomes a mere will-o'-the-wisp. Now, here it is—the analogy of Adam and Christ

(5:12-21) exposes the antithesis between the competing claims of two ultimate reference points—between the Creator God and the creature. Man, as a would-be god, sets himself up in competition to the one true and living God. And, claiming himself as his own ultimate reference point, sets in motion two competing governments, two competing laws, and two competing cultures. This has revolutionary ramifications. It means that the epicentre – the controlling force – of the *whole* epistle is *governmental and cultural*.

This is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus. Personal salvation is thus embedded in the context of God's governmental purpose. It is not an end in itself. This means that the storyline of redemptive history, as we have understood it, of Creation–Fall–Redemption–Consummation, is inadequate. Rather it should now read, Creation–De-Creation–Re-Creation–Consummation as God's redemptive plan. The Fall and salvation are, thus, held within God's redemptive purpose for the earth and history. There is no dualistic separation between creation and redemption and, therefore, of the temporal and the eternal. Nonetheless, our subliminal dualism and Gnosticism have caused us to spiritualise redemption to become exclusively individual, other-worldly, and eternal (Lloyd-Jones). Redemption, although a crucial theological category, is synonymous with Re-Creation (or New Creation). Christ through his redemptive work as the "new man" replaces Adam as the "old man" in a new creation, in the new covenant age here and now. Christ is the divide of history. The old epoch and order have been done away, the new has come. Jesus redeems creation – the whole cosmos – and renovates it. History now has "a future and a hope". This is why he taught us to pray, "Your *government* come, your *will* be done *on earth* as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10, author's rendering). As the "new man", Christ and his new society will fulfil what the "old man" and his society failed to do—that is, fill the earth with the culture of God's government of righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17).

Accordingly, with the epicentre of Romans found in the Adam-Christ analogy, the epistle's thrust, as stated, is governmental and cultural. But like any government, the government of God is exercised through its laws. It has been said that, if a culture changes its god, it changes its laws. So, the antithesis of the Adam-Christ analogy is not only between two gods – two ultimate reference points – but also two law-systems: *autonomy* (self-law) and *theonomy* (God's law).

Misreading the "Old Man" and the "Body of Sin"

Furthermore, Reformed commentators have not only misread the epistle's epicentre but have also misread the "old man" of 6:6, compounding the problem. They see it as merely our whole fallen nature from birth (Calvin) or our individual old humanity (or old self) in Adam (Lloyd-Jones) and the "body of sin" as either the mass of sin (Calvin), that is to say, the totality of all kinds of sin and corruption, or, as our physical bodies, serving as the instruments of sin (Murray, Lloyd-Jones). Although Lloyd-Jones also states that the "body of sin" is the old nature. While some of these, as larger theological perspectives, may be valid, they do not represent an accurate exegesis of the verse. Unfortunately, these handlings of the verse feed into the confusion of the two natures, that the Christian has both an old and new nature. They are unfortunately shipwrecked on the rocks of the most fundamental hermeneutical principle, the law of context. Moo is closer to the mark when he says, "Rather, they [old man and new man] designate the person as a whole, considered in relation to the corporate structure to which he or she belongs" (Moo, p. 373). Nygren is one of the few who grasps this by interpreting chapter ch. 6 in the light of the Adam-Christ solidarity taught in ch. 5. Hence, the "old man" and the "body of sin" as previously argued are the corporate Adam, the body of unbelievers both covenantally and organically joined in him. The counterpart to this is the "new man", the "body of Christ" into which the believer is transferred by baptism: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13, NKJV; also, Rom 6:3-6). See also J. Sidlow Baxter who taught that the "old man" was the corporate Adam, although he still promoted a somewhat counteractionist approach. The only other person, to my knowledge, who taught this was W. J. Ern Baxter, whose ministry I sat under for twenty years, beginning as an eighteen-year-old new believer. Ern was an extraordinarily eloquent preacher-teacher who pastored the largest evangelical church in Vancouver for twenty-five years and was highly influential internationally during the Charismatic renewal. See below for Ern's diagram of Romans, in my estimation, accurately parsing out all the key verses from Romans and the NT data into their appropriate categories (e.g. the corporate Adam, the corporate Christ, the body of Christ, the body of sin, the believer's body, the body of our Lord, etc.).

Paul's Real Gospel Manifesto

Cultural Manifesto

The upshot of this misreading is that Romans and, hence, the Gospel has been robbed of its core message—the apostle's real manifesto. It has been replaced with the subtext of personal salvation and holiness, as fundamental as these are. So, what is Paul's Gospel? The covenant parallel of Adam and Christ, as the architectonic structure of the epistle, shows forth the movement of history from Creation and De-Creation in Adam to Re-Creation and Consummation in Christ. And so, while

necessarily inclusive of personal salvation and renewal, Paul's larger manifesto is rather one of God's restoration of the whole creation, the cosmos; hence, of his government in history. It is therefore a cultural manifesto. In view of 5:12-21, as the agent of this restoration, this then demands the corporate Christ's obedience to the original cultural mandate (Gen 1:28), of filling, subduing, and ruling over the earth. This, Jesus renews in the Great Commission, commanding his church to baptise and disciple nations, teaching them to obey all that he has commanded (Mt 28:18-20).

Cultural Mandate

This cultural mandate is fulfilled through the once-for-all redemptive work of Christ, *first*, in the definitive shift of government from Adam to Christ and, *second*, in the progressive subduing of first the individual, then the family, the church, and the culture under the sway of God's government of righteousness, peace, and joy. This advance of the government of God is one of gradualism: "The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28). It moves from one sphere to the next, not through violent revolution but through an organic principle of maturity, of *internal integrity* leading to *external integration*. A healthy individual integrates with a family, a healthy family integrates with a redeemed community, and a healthy redeemed community integrates with the larger society. Each sphere willingly sacrificing on the altar of a larger sphere, the part surrendering to the whole, with the motivating force being one of serving not controlling. Any attempt at top-down dominion is not of the spirit of Christ but rather antichrist. As the Adam-Christ parallel shows, they are not only two covenant heads, but also two covenant societies. Both societies exist and function by virtue of their covenant heads and under their government, Adam's *autonomous* government and Christ's *theonomous* government. As man is progressively relocated from Adam into Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel and regeneration, there is a change of government from the dominion of sin to that of grace. This progressive dominion of God's government leads, in time, to the conversion of the world (chs. 9-11), flowing from one covenant sphere to another: to the family, the church, the culture, and, hence, to civil society and the state (see Ray Sutton, [That You May Prosper: Dominion by Covenant](#))

Law and Culture

Law is the outworking of a culture's ultimate reference point, of its god. Hence, autonomous man, as his own god, is governed by his own laws. However, with the definitive and epochal shift in Christ, he and his society have been served their death warrant. Autonomous man is a usurper and rebel. With overweening pride, he reached beyond the delegated authority granted by God to man as his vice-regent into godhood itself. And so, in Christ, as the "last Adam", he has been judged and condemned, receiving the penalty of death; in him the old Adamic order has been terminated. But now, God's new Christian society of individuals, families, churches, and culture, governed by his laws, has been mandated to dispossess every enemy of God and his Christ. Israel, under the OT economy, provides not only a type of the church (1 Cor 10:6, 11; Acts 7:38; Ex 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9 Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1), but also a model for the governance of nations (Dt 4:5-8; Is 2:2-4; Ex 19:6; Lev. 20:26; Dt. 7:6; 14:21; 26:19; 28:9; Is. 62:12). As Israel was baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea, likewise, nations are now baptised into Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of God's laws (1 Cor 10:11-4; Mt 28:18-20). As Israel either possessed the Land or was dispossessed in terms of the covenant, being provoked by its ethical stipulations to obedience or disobedience, likewise, the nations. And so, throughout Scripture even Gentile kings (i.e. the civil state) are commanded to obey and serve the Lord (Ps 2). This was the genius of medieval society (i.e., 'Christendom', etymologically, Christ's *domain*). Kings and magistrates, while never perfectly, saw themselves as governing under the King of kings (e.g. Charlemagne, Alfred the Great), providing the precondition for the rule of law, representative government through parliaments, and the principle of limited government. Nevertheless, the Gospel is not designed to be prosecuted by force through the sword of the magistrate, that is, under the bane of death or lesser threat. The magistrate's role, however, under God, is to enforce his law. The church preaches the Gospel of God and the state administers the law of God (see ch. 13 for church and state). Europe's evangelisation reached a critical mass so that its culture was Christianised; the law of God became normative for society. However, with the West's embrace of the Enlightenment project, there is today a diabolical outcry against Western civilisation and especially any notion of God's law as oppressive and unjust. This outcry, though, is also in the church, despite Reformed Protestantism's historic consensus on the law's three-fold use: in the civil sphere to curb sin, in evangelism to convict of sin, and in Christian sanctification. Sadly, almost across the board, the church does not honour the use of the law in any one of these. This is not merely a sin of omission but one of commission, as it actively resists their use, with the exception of the second and third use in some conservative Reformed circles. Unhappily, from the same tradition, a theory of "two kingdoms" has emerged, arguing for a kingdom of man, the world, governed by man's law and a separate kingdom of God, the church, governed by God's law. This conveniently exempts the church from its obedience to the Great Commission, the 'greatness' of which is its mandate to disciple not merely individuals or churches but nations, "teaching them to observe *all that I have commanded*" (Mt 28:20). But what did Jesus command?—Obedience to the Law of Moses, reinstating it for the new covenant aeon, attested to by the Gospels and reinforced by Paul (Mt 5:17-19; Rom 3:31). This obviously includes the state

and civil society, despite the attempt by many to deny it by misconstruing Jesus' statement that, "my kingdom is not *of* this world" (Jn 18:36). In other words, so their argument goes, the kingdom of God has no force in politics or culture. Let us clarify what this verse means. The word "of" serves as a preposition of origin, signifying that the Kingdom of God originates from above not below, from God not men, and therefore has authority over men. Jesus' teaching throughout the Gospel of John makes this abundantly clear:

He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. (3:31)

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. (8:23)

Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. (19:11)

Men are "from below" but Jesus who is the King is "from above", therefore, he is "not *of* this world" (8:23). And because he is "from above" they have "no authority" over him. Rather, Christ and his Kingdom have authority over them, and thus, the state, precisely because his Kingdom is not "of" this world. We will address the Christian doctrine of the state in ch. 13. Clearly, there is only one kingdom, the Kingdom of God that has authority over *all* men and *all* spheres of their existence. God's Kingdom is universal and ultimate. As alluded to previously, God exercises a creational and covenantal dominion over certain spheres: the individual, the family, the church, and the state (or the nation). Hence, there is one kingdom over multiple spheres, as the Kuyperian sphere-sovereignty doctrine teaches.

The fundamental problem with the "two kingdoms" theory is that it denies the eschatological shift from Adam to Christ, from one covenant head to another. But because it is eschatological, it is not only historical but also governmental. Christ is not only the intersection of two ages (or aeons) but also of two orders. In Christ, the old order of history has been *definitively* superseded. The "old man" and his "body of sin", his community of covenant-breakers, has been replaced by the "new man", Christ and his body. And now history is *progressively* transitioning from the old order to the new, as the Kingdom of God dispossesses the kingdom of darkness. A new covenant head has been appointed over the earth. And joined to him is a new covenant community, mandated anew to accomplish what Adam failed to do—to extend, as God's vice-regent, God's dominion over creation, filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God (Rev 5:10; 20:6).

The session of Christ at the right hand of the Father is integral to the mission of the church. Peter's Pentecostal sermon anchors the Holy Spirit's outpouring to Christ's ascension and enthronement at the right hand of the Father by quoting Psalm 110: "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, *until* I make your enemies your footstool" (Acts 2:34–35). God the Father is saying to the Son, "You preside here while the Holy Spirit – our executive agent – subdues every enemy of your crown rights as the King of kings." In other words, Jesus will not return *until* every pretender to the throne of the universe, every autonomous and rebellious power, is brought down to the dust. Hence, every visitation of the Holy Spirit to the church is to this end; that Christ's crown rights will prevail on the earth and in the affairs of men. In referencing this very psalm, Paul teaches that the "*last* enemy" to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:25-26), showing that from the time of Christ's ascension until his return every enemy is being progressively defeated *until* only one remains, and that one – death – shall be consumed by life itself in the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:16-26). This is the substance of the apostle's prayer for the Ephesians, that their eyes will be opened to the hope of their calling, to the glory of his inheritance *in* the "saints" (*hagios*- the set apart or holy ones), and to the power that was wrought in the resurrection on their behalf, and the authority that Christ and his body now – "in this age" – exercise over all authorities, powers and dominions.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints [*hagios*], I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints [*hagios*], and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only *in this age* but also in the one to come. And **he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**

Ephesians 1:15–23

This session of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit in the church is the “...administration [*oikonomia* – literally, law of the house] suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and **things on the earth**” (Eph 1:10 NASB). In Christ and his church, the eternal invades and governs the temporal. It is in, or during, the “fullness of the times” – here and now – when Christ administers “all things on the earth”. And how does he do this?—Through the church. This is why Jesus prefaced the church's marching orders – the renewed cultural mandate – with the declaration that “all authority in heaven and *on earth*” had been given to him (Mt 28:18). And so, Paul was given the revelation of the “administration [*oikonomia*] of the mystery” (Eph 3:3, 9; Rom 16:25), that is to say, not only the revelation of the Gospel but also its administration so that “the manifold wisdom of God might **now** be made known **through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). How does this happen except the church, being filled with the Holy Spirit, display the full panoply of God’s revelation, wisdom, and power; especially his holy and just laws for mankind. While they are not for man’s justification, God’s laws are for his sanctification, as a charter for life (Dt 4:1-8; Lev 18:5; Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12; see commentary on 2:13 for a discussion of law-keeping).

Conclusion

We conclude, therefore, that if 5:12-21 is the architectonic epicentre of Romans, it not only revolutionises our understanding of the whole epistle but more particularly chs. 6 and 7. Confronting the problems of sin and the law, these chapters, and the doctrine of sanctification (not to mention our doctrines of the Holy Spirit and of the church), are rescued from an emasculated and hyper-spiritualised parody of true Christianity. They no longer promote a morbid preoccupation with one’s personal holiness but rather an exultation of Christ’s dominion in history. Not only over personal sin but more significantly over society and the cosmos. With the renewing of the Christian mind, the doctrine of sanctification becomes far more comprehensive than previously imagined. It covers not only the individual but also the three other covenant spheres of the family, the church, and the nation as holy to the Lord.

Exegesis

Turning to the exegesis, the chapter divides into two paragraphs, vs. 1-14 and vs. 15-23. Paul’s question from v. 1 repeated in v.15, triggering the break between them and a transition in the argument. While both paragraphs explicate the transfer from the dominion of sin to the dominion of righteousness, the former focuses on the negative aspect of release from slavery to sin and the latter on the positive of slavery to righteousness. In fact, chs. 6 and 7 both revolve around a series of questions – 6:1, 15; 7:7, 13 – arresting potential accusations and misinterpretations of Paul’s argument to this point. Both chapters address the accusation against Paul of Antinomianism (against-law). See my comments on 3:8 for more background on this accusation. The message of sovereign grace (chs. 2-5) is so scandalous to the Jewish and legalistic mind, on one hand, that Paul was accused of denigrating the law but on the other – to the Greek mind – of advocating licence so that grace might abound the more. He, therefore, dismantles legalism *and* licence in ch. 6:1–7:6, and in ch. 7:7-25 defends the law, explaining its function of defining and exposing sin. Chapter 8 then resumes the themes of ch. 5, showing that chs. 6 and 7 are parenthetical, forming, in some small measure, an excursus. Nonetheless, the overriding thrust of chs. 5–8, as a literary whole, is to show the certainty of justification, that the believer is definitively saved, it is not a mere legal fiction, and that its implications are cosmic.

Fittingly, the whole section is thus characterised by “indicative/imperative” combinations, commanding a change of behaviour from the Adam to the Christ order: “sin will not rule over you”/“do not let sin reign” (6:13-14); “you are not in the flesh”/“do not live according to the flesh” (8:9, 12). The behaviours of the old order of Adam are to be jettisoned and the those of the new order in Christ adopted (see the parallel passages to Rom 6:6 in Eph 4:22-23; Col 3:9-10).

6:1-14—Dead to Sin in Christ

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self [anthropos -man] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be **enslaved** to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being*

*raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has **dominion** over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider [logizomai – reckon] yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore **reign** in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no **dominion** over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

For an exegesis of v. 6 see above, *Misreading the ‘Old Man’ and the ‘Body of Sin’*, showing the errors of translation and interpretation surrounding it. The implications are not insignificant, in fact, it could be said that the apostle’s project hangs on this one verse. Verse 14 – “since you are not under law but under grace” – is vigorously debated among commentators and infamously misconstrued to teach radical discontinuity between OT and NT, recognisant of Antinomianism and Marcionism. Regardless of what else might be said about the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:15-19, if they are taken at face value, for their plain meaning, one thing is clear—he has not come to “abolish the law”. Moreover, if anyone teaches otherwise, he or she “will be called least in the kingdom of God”. With this, Paul is in complete harmony. Immediately on the heels of his teaching of righteousness by faith he cuts off any possible antinomian conclusion: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law” (3:31). The law, as God’s objective standard of righteousness, has not been abolished. For background on this problem, see my comments on 3:21; also, on the Jewish abstraction of the law of God, see 2:1-5, 25, 29; 3:8. Calvin, Murray, Cranfield and Bahnsen all view it as referring, not to the law of God itself but to the condemning effect of the law. However, as Moo correctly points out, the immediate context – 5:20; 7:1-6 – does, in fact, notwithstanding the absence of the definite article (“the” law), refer to the actual law of God as given to Moses (*op. cit.*, p. 387). Nevertheless, he rejects the notion that it could also be referring to its Jewish abuse (*op. cit.*, p. 415), despite Paul’s great pains to address this problem (2:17-29; 3:9-30; 9:30-33; 10:3), including his message to Timothy that “the law is good, if one uses it lawfully”, that is to say, as objective ethical commands, implying other uses as unlawful (1 Tim 1:8-11). Although, he does allow a potential allusion to its condemning effects (*ibid*, p.388). But he unfortunately argues, contra to Jesus and Paul, for such discontinuity between the covenants that the “commanding force” of the Mosaic law no longer applies. Although, his position then dies the death of a thousand qualifications; some laws might still be in force but which ones he cannot tell (*op. cit.*, p. 390). Furthermore, he admits that grace operated in the OT, belying his radical law/grace discontinuity, and can offer no explanation (*ibid*). And moreover, the law, he concedes, is not intrinsically negative as are sin, the flesh, and death; again, his discontinuity schema offers no explanation. However, Moo’s dilemmas are resolved with the realisation that rather than discontinuity, continuity of the covenants is the actual pattern of redemptive history; hence, Law and Gospel represent a continuity from OT to NT, solving Moo’s dilemma as to which laws carry over—they all do, unless specifically rescinded by the NT (see my comments 3:21, 26). Nonetheless, in my view, Moo’s position that v. 14 refers to the actual law of Moses is correct, on the basis, as mentioned, of the immediate context. Paul is not only coming out of 5:20 – “the law came in to increase the trespass” – but is also preparing the way for a final answer to the problem of the law in 7:1-6 and following. And then sandwiched between them, ch. 6 builds the argument of freedom from the domain of sin, with v. 14a declaring that “sin will have no dominion over you”. Verse 14b then explains why this is so: “since you are not under law but under grace”. So, while the references are to the actual law, they focus on the law’s sin-exposing and sin-enlivening effect (3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 7:5, 7ff); and, hence, on the law’s judicial function of judgement and condemnation (2:12; 3:19; 4:15; 5:13; 7:9-11). By the time the apostle arrives at ch. 6, based on his argument from ch. 2 onwards, the ministry of the law and its negative effects because of sin are uppermost in his mind. He then expands on these in ch. 7, climaxing in the Gospel solution of 8:1—“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”. However, as referenced above, the Jewish abstraction of the law as a means of works-righteousness provides a significant aspect of the apostle’s argument to this point, adding to the import of v.14. So, to be “not under law but under grace” is to be freed from the besetting sin of autonomous man, Jew and Gentile, of self-righteousness. Autonomous man is a legalist. This plays out in a myriad of ways in the body politic: in positivist law, statism, and politically correct mentalities and the virtue signalling of cultural pharisaism. In conclusion, Moo’s dilemmas are easily resolved by the further realisation there is only one covenant with various administrations; from Adam each administration progressively increases, adding to the last, until the climax of the covenant in Christ (see my comments 3:21). Hence, in Christ, we are no longer “under” the old administration. This means we are no longer under its judicial condemnation, the “letter” of the law (4:15; 2 Cor 3:6-7), nor under the law’s misuse through works-righteousness (9:31-32; Gal 3:10-14). Nevertheless, the binding authority of God’s character and moral law remain; he does not change. Moses’ was an administration of inscripturate law (7:4, 6; 2 Cor 3:6; Col 2:14), Christ’s of incarnate grace (2 Cor 3:5-18; Rom 8:3). But neither are ever absent from the other—God’s law is gracious; his grace is lawful. Because of grace, God’s law can now be obeyed. In Adam, the law condemns; but, in Christ, it justifies and sanctifies (see my comments 2:13; 3:2, 20).

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! **16** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient **slaves**, you are **slaves** of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? **17** But thanks be to God, that you who were once **slaves** of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves** of righteousness. **19** I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as **slaves** to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as **slaves** to righteousness leading to sanctification. **20** For when you were **slaves** of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21** But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become **slaves** of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the next paragraph (vs. 15-23), on the heels of v. 14 in particular, as always, Paul heads off any possible antinomian (against-law) conclusion. He poses the rhetorical question, “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?” Because we are freed “from sin” we are not free “to sin” he exclaims, “By no means!” He then proceeds to underline that once we were slaves (*doulos*) to sin (vs. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20) but now slaves (*doulos*) to righteousness and of God (vs.16, 18, 19, 22). As Bob Dylan’s gospel lyric proclaims, “You’re gonna have to serve somebody”. Paul uses *doulos* (slave) and *douloo* (enslaved) eight times and the related words *hupakouo* or *hupakoo* (obey, obedient) three times. The transfer from Adam to Christ is one of dominion; each domain, claiming ultimacy, and a concomitant binding authority. Autonomous man, as a covenant-breaker and rebel against God, demands that all reality bow to him. Obedience to either domain requires, as the Greek word *hupakouo* conveys, a hearing (*kouo*) under (*hupa*), a recognition of authority. So, by standing in judgement over God’s word, Adam stepped out from under its authority. Instead, standing under his own word in obeisance to his own ultimacy and authority. As the source of his own law-word. Therefore, far from teaching freedom from law, through the Adam-Christ parallel Paul teaches the absolute antithesis between two ultimate authorities and two laws: Adam and Christ (see my comments 5:12-21). In v. 17, therefore, Paul gives thanks that the Romans have “become obedient [*hupakouo*] from the heart to the standard [*tupos*] of teaching to which you were committed [*paradidomi*].” In other words, they have embraced, the *tupos*— the “form”, or “pattern” — of Christian belief in this absolute antithesis between Adam and Christ; in fact, Paul has already established the antithesis as a *tupos* (type) in 5:14. Moreover, the Romans have not only accepted this as basic to the Christian belief-system (“the standard of teaching”) but also “committed” (*paradidomi*- to give over into another’s power) themselves under its authority, becoming “obedient” (*hupakouo*) “from the heart”. Relocated from Adam’s autonomous law-word, they are now, like a *doulos*, coming under the voice —the law-word — of a new master, of his objective standard for their conduct. The apostle’s explication of the law is, thus, viewed through the Adam-Christ paradigm not Moses-Christ. This is a game-changer, a pivotal distinction. Through chs. 2-4 he has dealt with the Moses (Jewish-Gentile) problem, but with ch. 5 he shifts from the Moses problem to the Adam problem, to man’s meta-history. And this, to explain the generic human problem, of Jew and Gentile, of autonomous man in rebellion against God. The only discontinuity that Paul thus emphasises is between two governments: Adam and Christ, the rule of sin and the rule of righteousness and of God. To be in Adam is to be therefore “under” the condemnation of the law; Adam’s very rejection of God’s law ironically brought him under its judgement. The relocation from Adam to Christ is thus from “under law” to “under grace” (v. 14). Accordingly, in v. 19 he defines the Adamic problem as one of “lawlessness” (*anomia*), of rebellion against God’s authority in his law-word. And, correspondingly, the Christ order as one of “lawfulness”, of submission to God’s law (3:31;8:7). The new administration in Christ is, hence, a restoration of God’s law, not an abrogation (Mt 5:17-19). To reject, therefore, the continuity of God’s law from Moses to Christ, as a binding authority, is a contravention of God’s purpose of the utmost gravity. It has emasculated the Gospel, deceived the church, and destroyed a culture. Uncorrected, this error singlehandedly thwarts God’s great earth-purpose. We have therefore been dispossessed and consigned to the wilderness of God’s dealings; like Adam, we are under the sanctions of the very law we reject. Until we bow to the ultimacy of God in his law-word we will not be given the Kingdom. It is not just a hermeneutical problem but a heart one. May God have mercy upon us. May he turn our hearts and deliver us from our rebellion.

[Part 5: Introduction—De-Creation & Re-Creation: Paradise Restored](#)

[Part 5a: Chapter 5:1-21—The Hope of Glory](#)

Part 5b: Chapter 6:1-23—The Problem of Sin

Part 5c: Chapter 7:1-25—The Problem of the Law

Part 5d: Chapter 8:1-39—Re-Creation by the Spirit: *Paradise Restored*

Part 1: [Kingdom through Covenant](#)

Part 2: [Caesar & Christ: Gospel Declared](#)

Part 3: [God Revealed & Man Judged: *Covenant Disobeyed*](#)

Part 4: [Judgement & Justification: *Justice Promised*](#)

Part 5: [De-Creation & Re-Creation: *Paradise Restored*](#)

Part 6: Disobedience & Dispossession: *Covenant Administered*

Part 7: Autonomy & Theonomy: *Covenant Obeyed*

Part 8: Personal & Cultural: *Dominion Regained*

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