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INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

BY

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to determine the relationship between the individual and the community in Pauline theology, focusing the investigation specifically on these motifs in Romans. Previous Pauline scholarship has for most of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries failed to recognize the integral connection between these two dimensions of Paul's thought, wrongly pitting either the individual or the community against the other. This investigation will present a typology of individuals in Romans in order to highlight the diversity of ways in which Paul thinks of individuals, as well as the necessarily communal location of these individuals.

Chapter one surveys recent Pauline scholarship on the question of individuals and community, noting that the dominant tone of this research is anti-individual in its fundamental orientation. This chapter concludes with an outline of the entire dissertation.

Chapter two provides a detailed analysis of the debate that developed between Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann over the role of the individual in Paul's letters. This debate set the agenda for the scholarship surveyed in Chapter one, and thus warrants a thorough treatment.

Chapter three brings the Stoic philosopher Epictetus into the conversation in order to provide a contemporary example of a thinker who, like Paul, attempted to do justice to both individual and communal/societal themes in his philosophical output. While Epictetus' way of relating the individual and the community is different from Paul's, it shows clearly that this is not an anachronistic question in antiquity, contrary to the claims of much Pauline scholarship. The comparison between Epictetus and Paul illuminates our understanding of Paul's theology even (perhaps especially) when it shows the different ways in which the two thinkers answered the same basic question, that of how to relate individuals and community/society.

Chapter four is the first half of the typology of individuals in Romans. It looks at four different types of individuals as they are found in Romans 2, 3 and 4: *characteristic*, *generic*, *binary* and *exemplary* individuals. Definitions of each type are offered as they are discussed.

Chapter five presents the second half of the typology of individuals in Romans, looking at four other types of individuals in Romans 5, 7, 12 and 16: *representative*, *negative exemplary*, *somatic* and *particular* individuals. While the communal nature of Pauline theology is evident in Chapter four, it becomes especially clear in Chapter five.

Finally, Chapter six summarizes the findings of the entire investigation, while also pointing to other Pauline texts that could be used to fill out the typology of individuals. Two main conclusions are enumerated. First, that both Paul and Epictetus place great emphasis on the individual and the individual's place within community or society, although Epictetus' concern for emotional invulnerability (seen in his prioritizing of individual, cognitive action) is in marked tension with Paul's more foundationally communal way of thinking. Second, filling out the second part of the point just mentioned, it is maintained that although Paul's theology must be understood as retaining a vital place for individuals, *these are necessarily individuals-within-community*, and that the prevalent scholarly antitheses between these two categories (on either side of the debate) are fundamentally misleading.

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The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic, without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

## **Declaration**

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or in any other university for a degree.

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Of course I would be most ungrateful if I did not also offer a small token of thanks to the God who created me, saved me and who sustains me in all of life.

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

November 28, 2011

## Abbreviations

The bibliographic reference style employed, and the abbreviations of ancient literature used, are all taken from Patrick H. Alexander, et al. (eds.), *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), with the following exceptions, which are not included in the *Handbook*:

<i>AnPhil</i>	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
CThM	Calwer theologische Monographien
EurH	Europäische Hochschulschriften
LS	A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
<i>LutMon</i>	<i>Lutherische Monatshefte</i>
<i>Phron</i>	<i>Phronesis</i>
RMCS	Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies
RUSCH	Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Much of the history of modern thought and culture is a story of the ways people have found to call . . . claims for individual independence into question, to transcend mere selves by fusing them with communities, nations, classes, or cultures, or to humble them by trumpeting their radical dependency on historical processes, cosmic forces, biological drives, fundamental ontologies, discursive regimes, or semiotic systems. More than any other world culture, the modern West has made the debate about individuality and selfhood a central question – perhaps the central question – of its collective attempts at self-definition.

Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. Exit the Individual: Recent Trends in Scholarship on the Individual and the Community in Paul's Letters**

A seismic shift has occurred in the interpretation of the Apostle Paul's letters over the last century. Classically Paul's letters have been read as directed, if not exclusively, at least primarily at the individual and the individual's salvation and moral life. A new consensus, however, has been developing among the majority of Pauline scholars that understands the apostle as a communal thinker who has little concern for the fate of individuals, who by and large does not even have a conception of the individual at all. The following study is a diagnosis of the dichotomy between the individual and the community as it has developed in Pauline scholarship, as well as a proposal for a way beyond this impasse. My thesis is simple: *the individual and the community belong together in Paul's theology; there is no Pauline individual outside of community, just as there is no community without individuals at the heart of its ongoing life*. The simplicity of this thesis, however, masks an enormous amount of disagreement and contention among scholars.

The roots of this debate in biblical scholarship lie in many places.<sup>2</sup> Two scholars in particular, however, William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer, represent

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<sup>1</sup> Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>2</sup> For a survey and analysis of the origins of this development in New Testament studies see Stephen Barton, "The Communal Dimension of Earliest Christianity: A Critical Survey of the Field," *JTS* 43 (1992): 399-427; cf. James G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles* (LNTS 320; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 28-32; Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual* (BIS; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1-6. On related

the most important early precursors of the turn from the individual in recent Pauline theology. Both scholars, in their own ways, strongly disputed that the individual was at the center of Pauline thought, primarily by arguing for the marginalization of justification by faith in reconstructions of the major emphases of Paul's thought.<sup>3</sup> This protest against the individual initially did not carry the day, however, and was largely eclipsed by the work of scholars operating with traditional assumptions about the importance of the individual, even as many of these scholars were otherwise highly critical of traditional interpretations of the New Testament. Rudolf Bultmann, of course, towers over the rest of his contemporaries in his single-minded insistence that the individual and the individual's act of decision are at the heart of Pauline thought. Bultmann's existentialist approach to New Testament interpretation, although representing the mainstream of biblical scholarship at the time, finally came under sustained attack from one of his own former students, Ernst Käsemann. Bultmann and Käsemann, because they engaged in a long-standing debate on the individual and community that sets out the major issues to be looked at in this dissertation, will be examined in detail in the next chapter. In this introductory chapter we will examine the

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trends in the human sciences more generally see Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (ed. Colin Gunton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158-85. Dale B. Martin, "Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: 'Toward a Social History of the Question'," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 52, captures these changes in biblical scholarship well: "Whereas [identifying individualism with Hellenism] was a saving aspect for nineteenth-century Germans, for whom individualism was a valued commodity of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, it was a problem by the middle of the twentieth century, when it could be made to symbolize the fractured, atomized, anonymous state of modernity with its loss of communities. And whereas individualism in conjunction with universalism represented truth to Kantian and Hegelian liberals, the same combination represented for American scholars, nurtured in pietism and evangelicalism, the loss of revelation or Christianity's claim to special access to truth."

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., William Wrede, *Paulus* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907), 77: "Paulus hat den Einzelnen gar nicht im Sinn; die Frage der persönlichen Heilsgewißheit spielt deshalb bei ihm keine Rolle. Er fragt, wie wir sahen, teils ganz allgemein nach der Bedingung für den Eintritt in die Kirche und findet sie im Glauben; teils ebenso allgemein nach dem Wege, auf dem die Menschheit überhaupt zum Heil gelangt, und hier weist er auf die Gnade, die in der Erlösung offenbar geworden ist." Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930), 215, concludes that—in contrast to a model centered on righteousness by faith (which is "individualistisch und unkosmisch")—at the heart of Paul's view of redemption is "ein kollektives, kosmisch bedingtes Erlebnis." Cf. Otto Merk, "Die Persönlichkeit des Paulus in der Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus* (eds. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 37.

trajectories that have developed subsequent to the debate between Bultmann and Käsemann.<sup>4</sup>

Three distinct strands of New Testament scholarship stand out in particular with regard to the wall of hostility that has been built up between individually- and communally-focused readings of Paul. These three can be labeled the social-scientific approach, readings of the apostle in the wake of the New Perspective on Paul, and apocalyptic approaches. Taken together with the earlier work of Käsemann they represent a forceful and integrated challenge to classic readings of Paul's letters that are focused on themes such as individual salvation, individual ethics, and the like.

The purpose of this survey of more recent scholarly approaches is to highlight the development of the dichotomy between individual and communal approaches to Paul that has largely come to dominate Pauline scholarship in the present. It must be stated emphatically from the outset that my purpose is only to bring attention to the dichotomy in recent scholarship, not to perpetuate it. A *broad-brush antithesis between the individual and the community in Paul is manifestly false*. When Paul writes of the individual, the community is never far from his mind, and the same is true the other way round.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1 Social-Scientific Anti-Individualism

The social-scientific approach to Paul is represented by a diverse group of scholars such as Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and the "Context Group" of New Testament researchers. It is closely related in approach to a renewed interest in biblical scholarship on the social dynamics of the ancient world, and Paul's churches in particular, an interest that has roots in the earlier work of scholars such as Wayne Meeks, Abraham Malherbe, and Gerd Theissen.<sup>6</sup> With regard to the individual and the community Bruce Malina is representative when he says:

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<sup>4</sup> For an extended treatment of the scholarly trajectories surveyed below see Ben C. Dunson, "The Individual and Community in Twentieth and Twenty-first-Century Pauline Scholarship," *CBR* 9 (2010): 68-88.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that I am using the word individual to refer to a singular person and am not here engaging in the wider modern debate about what constitutes human identity and selfhood.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the most important works that explore the New Testament from a social-scientific and/or "social dynamics" perspective are: Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006); Gerd Theissen, *Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004);

Instead of individualism, what we find in the first-century Mediterranean world is what might be called collectivism. Persons always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded. . . . Such a group-embedded, collectivist personality is one who simply needs another continually in order to know who he or she really is.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Esler concurs:

Nowhere [are the dangers of anachronistic readings of the New Testament] more evident than in the predilection of European and US critics to discuss first-century texts in terms of individualism when that is a feature of modern Western culture largely absent from the period under discussion.<sup>8</sup>

This approach to the New Testament argues that notions of individuality or individual concern in Paul are illegitimate and anachronistic projections of twentieth- or twenty-first-century individualism onto communally-focused texts.<sup>9</sup> The ancient world of the writers of the New Testament, in contrast, is comprised of

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idem, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); idem, *Social Reality and the Early Christians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2d ed.; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2d ed.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003); B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994); John H. Elliott, *Social Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 1993); John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (LEC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1986). See Burnett, *Salvation*, 3-6, for a more extensive discussion of this perspective in recent scholarship, including numerous additional bibliographical resources. See also David G. Horrell, "Social Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (ed. David G. Horrell; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 3-28; Theissen, *Social Reality*, 15, nn. 18-19; D. J. Harrington, "Second Testament Exegesis and the Social Sciences: A Bibliography," *BTB* 18 (1988): 77-85.

<sup>7</sup> Malina, *Insights*, 62; cf. B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, "First Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individualistic," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 67-96; see also John L. Meech, *Paul in Israel's Story: Self and Community at the Cross* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 40 (cf. 18, 39-44, 55-56), who, while adopting Malina's basic model of dyadic personality, qualifies it in a way that takes more account of the importance of the individual in Paul: "the self and community are correlates, which is to say that the self and community are each mutually the condition of the other."

<sup>8</sup> Esler, *Approaches*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> For a dissenting opinion regarding the claim that the modern reader of the New Testament is simply an isolated, individualistic, and abstract "self" (who can be easily contrasted with the ancient "dyadic" self) see F. Gerald Downing, "Persons in Relation," in *Making Sense in (and of) the First Christian Century* (JSNTSup 197; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 44-47; cf. 52: "Such social production of adults as we have evidenced from the east Mediterranean of late antiquity is as interested in producing socially performed and socially reinforced individuality as is (for good or ill) the social production of adults in North Atlantic countries today." Downing describes a set of interlocking attitudes found across a wide range of ancient sources that could best be described as inculcating a "socially performed and socially reinforced individuality," and which are in fact quite similar to modern attitudes and constructions of "the self": parental desire to see children develop in their emotional capabilities, development of individual expression in children's school exercises, and the asserting of one's own desires in romantic relationships.



collectivist societies, societies in which the interests of one's community are all-controlling, and where self-concern is almost wholly absent. It is not surprising, then, that issues like individual sin, justification and even ethics, would be of little interest to interpreters operating under the influence of social-scientific models. While the use of these models does not mean that an interpreter *must* dismiss the individual from Pauline theology, this has been true for most scholars operating in this realm of academic endeavor. Esler is more nuanced than many others in his recognition that these models "are merely heuristic tools used in what is essentially a comparative process"<sup>10</sup> and that "Mediterranean anthropology cannot hope to provide a set of models which perfectly match the New Testament social world . . . ."<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, claims such as his that individualism is "largely absent" from the New Testament period remain firmly entrenched in much recent Pauline scholarship, both on the academic and on the popular level.

## 1.2 Anti-Individualism in the Wake of the New Perspective on Paul

In the twentieth-century, an approach to Paul's relationship with Judaism developed that by-and-large began to emphasize the continuities, rather than conflicts between the apostle and the theology of his fellow Jews. This approach is associated with G. F. Moore, C. G. Montefiore, W. D. Davies, Krister Stendahl and E. P. Sanders, among others.<sup>12</sup>

For example, on the question of individuals and community, W. D. Davies argues that:

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was not solely and not primarily orientated toward the individual but to the interpretation of the people of God. The justified man was 'in Christ,' which is a communal concept. And necessarily because it was

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<sup>10</sup> Esler, *Approaches*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (3d ed.; London: SPCK, 1970); G. F. Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *HTR* 1 (1921): 197-254; C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen, 1914). On the history of twentieth-century scholarship emphasizing Paul's Jewish context see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The 'Lutheran' Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 117-33; Timo Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology* (WUNT 2.100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 15-18; Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 313-59.

eschatological, the doctrine moved towards the salvation of the world, a new creation.”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, Paul’s focus lies elsewhere than on individuals and their private relationship with God. Even justification by faith is primarily a matter of defining the boundaries of God’s true people. In this regard, we see a polarization developing between the individual and the community, although Davies does not express himself in quite as strongly antithetical terms as many who would come after him.

As is widely recognized, Krister Stendahl’s 1963 article “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West” had an immediate and substantial impact on the shape of subsequent Pauline scholarship, despite its brevity.<sup>14</sup> Douglas Harink echoes the sentiment of many over the last half century:

Stendahl managed in one short essay to distinguish the apostle’s concerns from centuries of individualizing, psychologising, and spiritualizing interpretations, with the audacious claim that a great deal of Paul’s theology was about Gentiles and Jews rather than about guilt-ridden individuals seeking to escape the punishment of an angry God.<sup>15</sup>

Stendahl’s essay, Harink continues, “[effectively shifted] attention from the typically ‘Lutheran’ or Protestant themes of individual justification, sin, guilt, grace, and faith to the more concrete, historical issues of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Paul’s mission and churches.”<sup>16</sup> As Richard Hays puts it, Stendahl

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<sup>13</sup> W. D. Davies, “Paul: From the Jewish Point of View,” in *Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume 3: The Early Roman Period* (eds. W. D. Davies, John Sturdy and William Horbury; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.716.

<sup>14</sup> Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215; repr. in idem, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-96. On the reception of Stendahl’s article, see e.g., Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification* (NSBT 9; Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2001), 14: “Although various studies of early Judaism challenged [the idea that in ‘coming to faith in Christ Paul found relief for his guilty conscience’], it was a provocative article on Paul which especially caught the attention of more recent scholarship, and marked the changing perspective which was to emerge in years to come.” Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), 6: “The work of many scholars, beginning with the pioneering essay by Krister Stendahl on Paul and the West’s introspective conscience, suggests the need for a persistent questioning of the traditional readings of Paul’s letters on a . . . fundamental level.” Bruce J. Malina, “The Individual and the Community – Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity,” *BTB* 9 (1979): 126: “Nearly two decades ago, Krister Stendahl competently argued against the existence of any sort of ‘introspective conscience’ in Paul and his writings . . .” Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (JSNTSup 274; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 14, insists that Stendahl’s article set the “critical agenda of the New Perspective” on Paul by shifting it away from a focus on “Paul’s ostensible introspective conscience” toward analysis of the place of Gentiles within the covenant people of God.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

“rendered increasingly doubtful” the idea that “Romans is a treatise on the problem of how a person may ‘find’ justification . . . .”<sup>17</sup>

Stendahl’s main problem with the “traditional Western way of reading Pauline letters” is that it looks at them as “documents of human consciousness” rather than contingent expressions of local concerns in the individual churches addressed in Paul’s letters.<sup>18</sup> This in turn has wrongly led to justification by faith being regarded as the center of Pauline (and biblical) thought, since it has “been hailed as the answer to the problem which faces the ruthlessly honest man in his practice of introspection.”<sup>19</sup> As a result, almost every aspect of Pauline theology has been illegitimately psychologized and distorted in an individualistic direction. Rather than focusing on the issue of Jew-Gentile relations “Pauline thought about the Law and Justification was applied [in the Western Christian tradition] in a consistent and grand style to a more general and timeless human problem.”<sup>20</sup> Stendahl sees Rudolf Bultmann as something of a capstone to this past history of exegesis.<sup>21</sup>

With this essay Stendahl sought to re-orient the exegetical and theological program of Pauline scholarship away from a focus on the individual toward exclusively communal and salvation-historical issues. While (as we will see in the next chapter) Ernst Käsemann provided a much more detailed and sophisticated program of anti-individual Pauline interpretation, Stendahl’s essay, by memorably capturing the changing mood of biblical scholarship, served as something of a flashpoint in dramatically redirecting Pauline scholarship away from questions of individual concern.

On the issue of individuals and their relationship to community it is noteworthy that E. P. Sanders, despite his criticism of traditional Christian readings of Paul, emphasizes that “Rabbinic religion, while personal and individual, was also corporate and collective,” that in the Judaism of Paul’s day and the centuries after it, “the pattern of religion which we have been discussing demonstrates how

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<sup>17</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Abraham as Father of Jews and Gentiles,” in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 63, and n. 10; cf. idem, “Psalm 143 as Testimony to the Righteousness of God,” in *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 57, and n. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Stendahl, “Introspective Conscience,” 79.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>21</sup> See ibid., 87-88.

individual and collective religion were combined.”<sup>22</sup> What is more, especially after the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, “the group did not mediate between God and individual Israelites: a man’s piety was personal, his prayers were directly to God, his forgiveness was directly from God.”<sup>23</sup> Sanders even points to Bultmann in support of his claim that “Christianity adopted a very similar mix of group membership and individual and personal religion.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, few of the scholars who have followed Sanders’ lead in comparing Paul and Judaism have been so balanced in their presentation of how either Paul or Judaism relate the individual and community.

Although certainly not a monolithic unity, the New Perspective on Paul has taken the insights of scholars such as Davies, Stendahl and Sanders even further in anti-individualist directions.<sup>25</sup> Richard Hays, for example, absolutizes the approach of scholars like Davies when he argues that: “The fundamental problem with which Paul is wrestling in Romans is not how a person may find acceptance with God; the problem is to work out an understanding of the relationship in Christ between Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>26</sup> The place of the people of God in the plan of God, not individual experience, is central to Paul’s theology. As with many scholars, Hays does not see middle ground as an option: either Paul is concerned to speak of individuals and

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<sup>22</sup> Sanders, *Palestinian Judaism*, 237.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 238 (although see also idem, *Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 49); cf. ibid., *Palestinian Judaism*, 547 (emphasis original): “Both Judaism and Paul take full account of the individual and the group.” On ibid., 238, Sanders cites Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; Waco, TX, 2007), 93. Here Bultmann says that in salvation “the individual is incorporated” (*der Einzelne eingegliedert ist*) into “the fellowship of God’s people” (*die Gemeinschaft des Volkes Gottes*) and that “in Christianity, the individual believer stands within the Congregation [*der einzelne Gläubige innerhalb der Gemeinde*], and the individual congregations are joined together into one Congregation—the Church” (Bultmann, *Theology*, 93; idem, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953], 92-93).

<sup>25</sup> I am here using Dunn’s phrase “New Perspective on Paul” to refer to any approach to Paul that is based on the reinterpretations of his theology that came in the wake of the wide-ranging reevaluation of Second Temple Judaism carried out during the twentieth-century and culminating in E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. For a survey of the key elements and primary emphases of the New Perspective on Paul see James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1-98, and Stephen Westerholm, “The New Perspective at Twenty-Five,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (eds. P. T. O’Brien, D. A. Carson and M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 1-38; Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 117-49, 178-200. The anti-individualism of the New Perspective on Paul was anticipated in numerous works in the 1960s and 1970s; see e.g., Nils A. Dahl, “The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications,” in *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 95-120; Stendahl, “Introspective Conscience,” 78-96; Markus Barth, “The Social Character of Justification,” *JES* 5 (1968): 241-61.

<sup>26</sup> Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 69. See also the survey of recent scholarly positions that emphasize the centrality of the issue of Jew-Gentile relations in Romans over against “individualistic” concerns in Burnett, *Salvation*, 96-104.

their personal salvation, or he means in his letters to work out a program of Jew-Gentile unity in the historical outworking of the divine plan, especially as it has come to its climax in the person of Jesus Christ. Writing at a more popular level N. T. Wright agrees: “The gospel creates, not a bunch of individual Christians, but a community. If you take the old route of putting justification, in its traditional meaning, at the centre of your theology, you will always be in danger of sustaining some sort of individualism.”<sup>27</sup>

Douglas Campbell, another consistently anti-individual post-New Perspective interpreter of Paul, contends that the modern failure to rightly understand the apostle owes much to Rudolf Bultmann, who “stresses humans’ will, their individuality, and their ethical nature, although not their inherent relationality or sociality.”<sup>28</sup> This necessarily (and unfortunately) has led the Pauline scholarship that followed Bultmann’s lead to focus its exegetical and theological attention almost exclusively on the individual and individual soteriology.<sup>29</sup> While Campbell shares the desire of Davies, Hays and many others to elevate the issue of the definition of covenant boundaries to prominence in Pauline theology, he also believes that it is a serious mistake to set the individual on a pedestal of Paul’s central themes because this ignores Paul’s explication of the foundationally relational nature of human existence. Like Hays, Campbell places individual and communal approaches to Paul in sharp antithesis: “It just does not seem possible to combine the individual and the corporate, the historical and the atemporal, the canonically antithetical with the canonically progressive, and so on.”<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, even Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who is perceived by many to have revived elements of Bultmann’s individualistic interpretation, emphasizes that the goal of Paul’s exhortation is community formation, and does so in such a way that the individual drops almost completely out of the picture:

I have mentioned already here that [community formation] is where we shall eventually end. Otherwise readers might draw the completely erroneous conclusion

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<sup>27</sup> N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Oxford: Lion, 1997), 157. Cf. *ibid.*, 158: “There is no such thing as an ‘individual’ Christian. Paul’s gospel created a community; his doctrine of justification sustained it.” Cf. *idem*, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 292.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 293-95.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, *Quest*, 49.

from our discussion . . . that Paul's Christ faith is only a relationship between an individual and 'his' or 'her' God. Nothing could be more false.<sup>31</sup>

While Engberg-Pedersen allows for certain elements of individual concern in Paul, he is thoroughly in line with New Perspective influenced readings in arguing that "experience of Christ . . . as seen in the Christ event lifts the individual . . . out of his or her individuality, leaves it behind and carries him or her over to a state of communality . . . shared with all those who have undergone the same process."<sup>32</sup> Engberg-Pedersen sees a vital role for rational self-deliberation in the event of conversion, but when it comes to the nature of the ongoing life of faith, the individual disappears.<sup>33</sup> While Engberg-Pedersen admits that his own focus on self-understanding in Paul "clearly recalls Bultmann," he insists that "the way this was construed in the ancient ethical tradition and in Paul" (thus also in Engberg-Pedersen's reconstructions of both) "has very little to do with modern 'individualism' as reflected in Bultmann's own existentialism."<sup>34</sup>

### 1.3 Apocalyptic Anti-Individualism

The third thread woven into the anti-individualist tapestry of modern Pauline studies is the "apocalyptic" (i.e., theological/cosmological/eschatological/etc.) approach which was presented to the world of New Testament scholarship, first by Albert Schweitzer, but later much more systematically by Ernst Käsemann.<sup>35</sup> After Käsemann, an apocalyptic approach was further developed in different ways in the works of scholars such as J. Louis Martyn and J. Christiaan Beker, among others.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 140.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 128, 137, 147, 152, 154-55.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. For an analysis of Käsemann's reception among scholars influenced by the New Perspective on Paul see Paul F. M. Zahl, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre Ernst Käsemanns* (CThM; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996), 188-98.

<sup>35</sup> See Schweitzer, *Mystik*, and e.g., Ernst Käsemann, "Zum Thema urchristlicher Apokalyptik," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964). On Schweitzer, Käsemann and apocalyptic see R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* (JSNTSup 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 23-71 and 186-246. Regarding Matlock's charge that Schweitzer "is often now little more than a name attached to the notion of an 'apocalyptic' approach to Paul" (*ibid.*, 26), I too must plead guilty. In my defence I can only say that my interests lie simply in the way interpreters of the so-called apocalyptic Paul have appealed to apocalyptic in order to marginalize and dismiss the individual in the apostle's thought.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g., J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 111-24; *idem*, *Galatians: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 97-105; Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 169-90; J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The*

Beker crisply articulates the antithesis that lies at the heart of apocalyptic approaches, namely the antithesis between individual and cosmos: either Paul is fundamentally concerned with “the imminent cosmic triumph of God,” or, as Bultmann insists, his chief interest lies in a demythologization of apocalyptic into the categories of “existential self-understanding.”<sup>37</sup> The individual almost completely disappears in the new picture of Pauline thought that emerges among apocalyptic interpreters, since what truly matters in their interpretational schemes is the epic struggle of good and evil as it works itself out on a worldwide stage. Speaking of the apocalyptic battle between the old and new ages in Galatians, Martyn argues that Paul “is concerned to offer an interpretation of Jesus’ death that is oriented not toward personal guilt and forgiveness, but rather toward corporate enslavement and liberation.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, the “root antidote to an individual sin . . . is not an individual instance of forgiveness. That antidote lies in . . . in vanquishing the enslaving *power of Sin* (the present evil age) . . .” through the encouragement and support of the community, which is where “sin is not only forgiven but also and fundamentally overpowered by God’s mighty victory over Sin.”<sup>39</sup> Individual sin, just like individual justification, is not Paul’s concern. An apocalyptic approach, for Martyn and others (such as Käsemann), leads directly to a communitarian approach to Paul’s theology that is set in antithesis with so-called individualistic approaches.

An apocalyptic understanding of Paul such as this is said by many to warrant a reevaluation of a host of exegetical and theological *foci* that classically have been understood in primarily individual terms. Speaking of this scholarly reassessment David Stubbs boldly argues that “given a reading of Paul in which ‘the faithfulness

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*Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Leander E. Keck, “Paul and Apocalyptic Theology,” *Int* 38 (1984): 229–41. For an analysis of twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature on the “apocalyptic Paul” see Matlock, *Unveiling*; on Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic (as theological type, and as genre) in biblical (and extra-biblical) material more broadly than just Paul see Adela Yarbro Collins, “Apocalypse Now: The State of Apocalyptic Studies Near the End of the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century,” *HTR* 104 (2011): 447–57; idem, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Christian,” *ABD* 1.288–92; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); idem, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Jewish Apocalypticism,” *ABD* 1.282–88; Paul D. Hanson, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: The Genre and Introductory Overview,” *ABD* 1.279–82; idem, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

<sup>37</sup> Beker, *Paul*, 17. Beker allows for certain minor divergences from Bultmann’s existentialism among critics of apocalyptic interpretation, but sees them all as ultimately resolving into a problematically anthropocentric interpretive approach. As will see in the next chapter, Käsemann’s apocalyptic approach begins by setting the individual in antithesis with cosmic concerns, but eventually ends by elevating the community over against the individual.

<sup>38</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 101.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

of Christ' is linked with an apocalyptic invasion of Jesus Christ into the world in which we participate, traditional Protestant notions of justification, apocalypse, election, politics, ethics and the church's relationship to culture must be renegotiated."<sup>40</sup>

Claims such as this are increasingly common in recent exegetical and theological literature, as evidenced, for example, in the way Douglas Harink argues for the Käsemannian triumph of "apocalyptic" anti-individualism in recent theology: "Paul's primary concerns, precisely in the language of justification, are cosmic and social more than inner and individual. The approach to justification through Paul's 'cosmological apocalyptic eschatology' . . . demonstrates this."<sup>41</sup> Harink is a prime example of the way in which the apocalyptic Paul has largely been grafted onto the New Perspective, or covenant-inclusion, argument for the primacy of community in the apostle's letters, with the result that the role of the individual has been greatly diminished, if not discounted altogether.<sup>42</sup>

#### 1.4 The Return of Anthropology?

Despite the strongly anti-individual tone of much recent Pauline scholarship, some scholars have continued to work within a framework that places the individual at the heart of Pauline theology.<sup>43</sup> Only one work, however, has attempted to address the concerns of anti-individualist scholarship on a large scale.<sup>44</sup> This book is Gary Burnett's *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*, which argues vigorously for returning the individual to the center of Paul's theology.

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<sup>40</sup> David L. Stubbs, "The Shape of Soteriology and the Pistis Christou Debate," *SJT* 61 (2008): 157. See also the way in which Campbell, *Quest*, 56-68, relies on "Pauline apocalyptic" to explicate Paul's understanding of the gospel in an anti-individualist direction.

<sup>41</sup> Harink, *Postliberals*, 59. So dominant is the Käsemannian approach in many present day circles that Harink, writing in 2003, can simply assume that the issue has been settled by the work of scholars such as Käsemann and Martyn, thus feeling little need to offer much in the way of argumentation in support of his own anti-individualism.

<sup>42</sup> On Harink's appropriation of New Perspective anti-individualism see *ibid.*, 25-45.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g., Simon Gathercole, "The Doctrine of Justification in Paul and Beyond: Some Proposals," in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges* (ed. Bruce L. McCormack; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 232, 240; Douglas J. Moo, "Israel and the Law in Romans 5-11: Interaction with the New Perspective," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (eds. P. T. O'Brien, D. A. Carson and M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 188, 216; Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 440-45; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 193-94.

<sup>44</sup> Although see Nijay K. Gupta, "Which 'Body' is a Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19)? Paul Beyond the Individual/Communal Divide," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 518-36, which attempts to move past the individual-communal impasse on the question of whether Paul conceives of the individual or the church as the spiritual temple described in 1 Cor 6:19.



The chief aim of Burnett's book is

to see if Paul was concerned with the individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity; whether Paul's understanding of God's work in the world was *primarily* operative at the level of the individual, *as opposed to* being largely concerned with people groups and group identity.<sup>45</sup>

Burnett is largely reacting against the use of the social-scientific research in Pauline studies surveyed above. This scholarship, Burnett contends, illegitimately considers a serious focus on the individual to be the imposition of modern and alien conceptualities onto the text of Paul's letters.<sup>46</sup> His book is an attempt at "questioning the strong collective emphasis in recent approaches to Romans and in indicating that Paul's gospel had a *primary application to the individual*."<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Burnett's book represents a pendulum swing away from the communally-centered approaches we have examined above. While Burnett does admit that the collective issue of "how Jews and Gentiles relate in the unfolding purposes of God in Christ"<sup>48</sup> is important in Romans, he insists that this issue must not be allowed to shift the focus away from the Pauline "individual qua individual." As he puts it elsewhere: "Paul's understanding of the gospel, whilst he was concerned with people-groups, had a *primary* focus on the individual."<sup>49</sup>

Burnett's reaction against exclusively communal interpretations of Pauline theology is understandable, but I believe, is ultimately one-sided itself. The reason for this lies in the fact that Burnett's sole focus is the faith and salvation of the individual *as an individual*. The individual's faith and salvation are indeed important themes in Romans (contrary to the prevailing opinion of much Pauline scholarship), and Burnett is right to highlight them, but insofar as he has attempted to place the focus of scholarship back on the "individual . . . *irrespective of social identity*" he has marginalized an equally foundational facet of Pauline theology.<sup>50</sup> Burnett's attempt to rehabilitate the Pauline individual is to be commended, and yet his focus on the importance of the individual does not end up giving due attention to the corresponding fact that Paul does not think in terms of individuals *abstracted from*

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<sup>45</sup> Burnett, *Salvation*, 10 (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> See e.g., *ibid.*, 28-29, 46, 55-57, 67, 84-87, 215-19.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 (emphasis added); cf. 227-28.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 209 (emphasis added).

<sup>50</sup> Burnett, *Salvation*, 10 (emphasis added).

community, even when speaking of themes such as faith and salvation.<sup>51</sup> It is also the case that in his attempt to highlight the importance of the individual, Burnett's narrow focus on individual salvation prevents him from doing full justice to the many *different* ways in which Paul conceptualizes the individual. The category of the Pauline individual, *understood as an individual*, encompasses far more than merely the individual's faith and salvation.

Furthermore, despite his concession to collectivist interpreters that the issue of Jew-Gentile relations is significant for Paul,<sup>52</sup> this does not get at the most essential facet of Paul's communal theology, which is focused on individuals being necessarily embedded into the single body of Christ. As I will argue below, there is no "individual qua individual" in Paul's understanding of the believing life. That is to say, there is no sense of the individual being understood as an *isolated* individual in the broader scheme of Paul's soteriology and ethics. The Pauline individual, in all of its divergent forms, is an individual-in-community.<sup>53</sup> Mere acknowledgement of the significance of Jew-Gentile relations in Paul's theological reasoning is not sufficient. His vision for individual life within community is richer than that.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> On which see further Ben C. Dunson, "Faith in Romans: the Salvation of the Individual or Life in Community?" *JSNT* 34 (2011): 19-46; cf. Robert Keay, "Review of Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual*," *JBL* 121 (2002): 777. While it is recognized that a dissertation such as Burnett's is necessarily selective in the texts it chooses to discuss, there is no way to do justice to how Paul relates individuals and community in Romans while restricting the discussion (as Burnett does) to Romans 1-8. Leaving out the latter half of the letter (esp. chapters 12-16) cannot help but skew the discussion in an illegitimately individualistic direction. Even when Burnett mentions these chapters he does so only with the place of the individual in mind (see e.g., Burnett, *Salvation*, 17-18).

<sup>52</sup> See e.g., *ibid.*, 18, 114, 221-23, 229-30. An example: "There can be no question that Paul was a radical individualist or that his understanding of salvation was concentrated on the individual in such a way that *the people of God within the purposes of God* became of secondary importance" (*ibid.*, 229 [emphasis added]).

<sup>53</sup> As will be expanded upon below, there is one theme in Romans where speaking of an "individual qua individual" may be appropriate, namely the individual standing before divine judgment (see Rom 2:6-16; 14:10-12), although this situation only obtains at the eschaton. Prior to that moment, Paul always conceives of the life of faith as one of individuals inextricably embedded within community.

<sup>54</sup> A recent doctoral dissertation by Valérie Nicolet Anderson is in a large degree of sympathy with Burnett's attempt to correct the scholarly bias toward exclusively communal concerns in Paul, although she critiques Burnett for operating with an inadequate (Enlightenment) understanding of individuality. See Valérie Nicolet Anderson, "Constructing the Self: Thinking With Paul and Michel Foucault" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2010), 11-20. While I agree with Anderson that Burnett's definition of the individual in Paul is inadequate (for Burnett there is simply one individual that matters, the individual who believes and is saved), I am not certain how appeal to Michel Foucault's understanding of "the self" (see *ibid.*, 186-310) makes her argument any less anachronistic than Burnett's supposedly Enlightenment understanding of the individual.

## 2. The Argument of this Thesis in Outline

The argument in this dissertation unfolds in four steps. First, in chapter two I provide a detailed analysis of the debate that developed between Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann over whether Paul's theology was centered on individual existence or cosmic and corporate concerns. This debate is important because it is the initial impetus that places the question of individuals, community and their relationship at the heart of the agenda of modern Pauline scholarship. As we have already seen, there is hardly a modern discussion of the importance (or not) of individuals in Paul that is carried out without reference to Bultmann, although almost always by way of critique or dismissal of his theology and its legacy.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, many of Käsemann's central emphases (such as cosmology and apocalyptic) have been warmly embraced in modern Pauline scholarship, attuned as it has become to themes that transcend, and even marginalize, the individual. I will argue that the antithesis between the individual and the community that dominates Käsemann's writings, and which has also come to dominate recent Pauline scholarship, is without merit. The individual and the community are two sides of the same coin. Even if Bultmann does not relate individuals and community completely satisfactorily, his own sensitivity to communal issues in Paul should be acknowledged. He has certainly shown that the individual (one specific kind at least) is an indispensable component of Pauline thought.

Next, in chapter three I discuss the individual-community question as it appears in the writings (more properly: transcribed lectures) of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus. This will enable me to set Paul and Epictetus together in conversation, not because either operates from the same set of basic theological or philosophical convictions, but because looking at Epictetus can shed fresh light on the same questions in Paul's letters. While Epictetus and Paul do not relate the individual and the community in exactly the same way, our understanding of Paul is

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<sup>55</sup> See e.g., Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), xxv-xxvi, who comments that the "spirited debate sparked by Ernst Käsemann's attacks on the hermeneutical program of [Rudolf Bultmann] defined the issues that preoccupied me as a graduate student. . . . Even where Bultmann is not mentioned explicitly [in Hays' book], he is often the unnamed elephant in the room . . . ." For Hays, one of the two main "mistaken hermeneutical decisions" inherent in Bultmann's reading of Paul is that "he understood the gospel principally as a message about human decision, human self-understanding" (ibid., xxvi; cf. 5-6; 47-52). We will see below that many criticisms of Bultmann on this point have not paid careful enough attention to the way in which he speaks of individuals necessarily being a part of the communal life of the church.

enriched when it is set in counterpoint with Epictetus'.<sup>56</sup> This is so because even the differences between Epictetus and Paul elucidate in important ways the nature of the individual and the community in both figures: whereas Epictetus' philosophy demands a militant guarding of one's personal power of choice, and thus is pointedly individual in its fundamental orientation (without excluding social concerns), Paul is much more concerned to define what it means to be an individual in comprehensively (but not *exclusively*) communal terms. Furthermore, Epictetus' discourses make it clear that the question of individuals and their relationship with community is not a merely modern question that has been imposed anachronistically onto ancient texts. While the function of the individual and the community in antiquity can be placed on a sliding scale of prominence depending on the source, articulating the relationship between the two themes is a pressing concern for a large number of ancient thinkers. Below we will see how this is worked out in different ways by Epictetus and Paul, with a primary eye toward how this helps us navigate a major interpretive problem in modern Pauline scholarship.

In chapter four I set out the first half of a typology of the individual in Romans. In this typology I attempt two things. First, I set out the wide variety of ways Paul conceptualizes the individual in Romans 1-4. This is particularly important because debates over whether the individual features to any sort of significant degree in Paul's thought often begin by assuming that the word individual means one single thing. Since these interpretations usually understand the word individual to imply some sort of *modern* individualism, they then feel warranted in dismissing the *entire idea of the individual*, almost always doing so without argumentation in support of such a move. The rightness of doing so is simply taken for granted.<sup>57</sup> Such reasoning wrongly assumes that Paul only has a

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<sup>56</sup> For a similar, recent approach to placing Paul and Epictetus in conversation see John M. G. Barclay, "Security and Self-Sufficiency: A Comparison of Paul and Epictetus," *ExAud* 24 (2008): 6. A conversational model such as this is different in many respects from several recent works comparing Paul and Epictetus, which continue (according to a classic history-of-religion approach) to look almost exclusively at the question of whether or not Paul was *influenced* by Stoic teachings (see e.g., Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010]; Niko Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law: A Comparison* [LNTS 405; London: T & T Clark, 2009]). Without dismissing the potential fruitfulness of works such as these, it is hoped that a more dialogical model, such as employed below, will be self-evidently worthwhile in the fresh light it sheds on a contested issue (individual vs. community) simply by setting two ancient thinkers side by side and allowing them to speak to the issue on their own terms, without seeking to make sense of either's system of thought only in terms of the interests of the other.

<sup>57</sup> As already noted, Burnett could be said to fall into this same error (only in reverse): for him there is only one kind of individual worth mentioning, the individual who has faith.

single way of conceptualizing the individual. We will see below that Paul constructs the individual in numerous ways, and that none of these can be summarily dismissed from consideration through vague charges of anachronism. Second, I highlight the communal context of the Pauline individuals found in these chapters. The communal dimension of the Pauline individual is important in this part of my typology, but is only seen in its fullness in chapter five where I deal with Romans 12-16, the heart of Paul's teaching on community in the letter.

In chapter five I complete the typology of the individual in Romans, this time focusing on Romans 5, 7, 12 and 16. Again, a wide variety of constructions of the individual are found in this material. However, in this chapter, especially in the sections focusing on Romans 12 and 16, the *necessarily* communal context of the Pauline individual becomes especially evident. *There simply is no individual in Pauline teaching on the believing life that is not at the same time embedded into the ongoing life of the believing community, which is the body of Christ.* There is no individual *qua* individual. Interpretations that attempt to highlight the importance of the individual without at the same time taking account of the individual's indispensably communal matrix cannot do justice to Paul's thinking either on the individual or the community. What is more, many other central themes in Paul's thought (faith, justification, judgment, etc.) will unavoidably be mishandled if the relationship between the individual and the community is not properly articulated first.

Finally, in chapter six I summarize my findings and seek to show their significance for understanding Paul's way of relating individuals to community.

In short, this thesis will argue that the individual and the community are thoroughly and inextricably integrated in Paul's letters. *The individual and the community imply each other.* To downplay or ignore the place of either, or their relationship, is to misunderstand a fundamental dynamic at work in Paul's system of thought.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Debate over the Individual in Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann

#### 1. Introduction

Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann engaged in a long-running debate over whether Paul's theology was basically anthropological or cosmological (i.e., focused on God's work in the world, rather than in individuals) in its orientation.<sup>1</sup> Simply put, Bultmann insisted on the primacy of the individual while Käsemann argued just as forcefully for the centrality of cosmological and communal themes in Paul's letters. This dispute systematically set the parameters of a scholarly debate that, as the survey in the preceding chapter has shown, continues unabated up to the present day. Accordingly, this chapter examines the role of the individual and cosmos/community in Bultmann's and Käsemann's writings. Käsemann's sustained attack on Bultmann's anthropological interpretive agenda opened the floodgates for communal-exclusive interpreters to follow after him. In what follows we will see that both scholars provide a distinctive approach to Paul's letters that highlights certain important elements to the exclusion of others. Ultimately, I will seek to explicate the origins of the antithetical construct in which the individual is pitted against the community in Bultmann and Käsemann in order to lay the groundwork for my own argument that the individual must be thoroughly integrated within community in Paul.

To anticipate the results of my analysis, I will contend that Käsemann constructs a misleading (although highly influential) antithesis between the individual and the community in Paul in only partially justified opposition to Bultmann. While it is an open question how well Bultmann integrates communal elements of Pauline teaching into his own theological presentation of the apostle, the pendulum swing in the opposite direction that Käsemann initiates obscures matters even further. On the other hand, Bultmann's insistence on the importance

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<sup>1</sup> Paul F. M. Zahl, *Grace in Practice: A Theology of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 17, n. 3, notes that "there is nothing in English yet concerning Käsemann's break with his teacher." What follows is meant to contribute toward remedying this lack, although it is restricted to the issue of the relationship between individuals and community in Pauline theology. This is, however, one of the central issues (if not the single most important) in Käsemann's break with Bultmann. Zahl's own analysis (in German) of the broader issues involved in Käsemann's long-running dispute with Bultmann is found in idem, *Rechtfertigungslehre*, 100-132.

of the Pauline individual, while salutary in many respects, is limited mostly to a single construction of the individual, and thus inadequately captures the fullness of Paul's talk of individuals. To illustrate just how solidified an antithetical individual-communal construct is in Pauline studies I will conclude this chapter with a brief treatment of the reception of Käsemann's argument for a "theocentric" interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Paul.

The most important questions to keep in mind in looking at these two scholars on the issue of the individual and the community in Paul are: 1) Not simply how, but why they arrive at their conclusions. What exegetical, theological and hermeneutical decisions lead each scholar to evaluate these issues differently? 2) Can we learn something about how to approach Paul based on the various conclusions to this first question? For example, does Bultmann notice aspects of Pauline thought that Käsemann misses, and vice versa? Is there a process of exegetical selectivity at work in each scholar that, when pinpointed, can be re-directed toward a more satisfying synthesis with regard to the individual and the community? The goal of this chapter is to ask these questions and see if answers can be uncovered that are able to move the scholarly debate toward a better understanding of Paul's thought on this issue.

## **2. Rudolf Bultmann**

Whether it is explicitly acknowledged or not, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, the ghost of Bultmannian "individualism" haunts a wide range of theological perspectives up to the present day. Even those most opposed to Bultmann on these issues can hardly avoid framing their own work according to the terms set by Bultmann's theological and exegetical agenda. In light of Bultmann's influence on the ensuing debate in New Testament scholarship over the individual and the community, his understanding of these two elements of Pauline thought must be analyzed. The central questions are these: why did Bultmann focus so much attention on the individual and the individual act of faith, and did he do so at the expense of the communal dimension of Paul's thought? In the end, Bultmann's overall interpretational program may fail to convince, but it provides a set of questions for Pauline research, the answers to which, although perhaps differing from Bultmann, may—despite the anti-individual protestations of much recent New

Testament scholarship—illuminate the meaning of Paul’s letters in fresh and unexpected ways.

## **2.1 The Individual: Exegetical Foundations**

The most important aspect of Bultmann’s treatment of the individual in Paul is the way in which he focuses his attention on the *generic* individual. Bultmann is interested in statements about individuals as individuals irrespective of any differences, whether they be religious, ethnic, cultural or the like. In this way, Bultmann is quite different from modern Western individualism with its preoccupation with particularity and those aspects of individuality that distinguish one person from another. In brief, Bultmann develops a model for understanding the generic human being from Paul’s statements about there being no ultimate difference between Jews and Gentiles (such as in Rom 3:27-30; Gal 3:28-29; 6:15; cf. Eph 2:11-22; Col 3:11), since in God’s eyes every single person is placed as *an individual* into one category: that of the boastful and fleshly sinner.

The following discussion focuses on the exegetical foundations and theological and hermeneutical constraints that Bultmann employs to argue for the centrality of the individual in Paul and the New Testament more generally. None of these points taken in isolation provides the single rationale for Bultmann’s individually-oriented focus. Rather, each indispensably contributes toward the formation of an impressive exegetical and theological rationale for existential interpretation.

### **2.1.1 Bodily Living: Created Humanity**

Bultmann’s understanding of the essence of human existence in Paul is divided into two major sections in his *Theology of the New Testament*: 1) The human prior to the revelation of faith and 2) the human under faith.<sup>2</sup> The first section treats the nature of human existence both in its created state and as that state has been co-opted by sin, while the second section deals with the divine remedy for sin in both its juridical and transformational aspects. The first subdivision is the focus of our initial inquiry since it is where Bultmann most clearly defends his understanding of individuality in Paul.

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<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 190-269 and 270-345.



For Bultmann, the essence of what it means to be human, and thus to have “individuality,” is that a person is “able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens.”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, being human consists of being a free, active agent and a responsive creature.

For Bultmann the most important anthropological term in Paul is body (σῶμα). Paul’s use of this word significantly shapes Bultmann’s description of Pauline anthropology and provides a window into Bultmann’s understanding of the quintessence of being human. In fact, σῶμα is “the most comprehensive term” for human existence in Paul.<sup>4</sup> Bultmann goes so far as to say that “somatic existence” is the “only human existence there is,” that it even continues beyond death.<sup>5</sup> The body, therefore, is the self, the seat of existential interaction with the world. As Bultmann puts it “man does not *have* a *soma*; he *is soma* . . . .”<sup>6</sup>

In defense of this notion Bultmann appeals to a wide selection of passages in Paul. For example, in 1 Cor 13:3 Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that love is more significant than giving one’s own body up to injury and death. Speaking of one’s body in this way is equivalent to speaking of one’s “self.” Philippians 1:20 consists of Paul telling his readers that he is resolved to honor Christ in his body, even if that necessitates death. Here also the body is simply Paul *himself*.<sup>7</sup> Summarizing his understanding of the word body in Paul, Bultmann says: “*Man, his person as a whole, can be denoted by soma.*”<sup>8</sup>

Included within the concept of the body are the notions of “having a relationship to [oneself]” and being able to “disassociate [one’s inner self] from [oneself as an object].”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, self-awareness is at the core of what it means to be human. Having a body entails the ability to think of oneself as an object.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 196. In this chapter I normally quote from the standard English translations of both Bultmann’s and Käsemann’s works, modifying them at points, and adding German in brackets when speaking of key concepts (with the German bibliographical reference immediately following the English one in the footnotes). I have left generic masculine singular pronouns in place when quoting from older English translations, with a few exceptions in places where I have otherwise modified the translation.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 196; cf. 198. Bultmann denies that Paul’s basic conception of the body is physical, even though he admits that Paul occasionally expresses himself incautiously in such terms, as in 1 Corinthians 15 (cf. 1 Cor 12:2-4, discussed in *ibid.*, 202).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 194; *idem*, *Theologie*, 195: “der Mann hat nicht ein σῶμα, sondern er ist σῶμα.”

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, *Theology*, 194-95.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., *Theology*, 195 (emphasis original); *idem*, *Theologie*, 192 (emphasis original): “Durch σῶμα kann der Mensch, die Person als ganze, bezeichnet werden.”

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, *Theology*, 199 (slightly modified); *idem*, *Theologie*, 195: “Der Mensch . . . kann . . . sich von sich selbst distanzieren . . . .” Cf. *Idem*, *Theology*, 202-3, 216.

Furthermore, the “inner” self can become entangled in sin and thus not only distinguished, but also estranged from one’s own body.<sup>10</sup> In other words, a rift can open up between who one is at the deepest level, and one’s bodily self. This understanding of the body is confirmed in Paul’s talk of the inner man. For example, 2 Cor 4:16 describes the inner person (ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν) as the subject-self, which can be distinguished from the outward person (ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος), which is, like the body, the objective self.<sup>11</sup>

Body language in Paul operates broadly to describe a person as a being capable of self-interaction. Paul’s use of the word mind (νοῦς), on the other hand, provides detail to that picture. Νοῦς captures what it means “to be an ‘I’ that is subject of its own willing and doing.”<sup>12</sup> While σῶμα speaks of human existence in general, νοῦς speaks of the “inner person,” the principle of individuality that is able to distinguish itself from the σῶμα and interact with it. For Bultmann, Romans 7 is paradigmatic for distinguishing between the self as object and an inner consciousness that is distinct from, and possibly even at odds with, the desires and actions of the bodily self. Romans 7:23 could not be any clearer on this point: there is a “law” at work in the non-Christian Jew that fights against what such a person knows in his or her mind (νοῦς), or inner self.<sup>13</sup> Put differently: on a deeper level, one holds a set of convictions that may be incongruous with the desires of the “bodily self,” since the bodily self can become enslaved to various sinister forces, such as sin, flesh and legalism.

Bultmann’s treatment of Pauline anthropological terms is used to bolster his specifically existential approach to theology. For example, the verb ζάω (“to live”) is understood to indicate the orientation of one’s life, whether toward good or evil, whether toward God or self. On its own, “life” is simply a way of existing that can be directed in any number of directions.<sup>14</sup> Bultmann contends that ζάω in Paul is always “qualified by an adverb . . . or by an adverbial phrase . . .” in some manner or

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 200-1; idem, *Theologie*, 197: The “I” or “inner person” of Rom 7:22 is “der Träger des eigentlichen Wollens des Menschen.”

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 203.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 211 (slightly modified); idem, *Theologie*: “ein Ich zu sein, das Subjekt seines Wollens und Tuns ist . . .”

<sup>13</sup> However, understanding the situation this way is only possible from the perspective of Christian faith (see idem, *Theology*, 212).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 210.

another.<sup>15</sup> One can live as a pagan or as a Jew (see Gal 2:14); one can live according to the flesh or according to love (see Rom 8:4 and 14:15). The sphere in which one “lives” will determine the outcome of one’s life and actions.

Similarly, the human conscience (συνείδησις) is the element of individuality where responsibility is located. The conscience can even become personified and testify externally to the individual as in Rom 9:1 and 2 Cor 1:12.<sup>16</sup> Like one’s way of life, the conscience guides a person toward authentic existence.<sup>17</sup> The point that Bultmann continues to drive at throughout his exegesis of Paul’s anthropological language is that being a human means being a rational agent who is constantly faced with a decision about how to proceed into the future. This is what Bultmann (relying on the terminology of existentialist philosophy) describes as the existential dilemma.

Bultmann summarizes the existential perspective on Paul in this way:

As the investigation of the term *soma* showed . . . the human [*Mensch*], according to Paul, is a being who has a relationship to itself [*ein Verhältnis zu sich selbst*], is placed at its own disposal, and is responsible for its own existence. But the human’s existence [*sein Sein*], as the investigation of the terms *psyche*, *pneuma*, *zoe*, *nous*, and *kardia* showed . . . is never to be found in the present as a fulfilled reality, but always lies ahead. In other words, it is always an intention and a quest [*Aus-sein-auf*]. And in it the human may find itself or lose its grip upon itself, gain or lose itself.<sup>18</sup>

A pervasive theme throughout Bultmann’s analysis of Paul’s anthropological terminology is the notion that such language has primary reference to how an individual lives his or her life with reference to God, and not with reference to other people (at least in the first instance). Capturing this emphasis succinctly is Bultmann’s explanation of the word man (ἄνθρωπος): “In most passages, *anthropos* means man in his creaturely humanity, and that means also man in his relation to God.”<sup>19</sup> This brief quote captures an important aspect of Bultmann’s thought: the individual is often thought of by Paul in terms of existence as a creature, thus

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 227 (modified); idem, *Theologie*, 223. While the lexical semantics behind Bultmann’s statements about words related to human nature may be dubious (rightly noted by Anderson, “Constructing the Self,” 20-7; cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1980], 280-3), the overall picture of the essence of being human that emerges in Bultmann’s writings is what is important for my purposes.

<sup>19</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 231.

highlighting the significance and primacy of the relationship between God and the individual.

### 2.1.2 Fleshly Living: Boastful Humanity

Having explained the nature of being human in its “unqualified ontological sense” [formal ontologischen Sinn], Bultmann moves on to clarify the “qualified ontic sense” [ontisch-qualifizierten Sinne] of existence in which individuals find themselves by virtue of their being in the world.<sup>20</sup> That is to say, on the one hand, Bultmann describes a person as that person exists without reference to a specific life orientation. Paul’s talk of the body falls into this ontological, contextually neutral sphere. On the other hand, Bultmann notes that Paul never speaks simply of individuals living in a vacuum. Instead, he always qualifies created (ontological) existence in terms of one’s actual (ontic) existence under the influence of a wide range of forces (the flesh, sin, love, the Spirit, righteousness, etc.).<sup>21</sup> While there are numerous facets to Bultmann’s understanding of life under the power of sin (the ontic situation prior to conversion), two aspects will now be discussed since they provide a framework for understanding the rest: flesh and boasting.

For Bultmann, a defective attitude toward God is at the root of all sin. Sin is refusing to acknowledge God as the creator and oneself as a creature. In Paul, the “. . . ultimate sin reveals itself to be the false assumption of receiving life not as the gift of the Creator but procuring it by one’s own power, of living from one’s self [aus sich selbst] rather than from God.”<sup>22</sup> This is the sin of the flesh (σάρξ).

On a mundane level Bultmann recognizes that flesh in Paul can mean the visible element of personhood (human as opposed to animal “physicality”). Flesh can also denote human weakness and transitoriness.<sup>23</sup> However, Paul is most concerned to speak of human flesh as it is co-opted by sinful impulses that direct a person away from proper living. This is what is meant in Paul by living “according to the flesh” (καρὰ σάρκα). Such a fleshly life is the result of “trust in one’s self [Selbstvertrauen] as being able to procure life by the use of the earthly and through

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 227 (slightly modified); idem, *Theologie*, 223.

<sup>21</sup> For the distinction between ontological and ontic existence see idem, *Theology*, 212, 227-28.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 232; idem, *Theologie*, 229.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 233-35.

one's own strength and accomplishment."<sup>24</sup> Based on passages such as Rom 8:7, Bultmann understands fleshly living as life at war with God.

Bultmann's interpretation of σάρξ could be understood to give prominence to the idea of flesh as a *power* at odds with humanity. However, Bultmann believes that the individual "is not, as the New Testament regards him, the victim of a strange dichotomy which exposes him to the interference of powers outside himself."<sup>25</sup> Instead, once the mythological element of spiritual warfare in Paul's letters has been properly interpreted ("demythologized"), the individual is seen to bear "the sole responsibility for his own feeling, thinking, and willing."<sup>26</sup> That is to say, no matter how much Paul's language may seem to speak of a cosmic battle between God and the devil, the truly significant reference of such language is to the power of choice that resides within each individual person.<sup>27</sup> Again, we see a partial explanation for why Bultmann focuses so much attention on the individual: what matters for Paul—and should matter for his modern interpreter—is the existential struggle of every human being.

Life is what God intends for humanity and what people naturally want for themselves. The sinister side of each person's flesh is the main force at work to thwart this pursuit. Sin results when the flesh controls one's existence and leads a person to seek what is not conducive to the good life. Sin creates a rupture between one's inner self (who desires life) and one's body (objective self). This rupture creates a situation where a person "tries to live out of his own strength and thus loses his self [*sein Selbst*]<sup>28</sup>—his 'life' [*seine ζωή*]<sup>28</sup>—and rushes into death." While flesh is the dominating force at work in those who turn away from God, boasting is the specific *attitude* that characterizes such people.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 239; idem, *Theologie*, 235.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch; trans. Reginald H. Fuller; London: SPCK, 1972), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Briefly, "demythologization" of the biblical writings is a method of *interpretation* in Bultmann. Since Bultmann believes that the entire Bible reflects an ancient and primitive world-view, he argues that it must be demythologized (that is, interpreted) in order to bring out the "self-understanding" contained within the texts. According to Bultmann, the self-understanding contained within the myth-laden world of the Bible is what really matters, both for Paul and for modern theological appropriation of the Bible. See *ibid.*, 17-44, for an outline of Bultmann's demythologization of key New Testament themes. Cf. Idem, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. and trans. Shubert M. Ogden; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 292; Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 258-63.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Meech, *Self and Community*, 129-30.

<sup>28</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 246; idem, *Theologie*, 241.

Bultmann explains the core problem facing humanity in this way: “In the self-praise of the law-obedient Jew and the self-praise of the Gnostic proud of his or her wisdom, the dominant attitude of humanity comes to light, especially the devotion with which they autonomously think themselves to be the true essence of humanity, which ultimately ends in self-contradiction.”<sup>29</sup> This haughty attitude manifests itself in “confidence in the flesh” rather than confidence in Christ (see e.g., Phil 3:4-8).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Bultmann tends to generalize the notion of boasting into a critique of all of humanity:

The attitude of sinful self-reliance finds its extreme expression in man’s ‘boasting’ [καυχᾶσθαι *dem Menschen*]. It is characteristic both of the Jew, who boasts of God and the Torah (Rom. 2:17, 23), and of the Greek, who boasts of his wisdom (1 Cor. 1:19-31). It is also a natural tendency of man [*des Menschen*] to compare himself with others in order to have his ‘boast’ thereby (Gal. 6:4).<sup>31</sup>

It is not significant whether one is a first-century Jew, a Gnostically-inclined Gentile or a twentieth-century German reader of Paul, all are guilty of boasting before God.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Bultmann’s insistence that, according to Paul, boasting is the universal disposition of sinful humanity serves as another element that feeds into his individually oriented New Testament interpretation. This is the basis for Bultmann’s insistence that in light of the gospel everyone is a generic individual and nothing else, at least in any ultimately important sense.

A telling example of Bultmann’s universalizing tendency is found in his explanation of how Paul transcends the contingent situation of Galatians with regard to the law: Bultmann reasons that even if “Paul’s doctrine of the law is polemic in character, it is by no means something occasional and secondary, but rather contains his central thoughts.”<sup>33</sup> Historical contingency cannot be allowed to overrule a universal opposition like that between grace and works.<sup>34</sup> For Bultmann, no matter what the social ramifications of Paul’s teaching might be, the generalized, individual person remains central.

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<sup>29</sup> Idem, “Neues Testament und Mythologie: Ein theologisches Gespräch,” in *Kerygma und Mythos* (ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch; Hamburg: Herbert Reich-Evangelischer, 1967), 37 (my translation).

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 243.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 242 (slightly modified); idem, *Theologie*, 239.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Idem, *Theology*, 242-43; see also idem, “Paul,” in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. and trans. Shubert M. Ogden; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 135-36.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Idem, *Theology*, 283-84.

Bultmann's exegesis of Romans 7 provides another enlightening example of his individualizing treatment of Paul. In Rom 7:14-24 Paul is said to portray the "the situation of man under Torah [*des Menschen unter dem Gesetz*]" as it has become clear looking backward from the standpoint of Christian faith."<sup>35</sup> The "I" of Romans 7 can also be said to be "the Jew" struggling under the law, but only as that struggle has been interpreted in light of faith.<sup>36</sup> Either way, whether it be the "human under Torah" or "the Jew" under the law, Bultmann seeks a generalizable pattern that can be applied to the individual human irrespective of time or circumstance.<sup>37</sup>

Since the fundamental human problem is centered on the individual and his or her boasting, the fundamental solution must be individually oriented as well. Hence, the justification of the individual is at the heart of Bultmann's theology, and faith (the means of justification) is understood as "*the absolute contrary of 'boasting'*."<sup>38</sup> The Gospel shatters boasting and prevents the prideful setting of oneself over against others (1 Cor 1:29). Christians are thus forbidden from looking down on others (see Gal 6:4; Rom 11:17-18), and instead must boast only in their weakness (see 2 Cor 11:30; 12:9; Rom 5:2) and thus in the Lord's power (2 Cor 1:9).<sup>39</sup> The justification of the ungodly shows that, while the individual is the primary concern in Paul's theology of creation and fall, it is also brought to the forefront in Paul's understanding of redemption.

## 2.2 The Individual: Theological and Hermeneutical Constraints

Several theological and hermeneutical convictions further facilitate Bultmann's existential approach to Paul. However, this is not to say that Bultmann simply imposes an individualistic theological *a priori* onto Paul's letters. Indeed, as we have already seen, especially throughout his explication of the meaning of Paul's

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 247 (slightly modified); idem, *Theologie*, 243; cf. idem, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. and trans. Shubert M. Ogden; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 147.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, "Paul," 115.

<sup>37</sup> Which is also the aim of Gary Burnett. See Burnett, *Salvation*, 10, whose study "seeks to see if Paul was concerned with the individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity; whether Paul's understanding of God's work in the world was primarily operative at the level of the individual, as opposed to being largely concerned with people groups and group identity."

<sup>38</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 281 (emphasis original); cf. idem, "The Christology of the New Testament," in *Faith and Understanding* (ed. R. W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969), 278-79. Cited in David Way, *The Lordship of Christ: Ernst Käsemann's Interpretation of Paul's Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 177.

<sup>39</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 242.

anthropological terms, Bultmann finds an individually-oriented approach to be demanded by Paul's letters themselves, both in the sense that Paul's own focus is the individual, and in the sense that the modern interpreter's focus should also be the individual.

The reciprocal relationship between exegesis and systematic exposition is part of Bultmann's use of the hermeneutical spiral: he continually points to the importance of the individual in Paul's letters and then uses this to structure his explication of the totality of Paul's thought. His overarching existential perspective, however, also enables Bultmann to make sense of the details of Paul's letters, including the self-understanding present in them. Karl Barth comes to a similar conclusion:

I hope I am not wrong when I say that Bultmann's primary aim is to present the New Testament as the document of a message (kerygma, proclamation, preaching). It is that and that alone. This means that the usual lines of demarcation between exegesis and systematic theology are entirely abolished.<sup>40</sup>

That is to say, there is no clear line separating Bultmann's exegesis of Paul, his overarching theological understanding of the apostle, and his interpretation of Pauline thought for the modern person. Because of this, the various exegetical and hermeneutical reasons for highlighting the individual in Paul often meld together.

I will now look at several of the theological and hermeneutical constraints that shape Bultmann's theology in an existential direction, keeping in mind that these cannot be understood in isolation from Bultmann's existential exegesis of key Pauline texts.

### 2.2.1 Theology is Anthropology

Bultmann conceives of Pauline anthropology and theology as closely intertwined.<sup>41</sup>

In fact:

Pauline theology is not a speculative system. It deals with God not as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man [*wie er für den Menschen . . . bedeutsam ist*], for man's responsibility and man's salvation. Correspondingly, it does not deal with the world and man as they are in themselves, but constantly sees the world and man in their relation to God. Every assertion about God is simultaneously

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<sup>40</sup> Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann—An Attempt to Understand Him," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch; trans. Reginald H. Fuller; London: SPCK, 1972), 84-85.

<sup>41</sup> The word "theology" is being used here in the more narrow sense of "teaching pertaining to God" as opposed to "teaching pertaining to humanity" (anthropology).



an assertion about man and vice versa [*Jeder Satz über Gott ist zugleich ein Satz über den Menschen und umgekehrt*]. For this reason and in this sense Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology [*Anthropologie*]. . . every assertion about God speaks of what He does with man and what He demands of him [*was er am Menschen tut und vom Menschen fordert*]. And, the other way around, every assertion about man speaks of God's deed and demand—or about man as he is qualified by the divine deed and demand and by his attitude toward them.<sup>42</sup>

God's being cannot be known as it is *a se*, but only as it is related to individual human subjects. Any biblical statement about God is at the same time a statement about God *in his relationship with humanity*, and any statement about humanity is a statement about humanity *only as it is related to God*. Since nothing can be said or known about God that is not filtered through the mind of a human agent “it is not legitimate to speak about god in general statements, in universal truths which are valid without references to the concrete, existential position of the speaker [*konkrete existentielle Situation des Redenden*].”<sup>43</sup> To begin from any vantage point outside of the mediation of the human actor is not only misguided, but impossible.

Thus, throughout his writings, Bultmann's central concern remains the individual, since all knowledge of God is mediated through the divine-individual relationship, via the kerygma. To defend such an understanding, Bultmann points to such texts as Rom 14:23 and Gal 2:20, which bring to the forefront the indispensability of faith for a right ordering of the world, and a right understanding

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<sup>42</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 190-1; idem, *Theologie*, 187-88; cf. idem, “Paul,” 127-28; David Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Continuum, 2000), 83.

<sup>43</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “What Does it Mean to Speak of God?” in *Faith and Understanding* (ed. Robert W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969), 53; idem, “Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?” in *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 26; cf. idem, “Mythology,” 19; Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Rudolf Bultmann's Theology of the New Testament,” in *The Crucified Messiah, and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 95: “Insight into the ‘historicity of existence’ has decisively clarified the problem of understanding historical documents for him and appears to him to be the appropriate ‘pre-understanding’ for the interpretation of the New Testament.” While Bultmann's interaction with Martin Heidegger cannot be discussed here in detail it is worthwhile to note that Bultmann was primarily interested in Heidegger because the two shared the same starting point, namely the historicity of existence, an existence that was studied from two different vantage points in philosophical and theological analysis (cf. Rudolf Bultmann, “Milestones in Books,” *ExpT* 70 [1959]: 125; John Painter, *Theology as Hermeneutics: Rudolf Bultmann's Interpretation of the History of Jesus* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], 16-19, 42-43; David Cairns, *A Gospel Without Myth: Bultmann's Challenge to the Preacher* [London: SCM, 1960], 54-64; John Macquarrie, “Philosophy and Theology in Bultmann's Thought,” in *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* [ed. Charles W. Kegley; London: SCM, 1966], 130-5). Rudolf Bultmann, “The Historicity of Man and Faith,” in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. and trans. Shubert M. Ogden; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961, emphasis original), 98, believed that “every theology is dependent for the clarification of its concepts upon a pretheological understanding of man that, as a rule, is determined by some philosophical tradition.” Thus, Heidegger's thought is, from Bultmann's vantage point, simply a conceptual tool used to clarify the task of theological inquiry (cf. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 232).

of God.<sup>44</sup> As we will see below, community is important in Bultmann, but primarily as an *implication* of the divine-human relationship, rather than as constituting a primary *component* of that relationship.

### 2.2.2 Faith, Kerygma and Demythologization

Another reason the individual is the focal point of theological enquiry is because God can only be known in one specific manner: through faith. Moreover, faith can only be created through the preaching of the word (the kerygma), as is evident in Rom 10:8-17.<sup>45</sup> When the kerygma is grasped through faith, a new theological understanding—a posture of hope in the face of an uncertain future—is granted to the individual.<sup>46</sup> Faith thus constitutes an exegetically-derived, individually-oriented hermeneutical constraint for Bultmann, in the sense that human knowledge of God is dependent on the acceptance of the kerygma by the individual.<sup>47</sup> If for Paul it is futile to seek knowledge of God apart from faith, it is equally futile to seek the ground or locus of Christian experience in the community, since it is individuals as *individuals* who are confronted with the kerygma and must submit to it in faith.

According to Bultmann, the “preaching of God’s saving act . . . addresses the conscience of the hearer and asks him whether he is willing to understand the occurrence that it proclaims as occurring to him himself [*an ihm selbst*] and thereby to understand himself [*sich selbst*] in its light.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, “*Jesus Christ confronts men in the kerygma and nowhere else*; just as he confronted Paul himself and forced him to the decision [*Entscheidung*].”<sup>49</sup> There is no access to theological knowledge apart from faith, and no creation of faith apart from the preached word.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 324-29.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 318; *idem*, “Paul,” 139. As Dahl, “Bultmann’s Theology,” 93-94, puts it: “For Bultmann as for Luther the kerygma, or gospel, is the point of orientation and the center of all theology.”

<sup>46</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 320-22.

<sup>47</sup> Although this does not diminish the fact that it is a divine word of address which does not have “its origin in human considerations and human intentions; it comes from God” (*idem*, “The Concept of the Word of God in the New Testament,” in *Faith and Understanding* [ed. Robert W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969], 299).

<sup>48</sup> *Idem*, “Paul,” 139 (slightly modified); *idem*, “Paulus,” RGG 4:1039; cf. *idem*, “Concept,” 301.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*, “The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul,” in *Faith and Understanding* (ed. Robert W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969), 241 (emphasis original); *idem*, “Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus,” in *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 208. Cf. *idem*, *Theology*, 302; *idem*, “Paul,” 139.

Such a document is a word of address and challenge to each individual person. It “is a word which has power, which acts with power,” namely the “power and wisdom” of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:14) that shows one’s sinfulness for what it really is.<sup>50</sup> God, as 2 Cor 5:20-21 indicates, calls for a response to the preached word, and “in the summons [of the kerygma], a specific understanding [*ein bestimmtes Verstehen*] is communicated to the obedient hearer [*dem gehorchenden Hören*].”<sup>51</sup> Since faith has to do with the transformation of human understanding it is thoroughly centered on the individual, even though the word of God also sovereignly constitutes the church as “an eschatological fact.”<sup>52</sup> The very purpose of the kerygma is to produce a true and proper self-understanding in the person who is summoned by it. Therefore, it makes no sense for anything other than the thinking and acting *individual* to be at the center of Bultmann’s understanding of Paul.

In contrast, Christology, for Käsemann is employed as a theological challenge to Bultmann’s elevation of the kerygma, under the rubric of “decision” (*Entscheidung*), to a controlling framework for interpretation.<sup>53</sup> For Käsemann, such a move restricts the essence of Pauline theology to a matter simply of existential choice, which is “a foundation clearly incapable of doing justice to the reality of any history which implies a doctrine of the Fall or of divine preservation.”<sup>54</sup> It may be that Bultmann’s choice of expressing his theology of the kerygma in terms of decision was infelicitous and opened him up to Käsemann’s charge of excessive individualism. However, given the actual contours of Bultmann’s discussion of the primacy of the living and active word of God in creating and sustaining faith, and of Christ’s sovereign act of confrontation with the individual in preaching, perhaps the divine has not been neglected to nearly the degree that Käsemann thinks it has.

As has already been noted, Bultmann argues that the New Testament, when properly demythologized (interpreted) yields a portrayal of humanity split into two fundamental categories: the individual before (personal) faith, and the individual

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<sup>50</sup> Bultmann, “Concept,” 298, 300-1; cf. idem, “Church and Teaching in the New Testament,” in *Faith and Understanding* (ed. R. W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969), 209, 216. To defend the notion of the “effective power” of God’s word Bultmann points to such passages in the New Testament as 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 3:1; Col 1:16.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 212; idem, “Kirche und Lehre im Neuen Testament,” in *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 180.

<sup>52</sup> Idem, “Paul,” 139-40.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g., idem, *Theology*, 316; idem, *Theologie*, 312.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ernst Käsemann, “New Testament Questions of Today,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1969), 15.

after the coming of (personal) faith.<sup>55</sup> It is precisely faith that provides the light that illuminates the true meaning of the mythology of the New Testament, which lies in the “understanding of human existence” (*Existenzverständnis*) that can be uncovered from the biblical texts.<sup>56</sup>

Demythologization is thus built on the premise that generalized truths about individual existence can be gleaned from the thoroughly mythological texts of the New Testament. Demythologization finds relevant and contemporary meaning in events such as Christ’s cross and resurrection only when “we ask what God is trying to say to each one of us through them.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, “myth should be interpreted not cosmologically [*kosmologisch*], but anthropologically [*anthropologisch*], or better still, existentially [*existential*].”<sup>58</sup> This procedure is legitimated by the fact the “New Testament itself invites this kind of criticism,”<sup>59</sup> primarily evinced in the fact that its own presentation of humanity inconsistently shifts between a cosmic and existential explanation of the human condition.<sup>60</sup> This comes out clearly when one compares the gnostically influenced idea that unbelieving humanity is subject to the enslaving power of sin (as in Romans 5-6; 1 Corinthians 15; Galatians 6) with statements to the effect that the individual who has faith is free from the domination of outside forces (e.g. 1 Cor 6:12; 7:17-24; 10:23-31). The latter examples indicate places where “the eschatology of Jewish apocalyptic and of Gnosticism has been emancipated from its accompanying mythology, in so far as the age of salvation has already dawned for the believer . . . .”<sup>61</sup> Once interpreted apart from

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<sup>55</sup> “Der Mensch vor der Offenbarung der πίστις” and “der Mensch unter der πίστις” (see Bultmann, *Theologie*, 186, 266).

<sup>56</sup> Idem, “Mythology,” 16; idem, “Mythologie,” 26.

<sup>57</sup> Idem, “Mythology,” 35; cf. Hans Hübner, “Existentielle Interpretation der Paulinischen ‘Gerechtigkeit Gottes’: Zur Kontroverse Rudolf Bultmann-Ernst Käsemann,” *NTS* 21 (1975): 483; For Bultmann “Das ganze Verfahren der Entmythologisierung . . . nur die Kehrseite der existentialen Interpretation ist . . . .”

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, “Mythology,” 10; idem, “Mythologie,” 22.

<sup>59</sup> Idem, “Mythology,” 11.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 11-12. Yet, despite this exegetical legitimization, there is also a strong sense in which Bultmann brings to the text the conviction that it *must* be demythologized if its message is to be made understandable and believable to the modern person. As Bultmann puts it: “It is impossible to use the electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles. We may think we can manage it in our own lives, but to expect others to do so is to make the Christian faith unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world” (ibid., 5).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 20.

such mythological imagery “the real question is whether it [= understanding of existence (*Existenzverständnis*)] is true.”<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, for both exegetical and hermeneutical reasons, Bultmann approaches the text of the New Testament expecting to find information that lays bare the existential situation of the individual as *an individual* since he insists that the “real purpose of myth is not to give an objective picture of the world [*ein objektives Weltbild*]; instead it points to how humanity understands itself in its world.”<sup>63</sup>

### 2.2.3 Historical Skepticism and Dialectical Theology

Bultmann follows his teacher Wilhelm Hermann in transferring Paul’s teaching on justification apart from works into the realm of epistemology.<sup>64</sup> For both Hermann and Bultmann, basing faith on objective facts is a sinful human striving after false security, analogous to Jewish trusting in Torah for justification and Gnostic boasting in the security and superiority of human wisdom. Bultmann puts it this way:

Our radical attempt to demythologize the New Testament is in fact a perfect parallel to St. Paul’s and Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from the works of the Law. Or rather, it carries this doctrine to its logical conclusion in the field of epistemology. Like the doctrine of justification it destroys every false security.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 11 (modified); idem, “Mythologie,” 23.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 22 (my translation). Cf. idem, “Christology,” 280; Dahl, “Bultmann’s Theology,” 94.

<sup>64</sup> Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 210-217, 233; cf. Tim Labron, *Bultmann Unlocked* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 33-42; Fergusson, *Bultmann*, 12, 35; Wilhelm Hermann, *The Communion of the Christian with God: Described on the Basis of Luther’s Statements* (ed. Robert T. Voelkel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), viii: “My opponents on the right count it part of their glory that with them the sum of doctrine is much more comprehensive, and embraces at the least all that is reported or taught about Jesus in the New Testament. In this assertion, of course, the legal character of their religion is still more sharply defined. And the most strange thing in this is that they wish to make a law for all who will become Christians the very doctrine of that Apostle who contended so hotly for the recognition of the fact that there is no law there that can make alive. They evidently imagine that the sum of doctrine constructed in this way by them ceases to be law when it gets the name ‘gospel.’” Cf. ibid., vii-xi, 16-17, 161-63, 214-16; Daniel L. Deegan, “The Theology of Wilhelm Hermann: A Reassessment,” *JR* 45 (1965): 91-95.

<sup>65</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “Bultmann Replies to His Critics,” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch; trans. Reginald H. Fuller; London: SPCK, 1972), 210-11; Quoted in Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 213.

Just as Bultmann finds boasting to be the fundamental error attacked by Paul (e.g. in Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:28-29; etc.), he also sees this error manifesting itself in a demand for trust in historically verifiable facts as a foundation for belief in God.<sup>66</sup>

Karl Barth's dialectic theology, which emphasizes the "radically other" nature of God also bolsters Bultmann's anti-objectivist stance. Bultmann appropriates dialectical theology in its refusal to anchor Christian faith to knowable events in the past such as the life, cross and resurrection of Christ. For Barth and Bultmann, an "objectivist" approach is thought to make God an object under human control rather than the subject who confronts all people and calls for faith.<sup>67</sup> As exemplified in the factions described by Paul in 1 Corinthians, it is all too human to "confuse faith with human knowledge and convictions."<sup>68</sup> Faith is not genuine unless it is a radical step into the dark based solely on trust in God.

Furthermore, historical skepticism leads Bultmann to argue that faith must be kept separate from belief in the historicity of past events. Faith must not be tied to the results of historical research because the results of such research are incapable of forming a foundation for Christian belief. Bultmann's historical approach seeks to demonstrate that no events (cross, resurrection, etc.) can be known in their religious significance simply from a study of history. Such an approach, as 1 Cor 1:17-18 indicates, empties the cross of its power and cannot accept that "the Christian proclamation is folly (μωρία), and . . . cannot be legitimized to men's reason as 'wisdom' (σοφία)."<sup>69</sup> The nature of God and of his rule over the world "is not within the scope of our knowledge, not even after the best religious observation of nature and history."<sup>70</sup> All that can be known by an individual is "God's rule over *me*."<sup>71</sup> Going even further, Bultmann argues that history should simply be ignored when it comes to matters of faith: "It is precisely

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Dahl, "Bultmann's Theology," 121: "His rejection of tendencies toward historicizing and mythologizing is a matter of his passionate religious concern: the kerygma must be rescued from objectivizing thought which puts it at man's disposal, thus safeguarding the *extra nos*."

<sup>67</sup> An objectivist viewpoint is one that bases faith (and thus knowledge of God) on specific, historically verifiable events that have a supposedly clear theological meaning attached to them. Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 303; cf. Dahl, "Bultmann's Theology," 117-18. On the influence of Barth's dialectic on Bultmann's anti-objectivism see Rudolf Bultmann, "Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead," in *Faith and Understanding* (ed. Robert W. Funk; trans. Louise Pettibone Smith; London: SCM, 1969), 69, 73-75, 94; cf. Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 223-26.

<sup>68</sup> Bultmann, "Barth," 68.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. (emphasis original).

its immunity from proof which secures the Christian proclamation against the charge of being mythological.”<sup>72</sup>

Bultmann’s appropriation of historical skepticism and elements of dialectical theology serves as further justification for approaching the New Testament from an individually-oriented perspective. Since historically verifiable, objective data cannot legitimate Christian belief, the significance of faith for the individual—and *nothing else*—must be the focus of exegetical inquiry and Christian proclamation.

### 2.3 The Individual-in-Community

As we have seen, Bultmann focuses throughout his writings on the generic individual. However, he does not ignore the social aspects of Pauline thought. In fact, contrary to many modern perceptions of Bultmann, the social and communal in Paul receives sustained treatment in his work, even if not to the satisfaction of the post-Bultmannian, anti-individualist consensus.

When Bultmann speaks in communal terms, it is almost always with reference to love within the church, which is the necessary outcome of the faith of every person, not an added extra.<sup>73</sup> Writing about the idea of the church (ἐκκλησία) in Paul, Bultmann highlights what he takes to be the most important background, namely the idea of corporate Israel in the Old Testament. Paul draws a direct line of continuity back to Israel and places his churches into the role of a “true Israel.” Bultmann puts it this way:

Thus, to a high degree, Paul’s significance consists in his having given to Christianity not the consciousness of being a new ‘religion,’ but rather the consciousness of being a ‘church’ in a sense that was unknown in the Hellenistic world. Nevertheless, this consciousness of being a church is but a recasting of the Jewish inheritance; for in Judaism also the idea of the church as the people of God was very much alive.<sup>74</sup>

In the church, therefore, individuals who have come to a proper self-understanding in the act of faith are not simply isolated individuals, but are united by love into specific congregations, which in turn form the unified body of all Christians in all

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<sup>72</sup> Idem, “Mythology,” 44.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Idem, “Jesus and Paul,” in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. and trans. Shubert M. Ogden; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 188-90.

<sup>74</sup> Bultmann, “Paul,” 119; cf. idem, “Christology,” 274.

places.<sup>75</sup> Love creates community and takes individuals outside of themselves into a new social world with a new perspective on what is valuable and beneficial.<sup>76</sup>

One of the central affirmations of Bultmann's theology of "authentic existence" is the notion that "for the believer everything worldly and on hand that he encounters turns out to be radically indifferent, inasmuch as nothing can be held against him."<sup>77</sup> That is to say, the encounter with Christ in the kerygma frees the believer from slavery to fear, boasting and self-security, all of which are hallmarks of life apart from faith. Nevertheless,

this indifference . . . immediately disappears before the question of what I have to do, before the question of my particular responsibility [*jeweiligen Verantwortung*] (1 Cor. 6:12, 8:1 ff., 10:23). Service of Christ realizes itself in actual life as *service to the neighbor* [*als Dienst am Nächsten*], of whom precisely the man who is free, and only he, should and can make himself a genuine servant (1 Cor. 9:19-22, cf. 8:9; Rom 14:13 ff., 15:1 ff.; Gal 5:13).<sup>78</sup>

Responsibility toward one's neighbor, therefore, is a non-negotiable aspect of the Christian's freedom. Individuality, for Bultmann, cannot entail individualistic isolation and self-serving complacency.

Put differently, freedom places the individual into a new realm of existence where he or she is "free to enjoy fellowship with others."<sup>79</sup> Bultmann points to the other-centered nature of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22) when he argues that freedom makes a person capable of "human togetherness" (*das menschliche Miteinander*) and is of the essence of what it means to be a "new creature."<sup>80</sup> In fact, the ethics of the New Testament is *primarily* communally-focused:

[The New Testament ethical] situation receives its stamp not alone from the demands that apply to the individual by himself [*dem Individuum für sich*], such as that of chastity (1 Cor. 6:12ff.), but especially from the obligations that arise from human fellowship [*dem menschlichen Miteinander*]. In this respect 'all things are lawful for me' is restricted by the limitation (1 Cor. 10:23b): 'but not all things build up'—some things do not contribute to building up fellowship. This limitation is also given in positive form: 'let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor' (1 Cor. 10:24).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Bultmann, "Paul," 120; cf. 140; idem, "Barth," 79.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. idem, "Christology," 275-76.

<sup>77</sup> Idem, "Paul," 145.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 145 (slightly modified; emphasis original); idem, "Paulus," 1043.

<sup>79</sup> Idem, "Mythology," 22; cf. idem, *Theology*, 339-40.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, "Mythologie," 31 (my translation); cf. idem, "Significance," 246.

<sup>81</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 342; idem, *Theologie*, 338.



Human desire for recognition from others is a foundational aspect of the slavery that all people are subject to apart from faith. The individual, however, having received recognition from God in justification, “is inwardly liberated so that he can love, that is, so that he can be genuinely devoted to his fellow-man and to the tasks of everyday life in the service of the community.”<sup>82</sup> Bultmann can even go so far in emphasizing the communal nature of faith working through love as to say that the church is not a place where one “has and enjoys his individual relationship to Christ [*individuelles Christus-Verhältnis*]” abstracted from the body of Christ.<sup>83</sup> Communion with Christ comes only in the context of communion with others through loving service.

Furthermore, Bultmann’s understanding of the way in which the gospel eliminates any ground for human boasting serves to bolster his communal vision. While Bultmann argues explicitly for the importance of the elimination of boasting for the individual, this elimination also entails a specific social function. All human beings stand before God simply as human beings. Since no one has grounds for a boast before God, no one has grounds for a boast against others either. Precisely in what it says about individuals, the gospel is the great social leveler, obliterating all grounds for self-exaltation.

Another example of Bultmann’s communally sensitive interpretation is found in his discussion of baptism and of Paul’s “in Christ” language. Disputing mystical-individual interpretations of the phrase “in Christ,” Bultmann argues instead that it is “primarily an ecclesiological formula [*eine ekklesiologische Formel*].”<sup>84</sup> Baptism, which joins one to Christ, is about having been brought into the community of the church, the location of the proleptic arrival of God’s new creation.<sup>85</sup> New creation is vitally important for Paul since the gospel “message has for its theme not the fate of individuals [*individueller Lebensschicksale*] but eschatological salvation [*das eschatologische Heil*].”<sup>86</sup> Thus, new creation (and, concomitantly, the Christian life itself) is communally oriented, although Bultmann

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<sup>82</sup> Idem, “Christ the End of the Law,” in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (trans. James C. G. Greig; London: SCM, 1955), 60; cf. idem, *Theology*, 332: “A paradoxical servitude! For the ‘slave of Christ’ is, at the same time, ‘a freedman of Christ’ (1 Cor. 7:22). It will presently appear that this servitude is also a ‘serving of one another’ (Gal. 5:13) and can demand that one make himself ‘a slave to all’ (1 Cor. 9:19).” Cf. *Ibid.*, 342–43.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 310 (modified); idem, *Theologie*, 306. *Contra* Anderson, “Constructing the Self,” 26.

<sup>84</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 311 (emphasis original); idem, *Theologie*, 307.

<sup>85</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 311.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 324 (slightly modified); idem, *Theologie*, 319.

never loses sight of the individual ramifications of such themes in Paul, such as “die Individualisierung der πίστις.”<sup>87</sup>

In sum, the one body and community of Christ is not simply “an association that constitutes itself nor a crowd of pneumatic individuals.” It is an “eschatological fact.”<sup>88</sup> The church is a group of believers who have been “taken out of ‘this world’” and who serve as “the continuation of the Christ-event.”<sup>89</sup> The Church is the only location where the kerygma is proclaimed, and thus serves as the only place where Christ is present and salvation enjoyed.<sup>90</sup> Throughout his writings Bultmann insists that God deals with individuals in the gospel, but only in connection with the participation of the individual in the life of the community. The rhetorically-loaded reaction to Bultmann’s individualism in subsequent scholarship has not paid careful enough attention to his attentiveness to communal concerns in Paul, even if it is admitted that Bultmann could have done more to articulate the concrete relationship between the individual and the community.<sup>91</sup>

## 2.4 Analysis

Bultmann contends that Paul does not provide a systematic presentation of his anthropological starting point. Nonetheless, such a starting point is the presupposition undergirding the entirety of the apostle’s thought. Just as Jesus did in his preaching, Paul begins the theological exposition in his letters from the premise that every person is a sinner.<sup>92</sup> In Paul, the individual human plight is theologically central because every human “has become guilty, stands simply as a sinner [*als Sünder*] before God. Whatever good he may do would naturally not in itself be bad, but would be only the act of a sinner, who stands, before God in infinite guilt.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>88</sup> Idem, “Paul,” 140.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., “Paul,” 140; cf. idem, *Theology*, 303-4: “But it is not only in the proclamation that the cross thus becomes present; it also does so in all those who let it become the determining power of their lives, those who are united with Christ into one *soma*.”

<sup>91</sup> This one-sided reaction against Bultmann has been recently restated by Anderson, “Constructing the Self,” 26: “Moreover, for Bultmann, it is unnecessary to talk about the self and its relationship to the community, let alone to a people, since what matters to him is the individual’s power of decision to lead an authentic life.” Similarly, see Meech, *Self and Community*, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Bultmann, “Significance,” 231.

<sup>93</sup> Idem, “End of the Law,” 50 (slightly modified); idem, “Christus des Gesetzes Ende,” in *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1952), 44.

Furthermore, in light of God's awesome transcendence "verschwinden alle menschlichen Differenzierungen; vor ihm steht der Jude wie der Grieche gleichermaßen als ἄνθρωπος (Rm 3, 28 f.). Menschliche Größe und menschliche Wertungen sind vor Gott nichtig."<sup>94</sup> Just as universal sin creates a common human predicament, God's "otherness" levels all human distinctions and grounds for boasting. All people stand before God simply as individuals, stripped of any distinguishing characteristics. Thus, the individual before God is the focus of Paul's teaching.

Yet, Bultmann recognizes that there is an interpersonal dimension to Paul's theology, although he does not allow this to obscure the primacy of the existential:

However much Paul's view of the history of salvation is oriented toward mankind [*Menschheit*], and not the individual [*Individuum*] . . . it still is true that the situation of mankind is also that of the individual [*Einzelnen*]. He, the sinner who is in death, is confronted by the gospel when it reaches him with the decision [*Entscheidung*] whether or not he is willing to understand himself anew and to receive his life from the hand of God.<sup>95</sup>

That is to say, there is no such entity as an abstract humanity (or community) that can be defined apart from the actual situation of individual people in the world. According to Paul, every individual person has fallen into sin and is confronted in the gospel with a call for decision to live for God.<sup>96</sup> For this reason exegetical and theological inquiry is necessarily directed (at least initially) at the question of the generic individual before God.

However, far from wholly subsuming the communal life of the church under the heading of the individual, Bultmann consistently writes of the responsibility and outward-looking nature of the life of faith. While the individual serves as the starting point and most prominent feature of Bultmann's theology, the extra-personal life of the community of faith is never lost sight of. Paul's kerygma does individualize, but it also transforms one's self-understanding to include care for the community. Recent scholarship has often superficially dismissed Bultmann's exegetical and theological work for its excessive individualism without recognizing his consistent, even if not dominant, focus on community.

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<sup>94</sup> Idem, *Theologie*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> Idem, *Theology*, 269; Idem, *Theologie*, 267-68.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Idem, "Christology," 267-68.

We are now prepared to return to the primary question with which we began our discussion of Bultmann. Why is his investigation of Pauline theology centered on the individual? The simple answer is that Bultmann is convinced that individual existence is central to Paul. In support of this contention Bultmann appeals to a wide range of data, including the existential orientation of Paul's anthropological terms and Paul's prohibition of generalized, human boasting. Bultmann's exegesis of Paul is admittedly selective in this regard, yet Bultmann is attuned to elements of Paul's thought that subsequent interpreters tend to miss.<sup>97</sup>

Nonetheless, a new question emerges when one attempts to understand Bultmann's treatment of the individual and the community: does he pay adequate attention to the way in which Paul *integrates* these two themes, or do they sit awkwardly together, without a clear sense of how they may be presented in their unity?<sup>98</sup>

Although Bultmann may have left his discussion of the communal life of the church relatively abstract, he does not neglect it. It is more the case that Bultmann is limited in his expression, than that he overlooks this important facet of Pauline teaching. Faith and love form the foundation for a self-giving community. Paul's preaching destroys human grounds for boasting, and in so doing, places everyone into the same existential situation, that of sinners before God. As such, the gospel creates community precisely through how it affects individuals. That is to say, authentic community is only possible for those individuals who have received a new identity in Christ, one that nullifies the identity associated with the old world of sin and death. The world of God's new creation is built on the premise that one's identifying characteristics, whether one be a Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, cannot distinguish oneself in God's sight. A new ethical imperative is born out of the divine prohibition on self-exaltation; the end of boasting calls into existence God's new creation where love, rather than status or personal attainment, is supreme. Thus, every individual stands before God in his or her individuality, and at

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<sup>97</sup> Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 283, says much the same thing: "Bultmann's use of philosophical description enables him to notice important features of the subject-matter of the New Testament, but . . . his insights are sometimes selective, partial, and in need of complementation by work at the level of painstaking exegesis."

<sup>98</sup> Even John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (London: SCM, 1955), 224 (cf. 215, 221), a more sympathetic reader of Bultmann than most, complains that "however admirable [Bultmann's] treatment of individual Christian experience, it fails to make the transition to the Christian community."

the same time every individual stands relationally united in a community of love with fellow believers.

### 3. Ernst Käsemann

Ernst Käsemann represents, and to a substantial degree initiates, the strongly negative reaction in Pauline scholarship to Bultmann's individually-oriented interpretation. Käsemann, writing about his former teacher, addresses the idea of the individual in this way:

Unvergessen ist mir Bultmanns Diktum in einer Seminardebatte über den neutestamentlichen Begriff "Kosmos": Menschheit gibt es nicht. Das ist ein Abstraktum! Ich hatte zu lernen, daß das total falsch war und viel eher das Wort "Individuum" ein Abstraktum bezeichnet.<sup>99</sup>

Käsemann has thrown down the anti-individual gauntlet: the individual is an abstract concept with very little—if any—importance for understanding Paul.

The community and the individual in Paul are important themes in Käsemann's writings. He does not, however, neatly compartmentalize the two motifs. Thus, their significance must be determined in a less straightforward manner than is the case with Bultmann. The reason for this lies in the overarching structure of Käsemann's theological system: Jesus Christ and his lordship dominates throughout, and an eschatological-apocalyptic understanding of salvation is the necessary corollary of this construct. The individual, and even the community, then, is less significant than the cosmic drama that works itself out in history, and culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the individual is firmly situated within the context of the "world" he or she belongs to (the old age of sin and death or the new age of Christ and the Spirit), which for the Christian involves participation in the body of Christ (itself a complex theme in Käsemann's writings). Thus, one must first work through Käsemann's reconstruction of Paul's Christology and eschatology (or "cosmology") before Käsemann's understanding of community, and the place of individuals within it, can be grasped.

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<sup>99</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "Was ich als deutscher Theologe in fünfzig Jahren verlernte," in *Kirchliche Konflikte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 241. This quote was brought to my attention by my postgraduate colleague Peter Orr. Cf. Zahl, *Rechtfertigungslehre*, 100-1.

### 3.1 Christology

#### 3.1.1 Christ is Lord

Christology serves as a criterion for *Sachkritik* of any individual portion of Paul's letters, and is the systematizing principle of Käsemann's Pauline interpretation.<sup>100</sup> Käsemann often frames his christological starting point in terms of an explicit rejection of the consistent focus on the human subject, and thus on anthropology, in Bultmann.<sup>101</sup> According to Käsemann, Bultmann's preoccupation with the individual and "existential decision" led him to neglect significant, and even dominant, themes in Paul's letters such as Christ's universal reign over the whole earth, and the cosmic battle between the forces of the old and new ages.<sup>102</sup> It is Käsemann's contention that a proper appreciation of these supra-individual motifs is necessary for a correct understanding of Paul.

For Käsemann, a person is either under the dominion of Christ, or the dominion of the hostile powers of the old, fallen age.<sup>103</sup> Käsemann describes these competing dominions as spheres of "solidarity" (*Solidarität*),<sup>104</sup> which define the nature of humanity.<sup>105</sup> For exegetical support of this notion, Käsemann often turns to Rom 5:12-21 and the discussion of Adam and Christ found there.<sup>106</sup> The realm of fallen creation is the realm of Adam, and when set in contrast with the realm of new creation and Christ, it forms a foundationally important construct in Paul's letters.

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<sup>100</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 40: In agreement with Barth, "the single most important point for [Käsemann's] interpretation of Paul is the focus on the centre of the gospel, and the consequent interpretation of all other elements in the light of that centre." For Käsemann, the center of the gospel is the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord over all. His prodigious theological output can be seen largely as a working out of the implications of this fact in all areas of Pauline interpretation (*ibid.*, 51; cf. 170-3). Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 166, define *Sachkritik* this way: "The text's subject matter must be used as a standard for assessing the text, i.e., for judging to what extent the text's words and sentences give adequate expression to the subject matter . . . it must be possible to criticize a biblical text from the point of view of its own central theological concern."

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 252: "Quoting from Bultmann's 1957 Gifford Lectures, in which his teacher states that with Paul the idea of salvation is oriented to the individual, Käsemann replies: 'This sentence clearly shows the stimulus and basis of all Bultmann's thought. Nowhere is stronger objection to be raised than here.'" Käsemann's quote comes from Ernst Käsemann, "Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Vorlesungsnachschrift für den internen Studiengebrauch" (Unpublished manuscript, n.d.)

<sup>102</sup> Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 252.

<sup>103</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM, 1971), 27-28.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 22; *idem*, "Zur paulinischen Anthropologie," in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 44.

<sup>105</sup> *Idem*, "Anthropology," 23-25.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Hübner, "Existential Interpretation," 469-71.

Paul “sees our existence [*Existenz*] as determined at any given time by the Lord whom we are serving. If a transformation of our existence is really effected in Baptism and if God’s Word does posit a new creation, this cannot help but mean a change of lordship [*Herrschaftswechsel*].”<sup>107</sup> Lordship, then, and not the individual, existential plight of sinners, is of paramount importance for Paul.<sup>108</sup>

With regard to Romans 5 Bultmann does not ignore Paul’s talk of outside forces at work on the individual in the world.<sup>109</sup> However, he strongly maintains that these powers are a subordinate concern for Paul, since what truly defines human existence is the internal battle at work in all people, the battle between flesh and spirit, the struggle for authentic existence in the face of death.<sup>110</sup> Whereas Käsemann understands Pauline teaching on themes such as “flesh” to refer to the cosmic struggle of the two ages, Bultmann contends that such language refers primarily to a battle within the individual, a battle that transcends the contingent situation of Paul’s letters and applies equally to all people throughout history.<sup>111</sup> Much hinges on determining the precise meaning of Paul’s anthropological terms, since an entirely different way of conceptualizing the individual and the community will result based on the decisions made. Bultmann’s consistent emphasis is on the generic individual who stands before God precisely as an individual, regardless of the influence of inter-personal forces. This is the individual who cannot boast before God’s awesome transcendence and impartiality (cf. Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:18-19). Käsemann, on the other hand, based on passages in Paul such as Romans 5 and 6, unfailingly insists that the powers at work on the individual (such as sin and freedom) are “presented so universally and therefore with such mythological objectivity that individual existence [*Einzelexistenz*] threatens to be lost to view.”<sup>112</sup> Both Bultmann and Käsemann recognize the objective picture in Paul with regard to

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<sup>107</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “The Righteousness of God in Paul,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1969), 176; idem, “Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus,” in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1964), 188.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Hübner, “Existential Interpretation,” 468.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Bultmann’s treatment of a proposed Gnostic background to Rom 5:12-21 in Bultmann, *Theology*, 174, 251-53, 347.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Idem, “Mythology,” 6; Hübner, “Existential Interpretation,” 469-71.

<sup>111</sup> This is the consistent emphasis in the large section of Bultmann’s *New Testament Theology* (Bultmann, *Theology*, 190-269) devoted to Paul’s anthropological terms. Cf. Idem, “Mythology,” 6. On the unchanging essence of the human situation see idem, “The Problem of Hermeneutics,” in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (trans. James C.G. Greig; London: SCM, 1955), 234-61.

<sup>112</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 159; idem, *An die Römer* (HNT8a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973), 150.

cosmic forces; Käsemann contends that this is one of Paul's chief contributions, while Bultmann neutralizes this fact by subordinating it to Paul's ostensibly more important existential concerns.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.1.2 Christ and Power

When it comes to defining the nature of Christ's lordship, Käsemann highlights several related themes in Paul. One of the most important is that of power, which is partly derived from Käsemann's history-of-religion study of Jewish apocalyptic and Gnostic sources.<sup>114</sup> Käsemann's most important contention with regard to power in Paul is that the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (righteousness of God) is a technical term in Jewish apocalyptic, which is picked up by Paul and used to maintain a gift-power dialectic.<sup>115</sup> That is to say, Paul speaks of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ primarily to indicate "God's sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus."<sup>116</sup> God's righteousness is God's power at work in Christ's saving activity.

Käsemann admits that the traditional Lutheran and Protestant understanding of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as "gift" (*Gabe*) is valid.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, the primary nuance of the phrase is that of God's effective salvation-creating power (*Macht*), manifested in Christ.<sup>118</sup> Käsemann insists that beginning the investigation with the gift aspect of God's righteousness will skew the apostle's theology in an unwarrantedly anthropocentric direction.<sup>119</sup> Individuals are only important insofar as Christ's lordship brings them into its sphere of power so that they act concretely in obedience to him. While individuals benefit from coming under the reign of Christ's lordship, the focus must always be on Christ and his dominion over all of creation.<sup>120</sup> Käsemann also warns against interpretations of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ that begin with "its specifically juridical application" since such a procedure will necessarily over-emphasize the gift nature of divine righteousness, and again lead to excessive importance being attached to anthropology.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> On the latter point see Hübner, "Existential Interpretation," 481.

<sup>114</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 282.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>116</sup> Käsemann, "Righteousness," 180.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, "Righteousness," 168; *idem*, "Gottesgerechtigkeit," 182. Cf. Way, *Lordship*, 193-94.

<sup>118</sup> Käsemann, "Gottesgerechtigkeit," 182.

<sup>119</sup> *Idem*, "Righteousness," 176, 180-1.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-82.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 172; cf. *idem*, *Romans*, 82.



### 3.1.3 Christ and Justification

Käsemann, like Bultmann, firmly maintains that justification is the center of Pauline theology.<sup>122</sup> However, he also insists that justification “cannot be located and isolated in soteriology, and especially not in anthropology, but is rooted in the apostle’s Christology and his doctrine of God.”<sup>123</sup> Justification “is the actuality of God’s right to his creation as this reveals itself as saving power, and this remains the basis, force, and truth of justification—a truth which transcends the individual [*Einzelnen*] and is directed toward a new world.”<sup>124</sup> Justification is the specific doctrine which most clearly displays God’s universal reign, through Christ the “Cosmocrator,” and is Paul’s application of Christology to humanity and to the world.<sup>125</sup> Thus, the centrality of justification is firmly anchored to the primacy of Christology, rather than to the primacy of the individual.<sup>126</sup>

Moreover, justification designates a sinner’s “transferral to the dominion of Christ” from the lordship of the evil powers of the old age and, thus, cannot be understood as an anthropological term.<sup>127</sup> Because of this, Käsemann does not believe that justification and sanctification can be separated in Paul, since the latter flows out of the former, and both concepts manifest Christ’s dominion over his subjects.<sup>128</sup> As an example, Käsemann’s exegesis of Rom 12:1-15:13 can be summed up as an application of the concept of the justification of the ungodly to the concrete life of the community.<sup>129</sup> That is to say, because Christ is lord over all, life in the churches must reflect his lordship concretely in interpersonal relations. Justification means whole-bodied submission to Christ, and reciprocal submission among fellow Christians.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 177, who points to Käsemann, *Romans*, 111, and idem, “Righteousness,” 174. Cf. Idem, *Romans*, 123. For a discussion of the shift in emphasis in Käsemann’s later writings which moved from highlighting sacramental and Hellenistic religious connections with Paul’s christological thought toward more Jewish apocalyptic themes such as justification, see Way, *Lordship*, 109-11.

<sup>123</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 123.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 93; idem, *Römer*, 86.

<sup>125</sup> Idem, “Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans,” in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM, 1971); Käsemann, *Romans*, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 24; cited by Way, *Lordship*, 215; cf. Hübner, “Existential Interpretation,” 469.

<sup>127</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 172; cited by Way, *Lordship*, 259.

<sup>128</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 260-1.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 262-63.

<sup>130</sup> Käsemann, “Anthropology,” 18-19, 22; cf. Way, *Lordship*, 259.

### 3.2 Cosmology

As was mentioned above, Käsemann's interpretation of the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ makes much of Paul's adaptation of Jewish apocalyptic motifs. In this section, we will examine Käsemann's use of such apocalyptic conceptions in more depth, since they are a key element in Käsemann's prioritizing of what he deems the "cosmological" aspect of Paul's thought over against concerns with individual human beings.<sup>131</sup>

In introducing his exposition of Rom 1:18-3:20, Käsemann maintains that this "section of the epistle deals with the totality of the cosmos [*Totalität des Kosmos*] and not just with an aggregate of individuals [*Anhäufung von Einzelnen*]; hence, it deals with humanity as such [*den Menschen als solchen*] and not just with representatives of religious groupings."<sup>132</sup> This section of Romans, following directly after the statement of the thesis of the letter in Rom 1:16-17, emphasizes the gospel's "cosmic breadth and depth."<sup>133</sup> Thus, the cosmic and apocalyptic opening of Romans sets the stage for the exposition of the eschatological drama that unfolds throughout the letter.

#### 3.2.1 The Two Ages

The doctrine of the two ages lies at the heart of Jewish apocalyptic thought. The old age is characterized by sin and death, while the new age is one of life, righteousness, blessing and peace. In distinction from Jewish apocalyptic, however, which looks forward to the submission of the entire earth in the future when God's anointed deliver (or deliverers) will usher in the universal dominion of Israel over the nations, Paul maintains an "eschatological reserve" based on his theology of the cross. Thus, while Paul believes that the powers of the old, evil age have been decisively defeated by Christ, this defeat is only manifested in Christian service and self-sacrifice, rather than in domination over the structures of power in the world. Paul's theology of the cross, in distinction from the theology of the Corinthian "enthusiasts" with their over-realized, triumphalistic eschatology, is observed in the fact that the present time is still one of temptation and trial in anticipation of a future day when Christ's reign will be completely dominant over all the earth (cf. 1

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Way, *Lordship*, 154: "... apocalyptic, not anthropology, determines the main lines of the apostle's theology."

<sup>132</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 33; idem, *Römer*, 30.

<sup>133</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 35; cf. Hübner, "Existential Interpretation," 468.

Cor 15:24-28).<sup>134</sup> The self-sacrificial surrender of the believer's body to Christ in the present time anticipates "the ultimate future of the reality of the Resurrection and of the untrammelled reign of Christ."<sup>135</sup> In further contradistinction from Jewish apocalyptic, Paul sees the old age overlapping with the present age, rather than being wholly surpassed by it.

Paul's modification of the Jewish view, nonetheless, retains the basic idea of the two ages, and this motif is fundamental in Käsemann's interpretation of the apostle. The world for Paul is one controlled by demonic forces. Thus, the individual is only a player ("a piece of the world" [*das Stück Welt*]) in a cosmic drama of competing forces. One cannot think of isolated individuals in the world, but must think of individuals as they are situated in this cosmic battle.<sup>136</sup> Contradicting Bultmann, salvation in Christ is not simply the granting of a new self-understanding. Instead it is a divine rescue from the powers of evil, and the ushering in of a new creation from which evil is banished forever.<sup>137</sup> The legitimate insight Käsemann sees in Bultmann is that he does not divorce what is true of God from how that affects humanity. Bultmann's fundamental error, however, lies in his neglect of the notion of lordship, as well as the notion of apocalyptic realms of power that operate on humans in their concrete life situations. In other words, individuals are not simply individuals, but are subject to relations and powers outside of themselves and do not have the ability to calmly and rationally determine the nature of their own existence.<sup>138</sup> Käsemann puts it this way:

The person is not seen primarily as the subject of his history; he is its object and projection. He is in the grip of forces which seize his existence and determine his will and responsibility at least to the extent that he cannot choose freely but can only grasp what is already there.<sup>139</sup>

For Paul "a human under the lordship of sin cannot be an 'individual' [*Einzelnen*], but is, as representative of its world [*Repräsentant seiner Welt*], enslaved to its powers."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1969), 132-35.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>136</sup> *Idem*, "Apokalyptik," 129.

<sup>137</sup> See *ibid.*, "Anthropology," 26; cited in Way, *Lordship*, 161-62. On this see also Zahl, *Rechtfertigungslehre*, 123-24.

<sup>138</sup> Käsemann, "Anthropology," 27.

<sup>139</sup> *Idem*, *Romans*, 150; quoted in Way, *Lordship*, 163.

<sup>140</sup> *Idem*, "Anthropology," 31 (modified); *idem*, "Anthropologie," 59.

True individuality is only a possibility for the believer who has been made new in the image of Christ, since true individuality entails freedom, love and service.

As an example of his defense of such contentions, Käsemann notes that in Romans 6 the “old man,” understood as humanity in its fallenness, is held under the bondage to sin which characterizes the old age. The old man is not the individual lost in sin, but corporate humanity as it is alienated from God. In Romans 7 “flesh” is a controlling power associated with the old age of sin and death which holds those under its sway in bondage, replacing the motif of the old man in Romans 6. As such, these motifs highlight the cosmic and corporate aspects of Pauline theology and go beyond “the individual sphere” (*der Bereich des Individuellen*).<sup>141</sup>

The new age, in a radical break from the old, is the place of manifold blessing. According to Käsemann, the Christian life is a “lived justification.”<sup>142</sup> The whole world is the sphere of God’s power. Thus, individual Christians are to live out their faithfulness concretely in whatever situation they find themselves.<sup>143</sup> New creation power must be extended into the world, because Christ’s lordship demands no less than the whole earth. Individual Christians living lives of inner piety hidden away from the world are an affront to the rightful claim that God’s messiah has over the world.

### 3.3 Community versus Individual?

As we have seen, Käsemann understands Paul’s thought to bring Christology and cosmology into the closest relationship. In Pauline teaching, the themes of Christ’s lordship, and the battle between the two ages, highlight the power and the sphere that determine the nature of Christian existence. The role of history’s chief actor has been cast and the stage has been set for his defining performance: the final defeat of the forces of evil in the cosmos. What remains to be seen is the outcome this defeat has for human beings and their lives in the world. It is here, more than anywhere else, that Käsemann’s understanding of the individual and the community, as well as of their relationship, stands out most clearly.

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<sup>141</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 188; idem, *Römer*, 178. Cf. Hübner, “Existential Interpretation,” 471-72.

<sup>142</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 25.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 24.

### 3.3.1 The Community

Käsemann believes that body of Christ language in Paul has primary reference to the corporate body of the church as a “validation” of Christ’s heavenly, exalted body through concrete acts of personal obedience.<sup>144</sup> The primary contention he makes with regard to the body of Christ is that it is the means of Christ’s communication *with* the world, and thus his lordship *over* the world.<sup>145</sup> Thus, “the body of Christ motif . . . expresses the cosmic scope of Paul’s theology: in and through his body Christ reaches out for the whole world. Baptism and the Lord’s supper incorporate people into the body of Christ.”<sup>146</sup> The theme of the body of Christ is important because it “expresses Paul’s concern for Christ’s ‘universal rule’ [*Weltherrschaft*] and his rule over the church.”<sup>147</sup> Christology always maintains primacy over ecclesiology; the church as the “people of God” is secondary in that its existence and vitality is wholly derivative of the power and work of the exalted Christ. Paul’s ecclesiology is determined by his “exclusively christological viewpoint”<sup>148</sup> in the sense that the church has no independent existence as an “eschatological event” (as per Bultmann) that could allow it to become a replacement for the exalted Christ himself.<sup>149</sup> Believers are united with Christ’s body, but the independent and distinct existence (and primacy) of Christ’s body is firmly guarded.<sup>150</sup> It is only through the working of the Holy Spirit that the church is made to be Christ’s presence in the world, and this is only “in such a way that it [cannot] become independent of its lord.”<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, Christology has primacy over the “people of God” concept, which Paul derives mostly from the Old Testament descriptions of Israel. While this

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<sup>144</sup> Käsemann, “Anthropology,” 18-19.

<sup>145</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 246-47.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>148</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “The Theological Problem Presented by the Motif of the Body of Christ,” in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM, 1971), 109 (Way’s translation [*Lordship*, 242]).

<sup>149</sup> Käsemann, “Theological Problem,” 118; Cf. Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 263, 267.

<sup>150</sup> Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 262-63. In Käsemann’s early work, Paul is said to have a “realistic” understanding of the body of Christ which is partially derived from Stoic conceptions of the humanity-encompassing “world body,” and which is partially derived from mystical conceptions of sacramental incorporation. Cf. Käsemann, “Theological Problem,” 106-8. Cf. *idem*, *Leib und Leib Christi: Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit* (BHT 9; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 161; cited in Way, *Lordship*, 107.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Käsemann, “Theological Problem,” 111-13; cited in Way, *Lordship*, 244. Although Käsemann’s later work shifts toward a “Jewish apocalyptic” history-of-religion background, he continues to maintain the dominance of Christology over all other elements of Pauline teaching. Cf. Way, *Lordship*, 109-11.

theme is present in Paul, Käsemann subordinates it to Christology because he fears that otherwise it will raise the earthly church community into prominence at the expense of Christ, and that it is peripheral to Paul's interests anyway.<sup>152</sup>

In a word, then, the church is vitally connected to Christ, and it receives both its existence, and its mission from him. Community, or ecclesiology, is important, but only insofar as it derives from Christology, which always remains central in Pauline thought.

### 3.3.2 The Individual

Only with Käsemann's caveat in place that ecclesiology is subordinate to Christology can his understanding of the place of the individual in Paul be properly understood. This is true because "viewed in their individuality, members of the church mean nothing to Paul."<sup>153</sup> Paul is even unconcerned with the church "as a religious group" except insofar as "it is the means whereby Christ reveals himself on earth and becomes incarnate in the world through his Spirit."<sup>154</sup> If community is an offshoot of Christology, then the individual, as a mere means toward the concretization of Christ's earthly presence, is all the more so.

In Käsemann's article "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic" he gives a short history of the development of the traditions which lay behind the notion of the church as a community in Paul's letters. He begins by noting that the earliest (= Palestinian) tradition (that which is related to the time during and immediately after Jesus' mission, as well as to the founding of the earliest churches) lacks any explicit anthropology. Instead, the "individual Christian [*der einzelne Christ*] is what he is simply and solely as a member of the people of God [*als Glied des Gottesvolkes*]."<sup>155</sup> Anthropology only enters the picture because of the demand for maintaining communal accord, which necessarily takes the form of paraenesis that is directed toward individuals. Anthropology "is in no way an independent expression of theology but only the parenetic concretion and application of ecclesiology."<sup>156</sup> Thus, "the earliest Christian theology cannot adequately be

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<sup>152</sup> Käsemann, "Theological Problem," 112; Way, *Lordship*, 242. Cf. Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 263, 267.

<sup>153</sup> Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 263, 262.

<sup>154</sup> Käsemann, "Theological Problem," 117.

<sup>155</sup> Idem, "Primitive," 117; idem, "Apokalyptik," 113.

<sup>156</sup> Idem, "Primitive," 117.

interpreted from an existentialist starting-point [*Leitmotiv der Existenz*], if decisive weight is to be given to its fundamental understanding of itself.”<sup>157</sup>

Moving on to the earliest Hellenistic Christian churches (including the Corinthian “enthusiasts”) we see a highly-realized eschatology, one that posits the present enjoyment of the fullness of eschatological salvation, as well as maintaining that Christ’s reign is already completely established in the world.<sup>158</sup> To such Christians,

The immediate conclusion to be drawn is that there was no thought of giving up cosmology even if anthropology was now coming to the fore [*die Anthropologie in den Vordergrund rückte*]. Of this period it might be said in some sense that anthropology is still in the shadow both of Christology and cosmology, and thus the continuity with apocalyptic is maintained. The believer who is swept along as a participant in the destiny of the Christ is the representative of a new world, and his membership in the Church is membership in this divine new world.<sup>159</sup>

However, since the Hellenistic church recognized that not everything outside of the church (the realm of new creation) had yet been placed under Christ’s dominion, a certain anthropological and soteriological emphasis developed. This emphasis was firmly based on the christological-cosmological understanding of salvation as new creation and deliverance from the old, evil age. This new anthropological development was necessitated by the fact that unbelief still existed in the world, and that unbelievers needed to be converted, and brought into submission to Christ’s reign. Thus, individual soteriology, and with it a new anthropological concern, grew up as a result of the mission of the earliest churches.<sup>160</sup>

With the success of the early Gentile mission of the Hellenistic church the idea of a “people of God” in continuity with Old Testament Israel waned among new converts, or at least could only be used figuratively since “those who received the promise no longer coincided exactly with those who received the fulfillment.”<sup>161</sup> Anthropology thus filled the gap that was developing, since it was well suited to the transformation of Jewish apocalyptic into “a metaphysical dualism, which itself then finds concretion and contemporary force in a doctrine of man. The question of

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 117; *idem*, “Apokalyptik,” 113.

<sup>158</sup> *Idem*, “Primitive,” 125–27. Käsemann here notes that this form of Christian proclamation is not present in “pure” form anywhere in the NT. Instead it is reflected in various fragments that have been incorporated into other documents (such as the pastorals) which may have slightly different interests or perspectives.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 128; *idem*, “Apokalyptik,” 122.

<sup>160</sup> *Idem*, “Primitive,” 128.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

the reality of the saving event can now be answered in a new way by starting from this anthropology.”<sup>162</sup> It is no longer simply the two realms of power that are central, but the specific way in which this construct affects individuals.<sup>163</sup>

Even here, “the two poles of the dialectic are not equal” since anthropology is “crystallized cosmology” (*konkretisierte Kosmologie*).<sup>164</sup> Cosmology, at least theoretically, remains decisive. In Paul, salvation is not chiefly about making right what is wrong on the individual level, but about the defeat of all powers hostile to God. To put it differently, “salvation does not primarily mean the end of past disaster and the forgiving cancellation of former guilt. It is, according to Rom. 5.9f.; 8.2, freedom from the power of sin, death and the divine wrath; that is to say, it is the possibility of new life.”<sup>165</sup> Nonetheless, it is precisely with regard to justification, a doctrine that is firmly attached to Christology and apocalyptic in the earliest tradition, that the individual-anthropological focus rises to prominence, even in Paul’s letters, but especially in the writings of his followers.<sup>166</sup>

Ultimately Käsemann believes that, compared with the teaching of Jesus and the earliest churches, individual anthropology takes on heightened importance in Paul. Nonetheless, Christ’s lordship continues to be all-determinative for understanding the place of the individual in the communal life of the church and in the unfolding drama of redemption.

### 3.3.3 The Relationship Between the Community and the Individual

According to Käsemann, Bultmann’s understanding of the nature of humanity is too individualistic since it does not conceive of humans as relational beings bound by their respective realms of existence, whether of the old or new age.<sup>167</sup> Bultmann’s understanding of individuality is said to be a particularly abstract and nineteenth-century understanding of humanity that is not sensitive to external forces and

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.; cf. 132: “The systematic development of anthropology is indeed without any doubt the particular personal contribution of the apostle, which still causes him to stand out from among his pupils, for they succeed in preserving only a few pitiful fragments of his terminology and practically nothing of his grand design.”

<sup>164</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 161; Käsemann, “Anthropology,” 29; idem, “Anthropologie,” 56; cf. idem, *Romans*, 52, 82, 159, 296.

<sup>165</sup> Idem, “The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul,” in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. Margaret Kohl; London: SCM, 1971), 44.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Harrisville and Sundberg, *Bible*, 261.

<sup>167</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 48; cf. 155, 159.



pressures that act upon humanity (and which Käsemann argues have been uncovered by modern sociology, biology, etc.).<sup>168</sup>

Paul's "anthropological terms" form an important battleground between Käsemann and Bultmann with regard to coming to a proper understanding of the relationship between the community and the individual. Significantly, Käsemann disputes Bultmann's definition of the key anthropological term "body." Contra Bultmann, a "body" is:

related, not to existence in isolation [*die isolierbare Existenz*], but to the world in which forces and persons and things clash violently – a world of love and hate, blessing and curse, service and destruction, in which man is largely determined by sexuality and death and where nobody, fundamentally speaking, belongs to himself alone [*niemand je zutiefst allein sich gehört*].<sup>169</sup>

That is to say, bodies are interactive by nature, and cannot be described in merely, or even primarily, existential terms.

Käsemann's exegesis is replete with examples defending his understanding of humanity as fundamentally relational.<sup>170</sup> In addition to the human body being inherently relational, it is also the claimed property of the Lord Jesus Christ. Käsemann terms the body a "piece of world." Everything, including every human body, in the world belongs to Christ.<sup>171</sup> The Pauline anthropological terms "flesh" and "spirit" are likewise oriented toward outside realities (lordships) which determine one's existence, rather than toward the individual as a self-subsistent subject.<sup>172</sup> The everyday world that one finds oneself in is the specific realm to which Christ directs his lawful demand for obedience.<sup>173</sup> The Christian does not have the freedom to retreat from the world into the inner sanctity of private devotional

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<sup>168</sup> Käsemann, "Anthropology," 10-11, 15-18.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 21 (cf. 22-23, 26); idem, "Anthropologie," 42-43; cf. idem, "Theological Problem," 114; idem, "Anthropology," 21: "To define this in ontological terms: corporeality is the nature of man in his need to participate in creatureliness and in his capacity for communication in the widest sense, that is to say, in his relationship to a world with which he is confronted on each several occasion."

<sup>170</sup> Way, *Lordship*, 160, summarizes Käsemann's use of various relevant passages in Paul this way: Käsemann "cites the questions of parents and children (1 Cor. 7: 14), the fate of the dead (1 Thess. 4: 13ff.), vicarious baptism (1 Cor. 15: 29), union with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6: 15), the nakedness of the transitional state (2 Cor. 5: 2 ff.), the handing over of the body of the incestuous man (1 Cor. 5: 5), and Paul's being caught up in the body (2 Cor. 12: 2). These examples demonstrate the futility of narrowing down 'creatureliness' to the individual, and of separating the 'authentic person' from nature, society, history, and creation in general."

<sup>171</sup> Käsemann, "Theological Problem," 114-16; cf. Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* (SBT 25; London: SCM, 1973), 178, n. 135.

<sup>172</sup> Käsemann, "Primitive," 136.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 135.

or churchly life. Such a world-denying posture is a Christ-denying posture.<sup>174</sup> The individual as a piece of the world is simply the way in which Christ claims all of creation for himself.

Thus we see that neither ecclesiology nor the individual is ultimately central in Paul's world. These two themes are derivative of Christology. The center of Paul's teaching "lies in the Christological aspect of his ecclesiology . . . . In a sentence – every Christian in his own place, in his particular situation, with his specific capacities and weaknesses, may and must be a 'place holder' for Christ until death."<sup>175</sup> The community is important, but in light of the way in which the independent status of Christ's own body and lordship in the world dominates Paul's letters, the church community (and, even more, the individual) is pushed into the background.

### 3.4 Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Anthropology is not Denied

It must be noted that Käsemann does not deny the presence of anthropology or individuals in Paul's letters. Indeed, he affirms this element of Paul's thought—even if reluctantly—throughout his writings.<sup>176</sup>

One way this is seen is in Käsemann's granting of a fairly traditional Protestant understanding of faith as having reference primarily to individuals. While he firmly maintains that faith must always be active in the world, its provenance remains that of the individual. Käsemann puts it this way:

Als Annahme des göttlichen Zuspruchs bleibt der Glaube bei Paulus primär eine Entscheidung des einzelnen Menschen, deren Gewicht darum nicht aus der Anthropologie in die Ekklesiologie verlegt werden sollte. Man glaubt zwar nie allein, aber unvertretbar, und die Gemeinde ist die Schar derer, die sich persönlich vom Aberglauben abgewandt haben und davon durch nichts und niemanden dispensiert werden können.<sup>177</sup>

Käsemann even sees this as a point of agreement with Bultmann.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Idem, "Theological Problem," 114

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>176</sup> Käsemann explicitly rejects the idea that he has no place for the individual in idem, "Erwiderung an Ulrich Asendorf," *LutMon* 6 (1967): 595, which is cited by Way, *Lordship*, 159, n. 79.

<sup>177</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "Der Glaube Abrahams in Römer 4," in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 147; cf. idem, *Römer*, 20; Way, *Lordship*, 214.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Ernst Käsemann, "The Faith of Abraham in Romans 4," in *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM, 1971), 84, n. 11.

Commenting on Rom 3:21-26, Käsemann notes that “whatever else God’s eschatological righteousness may be, at any rate it is a gift that comes to man διὰ πίστεως. Faith is basically human receptivity, as actively as it may express itself in obedience.”<sup>179</sup> However, despite Käsemann’s clear insistence that faith is something that belongs to individuals, he feels compelled to clarify his position in a non-individualistic direction:

To say that a man only believes as an individual [*als Individuum*] is simply to say that here, as in the case of ministry in the world, he cannot shrug off responsibility [*Verantwortung*]. But I find myself totally unable to assent to the view that Paul’s theology and his philosophy of history are orientated towards the individual [*am Individuum orientiert sei*].<sup>180</sup>

Käsemann recognizes that humanity is tasked by God with the responsibility of responding to the divine summons in the gospel. However, admitting the importance of the individual should not be taken as shifting the focus of Paul’s theology away from Christology toward anthropology. In fact, this does little to mitigate Käsemann’s unswervingly anti-individual rhetoric elsewhere, especially given that this reluctant concession to anthropological concerns is merely part of an argument for the concrete expression of the supra-individual lordship of Christ. The individual may exist, but the individual hardly makes much of an impact in determining the shape of Käsemann’s Pauline theology.

### 3.4.2 Tying the Threads Together: Christology, Cosmology, Ecclesiology and Anthropology

In several places Käsemann notes that Bultmann was right to observe the elevated position of anthropology in Paul and John. For example, he agrees that more than any other New Testament writer, Paul brings individual paraenesis and individual soteriology to the forefront, in distinction from the view dominant in the rest of the New Testament that sees an individual “more or less as the representative of a group.”<sup>181</sup> Commenting on what he understands to be the thesis of Romans (Rom 1:16-17), Käsemann states:

<sup>179</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 94. Again, Käsemann sees this as a point of agreement with Bultmann.

<sup>180</sup> Idem, “Righteousness,” 176; idem, “Gottesgerechtigkeit,” 188; cf. idem, “Righteousness,” 176, n. 5: “As against R. Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 1957, pp. 43ff.”

<sup>181</sup> Idem, “Anthropology,” 2: “. . . even in the community of the body of Christ [the believer] is more than a dispensable member of a corporation, for he is the irreplaceable representative of his Lord.”

The reference to ‘every’ believer shows that the interpretation by early history-of-religions research, that Paul never has the individual in mind . . . is wrong. Universalism and the most radical individuation are here two sides of the same coin [Denn Universalismus und äußerste Individuation sind hier Kehrseiten desselben Sachverhaltes].<sup>182</sup>

With regard to justification and judgment Käsemann states that for “the apostle doom lies not only over the world but also over the individual whose existence heaps God’s wrath upon itself.”<sup>183</sup> Thus “. . . the world and the individual are directly related to one another and the signature of cosmology may be perceived in anthropology.”<sup>184</sup>

However, Käsemann cannot simply leave things at that. While Bultmann theoretically affirms an equality, a “vice versa,” of theological and anthropological considerations in Paul, he has in fact neglected the theological side of the equation by elevating the individual to a place of prominence that is not warranted by the text of Paul’s letters.<sup>185</sup> Since Christ is Lord over all the earth, Paul’s gospel is worldwide in scope. Moreover, the gospel mission is presented in Paul in terms of the cosmic conflict between God and humanity. Thus, the individual is indispensable in Paul, but primarily because the universal compass of the Pauline mission demands a concrete individual response. Individuals are important, but only insofar as they contribute to the establishment of the universal lordship of Christ in the world.<sup>186</sup> In a balanced statement, Käsemann, speaking specifically of Rom 5:12-21, describes the relationship between the individual and the cosmos this way:

If, in relation to existence, the depth of the salvation event is in view, so is the universality of grace with the historical perspective. In each individual God is concretely reaching for the world. This would be arbitrary if the whole breadth of creation were not at issue. The two approaches alternate and complement one another in this epistle . . . Neither the person in isolation [*der isolierbare Mensch*] nor history abstracted from the individual [*die vom Einzelnen abstrahierende Geschichte*], but the person in his world [*der Mensch in seiner Welt*] is as the reality of creation simultaneously the object and the field of salvation.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., *Romans*, 22. Cf. Käsemann’s comments on the individual implications of the “end of the law” as understood by Paul in Rom 3:27-31 (ibid., *Romans*, 103).

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 57. Käsemann (see e.g., ibid., *Romans*, 66) can even go so far as to admit the Bultmannian concern with “self-judgment” and “self-criticism” in Paul.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>185</sup> Idem, “Anthropology,” 12.

<sup>186</sup> Idem, “Salvation History,” 65.

<sup>187</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 141 (cf. 87-88); idem, *Römer*, 131.

While Käsemann does not deny the role of the individual in Paul's gospel, he cannot allow the individual to be the starting point of theological inquiry.

In fact, Käsemann appears to presume that, in direct contrast to Bultmann, an anti-individualistic starting point is a necessary presupposition of proper exegetical results. Käsemann's anti-individual rhetoric is therefore necessary as a safeguard to ensure that due prominence is given to the christological and apocalyptic coloring that he believes so thoroughly permeates Paul's thought.

By way of summary, we can say that Christology brings to the forefront the salvation-creating power of God, while cosmology denotes the nature and realm of divine deliverance. Ecclesiology highlights the indispensably relational outworking of Christ's apocalyptic reign, and anthropology indicates the concrete expression of this rule in individual existence. All throughout, the Lordship of Christ—not anthropology—governs every facet of Christian existence.

### **3.4.3 The Rhetoric of Antithesis**

We have seen that Käsemann acknowledges the importance of Pauline anthropology. Nonetheless, throughout his writings, the rhetoric of cosmology and apocalyptic ends up obscuring what he otherwise admits, that the individual has an important function in Paul's letters. In fact, Käsemann's downplaying of the individual is a constant motif in his writings. Such a downgrade of individual concerns results in exegesis of Paul's letters that is skewed in both relatively insignificant ways, as well as with reference to foundational issues such as the nature of the church and its responsibility in the world. Käsemann's overstatement of the primacy of Christology and cosmology over anthropology has fundamental repercussions for any attempt to articulate the proper relationship between the individual and the community in Paul correctly. Some representative examples will suffice to make Käsemann's penchant for overstating himself clear.<sup>188</sup>

In commenting on Rom 3:21-26, Käsemann downplays the notion of individual redemption (especially in v. 25) through recourse to the two-age construct (which he sees in the latter half of v. 25). He assumes that Paul's eschatology makes the sacrificial motif of propitiation or expiation irrelevant, or at least inconsequential for the individual. While, Käsemann admits that v. 26 has

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<sup>188</sup> The first three examples are from Käsemann's Romans commentary, where such an interpretive stance is often evident. These are merely a few examples.

reference to individuals, he lets his apocalyptic construct run roughshod over a theme (sacrificial redemption) that has individual significance, which is seen in Paul's statement that Christ's blood (as a metonymy for his death) constitutes the mercy seat (ἰλαστήριον) that avails before God and which affects the justification of those who have faith (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) in Christ.<sup>189</sup> Käsemann rejects the sacrificial and individual elements of Paul's thought at this point because of a controlling assumption about the primacy of cosmology over anthropology.

With regard to the universal scope of Paul's presentation of Abraham and the promise in Romans 4, Käsemann argues that individuality falls almost completely out of the picture. He says of justification in Romans 4:

Justification, as the restitution of creation and as resurrection anticipated in the stage of trial (Anfechtung), is the decisive motif of Paul's soteriology and theology and that these always have to be interpreted in terms of it. It also means that justification cannot be located and isolated in soteriology, and especially not in anthropology, but is rooted in the apostle's Christology and his doctrine of God.<sup>190</sup>

Käsemann's desire, seen in his Romans commentary, to refute a certain kind of individualism leads him to overstate himself substantially. Instead of attempting to integrate the individual insights developed in his article "The Faith of Abraham in Romans 4,"<sup>191</sup> where Käsemann speaks of the importance of the faith of individuals, we see a rhetoric of sharp antithesis in his Romans commentary between soteriology (anthropology) and Christology (theology). As we have already seen, this rhetoric permeates Käsemann's writings.

Commenting on Rom 6:16-22, Käsemann says that "in both cases the central concern is not the individual but the lordship of Christ, which is objectively erected over the individual [*über den Einzelnen*] and is to be subjectively grasped and maintained [*subjektiv ergriffen und festgehalten werden will*]."<sup>192</sup> However, the fact that there must be a "subjective grasping" by the individual shows that there is absolutely no need to speak of a "central concern" (i.e., lordship) as if giving full force to the individual concern in these verses would somehow diminish the christological significance of the passage. While not positing an absolute antithesis

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<sup>189</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 99-100. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 1.200-1, n. 1, for an excellent analysis of the difficulties involved in Käsemann's reconstruction of this passage in Romans.

<sup>190</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 123 (slightly modified; *Anfechtung* is un-italicized and in parentheses, rather than brackets, in the English translation); idem, *Römer*, 115-16.

<sup>191</sup> Idem, "Romans 4," 83.

<sup>192</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 182; idem, *Römer*, 172.

between individual and communal concerns, this section (like many in Käsemann) significantly diminishes the role of the individual, and its integration into community. This is often what happens when exegesis is phrased in terms where one alternative is admitted, yet lessened by arguing that the general thrust is “not as much” about that alternative (i.e., saying “Paul is concerned with cosmology, and not as much with soteriology”). In other words, the force of the grudging admission that the individual plays any role whatsoever in the cosmic drama of redemption is significantly mitigated by placing cosmological and communal concerns into a controlling and systematizing role where little room is left for substantive anthropological concerns.

In a different context, Käsemann discusses Krister Stendahl’s “salvation historical” approach to Paul and justification, stating that

Stendahl and his friends are right in protesting against the individualist curtailment [*die individualistische Verkürzung*] of the Christian message. Here the twentieth century must dissociate itself from the nineteenth. The Pauline doctrine of justification never took its bearings from the individual, although hardly anyone now realizes this. It does not merely talk about the gift of God to the individual. If that were so, the cosmic horizons of Rom. 1:18-3:20; 5:12ff.; 8:18ff. and especially chs. 9-11, would be incomprehensible. We should then have to shut our eyes to the fact that Paul can depict God’s righteousness as a power which reaches out towards our lives in order to make them obedient. Salvation never consists in our being given something, however wonderful. Salvation, always, is simply God himself in his presence for us.<sup>193</sup>

However, Käsemann goes on to note (just one page later) that Paul “usually expresses [the doctrine of justification] anthropologically because he is concerned that it should determine our everyday lives.”<sup>194</sup> Käsemann appears to be arguing that justification, even in its individual ramifications, must be understood in the “cosmic horizons” of God’s entire redemptive plan. However, instead of integrating the individual and the cosmic, we see an overreaction that leads to a false antithesis.

Without belaboring the point, it must be repeated that Käsemann does not deny a place for individual concerns. He does, however, continually relegate the individual to the periphery of Paul’s thought, obscuring and even diminishing important elements of Paul’s theologizing. Those who would argue against such moves on *exegetical* grounds are too easily dismissed as individualistic when the

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<sup>193</sup> Idem, “Salvation History,” 74; idem, “Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief,” in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 132.

<sup>194</sup> Idem, “Salvation History,” 75 (slightly modified); idem, “Heilsgeschichte,” 133.

presence or absence of individual motifs is the very point that needs be determined from careful textual analysis. Before offering some final remarks on Käsemann's theological system, I will now turn to a brief examination of the significant impact his anti-individual interpretational approach has had on subsequent scholarship, specifically on the question of the righteousness of God in Paul.<sup>195</sup>

#### 3.4.4 Käsemann's Legacy: The Reception of his Apocalyptic Reading of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ

In his article "The Righteousness of God in Paul," Käsemann provides a revealing statement with regard to the fundamental orientation of his own theology.

Käsemann is commenting on whether or not δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ should be understood primarily as a divine attribute or as a divine gift:

Like Bultmann, and indeed because of his exaggeration of the facts, I, too, am bound to make a question of translation into a theological decision. At this point philology and the history of ideas prove broken reeds because, if we confine ourselves to the insights they provide, *both solutions appear acceptable*. The whole of the apostle's theology has now to be subpoenaed in order to reach the correct translation of a single word and, conversely, the correct translation of this one word determines, as I see it, the whole of the apostle's theology.<sup>196</sup>

Such a statement is illuminating precisely because Käsemann recognizes that lexical and historical research into the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ *could* lead one in either an individually-oriented or a cosmologically-oriented direction.<sup>197</sup> Käsemann opts to allow his Christological *Sachkritik* principle ("The whole of the apostle's theology has to be subpoenaed...") to determine his handling of the issue. Bultmann, quite clearly, selects the individually-oriented option where (based primarily on Phil 3:9)

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<sup>195</sup> Although Käsemann's arguments on this point have been modified substantially by subsequent scholarship, the "anti-individualistic" tenor of Käsemann's presentation has almost always been retained. The standard caveat: as Käsemann already noted, "a complete history of the interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Paul can scarcely be given here since it would embrace many volumes." (Käsemann, *Romans*, 25); Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.92; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26* (JSNTSup 65; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 138. For a helpful survey of research up to 1972 see J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1-14. For further bibliography see Campbell, *Romans 3.21-26*, 138, n. 2. See also Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2007), 141-48, and the bibliographic sources listed in the footnotes on those pages.

<sup>196</sup> Idem, "Righteousness," 173, n. 4 (emphasis added).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Hübner, "Existential Interpretation," 463.



“‘God’s righteousness’ means the righteousness from God which is conferred upon [the believer] as a gift by God’s free grace alone.”<sup>198</sup>

An apocalyptic, as opposed to a so-called anthropocentric, interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ was further developed by many of Käsemann’s students. For example, Manfred Brauch describes the position of Christian Müller this way:

As a result of [his] analysis, Müller describes the ‘formal structure’ of *dikaiosynē theou* as the ‘eschatological realization of God’s right in the world’ (p. 72), for ‘*dikaiosynē ek nomou* and *ek pisteōs* (10:5) are not descriptions of the individual, but signs for the old and the new people of God, respectively’ . . . .<sup>199</sup>

For Müller, the social function of righteousness language in setting up Paul’s law-faith contrast invalidates, rather than complements, an understanding of the righteousness of God focused on the identity or status of the individual who believes that gospel.

The apocalyptic reading of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ eventually began to have a wide impact outside the circle of those directly taught by Käsemann. J. C. Beker, for example, also operating with an apocalyptic perspective on Paul’s thought argues that

The phrase ‘the righteousness of God’ (*dikaiosynē [tou] theou*)—which Paul uses only in Rom. 1:17, 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26, 10:3, and Phil. 3:9—transcends the category of acquittal and personal relationship because it points to that order of cosmic peace (*shalōm*) and salvation (*sōtēria*) that has been proleptically manifested in Christ and that discloses itself in our obedience to his lordship (Rom. 6:16-23).<sup>200</sup>

Beker’s argument does not necessarily preclude a role for an individual application of the language of the righteousness of God. Theoretically the fact that the righteousness of God “transcends the category of acquittal and personal relationship” does not mean that it obliterates such categories. However, it is telling that Beker does not in fact go on to explicate what the role of the individual would be for Paul. Like Käsemann, Beker appears to admit that the individual is not wholly unimportant, but nullifies such a concession by not actually explaining the place of the individual in the apostle’s thought. The sole nuance that Beker intends to

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<sup>198</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 285; cf. 279-85; idem, “ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 12-16. See Zahl, *Rechtfertigungslehre*, 125-26, on the interaction between Bultmann and Käsemann on the question of the righteousness of God.

<sup>199</sup> Manfred T. Brauch, “Perspectives of ‘God’s Righteousness’ in Recent German Discussion,” in E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1977), 530; cf. C. Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1964).

<sup>200</sup> Beker, *Paul*, 264.

convey in this section is that the righteousness of God in Paul is cosmic and creative, rather than individual and analytic.

After recounting the nineteenth and twentieth-century development of a relational understanding of righteousness, with its focus on God's "activity as Savior," Joseph Fitzmyer goes on to state:

What is debatable, however, is whether the gift idea of *dikaiosynē theou* is suitable anywhere in Romans. In his debate with Käsemann, Bultmann insisted on different senses of the phrase in different places in Paul's letters (subjective gen. in 3:5, 25, objective in 1:17; 10:3). Käsemann rightly sought to use one sense, stressing the power character of God's gift. *Pace* Cranfield (*Romans*, 97, 825), it is not 'arbitrary' to insist that *dikaiosynē theou* in Romans has only 'one sense.' It has rather to be shown that it is right to import the objective sense from 2 Corinthians or the prepositional expression of Phil 3:9 into the interpretation of Romans.<sup>201</sup>

For Fitzmyer, the only text in Romans where the potential for understanding righteousness as something other than "saving power" is even open to debate is Rom 10:3.<sup>202</sup> Commenting on δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Rom 3:5, Fitzmyer scolds the interpreter who would find such individually oriented notions such as God's "punitive judgment upon sin" in this verse since "to admit that would be to upset all the gains of recent decades in the interpretation of Romans."<sup>203</sup> According to Fitzmyer (building explicitly on Käsemann), it is a settled issue in scholarship that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ must be understood only in the sense of a divine attribute or activity consonant with that attribute.

N. T Wright argues similarly: "I regard it as an increasingly firm conclusion that Paul's other uses of the phrase (all in Romans) treat θεοῦ as referring to a δικαιοσύνη that is God's own, rather than a δικαιοσύνη that he gives, reckons,

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<sup>201</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; London: Chapman, 1992), 262. Fitzmyer (*ibid.*, 262-63) then lists several important scholars who have adopted the Käsemannian perspective, including P. Stuhlmacher, K. Kertlege, S. Lyonnet, C. H. Dodd, and W.-G. Kümmel, among others. The foundational work that argues for a relational understanding of righteousness in the OT and in Paul is Hermann Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1899). As Campbell, *Romans* 3.21-26, 148-49, notes: "[Hermann Cremer argued that] righteousness denoted fidelity to the demands of a relationship, whether with a spouse, neighbor, tribe, nation or God. This fundamental insight has been presupposed by all subsequent analyses, although it is developed somewhat divergently." For a thoroughgoing critique of Cremer's (and those who have followed it) "relational" understanding of righteousness see Charles Lee Irons, "ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2011).

<sup>202</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 263.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 329. Fitzmyer is arguing against John Piper, "The Righteousness of God in Romans 3.1-8," *TZ* 36 (1980): 15.

imparts, or imputes to human beings.”<sup>204</sup> Elsewhere Wright argues that “when [δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ] occurs in biblical and post-biblical Jewish texts, it always refers to God’s own righteousness, not to the status people have from God; and Jewish discussions of ‘God’s righteousness’ in this sense show close parallels with Paul’s arguments in Romans.”<sup>205</sup> Katherine Grieb summarizes Paul’s understanding of the righteousness of God in a comparable vein to Wright:

Paul seems to have four meanings in mind: (1) God’s righteousness as the Creator to the entire creation; (2) God’s special covenant relationship with Israel; (3) God as the impartial judge who will put things right, especially for the poor and the oppressed; and (4) God’s saving faithfulness that will restore all things to right relationship at the end time.<sup>206</sup>

Operating in the Käsemannian, anti-individualistic trajectory, both Wright and Grieb reject an understanding of the righteousness of God in Paul that incorporates the idea of righteousness being *in any way whatsoever* a human identity that is granted or based on faith.<sup>207</sup>

Similarly, Douglas Campbell states that:

God’s eschatological saving righteousness functions dynamically, like the O.T. ‘Word of God’ breaking into a chaotic or rebellious order from above but crucially for Paul, here definitively within the Christ-event. The primary relationship presupposed by this reading is therefore that between God and the gospel in the context of the cosmos, not that between the gospel and the individual.<sup>208</sup>

Campbell, amplifying Käsemann’s cosmic construct, places individually-oriented applications of the gospel and God’s righteousness in antithetical relation to the cosmic ramifications of the gospel, with the latter winning out completely. Building on Campbell’s reading of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, David Southall, in a recent dissertation

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<sup>204</sup> N. T. Wright, “On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21,” in *Pauline Theology. Volume 2: 1 & 2 Corinthians* (ed. David M. Hay; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 200-1; cf. 206: “The ‘righteousness of God’ in this verse is not a human status in virtue of which the one who has ‘become’ it stands ‘righteous’ before God, as in Lutheran soteriology. It is the covenantal faithfulness of the one true God, now active through the paradoxical Christ-shaped ministry of Paul, reaching out with the offer of reconciliation to all who hear his bold preaching.”

<sup>205</sup> Idem, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 403.

<sup>206</sup> A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God’s Righteousness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>207</sup> On the notion of a new “identity” of righteousness based on faith see Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (rev. and exp. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238.

<sup>208</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17- A Crux Interpretum for the πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate,” *JBL* 113 (1994): 272, quoted in David J. Southall, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans: Personified dikaiosynē within Metaphoric and Narrational Settings* (WUNT 2.240; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 289.

published on Paul's righteousness language, argues that an "anthropocentric view [of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Rom 1:17] seems unsatisfactory in the light of an alternative reading" that "emphasizes the gospel itself" where "the sense is that 'the righteousness of God is being revealed within the gospel.'"<sup>209</sup> Such a reading "links well with my cosmic eschatological assertions that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is God's faithfulness and His saving activity."<sup>210</sup> For Southall (as with Campbell and Käsemann) cosmology trumps anthropology.

Commenting on δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Rom 1:17 Robert Jewett shows his indebtedness to Käsemann: "A crucial contribution was made by Käsemann, who emphasized the apocalyptic understanding of the 'righteousness of God,' developed in response to the individualized, existential interpretation of imputed righteousness by his teacher, Rudolf Bultmann."<sup>211</sup> For Jewett, Paul's apocalyptic context demands a non-individualized reading of his letters. Jewett lumps together any reading of justification in Paul that recognizes the change in status or identity that is received through faith and then dismisses such understandings as "partisan controversies" that are insufficiently cognizant of "the apocalyptic background of Paul's language or the missional setting of Romans."<sup>212</sup> Building on Käsemann's rhetoric of antithesis, Jewett states that the "primary scope" of the righteousness of God in Paul "is the group, that is, the nation and the world, rather than the individual."<sup>213</sup> Jewett goes so far as to say that "the individual believer in the modern sense was not in view by Paul, even though the formulation from Habakkuk encourages an individualistic construal for the modern hearer."<sup>214</sup>

Richard Hays takes a similar line with regard to righteousness of God language in Paul: "The problem in view here [Rom 3:20-21] is not, as Hans Conzelmann thinks, 'the subjective quest for salvation,' but still, as in Rom 3:5, the issue of God's integrity, God's justice that persistently overcomes human unfaithfulness."<sup>215</sup> Hays understands interpretations of the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 293, citing Campbell, *Romans* 3.21-26, 205.

<sup>210</sup> Southall, *Rediscovering*, 293.

<sup>211</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 141; cf. Robert Jewett, "Major Impulses in the Theological Interpretation of Romans Since Barth," *Int* 34 (1980): 25-27.

<sup>212</sup> Idem, *Romans*, 141.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>215</sup> Hays, "Psalm 143," 60.

that are not centered solely on God's salvation power to entail a reversion to pietistic or fundamentalistic questions of "How can I be saved?"<sup>216</sup>

The tendency toward diminishing the role of the individual in relation to God's righteousness is clear in the examples above. This is not surprising given the way most current Pauline scholarship is set firmly against assigning a prominent place—if any place at all—to the individual in Paul's letters. Such questions are simply passé and irrelevant to the modern scholar of Paul's thought.

This is all quite odd, considering the way in which πίστις functions in all of the contexts in which the righteousness of God appears in Romans, and often, as in Romans 3, functions as the vehicle for the reception of a new believing identity. As Francis Watson puts it:

Käsemann's attempt to convert [the righteousness of God] into an apocalyptic victory over the world, only tenuously linked with faith, is an exegetical error. . . . An interpretation that severs the link between righteousness and faith will be plausible only to those who, on the basis of questionable dogmatic commitments, cannot accept the faith/justification sequence that Paul's language so plainly entails.<sup>217</sup>

Righteousness, whatever else it may entail, is firmly connected with the faith of individuals.<sup>218</sup>

Rudolf Bultmann, on the other hand, is able to incorporate Käsemann's insight into δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, understood as God's saving action, without at the same time falling into the false dichotomy that plagues interpretations in the Käsemannian vein: "Ebenso ist natürlich die Gabe δικ. θεοῦ im Handeln Gottes

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 57; cf. Wright, *Fresh Perspectives*, 123. This is a question that appears to pre-date the rise of Christian fundamentalism by a few years or so. See e.g., Acts 16:30b: κύριοι, τί με δεῖ ποιεῖν ἵνα σωθῶ; ("Sirs, what must I do in order to be saved?").

<sup>217</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 238 (emphasis original); cf. 245: "'Faith' is marginalized . . . on account of [Käsemann's] polemic against the 'individualism' inherent in 'justification by faith' as traditionally understood."

<sup>218</sup> Appealing to the "faith/fulness of Christ" is of no help in evading the force of this argument. As Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 157-58, has shown, even if we grant the legitimacy of a "faith/fulness of Christ" reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ in some places, Paul often speaks explicitly of faith in Christ [e.g. Rom 9:33; 10:11; Gal 2:16; 3:26]. More significantly, Jesus is never the subject of the verb πιστεύω in Paul, a verb which occurs 41 times, nor is he ever described as πιστός, even though Paul uses that epithet 9 times. Believing in Christ is an important facet of Paul's thought and it exercises a controlling function with regard to the righteousness of God. Positing cosmic dimensions of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ cannot obscure this fact either. For more on the individual (but not exclusively so) nature of Pauline faith see Dunson, "Faith."

begründet, aber δίκ. bezeichnet nicht das Handeln als solches, sondern sein Ergebnis.”<sup>219</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Käsemann describes his problem with Bultmann’s theological agenda in this way:

By abandoning the question of the meaning of history or, rather, by narrowing it down to the question of the meaning of the historical nature of existence [*dem Sinn der Geschichtlichkeit der Existenz*], Bultmann was inevitably bound to maintain that Pauline theology takes its bearings from the individual [*die paulinische Theologie sie am Individuum orientiert*]. His presentation of New Testament theology is determined by this thesis. Personal relations colour the total picture and allow even Christian service to be described within the framework of an individual ethic [*im Rahmen einer Individualethik*]. The fruitfulness of this approach is as indisputable as the fascination of its systematic consistency.<sup>220</sup>

Ironically, Käsemann falls into the exact opposite error, largely due to his attempt to distance himself from his teacher on the point of anthropology.

Yet, Käsemann sees himself as taking a middle position between the extremes of Bultmannian existentialism and salvation-historical “idealism”:

I apparently stand between two fronts in refusing either to subordinate the apostle’s doctrine of justification to a pattern of salvation history or to allow it to turn into a mere vehicle for the self-understanding of the believer [*Vehikel für das Selbstverständnis der Glaubenden*]. I would recognize both as necessary. What I would dispute are the respective emphases which are associated with these aspects.<sup>221</sup>

It is certainly true that the individually-oriented aspects of Paul’s letters should not be allowed to obscure the cosmic picture that emerges so clearly in texts such as Romans 1, 5 and 8. Yet, the question remains: does Käsemann find a way to adequately integrate the individual and the community in Paul into a coherent whole, or does his rhetorical overstatement and exegetical selectivity prevent him from adequately interpreting the diverse strands of the apostle’s thinking? While Käsemann opens up several fresh and important avenues for Pauline research, he also leads interpreters down numerous blind alleys, and closes off other lanes that could be fruitfully explored from a variety of new perspectives. Care must be

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<sup>219</sup> Bultmann, “ΔΙΚΑΟΙΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ,” 14.

<sup>220</sup> Käsemann, “Anthropology,” 10; idem, “Anthropologie,” 24.

<sup>221</sup> Idem, “Salvation History,” 75, n. 27; idem, “Heilsgeschichte,” 135, n. 27. An even more forceful argument along these lines is found in Axel von Dobbeler, *Glaube als Teilhabe: Historische und semantische Grundlagen der paulinischen Theologie und Ekklesiologie des Glaubens* (WUNT 2.22; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 5: “Wir setzen uns damit vor allem gegen die intellektualistisch-abstrakte Sicht des Glaubens als ein Fürwahrhalten, bzw. ein neues Sich-selbst-Verstehen ab.”

exercised so that Käsemann's proper concern with eschatological and communal features of Pauline thought does not lead to thinking that requires an excluded opposite in order to make the case for its own persuasiveness.

Similar questions can be asked of Bultmann. Has he found a way to show how the individual and the community are related in Paul? I have attempted to show that Bultmann is much more attentive to the communal dynamics of Paul's theology than many of his detractors have thought, but one can still ask whether his discussion of community is concrete enough. In other words, is Bultmann content to leave the discussion at a relatively abstract level? Bultmann does not provide all of the answers to the questions we posed at the beginning of this chapter, such as whether it is possible to integrate the complex argumentation in Paul's letters with regard to both its individual and communal implications and repercussions. Nonetheless, he, like Käsemann, focuses attention on important Pauline texts, which, especially given the anti-individual context of modern scholarship, need to be re-explored, even if one arrives at different conclusions.

For example, we have seen how Bultmann highlights the "generic individual" in Paul (such as in Paul's critique of "generic boasting" in Rom 3:27 and his discussion of the generic ἄνθρωπος in Rom 2:1-3). Bultmann's careful attention to this facet of Paul's letters is evidence that his "individualistic" interpretation of the apostle is not as insensitive to the precise contours of Pauline thought as some have suggested. While I believe that Bultmann has neglected other important ways of conceptualizing the Pauline individual, his insight into the *generic* individual provides an important focal point for further exegetical exploration.<sup>222</sup>

I suggest that in both Bultmann and Käsemann an exegetical selectivity is at work that can make sense of certain portions of Paul's letters, while obscuring others. Yet, the preceding discussion should not be taken to imply that Bultmann's individualism and Käsemann's communalism should—or even can—be brought together in a simplistic pseudo-Hegelian synthesis.<sup>223</sup> Instead, I have endeavored to draw attention to the hermeneutical and exegetical possibilities that are highlighted by each scholar's selective reading of Paul. Each approach underlines

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<sup>222</sup> Hans Hübner's assesment is surely correct: "Bultmanns Einbringen der existentialen Interpretation in der Theologie ist sein großes Verdienst, das nicht hoch genug eingeschätzt werden kann," even if his "Existential Interpretation steht aber in der Gefahr, in individualistischer Weise mißdeutet zu werden . . ." ("Existential Interpretation," 488).

<sup>223</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 463.

genuinely important aspects of Paul's thought that must be attended to, especially in light of the false antitheses that are common in current research.



## CHAPTER 3

### Individual and Community in the Discourses of Epictetus

#### 1. Introduction

As the survey in chapter one above has indicated, an increasing number of Pauline scholars argue that it is anachronistic to speak of individuals in any important sense in Pauline thought. Indeed, doubt has been expressed about the existence in the entire first-century world of anything resembling a modern view of the individual.

The first task of this chapter is to examine this question: is the widespread scholarly apprehension about speaking of the individual in the first-century warranted? To do so, we will look at the discourses of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus in order to determine whether the individual played an important role within his system. The second question to be answered in this chapter, however, is equally important: how does Epictetus—if indeed he does—relate the individual to society as a whole?<sup>1</sup> The two questions are intertwined, and as the survey of scholarship below will make clear, must be answered together.

I contend that Epictetus's ethical logic is quite pointedly centered on the individual; the individual's power to choose a life of virtuous tranquility, despite the outward circumstances of life, is the primary concern of Epictetus' ethical paraenesis. The communal and social facets of Epictetus' discourses are secondary—and contingent—expressions of an essentially individually-centered system. Although it is not the case that outwardly-focused aspects of Epictetus' thought are insignificant, his ethical system is—and can only be—founded on the necessity of preserving one's self, since he ultimately places social concern into the category of "things indifferent" to happiness.<sup>2</sup> From this sure foundation his ethical teaching branches outward toward social responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Burnett has rightly pointed to recent scholarship challenging the idea that there was no important sense of individuality in the ancient world, his presentation of this issue is clouded when he so strongly distances himself from anti-individual understandings of the ancient world by almost exclusively emphasizing the *individualistic* aspects of the ancient world (see e.g., Burnett, *Salvation*, 23-87). My analysis of Epictetus is specifically meant to avoid swinging the pendulum in *either* an individualistic or communalistic direction, since as I will argue below, both the individual and society are vitally important in Epictetus' thought, as is the case with most thinkers in antiquity.

<sup>2</sup> On this latter point see A. A. Long, *Epictetus: a Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 232.

The ultimate purpose of this study of Epictetus' way of relating individual and communal themes is to enable the interpreter of Paul's letters to compare and contrast Epictetus and Paul. In so doing, both similarities and differences will become evident, although the main point of this comparison is to re-open the question of the individual and the community in Pauline theology by taking careful note of how thoroughly at home such a question is in a near contemporary of Paul's, no matter how different the foundational philosophical and theological outlooks of each thinker might be.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Individual and Community in Recent Scholarship on Stoicism

In his account of the relationship between Paul and Stoicism, Troels Engberg-Pedersen places great weight on Stoic teaching on *oikeiōsis*, a motif that has been increasingly seen in recent scholarship as one of the keys to understanding Stoic ethics. In brief, *oikeiōsis* is the notion that when a person has become equipped with a detachment from earthly possessions and affections by aligning him or herself completely with reason/God, such a person is elevated beyond mere self-directedness toward selfless care for others.<sup>4</sup> While Engberg-Pedersen admits that the ethical system of "canonical" Stoicism *appears* "wholly oriented towards the individual and his or her happiness," he nonetheless insists that Stoic ethics "is just as community-oriented as anything to be found in Paul" since it is inescapably political in its vision.<sup>5</sup> In fact, although a focus on the individual with regard to mental "conversion" and cognitive change at the *inception* of ethical progress is appropriate, neither individual transformation nor the inner life of the individual is paramount in the ongoing life of moral progress.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the aim of one's ethical

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<sup>3</sup> In other words, I am not primarily seeking to note similarities or differences between Epictetus and Paul, or to argue for influence one way or the other. Instead, I am placing two roughly contemporary writers side-by-side, who both address a similar issue (how to relate the individual to the community), with the goal of persuading Pauline interpreters that this was a live issue in antiquity and that superficial dismissals of the Pauline individual are illegitimate, despite the legitimate desire to avoid anachronism. As we will see in the next two chapters, the Pauline individual is a vitally important category in Paul's theology and ethics, but it is most emphatically not an *isolated* individual; for Paul the redeemed individual is necessarily an individual-in-community.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 3.16; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 53-54. Epictetus' appropriation of Stoic *oikeiōsis* teaching will be examined in greater detail below.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 37; cf. 73-78. However, Engberg-Pedersen admits that Stoicism (in distinction from Paul) never created actual communities and that in this regard it remained "more or less 'individualistic'" (*ibid.*, 78). This is quite an admission!

<sup>6</sup> See *Ibid.*, 66-70.

development in both systems is a radically community-centered life orientation. Engberg-Pedersen's proposal is particularly important for my purposes since he places Stoicism side-by-side with Paul's theology and ethics in order to argue for a similarly all-pervasive focus on the community in Paul. For Engberg-Pedersen it is either the individual or the community; there is no *via media*: after conversion "the individual [is] nothing but a member of the group,"<sup>7</sup> since Christ-faith "lifts the individual . . . out of his or her individuality, leaves it behind and carries him or her over to a state of communality."<sup>8</sup>

How does Engberg-Pedersen's anti-individualist understanding of Stoicism compare with the views of other scholars in the field? As is the case in New Testament studies, scholars of Stoicism have also recently begun to scrutinize whether Stoic ethics should be understood as individualistic or social in its fundamental outlook.

In her book *The Roman Stoics* Gretchen Reydam-Schils lays out the two primary issues involved in this discussion: 1) the fact that "the Stoics have a robust notion of self," indeed, "the strongest sense of selfhood" on offer in the Hellenistic ethical tradition;<sup>9</sup> 2) but also that "individuality is but one aspect of the Roman Stoic notion of a human being's core" since everyone is embedded into "a network of relationships . . . [that] has its specific claims and standards of behavior."<sup>10</sup> With regard to the latter point Reydam-Schils argues that

because sociability is part of animal and human nature, appropriation is also supposed to embrace care of others. And the Roman Stoic version of 'appropriation' yields a striking appreciation for relationships with friends, parents, lovers, spouses, children, siblings, parents-in-law, and the like.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, because "*oikeiōsis* implies a focus on one's own needs as dictated by one's nature, both ancient and contemporary critics of the Stoics have not failed to question how this dynamic could be reconciled with life in a community and the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. For a representative sampling of more instances of this understanding of the individual in relation to community see *ibid.*, 128, 137, 147, 152, 154-55. This line of argumentation is repeated in *idem*, *Cosmology and Self*, 176-81, although Engberg-Pedersen does offer a more nuanced description of the Pauline "self" in this book (partially in response to criticisms of *Paul and the Stoics*).

<sup>9</sup> Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 53; cf. Nicholas P. White, *Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 316-17.

needs of others.”<sup>12</sup> That is to say, many scholars—and many non-scholarly readers ancient and modern—are troubled by the logic of ethical decision making in Stoics such as Epictetus because it at least *sounds* extremely individualistic, possibly even antisocial. Reydam-Schils’ own response to this seeming tension between the individual and communal aspects of Stoic ethics seeks to do justice both to its “robust notion of the self” and its “distinctive pattern of emphasizing social responsibility.”<sup>13</sup>

Anthony Long likewise notes the apparent absence of “any necessary link with social relationships” in Epictetus’ focus on “living ‘unimpeded and undistressed’.” Long surmises that Epictetus’ ethical outlook “looks as if it could be a policy for a wholly self-absorbed life, keeping clear of anything that might jeopardize one’s individual tranquility” even arguing that “in a certain respect that impression is correct.” However, Long immediately adds that this self-concern “so far from cutting people off from society,” is actually “the essential condition for acting well in every social role” since only those “who are wholly at peace with themselves, have the right kind of disposition to care effectively about other people as well.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, Long maintains that a strong desire to maintain one’s individual well-being is a necessary presupposition for proper communal living in Stoic thought. Thus, Long does not see a tension between the primacy of the individual and the importance of the community, even though he does feel the need

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<sup>12</sup> Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 53; cf. Malcolm Schofield, “Social and Political Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 764–65; Brad Inwood, “L’oikeiōsis Sociale chez Epictète,” in *Polyhistor: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ancient Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe A. Algra, Pieter W. van der Horst and David T. Runia; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 243–44; Gisela Striker, “The Role of Oikeiōsis in Stoic Ethics,” in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 288–89, 295; Nicholas P. White, “The Basis of Stoic Ethics,” *HSCP* 83 (1979): 149–65; Adolf Bonhöffer, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet. Anhang: Exkurse über einige wichtige Punkte der stoischen Ethik* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1894), 158–59.

<sup>13</sup> Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 3; see also Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49. Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–70, argues for a similarly robust view of social responsibility in Stoicism, but perhaps because the target of his own critique is scholarship that pits Stoic self-centeredness completely against Stoic social responsibility, he does not give much attention to the importance of the self and self-preservation in the Roman Stoic authors he analyzes.

<sup>14</sup> All quotes in this paragraph are from Long, *Epictetus*, 114; cf. 116: “. . . his ethics is premised on the claim that we have to care first and foremost for our individual selves if we are to be properly equipped to do what is incumbent on us in our social roles.” cf. *ibid.*, 198; Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 43.

to defend Stoicism from the charge of being *wholly* individualistic.<sup>15</sup> John Sellars similarly concludes that “it is arguably one of the strengths of the Stoic position” that “it is an ethical theory that takes seriously the primitive behaviour of animals and human beings, and does not try to pretend that selfish motivations are not at the heart of most people’s actions.”<sup>16</sup> The synthesis (seen in Long and Sellars) of a primarily self-preservative instinct with a nonetheless important social concern has precedent in the seminal work of Adolf Bonhöffer, who in 1894 said of Epictetus:

Hier haben wir klar und deutlich die Synthese der egoistischen und altruistischen Motive. . . . Er selbst wenigstens ist überzeugt, dass die Befolgung seiner Lehren nicht bloss Dankbarkeit gegen Gott und stetige Freudigkeit, sondern auch Frieden und Eintracht im Haus, im Staat und Völkerleben wirken würde (IV, 5, 35). Der Grundsatz aber, den Epictet hier ausspricht, dass wer auf sein eigenes wahres Glück bedacht ist, auch seine sozialen Pflichten am besten erfüllt, ist unstreitig der denkbar höchste, den eine Ethik aufstellen kann.<sup>17</sup>

Attempting to give a more prominent place to the community in Stoic ethics, Martha Nussbaum insists that the individual progressing in virtue never remains simply an individual, but must live virtuously in every one of his or her concrete social relationships. Like Reydams-Schils and Long, Nussbaum recognizes that “Stoic arguments seek the health of the individual human being, to be sure . . .” but also that “they never let the pupil forget that pursuing this end is inseparable from seeking the good of other human beings.” The reason for this lies in the fact that “philosophy’s mission, as we have seen, is not to one person or two, not to the rich, or the well-educated or the prominent, but to the human race as such.” No one can “pursue one’s own fullest good without at the same time caring for and fostering the good of others. . . . In short, a life based on narrow self-interest cannot be

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 200 (cf. 114–16, 198–200): “There are not two dispositions, a self-interested one and an altruistic one, but a single attitude that treats concern for others as integral to concern for oneself. . . . Epictetus devotes far more attention to instructing his students in self-improvement than he gives to advising them on specific social roles. As we have already seen, he treats the latter as a topic that is secondary to the primary topic of training one’s desires and aversions. . . . We could say that Epictetus places duty to oneself as the top priority. . . . but, while it is one’s primary function to improve oneself, this should not be at the expense of neglecting one’s social relationships . . .” But note that Long is careful to distinguish Epictetus’ individualism from modern, “Cartesian” individualism (see e.g., A. A. Long, “Stoic Psychology,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* [eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 584; cf. Sorabji, *Self*, 157; Gill’s criticism of Long on this point, then, seems somewhat misplaced [Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 371; cf. 372–91]).

<sup>16</sup> John Sellars, *Stoicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 108.

<sup>17</sup> Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 5.

successful, even on its own terms. Since the self is a member of the human community, promoting its fullest success includes promoting the ends of others.”<sup>18</sup>

However, while recognizing the interplay between individualism and communalism, Nussbaum pushes the communal dimension further than Reydam-Schils or Long when she says that—in modification of the standard approach of other philosophical schools—Stoic thought focuses “on communal well-being *rather* than the health of isolated individuals.”<sup>19</sup> Stoics “do not, like the others, turn away from politics, bringing *eudaimonia* to individual pupils (or groups of friends) by moderating their individual desires, without social change.” Instead, they “set themselves the task of producing a just and humane society.”<sup>20</sup> Going even further Nussbaum says that in Stoicism the person who desires to cultivate virtue needs to “be taught that what she is *as an individual* is a member of a whole, and that this whole reaches out to include the entirety of humanity.”<sup>21</sup> In a similar fashion to Engberg-Pedersen, Nussbaum places the communal dimension of Stoic ethics into a place of precedence. For her it is not simply enough to recognize the communal aspect of Stoicism. Rather, one’s understanding of Stoicism will be skewed unless one gives due heed to the *ultimacy* of community, where the individual is simply the starting point for moving toward the accomplishment of Stoicism’s broader social vision.<sup>22</sup> However, unlike Engberg-Pedersen, Nussbaum is generally more willing to admit the presence of individually-centered elements of Stoic ethics that remain in place during the process of human advancement in virtue.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> All quotes in this paragraph are from Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 341-42; cf. 342-44.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 329 (emphasis added). Cf. Inwood, “*L’oikeiōsis*,” 244: Epictetus “insiste catégoriquement sur la nature irréductiblement sociale de l’homme.”

<sup>20</sup> The two preceding quotes are from Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 319.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 344 (emphasis original).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M. Andrew Holowchak, *The Stoics: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2008), 39: “To make sense of Stoic naturalism, one has to have some story to tell, and a convincing one, about how humans go from beings who are preeminently preoccupied with self-preservation, to beings whose rational element predominates and has such regard for other- and cosmic-concern that it may even subordinate the self-preservative instinct to a cosmic ideal.” However, this is in tension with statements Holowchak makes elsewhere, such as when he says that “overall, there was general agreement among the Stoics that the primary human impulse, dictated by nature, was self-preservation” (Holowchak, *Stoics*, 36). Holowchak (ibid., 37 [emphasis added]), seems to admit that, rather than subordinating “the self-preservative instinct to a cosmic ideal” “self-affection *branches out* into mutual affection and friendship with others, which develops into a sense of patriotism, of care for posterity, and even of fit into the cosmos itself. Here Aristotle’s political animal has become cosmic.” This quote is more in line with Long’s observation (cited above) that the self-preservative instinct is “the essential condition for acting well in every social role” (Long, *Epictetus*, 114).

<sup>23</sup> For example, Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 344, cites a passage in Epictetus where he encourages the virtuous progressor to recognize that “the medical concern she, and the teacher, feel for her personal health is at the same time a concern for the world of rational beings, of which she is a

The one scholar of ancient philosophy who comes closest to Engberg-Pedersen's dismissal of the importance of the "post-conversion" individual in Stoicism is Christopher Gill, who argues that "if we are to engage effectively with [ancient concepts of self or personality], we need to counteract the modern tendency to conceive *self* or *personality* in terms that gives a central role to subjectivity and individuality."<sup>24</sup> However, even Gill recognizes that the individual is important throughout the process of ethical growth in Stoicism. He simply insists that it is a radically different *kind* of individual (an "objective-participant") than the "modern individual," which Gill sees as determined to such a large degree by questions of subjectivity and inwardness (a "subjective-individualist").<sup>25</sup>

These views on the relationship between the individual and the community in Stoic ethics highlight a widely felt tension among scholars of ancient philosophy, namely how to make sense of the centrality of the individual and self-preservation while at the same time doing justice to the social-communal aspect of Stoic thought. The scholars surveyed above recognize that the communal dimension of Stoic ethical reasoning—as vital as it is—does not completely subordinate the individual dimension to itself, even if they have different ways of relating the individual and community. This runs directly counter to Engberg-Pedersen's case for the total sublimation of the individual into the community in both Stoicism and Pauline thought.<sup>26</sup>

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'principal part' (Epict. 2.10.3)." In other words, proper self-concern, rather than being obliterated in the quest for cosmic virtue, leads naturally to concern for others.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Gill, "The Self and Hellenistic-Roman Philosophical Therapy," in *Vom Selbst-Verständnis in Antike und Neuzeit* (eds. Alexander Arweiler and Melanie Möller; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 359.

<sup>25</sup> On which see idem, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: the Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9-28.

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars comparing Paul and Epictetus have also noted the individualistic thrust of the latter and the problems that arise when one elevates the communal dimensions of his thought to an all-controlling position. Cf. Abraham J. Malherbe, "Paul's Self-Sufficiency (Philippians 4:11)," in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. J. T. Fitzgerald; NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996): 138, on "Stoic introspection"; cf. Stephen J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (SNTW; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 73, n. 82: who points to the tension involved when Engberg-Pedersen argues that "Paul practiced Stoicism as a communitarian project" even though "Engberg-Pedersen admits . . . that the Stoicism of Paul's era was 'more or less individualistic'." In contrast to Engberg-Pedersen, Chester contends that "none of the leading Stoics of this period, including Epictetus, understood their philosophy in communitarian terms. . . . I doubt both that the claim that Paul practised Stoicism as a communitarian project can be sustained historically . . ."; cf. Downing, "Persons," 58-59: "First-century examples of a concern for interiority are richly provided by Epictetus . . . This Stoic distinction, with the emphasis on the 'inner', on interiority, which Epictetus learned from Musonius Rufus, is widely available and deployed." Downing (*ibid.*, 50-60) points to Cicero, Seneca, Philo and even opponents of Stoicism such as Plutarch and the Epicureans, who all

It should be said from the outset that if self-concern is defined (as it is by Engberg-Pedersen) as *selfish* concern, then neither Epictetus nor Paul has any desire to defend it. Neither figure seeks to elevate selfishness to the level of a virtue, ultimate or otherwise. It is my contention that Engberg-Pedersen reads Stoicism exactly backwards: for him the individual is radically subordinate to the community. This interpretation of Stoicism leads to insurmountable difficulties for a reading of Epictetus (and other Stoics for that matter). Instead of pitting the individual against the community, I intend to show in this chapter that Epictetus never takes individual self-concern out of his sights when laying out the contours of the moral life.<sup>27</sup> Socially-directed ethics are important, but they are not ultimate. To understand Epictetus in this regard, one must reject the equation of care of the self and introspective selfishness. The rest of this chapter will therefore show how these issues work themselves out in Epictetus' writings.

### 3. Epictetus: Self and Society

#### 3.1 Preliminaries

In order to make overall sense of the details of Epictetus' system several preliminary issues must be addressed. First, we will look at some features of Epictetus' discourses that need to be understood in order to make better sense of his teachings. Second, we will examine the goal of Epictetus' ethical system. This is necessary because it reveals how Epictetus' entire ethical program is directed toward personal development and inner peace.

##### 3.1.1 Epictetus in Context

First, a word about the author. Epictetus did not write his lectures down, and thus we are dependent on the transcriptions of his student Arrian.<sup>28</sup> While some scholars

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share a concern for "interiority" and "inner self-engagement" in their expositions of the nature of moral progress.

<sup>27</sup> Engberg-Pedersen does appear to recognize this occasionally (cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 50-1, on Aristotle), although he does not allow it to mitigate the unswervingly anti-individual tone of his book.

<sup>28</sup> Epictetus was likely born sometime during the decade 50-60 CE in Hierapolis in the southwestern region of present-day Turkey. He was at one time a slave of Nero's secretary Epaphroditus, and was given philosophical training by the great Roman Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus. He began his own teaching in Rome and moved to Nicopolis after the emperor Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome in 95 CE. Epictetus probably died around 135 CE, having lived with poor health throughout a remarkably long life, given the time. These biographical details come from Long, *Epictetus*, 10-12; cf. Huttunen, *Comparison*, 4-6; W. A. Oldfather, "Introduction," in *Epictetus*:



question whether the content of the extant Epictetan material is authentic, there is no reason to doubt that what is recorded is “completely authentic to Epictetus’ own style and language” since the Discourses retain Epictetus’ “strikingly urgent and vivid voice quite distinct from Arrian’s authorial persona in [Arrian’s] other works . . .”<sup>29</sup> It would be nearly impossible to prove that the material does not go back to Epictetus anyway, so it is something of a moot point to challenge Epictetus’ authorship. Working with the existing material gives us access to an enlightening philosophical discussion of the individual and the community that is roughly contemporary with Paul, no matter how much of a hand Arrian may have had in shaping the presentation of Epictetus’ lectures.<sup>30</sup>

Second, a word about the content. The Discourses are expansive treatments of a wide range of philosophical topics, with a primary interest in applied ethics, though it is important to note that Epictetus only makes sense when understood within a unified system of logic and physics as well.<sup>31</sup> Arrian’s Manual, or *Enchiridion*, is a condensation of Epictetus’ thought into aphoristic slogans which, while often memorable, are not as well-developed, and thus will not be analyzed in this chapter.<sup>32</sup> Instead, the focus here is on the discourses found in books 1-4 of Arrian’s transcriptions of Epictetus’ lectures.<sup>33</sup> A.A. Long notes that it is important to keep the audience in mind since the discourses are transcriptions of lectures to students who already possess a certain amount of knowledge of Stoicism and philosophy in general. Since the lectures are for students, the “hyperbole, irony, and repetitiousness that are characteristic of his teaching” can be better appreciated, not as a defect in style, but as a consequence of the school-house origins of the

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*The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, The Manual, and Fragments* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), vii-xii.

<sup>29</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 41. See also Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 59, n. 19; Huttunen, *Comparison*, 4, n. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Difficulties are compounded by the fact that all “manuscripts of the discourses have been shown to depend on one, *Cod. Bodleianus Misc. Graec. 251 s. xi/xii*. Text criticism is thus only the weighing of suggested emendations to the many flaws in this manuscript” (Peter Oakes, “Epictetus [and the New Testament],” *VE* 23 [1993]: 40; cf. Huttunen, *Comparison*, 5). On the question of textual criticism in general see Oldfather, “Introduction,” xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>31</sup> Julia Annas, “Ethics in Stoic Philosophy,” *Phron* 52 (2007): 58-63; cf. 85-87; cf. Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 3. The unity of the three branches of Stoic thought is seen clearly in the analogies various Stoic writers use to describe it: e.g., an egg, with logic understood as the shell, and physics and ethics variously described as the yolk or egg white (Annas, “Ethics,” 62, n. 12). See also Holowchak, *Stoics*, 53.

<sup>32</sup> Long calls the maxims in the Manual “potted doctrines” (Long, *Epictetus*, 48) which he thinks are inferior to the “unique blend of philosophy, pedagogy, satire, exhortation, and uninhibited dialogue” (*ibid.*, 9) found in the Discourses.

<sup>33</sup> On the Manual, and reasons for focusing on the Discourses, see *ibid.*, 8-9.

lectures.<sup>34</sup> Stylistically the Discourses share the elenctic, or questioning, style of Epictetus' hero Socrates, which is meant to push students to take decisive action to improve the goodness of their lives.<sup>35</sup>

The challenging and questioning style of the Discourses highlights one of the most important themes in Epictetus' system: one must put into practice what one learns. Philosophical knowledge that is not lived out in real life is useless for Epictetus. This is important because it shows the way in which Epictetus' philosophy was not simply an abstract system to be learned, but had significant bearing on how individuals went about their lives, and how they related to others. Epictetus puts it this way: "That is why the philosophers admonish us not to be satisfied with merely learning, but to add thereto practice also, and then training."<sup>36</sup> The elevated significance of the individual self in Epictetus is in large part due to his insistence that individual people become self-reflective in order to put his teaching into practice. Thus, the individual, as an individual, becomes the focal point of ethical exhortation, even exhortation that impinges upon the social domain. Epictetus' "disdain for mere learning is one of his ways of stating the incomparably greater importance of training oneself to live well; in the words he uses to inculcate that project he is as artful as the rhetoricians from whom he officially distances himself."<sup>37</sup>

### 3.1.2 The Goal of Epictetus' Ethics: Happiness through Progress in Personal Virtue

Epictetus' ethical system is goal oriented. That is to say, he puts forward an account of the ideal life and the conditions for attaining it. In particular, Epictetus argues that happiness is the goal of life.<sup>38</sup> Truly ethical living is not a disinterested striving

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4; cf. 43-46. However, Long (ibid., 8-9) also notes that "numerous passages of the discourses, in spite of their conversational and colloquial idiom, have a logical structure that lends itself to formal analysis."

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ibid., 55-61; cf. 16, 68, 73. See also Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 335-41.

<sup>36</sup> *Diatr.* 2.9.13: Διὰ τοῦτο παραγγέλλουσιν οἱ φιλόσοφοι μὴ ἀρκεῖσθαι μόνῳ τῷ μαθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μελέτην προσλαμβάνειν, εἴτα ἄσκησιν. Cf. *Diatr.* 1.4.13-17; 3.23.30-32; Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 13; cf. 19-20, 58; cf. Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 330. John Sellars calls this feature of Epictetus' teaching a training in the "art of living" (Sellars, *Stoicism*, 6-27; cf. 36, 47-49).

<sup>38</sup> Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (SNTSMS 137; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 59-60; Long, *Epictetus*, 113, 193; idem, "Stoic Eudaimonism," in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 179-201; Brad Inwood and Pierluigi Donini, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 684-90; John M. Cooper, "Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and 'Moral Duty' in Stoicism," in *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (eds. Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261-66; Stephen

for goodness, but includes within it a desire for reward or blessedness, namely the living of a happy life. While the philosophical schools of antiquity—operating within Aristotle’s eudaemonistic system of ethics—debated the *means* of achieving happiness, all were in basic agreement that happiness was indeed worth striving for, and that it motivated right living.<sup>39</sup>

Within this framework, Epictetus (and Stoicism generally) offers a distinctive understanding of the course of action one should take to procure happiness, namely the pursuit of virtue (which can be loosely defined as living in harmony with nature, which for Epictetus carries the additional overtone of conforming oneself to divine providence; cf. *Diatr.* 1.1.17).<sup>40</sup> In this way of thinking,

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Engstrom, “Happiness and the Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant,” in *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty* (eds. Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 102-4; Gisela Striker, “Following Nature: A Study in Stoic Ethics,” in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 221-22; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 3-4, 21-22, 41; Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27, 44, 426; T. H. Irwin, “Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness,” in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (eds. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 208-10; Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 4-6.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1095a13-29 [1.4.1-4]. Cf. Michael Gass, “Eudaimonism and Theology in Stoic Accounts of Virtue,” *JHI* 61 (2000): 19-20; David Furley, “Cosmology,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 448-51; Annas, *Happiness*, 44; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), 16-35; Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 12, 163-88. Aristotle offers an understanding of the good that includes within itself the notion that happiness is *not* solely attainable through recourse to a right ordering of one’s own mind and life (see *Eth. nic.* 1099a30, 1099b7-8 [1.8.15, 17]). For him, numerous external goods, including friends, wealth, physical attractiveness, a harmonious family life, etc., are also necessary (cf. Engstrom, “Happiness,” 104, 112-13; Irwin, “Happiness,” 206-8). Aristotle’s view contrasts significantly with Epictetus’ in that life in community for Aristotle is a non-negotiable dimension of the good and happy life, whereas it is an important, but entirely contingent dimension for Epictetus, since happiness is solely dependent on virtue—an inward state impervious to external circumstances. Virtue provides the only sure basis for a life of contentment because it is “indifferent to the characteristic temporal shape of a human life” (Annas, *Happiness*, 429; cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 119; Long, *Epictetus*, 192).

<sup>40</sup> See Lincoln E. Galloway, *Freedom in the Gospel: Paul’s Exemplum in 1 Cor 9 in Conversation with the Discourses of Epictetus and Philo* (CBET 38; Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 76-78. Both Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 16, and Long, *Epictetus*, 33, note that Epictetus does not use the term virtue (ἀρετή) often. Bonhöffer believes this is a reaction against “scholastic” traditionalism and points out that Epictetus uses a variety of interrelated descriptions of the goal of life (following God, following nature, protecting one’s volition, freedom from external constraint, etc.; Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 12). However, Epictetus does occasionally use ἀρετή in the classical sense, as seen in e.g., *Diatr.* 1.4.3: here virtue is what creates happiness/blessedness (εὐδαιμονία), contentment (ἀπάθεια) and serenity (εὐποία). The point Bonhöffer and Long both make still stands: this usage is infrequent. Thus, I am using the term virtue here loosely as an umbrella term for the set of perspectively related goals that Epictetus urges his students to seek in order to become invincibly happy. This is easier (and significantly less confusing) than saying virtue/following God/living according to nature/developing the soul/protecting one’s volition/protecting personal honor and dignity/being self-sufficient/etc. every time I mention the goal of life in Epictetus’ system.

virtue and happiness, although they can be distinguished conceptually, are closely connected, in that virtue is the precondition and foundation of happiness.<sup>41</sup>

A prominent feature of Epictetus' thought is the way he ties right living directly to care for the self. For example, in a discourse on "how one may preserve his proper character upon every occasion" (Πῶς ἂν τις σώζοι τὸ κατὰ πρόσωπον ἐν παντί - *Diatr.* 1.2) Epictetus argues that this involves a "regard for one's proper character" (1.2.28) and doing "that which is according to (one's) person" (1.2.30); in other words, doing that which is virtuous and in line with the nature with which all people are endowed by God (1.2.34).<sup>42</sup> Every person is faced with two ways of acting at any given time, either to act nobly and in accord with nature, or to choose those things that are "inappropriate" (τὰ μηδὲν προσήκοντα - 1.2.32), inappropriate at least for those who care about cultivating virtue.<sup>43</sup> Doing what is inappropriate leads one into slavery; it is a selling of one's "power of choice" (προαίρεσις - 1.2.33). Thus, although he may not use the term virtue often, Epictetus firmly believes that there is a specific way of living that is in harmony with nature, and that will thus lead to happiness. The happy life, then, is the virtuous life that is dependent on self-control, self-focus, and self-concern. The community is important as an implication of seeking to live in accordance with virtue and seeking to be appropriately integrated into the world, but is not absolutely vital for one's own happiness.

In this chapter I will explain how Epictetus understands virtue to be the pathway to happiness, since it is an inward disposition entirely free from exterior constraint, whether such constriction arises from the actions of others or from the

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<sup>41</sup> Malcolm Schofield, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 246. Epictetus brings this aspect of Stoic ethics to the fore in his discourse entitled "What is the true nature of the good?" (Τίς οὐσία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; *Diatr.* 2.8) where he explains that the only true good consists in a "desire that fails not of achievement, an aversion proof against encountering what it would avoid, an appropriate choice, a thoughtful purpose, a well-considered assent" (2.8.29). The inescapable intertwining of virtue and happiness in Stoic thought stands out here: happiness, in that human flourishing comes about when desire attends only to those things within one's own power to bring about; virtue, in that such choices are wholly appropriate (ὁμῶς καθήκουσαν), that is, in harmony with nature.

<sup>42</sup> All English translations of Epictetus are from the Loeb Classical Library (LCL) edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>43</sup> "Inappropriate things" (τὰ μηδὲν προσήκοντα) is a technical designation in Stoicism for actions taken against nature. On appropriate (those things that are in harmony with nature) and inappropriate actions in Stoicism see Long, *Epictetus*, 115-16; David Sedley, "The Stoic-Platonist Debate on kathēkonta," in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 250-56; F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (2d ed.; London: Bristol Classic, 1989), 45-48; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Discovering the Good: Oikeiōsis and Kathēkonta in Stoic Ethics," in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics* (eds. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 145-46, 178-82.

vagaries of historical happenstance. Epictetus is passionate in his defense of indifference because he desires to liberate his students from slavery to situations over which they have no control.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, happiness (and thus virtue too) is something that must be vigorously sought across the whole span of one's life. It is not "just . . . a thing, however good, that someone might present you with."<sup>45</sup> That is to say, the ancient idea going back to Aristotle was one that emphasized the *pursuit* of happiness, rather than a state or emotion of happiness, especially for Epictetus, if such an emotional state was thought to be dependent on circumstances outside of one's own control.<sup>46</sup> This quest for happiness through virtue, which entails a lifetime of rigorous training of the mind, is part of the process by which those who cultivate virtue become integrated into the cosmos. Although potentially difficult for modern readers to understand—accustomed as we are to the Kantian decoupling of virtue and personal benefit—seeking one's own good in Stoicism is harmonious with the single-minded pursuit of virtue *and* communal benefit.<sup>47</sup> After all, being assimilated into the cosmos, or nature, through seeking what is "one's own" necessarily entails virtuous and beneficial relations with others, whether they be members of one's own family, one's city, or even the entire world.<sup>48</sup> However, the self-preservative instinct remains central in Epictetus' account of cosmic integration (*oikeiōsis*), which itself forms the basis of Epictetus' socio-ethical vision.

The quest for happiness is a quest with the individual placed firmly at the center. Communal concern is important, but it does not do away with the primacy of self-preservation and self-concern. Self-preservation for Epictetus is not tainted with the selfishness or morbid introspectiveness such as modern readers might assume. This is important to remember because it is precisely this point that has led Engberg-Pedersen and others to attempt to vindicate Stoic ethics by downplaying

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 214–16; cf. Sorabji, *Self*, 183–85. Sorabji (*ibid.*, 192) notes that Epictetus prefers his own terms *aproaireton* ("not subject to will") or *allotrion* ("not belonging to us") to the word *adiaphora* ("indifferent"; although he does use this word as well) in order to emphasize the control one has over what is most important in life, namely, one's own power of volition. In other words, things are indifferent only because one has set one's mental and emotional energies on what is "up to us."

<sup>45</sup> Annas, *Happiness*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 45–46, 430.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Cooper, "Eudaimonism," 275–78.

<sup>48</sup> The distinction between things that are "one's own" or "not one's own" is vitally important for understanding the place of the individual and community in Epictetus, and will thus receive detailed treatment below.

the importance of self-preservation in Stoic ethical prescriptions. Such a move obscures the contours of the relationship between the individual and the community in Epictetus' thinking where proper social relations are the by-product, rather than the primary aim and focus, of the appropriate use of one's mental faculties in maintaining indifference toward all things external to one's one power of choice. In fact, every altruistic impulse flows directly out of one's self-preservative instinct (which remains intact throughout life), since honor is one of the primary things that one must preserve in order to be virtuous and, thus, well-disposed toward others. The primary purpose of the analysis below is to give a precise account of the relationship between self-preservation and social concern—thus between the individual and the community—in Epictetus' thought through close readings of several important passages in his discourses.

### 3.2 The Individual in Epictetus' Ethics

#### 3.2.1 The Individual and Moral Progress (*Diatr.* 1.4 and 3.2)

The distinction between the Sage and the person making progress in virtue is found in the earliest Stoic thinking and remains constant throughout the various Stoic writers of antiquity. Nonetheless, the Sage model is used differently by different Stoics. For example, Long notes that Chrysippus “had become notorious for [his] rigidity, paradoxicality, esoteric terminology, and fine (or in critics' eyes quibbling) distinctions” with regard to doctrines like that of the Stoic Sage.<sup>49</sup> According to thinkers such as Chrysippus the all-wise and virtuous Sage could appear to be so far above the realm of human possibility as to make the quest for virtue seem almost futile. The motive behind such thinking was to bring attention to the absolute nature of virtue and vice, which could be neither truly good nor evil if they were subject to shades of valuation.<sup>50</sup> Regardless, Stoicism was sharply criticized in antiquity for what looked to many to be a denial of the possibility of acquiring wisdom. Furthermore, the thought that virtue was an unattainable phantom, the possession of the mythical Sage alone, was even more troubling.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 714-17. On the co-equality of everything virtuous see A. A. Long, “Dialectic and the Stoic Sage,” in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 98; on the co-equality of all vices or sins, see J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 81-96.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 724-27.

Later Stoics also paid homage to this tenet of Stoic dogma, although some—like Epictetus—were more interested in putting forward an ethical system that would benefit the average person who desired to make incremental, yet steady, improvement in virtue.<sup>52</sup> For this reason, the notion of progress is vitally important for understanding Epictetus’ conception of the good life, as well as how it brings the individual and community within its orbit. Epictetus’ tractate “On Progress” (*Diatr.* 1.4: Περὶ προκοπῆς) provides an illuminating window into this facet of his thought. In this section I will examine *Diatr.* 1.4 along with *Diatr.* 3.2 since they are closely related, and when read together, helpfully elucidate one another.<sup>53</sup>

“On Progress” begins by arguing that the most important thing one who desires to make progress (προκοπή) can learn from philosophers is “that desire is for things good and aversion is toward things evil” and that a serene (εὖρουν) and calm (ἀπαθές) state of mind is the goal of the life well-lived (1.4.1). Contained within this short bit of text in the opening of the tractate is—in *nuce*—the entire Stoic philosophy for the undisturbed life as understood and taught by Epictetus. What Epictetus intends to convey to his students is the way one can learn to make progress in virtue, and thus make headway toward a life of complete peace, without the possibility of disturbance caused by anything external to oneself. As will become clear in the ensuing analysis, serenity and calm are the states of mind that accompany, and essentially constitute, human happiness. The opening lines of “On Progress,” then, set out the general topic of the discourse (progress) and proceed to elaborate on the proper mental dispositions, which, if followed, will lead to a life of happiness, serenity and calm (see 1.4.3). Epictetus explains that these states of mind can be obtained if (and only if) one never fails to gain all “objects of desire” (ὀρέξει) and never embraces any “objects of aversion” (ἐκκλίσει). Contained within this

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<sup>52</sup> On the function of the Sage with reference to moral progress in Stoicism in general see Sellars, *Stoicism*, 36–41; cf. R. J. Hankinson, “Stoic Epistemology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 59; with reference to Epictetus see Long, *Epictetus*, 32–34, 37. Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 726–31, note that even the earlier Stoics did not ultimately deny a place for ordinary people seeking virtue, since they allowed for “degrees of nearness to virtue” and a process of moral progress where one sought to be as much like the all-wise Sage as possible. Cf. Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 34–35; Lee, *Body of Christ*, 62; and Brad Inwood, “Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics,” in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 95, on the ways in which the Roman Stoics allowed that all people could “comprehend the order of the universe and thus act virtuously.”

<sup>53</sup> *Diatr.* 3.2: “Concerning the things it is necessary that the progressor be trained in, and that we neglect the most important things” (Περὶ τῶν ἀσκεισθῶν καὶ τῶν προκόψοντα καὶ ὅτι τῶν κυριωτάτων ἀμελοῦμεν).

rather straightforward sounding statement is the essence of Epictetus' conception of the good life.<sup>54</sup>

The way in which one guarantees the attainment of what is desired is through the exclusion, or at least the radical modification, of the very notion of desire. That is to say, one must learn to refrain from desiring anything that she is not able of her own volition to get for herself. The same holds true for aversion. Here one must feel “aversion only toward the things which involve freedom of choice” (τὰ προαιρετικά). While Oldfather's translation of τὰ προαιρετικά as “things which involve freedom of choice” is not entirely misleading, one must be careful not to import complex modern debates about the freedom or determination of the will into this word, and that which is closely related to it, namely προαίρεσις.<sup>55</sup> In this context προαιρετικόν (in conjunction with aversion) refers simply to things one is able to avoid, since such things consist of inward responses, rather than external happenstances (cf. 1.17.22-28, where Epictetus argues that goodness is always within one's power of choice). The point Epictetus is making here is that the only way to guarantee happiness no matter one's circumstances is to alter how desire and aversion are conceived. One must reformulate what one seeks and what one seeks to avoid by creating a new system of valuation based on what is or is not within one's “freedom of choice,” rather than simply on one's unreflective impulses toward or away from certain objects or situations. The alternative to such a reformulation of one's desires is the exceedingly precarious struggle to attempt to avoid everything that is outside of one's power of choosing (ἄπροαιρέτον), that is, those things that one does not always have the *ability* to avoid, such as the death of a loved one, sickness, or material ruin. When a person attempts this, the types of things he or she so desperately seeks to avoid will inevitably come about at some point and bring such a person to grief because that person's happiness is dependent on avoiding negative *outcomes* (1.4.2). In contrast, Epictetus maintains that virtue (ἀρετή) alone “holds out the promise . . . to create happiness [εὐδαιμονία] and calm

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<sup>54</sup> The instinctive response to Epictetus' claim that serenity and calm are tied indissolubly to the securing of objects that one desires and avoidance of objects that one is averse to is that such a statement runs sharply counter to normal human experience. For most people, it would be assumed, often lead lives of frustration—and even despair—precisely because they are unable to get what they want and avoid what they do not want. Epictetus, of course, is aware of the counter-intuitive nature of his proposal and must continue his explication of the nature of desire and aversion in order to show exactly how his proposal for the taming of both mental states is first of all possible, and secondly, how such taming is in fact absolutely indispensable for the securing of happiness.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 17; Sorabji, *Self*, 194-95; Long, *Epictetus*, 92, 221.



[ἀπάθεια] and serenity [εὐροια]” because virtue alone is built upon one’s correct mental evaluation of life’s circumstances, rather than on the presence or absence of the circumstances themselves (1.4.3).<sup>56</sup> The goal of progress is the attainment of happiness, calm and serenity through virtue (1.4.4-5).

Epictetus next asks why it is that, if what he has just said about progress and virtue is true, people nonetheless seek “progress” elsewhere. It is again stated that the goal (lit. work [ἔργον]) of virtue is serenity. At this point, Epictetus mockingly asks his students whether the person making progress in virtue is the one who has mastered the writings of Chrysippus. If so, then that person is truly virtuous. But of course Epictetus’ students should know better than that: since virtue produces one thing (serenity), the approach to virtue (progress) cannot produce anything less, and simple knowledge of the contents of Chrysippus’ writings is just that, knowledge without the attendant (and indispensable) practice of what is learned (1.4.5-9; cf. 1.4.13-17, 20-23). In fact, bare knowledge of philosophical writings diverts a potential progressor “from the consciousness of his own shortcomings” because it distracts such a person from both “the work of virtue” and the path of progress toward that aim (1.4.10).

The explanation offered in 1.4.11 for the place where one’s “work” lies (i.e., the actions appropriate to virtuous living) covers the three most important topics in Epictetus’ program of moral progress: 1) “desire and aversion” (ὀρέξει καὶ ἐκκλίσει), 2) “choice and refusal” (ὀρμαῖς καὶ ἀφορμαῖς), and 3) “giving assent and withholding judgment” (προθέσει καὶ ἐποχῇ).<sup>57</sup> The one who is truly making progress will, on account of the altered dispositional state described above, be completely immune to “encountering what you would avoid.” Any other approach to external circumstances leaves one in a perpetual state of “fear and grief” (τρέμων καὶ πενθῶν) (1.4.11). These three realms of thought must be addressed further because they play a vital role in determining the precise shape of Epictetus’ ethical

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<sup>56</sup> Thus, in *Diatr.* 1.18.11, Epictetus even urges his auditors to refrain from admiring (θαυμάζω) their spouses or possessions. The reason: such things can be stolen, leading one to grief. Rightly evaluating material things by counting them as nothing (παρὰ μηδέν; 1.18.12), then, inoculates one against the pain of their loss.

<sup>57</sup> The last two are my translations. For a clear and brief discussion of the three fields see Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 59-60. Oakes, “Epictetus,” 41, helpfully points to the fluidity with which Epictetus can use the terminology of these three topics; his classification system is not a rigid and technical one. Cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 50-52.

schematization, as well as laying out foundationally important ways in which the individual plays a part in that system.

Desire (ὀρεξις) and aversion (ἐκκλισις) are the two affective, mental states possible for a person confronted with objects in the world. Straightforwardly, desire means longing to obtain some object or state of existence, while aversion is the state of mind consisting in revulsion toward certain objects or life-states that are deemed to be evil or self-damaging. For Epictetus, properly functioning desire should be directed at that which one is always able to procure for oneself, while aversion must be aimed at those things one has the power to abstain from or prevent from happening.<sup>58</sup> A properly functioning faculty of desire and aversion must be in place in order that (ἵνα) one might be “unerring in achieving one’s goal” (ἀναπότρευτος) and “kept from what one is averse to” (ἀπερίπτωτος).<sup>59</sup> The problem with most people is that they seek to immunize themselves against the possibility of encountering things they dislike, which, as Epictetus notes, is a stance doomed to failure, because one can never infallibly control what happens in life (1.4.19).

In 3.2.3 Epictetus elaborates upon the simpler description of the three fields of study he has given in 1.4. Here he explains why he calls the field of study pertaining to desire and aversion (“the first and most necessary topics” [πρῶτοι τόποι καὶ ἀναγκαιότατοι] - 1.4.12) the “most important” (κυριώτατος), namely because it has to do with the passions (τὰ πάθη). The passions become activated when one fails to get what one has set one’s desire on, or falls into that which one wishes to avoid. Succumbing to passion inevitably leads to a host of disastrous consequences (listed in 3.2.3), making one insensible to the guidance of wisdom.<sup>60</sup>

The fundamental human error, then, is that of setting one’s affections on things that one cannot assuredly secure for oneself. What is needed to cure this disease of the soul is a thoroughgoing transformation of what one believes is worthy of desire and aversion. The purging of attachment to external objects and circumstances can only come about by attending to one’s volition (προαίρεσις - see

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 113: “Is [Epictetus] telling his students that they should not make happiness and the virtues of which it consists their single-minded objective? That is out of the question. His point is rather that they should defer their natural desire for what is good until they are so secure in their understanding of goodness that they have detached any vestige of desirability for external things (see 3.12.4; 4.1.77).”

<sup>59</sup> My translations.

<sup>60</sup> On the general Stoic view of passions and keeping them under control see Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 699-704.

1.4.18), or power of choice, because this power is purely internal and is able—when properly trained—to direct one’s desire and aversion toward those internal states that constitute the good life (virtue, piety, duty, etc.).<sup>61</sup> Such a convictional revolution brings one into line with correct thinking about the nature of human flourishing, specifically that serenity through virtue is the ultimate good, and is the only way to ensure that one will always obtain the outcome that one desires in life—being undisturbed by external conditions.<sup>62</sup> Thus, desire and aversion by themselves are not bad. It is only when what one desires or is averse to is external to one’s inner power of choice that problems arise.

Desire and aversion, then, are states of mind, that when transformed can be applied to personal growth in virtue, with a resultant increase in a sense of peace and well-being. However, simply having new beliefs about what one should or should not choose does not explain how one goes about putting such principles into practice. Epictetus thus turns to praxis in the second topic of his ethical guidelines, that dealing with reasoned choices (ὁρμαῖς) and refusals (ἀφορμαῖς).<sup>63</sup>

This second field of one’s life task deals specifically with what is appropriate (τὸ καθήκον). Appropriate action is a critical category in Stoic and Epictetan teaching, and is bound up with one’s broader social responsibilities in the world.<sup>64</sup> Essentially, appropriate acts are those that fit the demands of a given situation, in the context of seeking to preserve one’s own life, and which fit harmoniously into the overarching balance of the cosmos.<sup>65</sup> As such, in classic Stoic teaching they are not primarily concerned with communal responsibility, but with self-preservation.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> On προαίρεσις see further below.

<sup>62</sup> *Diatr.* 3.2.1 explicitly links the moderation of desire and aversion with “obtaining what one wants” (ἵνα μήτ’ ὀρεγόμενος ἀποτυγχάνῃ) and “avoiding falling into what one is averse to” (μήτ’ ἐκκλίνων περιπίπτῃ) (my translations).

<sup>63</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 115, similarly calls these positive and negative impulses in order to highlight the volitional dimension.

<sup>64</sup> It is probably for this reason that Oldfather translates τὸ καθήκον in 3.2.2 as “duty.” Given its fairly precise meaning in relation to the overall Stoic system of evaluation of good and bad in the world, and of how individuals fit into the wider world (thus its relation to *oikeiōsis*), it is better translated as “appropriate thing,” rather than duty. The context of the passage within which the word is set (see esp. 3.2.4) points to the important social responsibilities one has toward others, but the word itself does not mean duty. On appropriate (those things that are in harmony with nature) and inappropriate things in Stoicism see Sedley, “Debate,” 128–33; cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 120–22; Long, *Epictetus*, 115–16, 231–34; Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 697–99; Striker, “Following Nature,” 250–56; Sandbach, *Stoics*, 45–48; Engberg-Pedersen, “Discovering,” 145–46, 178–82.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Sandbach, *Stoics*, 45–46.

<sup>66</sup> Striker, “Following Nature,” 255: “The decisive factor is not whether an action is altruistic, say, or socially useful, but whether it is in accordance with human nature and done from the intention of agreeing with universal nature.” Cf. Inwood, “Rules,” 126–27.

However, in 3.2.4 Epictetus elaborates on what he takes to be necessary entailments of appropriate actions: the maintenance of proper social relations (τὰς σχέσεις), “both natural and acquired, as a religious man, as a son, a brother, a father, a citizen.”<sup>67</sup> Thus, control over the faculty of desiring and being averse to things, when put into practice the right way, includes within its remit the maintenance of all those duties that every person has, whether to God, family or state. On this point Epictetus takes an interesting step in distancing himself from the classic characterization of the stony and uncaring Stoic by arguing that one who attends to what is appropriate in life need not, nor can be, completely unsympathetic to the plight of others.<sup>68</sup> As Epictetus puts it in 3.2.4: “It is not necessary for me to be unfeeling [ἀπαθῆ] as a statue.”<sup>69</sup>

In this way, Epictetus brings outwardly-directed responsibility to the fore in a way that was not as prominent or obvious in earlier Stoic writers.<sup>70</sup> A truly appropriate act is one that involves a person in the harmonious assimilation of all worldly things into the perfect balance of nature. Thus, it demands right relations with others. While the way in which one is assimilated into social units, and ultimately the whole world, is the subject of the discussion on *oikeiōsis* below, it is sufficient at this point to note that flowing from Epictetus’ focus on individual human choice and its moderation is a strong social concern.<sup>71</sup> Epictetus senses no tension here. In fact, strict control of one’s own emotional life (the first—and most important—ethical topic in his system) is the prerequisite for making appropriate, and socially beneficial, decisions.<sup>72</sup>

In sum, the field of study pertaining to choice and refusal is all about putting into practice one’s modified desires in a way that orders one’s life appropriately

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 3.21.1-6.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 232.

<sup>69</sup> *Ench.* 16 puts this same idea a bit more crassly when it says that it is acceptable to sympathize with a person in distress “so far as words go, and, if occasion offers, even to groan with him;” but that one must “be careful not to groan also in the centre of your being.” Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 231; Oakes, “Epictetus,” 44.

<sup>70</sup> Other Stoics did, however, place appropriate acts into the context of cosmic assimilation (cf. Striker, “Following Nature,” 255). Epictetus’ distinctiveness lies in tying social responsibility more closely to the nature of appropriate acts themselves.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, “Following Nature,” 250.

<sup>72</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 116 (cf. 21-22; 30): Epictetus “is emphatic on the natural self-interestedness of human motivations, and he devotes much more explicit thought to care of the self than to what is incumbent on human beings as members of a society.”

according to nature. It has important communal implications, but receives its driving power from within the individual.

In 1.4.11 Epictetus attaches the right functioning of judgments to his third topic of moral development. Getting this aspect of ethical teaching correct is necessary to keep a person free from deception (ἀνεξάπτητος). The way in which one is able to moderate and redirect one's desires and aversions (the first ethical topic) is through a proper response to every sense impression (φαντασία) one encounters. Sense impressions in Stoicism are "alterations" within one's governing faculty evoked within a person by objects or perceptions of the world. These alterations *themselves* are not volitional responses to the object that evoked them, but are simply the "propositional content" or value that one assigns to the object. When one receives an impression one is then faced with the decision to accept the initial intellectual content of the impression, or to resist it.<sup>73</sup> Epictetus, summarizing his entire ethical program, states that "the first and greatest task of the philosopher is to test the impressions and discriminate between them" (1.20.7). Control over what appears to the senses (τὸ φαινόμενον - i.e., those things that create impressions) is "the measure of every man's action" (1.28.10). That is to say, mental control is the standard by which one's own moral character is judged: those who have rightly evaluated external impressions are blameless (ἀνέγκλητος), while those who have not will suffer (ζημιώω) for it.<sup>74</sup>

It is thus absolutely vital that one keeps one's "preconceptions [προλήψεις] clear, polished like weapons, and ready at hand" (1.27.6), since these—as certain general notions held in common by all people about what is good and evil—serve as pointers toward right actions when one is faced with various impressions.<sup>75</sup> Such innate ideas must be actualized through a process of mental development and maturation, as 1.27.6 shows, but they are nonetheless inherent in the human mind from birth, even if only in seed form. In 1.27.2-4 Epictetus compares the testing of

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<sup>73</sup> Tad Brennan, "Stoic Moral Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. Brad Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 260-3; cf. Michael Frede, "Stoic Epistemology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (eds. Keimpe Algra, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 300-11; Long, "Psychology," 572-80; idem, "Representation and the Self in Stoicism," in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 271.

<sup>74</sup> My translations. *Diatr.* 1.28 is devoted primarily to explicating how impressions arise and how they should be responded to. Cf. *Diatr.* 1.14.7-8, 16-17; André Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul* (SNTSMS 140; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 122-23.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 1.22.1-2; 4.1.44-45; both cited by Long, *Epictetus*, 81; cf. idem, "Representation," 280.

impressions to an army calling up reinforcements, a process that is necessary no matter what one is confronted with, whether it be a momentary difficulty or a recurring habit (ἔθος - 1.27.3). While preconceptions show one that good and evil exist and are worth seeking and shunning respectively, the withholding and giving of assent to impressions is the means by which one can infallibly obtain the good that one innately knows is worth seeking.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the good life is found by “turning one’s thoughts upon oneself” (ἐπιστρέψατε αὐτοὶ ἐφ’ ἑαυτούς - 3.22.39) in order to examine one’s preconceived ideas (προλήψεις) and whether they line up with what is truly good, namely to be free from the unwanted influence of external things.<sup>77</sup> For this reason, as Epictetus puts it in 3.22.38, ultimately the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) is not something outside of oneself, but is found “within you” (ἐν ὑμῖν), which is the only place one has control over one’s own happiness. Epictetus strongly exhorts his listeners to “develop this” (τοῦτο ἐξεργάξασθε) capacity for evaluating impressions and in so doing to “seek here your good” (ἐνταῦθα ζητεῖτε τὸ ἀγαθόν - 3.22.44).

A more self-focused understanding of how to achieve the good life is hardly conceivable. This holds true for every moment of one’s life, since there is never a time when one is not confronted with impressions that must be rationally evaluated and acted on. This is but one element in Epictetus’ philosophy that shows the complete falsity of contending that there is no place for the individual in Stoic ethics.<sup>78</sup> Right living is premised on the notion of rigorous self-regard, not only when one becomes gripped by the force of the logical ordering of the world, but throughout all of life.<sup>79</sup> This primacy of the individual in Epictetus’ system leads him in another place to summarize his understanding of the very meaning of human existence with the claim that one’s “own life is the subject-matter of the art [τέχνη] of living” (1.15.2). In a similar fashion Epictetus responds to an inquirer’s question about how to secure reconciliation with an estranged brother by saying that “philosophy does not profess to secure for man any external possession” (1.15.2). Epictetus clearly places right social relations into the subsidiary role of external

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Idem, *Epictetus*, 82; Oakes, “Epictetus,” 43.

<sup>77</sup> Slightly modified LCL translation. On the process of giving and withholding assent in Stoicism in general see Long, “Representation,” 273-75; on the same in Epictetus see idem, “Representation,” 275-85.

<sup>78</sup> Epictetus is hardly innovative in this regard, even if he is more obsessively single-minded than other Stoics in his focus on the self and mental control.

<sup>79</sup> Pace Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 62-70.

possessions here.<sup>80</sup> In other words, philosophy does not offer any prescription for social harmony since this is an “external thing” (τῶν ἐκτός) in the same category as one’s profession, health or reputation (1.15.3).<sup>81</sup> That is not to say that such communally focused problems are unimportant, but simply that they lie “outside [philosophy’s] proper subject matter” (ἔξω . . . τῆς ἰδίας ὕλης - 1.15.2), since philosophy can only guarantee the securing of *personal* benefit through mental training and self-control (1.15.3-4). Highlighting the fact that progress and maturity in right living are lifelong endeavors, this same discourse sees Epictetus comparing the development of the ability to live virtuously to the time-consuming process of plants producing fruit (1.15.7-8).

Epictetus’ primary concern with impressions in 1.4 and 3.2 is to show how one goes about “testing” such impressions, only accepting those that are in harmony with nature and virtuous living.<sup>82</sup> In 3.2.5 the governing power of choice in each person is tasked with making right evaluative judgments about sense impressions. Such a person can learn to resist the impressions that arise from unhealthy desires and so be freed from a state of terror resulting from the fear of falling into what one is averse to (3.2.8-9). If one has mastered the theory behind the first two ethical fields, and has not learned to resist wrong impressions, then such a person is just as miserable and morally ignorant as if he or she had no knowledge of philosophy whatsoever (cf. 3.2.8-12). The progressor who has mastered this third field has risen to the level of certainty (ἀσφάλεια - 3.2.5) in the rightness of his or her actions, so that even if asleep or drunk no sense impression can overrule that individual’s power of choice.

What precisely is involved in testing impressions? To answer this question Epictetus turns to Stoic teaching on judgments (δόγματα - cf. 3.2.13). While impressions are the impulses that arise outside of the self and call for a reply, judgments are rationally crafted responses to these external stimuli.<sup>83</sup> In 3.2.8 Epictetus gives a negative example of the kind of person who has not learned to make proper judgments about external impressions. Here he speaks of the

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 4.1.111-12; Inwood, “L’*oikeiôsis*,” 246-48.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. “Philosophy promises none of these things, but rather, ‘In every circumstance I will keep the governing principle (ἡγεμονικόν) in a state of accord with nature’” (1.15.3-4).

<sup>82</sup> However, the third field of ethical study is only for the individual who has mastered the first two fields and is making steady progress in right living (cf. *Diatr.* 1.4.13; 3.2.5).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 27, 214-17; Frede, “Epistemology,” 313-21; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 374-75. On how impressions are formed (according to Epictetus and other Stoics), see Sellars, *Stoicism*, 64-74.

impression that arises when a man sees a pretty girl (κοράσιον καλόν). Those with a defective power of judgment give into the impression in lust for the woman's form, because they have been deceived into thinking that this sort of response is good and excellent, or at least unavoidable. On the other hand, one who is able to "keep himself from deception" (διαφυλάξαι τὸ ἀνεξαπάτητον - 3.2.7) will miss nothing necessary for the good life because he will have a resolutely unchangeable (ἀμεταπτωσία) moral constitution. Only a person like this has attained perfection (cf. ἐκπονέω - 3.2.8). In fact, as Epictetus argues in another place, if one's modesty (αἰδῆμον), faithfulness (πιστόν), and intelligence (συνετόν) are preserved through the proper testing of impressions, this means that the whole person is thereby preserved (1.28.21). Right judgments alone "make the volition (προαίρεσις) good, but if they be crooked and awry, they make it evil" (1.29.1-3). Such self-directed qualities are not at odds with the human "capacity for social action" (κοινωνικός - 1.28.20), but neither are they subsumed under it. In other words, as Epictetus briefly displays in 1.28.19-28, the preservation of oneself and one's many personal virtues is important *above all else*, even though such virtue necessarily entails things like "respect for the laws of hospitality" (1.28.23).

In this same connection Epictetus also speaks of volition (προαίρεσις - cf. 3.2.13), which is a vital concept in his ethical teaching, and thus needs to be explained in more detail here.<sup>84</sup> Volition is essentially the power of choice within the individual. It is not dependent on action, but only upon the willing of an action. That is to say, volition for Epictetus is the unhindered capacity to choose, the ability to assess external impressions and take a course of mental action, regardless of one's bodily ability to carry such actions out.<sup>85</sup> The concept is so important for Epictetus because freedom from slavery to external circumstances is a vain and

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<sup>84</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 211, notes that "Epictetus is the only Stoic according to our record who made *prohairesis* a key term" and that he uses it similarly to how earlier Stoics used the word ἡγεμονικόν (the governing faculty of the soul). Cf. Sorabji, *Self*, 191-95; Robert Dobbin, "Προαίρεσις in Epictetus," *AnPhil* 11 (1991): 111, 129. As Long, *Epictetus*, 218, has shown, the LCL translation of προαίρεσις as "moral purpose" is a bit confusing. To begin with, one can have a bad or good προαίρεσις. The epithet "moral" could obscure this, since it seems to imply that the προαίρεσις is only oriented toward what is good or "moral," or that one's προαίρεσις has to do with one's responsibility toward others, when for Epictetus it is solely concerned "with the achievement of happiness in terms of mental freedom and tranquility" (Oakes, "Epictetus," 47). From now on I will translate προαίρεσις as "volition" in my own translations, as well as wherever it is found in the LCL.

<sup>85</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 219; cf. Dobbin, "Προαίρεσις," 120-2, 130, 133; Long, *Epictetus*, 211: "We should take *prohairesis* to refer to the human mind in just those capacities or dispositions that Epictetus constantly maintains to be completely 'up to us' and free from external constraint."



illusory hope if one does not have the faculty within oneself of choosing to react rightly to all that comes one's way in life. Having been a slave himself, Epictetus warns his auditors strongly against the dangers of slavery to things outside of one's choosing, stressing that true freedom is only attainable when one "sleeplessly" keeps one's "mind undisturbed by passion, pain, fear, or confusion" (4.3.7).<sup>86</sup>

This comes out clearly in 3.2.13, where Epictetus chides his students for despising their power of volition by setting value on a range of things outside of their own control, such as how they are esteemed by others, or how scholarly they appear. Even worse, these kinds of wrong evaluations imply that nature itself (and thus divine providence) is flawed, since nothing happens apart from what nature intends (cf. 1.9.24-26).<sup>87</sup> The only possible path to peace of mind is to diligently attend to one's volition, only setting value on things that are within one's power of choice (the first ethical topic), and seeing all external things as indifferent to one's happiness (cf. 3.2.13, 16).<sup>88</sup> This is why προαίρεσις is such a foundational aspect of human identity for Epictetus: it is the sole element of the human being capable of forming correct judgments about external impressions, and thus the only hope for those who suffer misfortune in life, because it makes the one who correctly uses it impervious to such misfortune; he or she learns to cast out grief (πένθος) over how things turn out in life, and to be free from the attendant pain that comes along with such misplaced emotions (1.4.23).<sup>89</sup> If one follows this advice, such a person will never fear what others can do to him or her since there is no one else who can gain control over the things that are under one's own control (τῶν ἐπ' ἐμοί - 1.29.8).<sup>90</sup> Προαίρεσις—employed rightly—is "the essence of the good" (οὐσία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ -

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 112-14; Long, *Epictetus*, 11.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 253.

<sup>88</sup> Other Stoics differed on their view of "indifferents," with some organizing them according to those preferred, those dispreferred, and those wholly indifferent. In this way of thinking, virtue is still the only true good, although other things that are indifferent in and of themselves can still be preferred or avoided, as long as they do not cause a person to place ultimate value on them, or to violate one's virtue in seeking them. Epictetus, however, places all indifferents into the same category of "external things," the attainment of which cannot serve as the means of becoming happy (cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 113). On the differentiation with reference to "indifferents" in other Stoic writers see Sorabji, *Self*, 192; Inwood and Donini, "Ethics," 691-97; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 360-6.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 1.19.16, where Epictetus rebukes his listeners for entertaining "absurd opinions about what lies outside the province of the volition (ἀποαιρέτων)" by attaching themselves and their affections to external things. Stoics place all emotions into the category of judgments. Therefore, the "extirpation of the emotions" through the "cognitive therapy" of testing impressions is the key ingredient of the Stoic calling (cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 34, 118; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 41, 389-90).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 220: "The crucial claim, then, is that nothing outside our individual selves has ultimate authority over what we want or do not want." Thus, true freedom is "entirely psychological and attitudinal" (ibid., 27; cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 17).

1.29.1; cf. 1.25.1-2). External things are nothing more than “materials for the volition” (ὕλαι τῇ προαίρεσει), used by God to perfect the volitional seat of human identity (1.29.1-3).<sup>91</sup> It can even be said that one’s volition is *the person* in the deepest sense. For this reason, Epictetus constantly distinguishes between the “paltry” outward human body (τὸ σωματίον), which is a non-essential element of one’s identity, and the volition, which in and of itself constitutes the core of human identity (cf. 3.18.3). Epictetus says this explicitly in 3.1.40: “You are not flesh, nor hair, but volition [προαίρεσις].”<sup>92</sup>

It is how we respond to our circumstances, Epictetus contends, that shows our true nature (3.2.14-15; cf. 1.22.9-10). Thus, he can structure his entire ethical system on the premise that “outside the sphere of volition there is nothing either good or bad” (3.10.18).<sup>93</sup> What you are at the very core of your being, then, is determined by the way in which you make use of your power of choice, your προαίρεσις.<sup>94</sup> Stripped of all extraneous ornaments of uniqueness (health, family, city, tradition, etc.), human identity is nothing but individual volition, power of choice and mental command.<sup>95</sup> As such, it is self-centered to an enormous degree. Scholars who move past this aspect of Epictetus’ teaching to its social dimensions are correct to do so, but only if they do so within a framework where cognitive self-control remains primary.<sup>96</sup>

What then is the essence of moral progress for Epictetus? After laying out his three-fold system in 1.4.11-12, Epictetus compares two types of people, those who learn, and those who *practice* what they learn. The former is like an avid collector of weights, but who has no muscles to show for it, since the weights sit around

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<sup>91</sup> Epictetus is so convinced of the ability of his system to bring relief from sorrow and pain that he is willing to be deceived into accepting its rightness because he would rather be wrong and completely at peace, than right and miserable (1.4.27). Cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 1.1.23: “What is that you say man? Fetter *me*? My leg you will fetter, but my volition (προαίρεσις) not even Zeus himself has power to overcome” (cited by Long, *Epictetus*, 161). Cf. idem, “Representation,” 275-76, 282; Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 25. When in 2.1.1 Epictetus urges his audience to “consider who you are,” the definition of human identity that follows begins with the statement that “there is no quality more sovereign than volition (προαίρεσις).” In fact, everything that distinguishes rational humanity from the animal world can be summed up under the heading of volition (2.1.2). Cf. Sellars, *Stoicism*, 105; Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 15-16; cf. 25-29, 34-45; Long, *Epictetus*, 21, 28-29, 172-75, 207-20; idem, “Psychology,” 574-75, 577; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 326.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 217.

<sup>94</sup> This is why Long (“Psychology,” 584) can say that the Stoic “philosophy of mind is also a philosophy of the self.” Cf. Idem, *Epictetus*, 220.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Idem, “Psychology,” 584.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 1.26.15: “This, then, is a starting point in philosophy—a perception of the state of one’s own governing principle (ἡγεμονικόν).” Cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 156-58.

collecting dust, serving as nothing more than a vain ground for boasting. The latter cares little for the weights themselves, which are merely a means toward an end, since he or she recognizes that knowledge without praxis is useless. In the same way, progress in moral living is only for those who are able to master their power of volition, who are able to rightly evaluate external impressions, and thus who are able to live lives unimpeded by external circumstances. Only such a person as this is living in harmony with nature and making progress. You can read all the books in the world about mastering your power of choice and still show yourself to be utterly incapable of actually doing so (1.4.14-15). Even the writings of the revered Stoic Chrysippus, Epictetus urges, are worth reading only because they grant knowledge of the truth of what Epictetus has been saying about tranquility and harmony with nature through the reordering of one's desires (1.4.28-29).

In 1.4.18 Epictetus asks where progress is to be found. He answers that it lies in “withdrawing from external things,” turning one’s “attention to the question of his own volition.” Proper use of one’s power of volition requires it to be cultivated and perfected in order that (ὥστε) it might be “finally harmonious with nature, elevated, free, unhindered, untrammelled, faithful, and honourable.”<sup>97</sup> A purified volition leads one to desire (ποθέω) what one can assuredly bring about (virtue, etc.), and to avoid (φεύγω) “things not up to oneself” (τὰ μὴ ἐφ’ αὐτῷ), namely all things external (τῶν ἐκτός) (1.4.18-19).<sup>98</sup> In other words, volition working rightly leads one to focus on attaining “that which is up to us” (τὸ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν). These things (desire, aversion, etc.) are exclusively internal.<sup>99</sup>

### 3.2.2 Summary: The Individual in Epictetus’ Ethics

We are now in a position to isolate the most important features of Epictetus’ prescription for moral progress. First, it is a system focused on the transformation of the mind of the individual; second, it demands a lifetime of vigorous training in mental fortitude. The power of external things over one’s affections is so strong, that great care must be exercised across one’s entire life to cultivate one’s volition, and thus one’s virtue (cf. 1.4.18); the individual’s mental power of volition never

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<sup>97</sup> Gk: ὥστε σύμφωνον ἀποτελέσαι τῇ φύσει, ὑψηλὴν ἐλευθέραν ἀκώλυτον ἀνεμπόδιστον πιστὴν αἰδήμονα.

<sup>98</sup> My translation.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Dobbin, “Προαίρεσις,” 124.

drops out of the picture. Progress is in this way seen to be possible only for those individuals who are sufficiently focused inwardly that they keep themselves from being caught up in the illegitimate scheme of valuation that the ordinary person constantly falls into because of a lack of proper self-regard. The epitome of waywardness for Epictetus is precisely the person who *lacks* introspection and self-regard, who fails to be an adequate “interpreter” and “student of himself and his works” (1.6.19).<sup>100</sup>

In 1.4.29-32, Epictetus ask why, if humans erect shrines and altars to the gods who supplied humanity with the knowledge of food cultivation, they should not much more praise the God who has granted knowledge of the pathway to the good life (τὸ εὖ ζῆν). This benefit—unlike that supplied through earthly produce—is the “fruit in a human mind” (καρπὸν ἐν ἀνθρωπίνῃ διανοίᾳ) that leads to true peace. Thus, for Epictetus, only diligent mental fortitude can lead to indestructible happiness through complete indifference (cf. ἀπαθῆ - 1.4.29) to the external realities of one’s life.<sup>101</sup> Since the things preventing human flourishing are wrong “beliefs, desires, and preferences,” the solution to this state of affairs must be focused on fixing these mental states.<sup>102</sup> This is what gives Epictetus’ ethics what Long calls its distinctively “existential” flavor.<sup>103</sup> The human mind is sick and must receive treatment; thus cognitive “medical arguments, like bodily medical treatments, are *directed at the health of the individual* as such, not at communities or at the individual as member of a community.”<sup>104</sup> As 3.3.1 puts it, the governing center (ἡγεμονικόν) of each person is the most important “subject-matter” (ὑλὴ) with which “the good and excellent” human being must attend since it is the human faculty tasked with

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<sup>100</sup> Long’s translation (“Representation,” 276). Cf. Sorabji, *Self*, 178: “Epictetus’ wish to narrow the self down to exclude the body and anything except a rightly directed will requires constant attention to how one is doing.” Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 108, 138.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Long, “Psychology,” 580. Oldfather translates ἀπαθῆ here as “tranquility.” However, given that throughout this passage Epictetus has used numerous words for serenity, and given the context of 1.4.29, which is found in a summation of the content of Epictetus’ prescription for happiness through the virtuous reframing of desire and aversion, it seems better to translate ἀπαθῆ in the more common way as “indifference.” Rightly controlling one’s mind *will* lead to tranquility, but the main point Epictetus is making is stronger than that: right living will lead to utter indifference to one’s external circumstances, thus *making* one tranquil and serene.

<sup>102</sup> Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 26; cf. 34, 28, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 34. In this regard Long’s (*Epictetus*, 156) description of Epictetus sounds positively Bultmannian: “It will have been obvious to every reader that the primary goal of Epictetus’ theology is the light it can shed on human self-understanding and moral orientation.”

<sup>104</sup> Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 46 (emphasis original). Nussbaum (*ibid.*, 41) is well aware of the social dynamics of Stoic teaching, although she, like Long, recognizes that these dynamics are subordinate (although still necessary) to those of individual control of the mind and emotions.

controlling the impressions (cf. 1.20.11-12). This shows us that the good life is achievable by anyone (in any condition whatsoever) who has a sufficient desire to control their responses to outward conditions. As such, blessed living is attainable solely through mental focus and control. It does not depend on fate, and it certainly does not *depend* on community. Rather, the essence of being a virtuous and happy person is self-control, the ruling of one's "impressions in accordance with nature" (ταῖς φαντασίαις κατὰ φύσιν - 3.3.2).<sup>105</sup>

We have also noted how the ethical life is a process that requires constant vigilance and training. The right use of impressions is very much a learned skill, which Epictetus describes as a rigorous exercising (γυμνάζω) of the self (3.8.1). Only a *daily* application of this sort of thorough mental scrutiny will enable one to be so impervious to external matters that one can even dismiss the death of a friend's child as being "outside the sphere of the volition" and thus "not an evil" (3.8.1-2; cf. *Ench.* 3; 26). Epictetus' instruction in the three ethical fields described above is explicitly marked out as a process of training (ἀσκέω) that is necessary for those who desire to be "good and excellent" (καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν) (3.2.1). Throughout his discourses Epictetus employs a variety of colorful metaphors and images to describe the life-long quest of moral progress: just as a calf does not become a bull at once, so a person must train (χειμασκέω) as a soldier does during his time home during the winter before rejoining the army in the spring (1.2.32); the "business of life" is like a large-scale and lengthy military campaign (3.24.-31-32); just as readers must practice reading, and writers must practice writing (2.18.1-4), the "same principle holds true in the affairs of the mind (τῶν ψυχικῶν)" (2.18.5); "the man who exercises himself against [wrong] external impressions is the true athlete in training" (2.18.27) who through "the habit of taking such exercises . . . will see what mighty shoulders you develop, what sinews, what vigour" (2.18.26). This is all to say that the self does not disappear from view after beginning a life of moral progress.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 34; Striker, "Following Nature," 241. Certainly many other factors (rationality, ethnicity, nationality, tradition, freedom of the will [or lack thereof], etc.) figure into Epictetus' and other ancient conceptions of human identity (on this see Long, "Representation," 283). The point I am making is that the good life is achievable by an individual, as an individual, through the control of one's affections and does not—indeed cannot—be determined (even to a small degree) by factors or influences outside of an individual's self-governing mental faculty.

<sup>106</sup> Pace Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 37, 294. Although Engberg-Pedersen shows elsewhere (e.g., idem, "The Logic of Action in Paul: How does he Differ From the Moral Philosophers on Spiritual and Moral Progression and Regression?" in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* [ed. John T. Fitzgerald; RMCS; London: Routledge, 2008], 248, 255-61), that he is clearly aware

Rather, the self must undergo a progression in discipline—a “moral education”—where the individual’s mind is perpetually tasked with the most important human activity of all, the evaluation of external impressions (cf. 2.18.7), which are the only things in life under one’s personal control (cf. 1.12.35).<sup>107</sup>

This is not to say that concern for others is absent even with regard to such a thoroughly individually-oriented notion as Epictetus’ three-fold system for moral progress. We have seen that the second ethical locus in particular points to the way in which the lifelong practice of guarding one’s volition contains within it the seeds for social responsibility and care. While Epictetus does not flesh out this communal concern in this discourse, he still highlights the important connection between care for the self and care for others. Yet even here he does this in a way that does not detract in the least from the primacy of the individual. It is only individuals acting rightly for themselves who can be equipped to live virtuously with others. An intensely inward and self-focused concern, rather than being subordinated to the social dimension of Epictetus’ thought, is the very precondition for it.<sup>108</sup>

### 3.3 The Community in Epictetus’ Ethics

Can the individually-centered facets of Epictetus’ thought be harmonized with a strong social concern? Epictetus believes they can, and in this regard he puts his own distinctive twist on previous Stoic teaching on how the individual and the community relate to one another. I will first briefly comment on communal themes

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that in Stoicism progress in wisdom is a process that must span one’s entire life, this does not adequately shape his description of the individual-communal dynamics of Stoicism or Paul (cf. idem, *Cosmology and Self*, 106, 135, 138; idem, “Self-Sufficiency and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* [eds. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole; London: T & T Clark, 2007], 117-39; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 54-55). See e.g., idem, “The Logic of Action in Paul” 260: “My first basic question has been whether the understanding of the self-determining self that is encapsulated in [the ethical logic of the moral philosophers] was also Paul’s. The answer has been that it was. . . . Throughout [one’s whole life], Paul presupposes the kind of self-determining self who makes up his or her own mind, and who is, as it were, an individual ‘understanding in action’.” I am completely unable to square such a statement with Engberg-Pedersen’s persistent dismissal of the individual, and his argument for its total subordination to the community in Stoic and Pauline teaching on the “post-conversion” life as found throughout *Paul and the Stoics* (see e.g., idem, 138-39, 166-69, 231-33).

<sup>107</sup> See esp. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 144-50, and also Munzinger, *Discerning*, 135-36; Long, “Representation,” 281-82. On the necessity for continual progress in moral education in Stoicism more broadly than just Epictetus see Inwood and Donini, “Ethics,” 705-13, 724-35.

<sup>108</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 122, rightly insists that for Epictetus a concern for others is “derived from the directedness towards God” (emphasis removed). However, this “directedness towards God” should not be placed in opposition to directedness toward oneself, as Engberg-Pedersen shows (ibid., 116-21).

in Stoicism generally, with a view to placing Epictetus' own communal ethics in context, which will then be discussed in detail.

Οἰκείωσις is the word used by various Stoic authors (and summarizers of Stoic teaching) to describe the process that begins at birth whereby an innate self-preservative instinct in newborns leads them as they grow in virtue and understanding to recognize that certain actions and desires are “appropriate” or beneficial. Such thinking can be traced back to Chrysippus, who maintains that nature has endowed every person with the rational capacity to seek—according to his or her earliest longings, or first impulses (τὴν πρώτην ὁρμήν)—what is appropriate, namely his or her own self-preservation. In other words, from birth nature itself appropriates (οἰκείω), or impresses upon the soul, the desire for self-preservation.<sup>109</sup>

However, οἰκείωσις only *begins* with the self-focused endowment nature bestows on children at birth. Stoic writers, such as Hierocles, also note how this initially self-preservative instinct branches out into social concerns (such as love for family) as one becomes trained over time in what is rational and good.<sup>110</sup> Such feelings are within the range of appropriate dispositions (οἰκείωσις),<sup>111</sup> although this does not diminish the fact that the process of rationally seeking out such things flows from an indispensable desire for one's own good, from the appropriate disposition of benevolence (εὐνοητικός) toward oneself (πρὸς ἑαυτό).<sup>112</sup> Hierocles bases this social concern on an inborn human need for community.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> As recorded in Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 7.85-86 (SVF 3.178; LS 57A); cf. Plutarch's hostile statement of Chrysippus' position in similar terms in *Stoic. rep.* 1038B (SVF 3.179, 2.724; LS 57E). On this see Gill, *Structured Self*, 129-77; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 108, 120; Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 56; Schofield, “Thought,” 762; Mary Whitlock Blundell, “Parental Nature and Stoic Οἰκείωσις,” *AnPhil* 10 (1990): 221-42; White, “Basis,” 165-78; S. G. Pembroke, “Oikeiōsis,” in *Problems in Stoicism* (ed. A. A. Long; London: Athlone, 1971), 114-49. Aristotle also develops ideas similar to those of the Stoics on the derivation of love for others from the love parents have for their children (see e.g., *Eth. nic.* 1161b16-33; cited by Brad Inwood, “Comments on Professor Görgemanns' Paper: Two Forms of Oikeiōsis in Arius and the Stoa,” in *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus* [ed. William W. Fortenbaugh; RUSCH; New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1983], 198; cf. Blundell, “Οἰκείωσις,” 228-29).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Striker, “Oikeiōsis,” 286. It is important to note, however, that Stoic accounts of οἰκείωσις (Cicero's excluded, on which see Gill, *Structured Self*, 132-33; Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 64-100) have “a strongly normative cast,” that is, they are about “what we *should* do” rather than what always happens in the world (Schofield, “Thought,” 763 [emphasis original]).

<sup>111</sup> LS 2:345: “The feminine noun to be supplied with the adjectives must be οἰκείωσις” (appropriate disposition).

<sup>112</sup> Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 9.3-10 (LS 57D). There is a gap in the text with regard to what is the “appropriate disposition to oneself” in the second instance of this phrase in this passage. Nonetheless, given that the first instance labels this disposition as “benevolence” (εὐνοητικός), and that it is said that just as (καθάπερ) “affection” (στερκτητικός) is the appropriate disposition toward

A classic text explaining the process of cosmic appropriation/assimilation is found in another fragment of Hierocles', which is preserved in Stobaeus' *Florilegium* 4.671.7-673.11.<sup>114</sup> In this passage Hierocles uses the image of a series of concentric circles to describe the way in which one is assimilated into varying levels of social integration. The first circle is one's self or mind, the second is one's closest family, the third includes one's extended family, the fourth is made up of fellow citizens, and the fifth is comprised of the entire human race. He recognizes that natural affection (εὐνοία - see LS 57G, line 20) will not be as great for those in the circles further out, but argues that it is nonetheless necessary for all people to do their best to assimilate to everyone in all five rings of social relations. The primacy of the individual is apparent in Hierocles, since a person's experience of the self "as the closest object of his concern"<sup>115</sup> is wholly natural, while it takes effort to be affectionate toward those in the outer circles. Importantly, however, self-preservation will simultaneously promote communal well-being since it is the task of every virtuous person to "draw the circles together somehow towards the centre" by recognizing "that concern for other people is a natural development of concern for one's self."<sup>116</sup>

Cicero's description of Stoic teaching on οἰκείωσις is similar to those above, although he begins with the natural love parents have for children, rather than the concern children naturally have at birth for themselves and their own good.<sup>117</sup> From this starting point Stoics believe they can "derive the general sociability of the human race," since it proves that humans are naturally affectionate for all other humans and thus equipped for civil unions such as the state.<sup>118</sup> Although Cicero does not deny the self-interested dimension of the process of being assimilated into the

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one's children so also is a similar disposition toward oneself appropriate, the gap must be supplied with some sort of word indicating self-benefit or self-preservation. Based on the place of the only letter preserved in the gap (an iota), LS (2:345) suggests either "observation" (τηρητικῶς; cf. LSJ, 1289) or "care" (κηδεμονικῶς; cf. LSJ, 946) to modify the second instance of "oneself."

<sup>113</sup> Hierocles, *El. Eth.* 11.14-18 (LS 57D).

<sup>114</sup> LS 57G. Cf. Lee, *Body of Christ*, 69; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 130-33; Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 3; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 341-44; Annas, *Happiness*, 267-70.

<sup>115</sup> LS 1:353.

<sup>116</sup> LS 1:353.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.62 (LS 57F). Cf. Holowchak, *Stoics*, 36-37; Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 55-59; Striker, "Oikeiōsis," 294; Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 66-100. Cicero's own philosophical commitments are somewhat difficult to pin down. This issue is explored at length in John Glucker, "Cicero's Philosophical Affiliations," in *The Question of 'Eclecticism'* (eds. J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34-69.

<sup>118</sup> Cicero, *Fin.* 3.63-63 (LS 57F).



world, he does elevate the social dynamics of this development to a significant degree.<sup>119</sup> For him, the natural affection of human for human is so strong that everyone prefers the “common advantage” (*communem utilitatem*) to his or her own.<sup>120</sup> However, despite this strongly communal cast, Cicero describes the process in a way similar to earlier Stoic writers: initial self-concern (or at least a knowledge that a parent is concerned about oneself) is the basis for, and branches out into, concern for others. The human instinct for self-preservation is nature’s way of guaranteeing a thriving communal impulse; the outer circles of social relations are brought within the inner circle, thus becoming integrated *into* self-concern, rather than replacing it.<sup>121</sup>

Epictetus’ social ethic is broadly in line with previous Stoic teachers: it is essentially self-sufficiency branching out into social concern. Nonetheless, his distinctive twist is important for what it shows us about the relation of individuals and community in his thought. In his teaching, the individual self is primary to a much greater degree than in other Stoic thinkers. However, this does not entail that the community is unimportant, as it is seen that—when looked at from a cosmic perspective—the interests of others become integrally related to one’s own self-preservation, thus becoming worth seeking with the care one expends in benefitting oneself.<sup>122</sup> I now turn to a series of important passages in order to

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.67 (LS 57F, emphasis original to LS): “But just as the communal nature of a theatre is compatible with the correctness of saying that the place each person occupies is *his*, so in the city or world which they share no right is infringed by each man’s possessing what belongs to him.”

<sup>120</sup> Cicero, *Fin.* 3.64 (LS 57F).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Schofield, “Thought,” 761. Although important, *οἰκείωσις* is not the only theme of communal importance in Stoicism. Another socially-directed motif is that of the body and its members, an image used to urge communal cohesion despite individual diversity. Additionally, Stoics speak of the universe itself as a body, a doctrine which supports their teaching on how each person becomes integrated into the cosmos (cf. Lee, *Body of Christ*, 46–58, 83–101), as well as becoming “world-citizens” in the divine government of the universe (cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.9; 2.5.24–26; 2.10.34; Holowchak, *Stoics*, 116, nn. 6–7; Sellars, *Stoicism*, 130–2; Long, *Epictetus*, 150, 233–34; Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 322; Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 24).

<sup>122</sup> Inwood, “Comments,” 193–99 (cf. idem, “*Λ’οἰκειῶσις*,” 252–54), suggests that there are two types of *οἰκείωσις* at work in Stoic ethics, a personal and a social type. He also argues that these two types are held together in Stoic sources in an *ad hoc* fashion, without any real awareness by the Stoics of how to hold “an apparently egoistic trait of human nature” together with “the altruistic trait of natural social affinity.” For instance, there is a subtle shift in authors such as Hierocles and Cicero where they switch from speaking of the natural love of the self (the first type of *οἰκείωσις*) to the natural love parents have for their children (the second type of *οἰκείωσις*), the latter alone being the basis for the human desire for communal betterment. Inwood’s argument appears correct with regard to the major passages in Stoic authors that touch on *οἰκείωσις*, although I think that Epictetus is a significant exception to this rule in that he explicitly ties the social good of others into the

determine the way in which Epictetus relates the individual and community (society).

### 3.3.1 Is Self-Preservation Selfish? (*Diatr.* 1.19)

In a passage in the context of a treatise on how one should interact with a threatening tyrant (1.19), Epictetus sets forth his standard account of how to remain totally free from external trouble. As we have already seen, this is done by attending solely to one's judgments, a procedure which, if done properly, guards one against the inner distress that would otherwise come about through the physical abuse inflicted by the tyrant. Epictetus grants that his hypothetical tyrant is indeed "master of my dead body" (1.19.9), in that outwardly he can use his position of power to treat those under him in whatever way he chooses. Yet when asked by the tyrant whether this will cause Epictetus to pay attention to his threats, Epictetus responds that he only pays attention to himself (1.19.10), to those things within the scope of his volition (cf. 1.19.16, 22), since a person's physical welfare is irrelevant to one's quest for inner peace (1.19.1-10).

Epictetus is well aware that this way of thinking might be misunderstood as selfishness, rather than self-control.<sup>123</sup> Anticipating the negative response of his hearers, Epictetus claims that such a stance "is not mere self-love [φίλαυτον]" (1.19.11). Epictetus begins by arguing that nature itself has constituted humans such that it is not even possible for them to avoid acting in self-interest, just as the sun and Zeus do all things for themselves by their very nature.<sup>124</sup> Yet, in 1.19.12 Zeus' abundant generosity in supplying the earth with rain and harvest shows that divine self-interest is also beneficial (ὠφέλιμος) "for the common interest" (εἰς τὸ κοινόν). Otherwise, Zeus would not receive the praise and reverence of the world. In similar fashion God has so constituted human nature that there can be no self-preservation without a corresponding contribution to the common interest. Thus, as Epictetus puts it in 1.19.14, "it is not anti-social for one to do everything for oneself."<sup>125</sup> The

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natural desire people have to preserve their own interests. The analysis below will attempt to substantiate this point in detail. Even with the standard accounts prior to Epictetus, however, what matters for my purposes is that individual and communal well-being *are* held together, even if the rationale for doing so may fail to persuade ancient or modern readers.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Idem, "L'*oikeiôsis*," 247, 255.

<sup>124</sup> *Diatr.* 1.19.11: "He does everything for himself" (αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα πάντα ποιεῖ). Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 197-98.

<sup>125</sup> Gk: οὕτως οὐκέτι ἀκοινωνητον γίνεται τὸ πάντα αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα ποιεῖν.

only alternative would be to neglect oneself and one's own interests, which would destroy the very foundation of Epictetus' prescriptions for indifference to external circumstances, since the principle (ἀρχή) of appropriation (οἰκείωσις) whereby a person's self-interest branches out into social concern would be nullified (1.19.15).<sup>126</sup> That is to say, Epictetus sees in οἰκείωσις the grounds for grouping self-concern and communal-concern into the same category so that the exact same impulse that leads to self-preservation also brings the welfare of others within its scope; the good of others becomes vital to one's own self-interest (τοῦ ἰδίου συμφέροντος - 1.19.15).<sup>127</sup>

Thus, in 1.19.1-15 we see the same dynamic that was at work in Epictetus' teaching on moral progress: the most important thing in the world is oneself and one's power of choice (cf. 1.19.2-3); yet as one is assimilated into the cosmos (the process and principle of οἰκείωσις), the common good becomes an indispensable part of one's personal well-being. In this way the individual and mental self-control remain primary without in the least doing away with the importance of communal concerns.<sup>128</sup> The primacy of the individual is the foundational presupposition for all other-regarding attitudes.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Long, *Epictetus*, 197, maintains that Epictetus' communal vision is not as dependent on οἰκείωσις as some of the Stoic thinkers surveyed above. However, it does figure into his thought as one aspect of his broader communal vision and contributes significantly to his synthesis of individuality and community. Cf. Gill, *Structured Self*, 380: "In broad terms, I take it that Epictetus sets out in plain language a pathway in ethical progress based on the central Stoic idea of development as 'appropriation', as illustrated in Cicero's account in *Fin.* 3.16-22." In other words, although Epictetus doesn't use the language of οἰκείωσις very often, the conceptuality is present in important ways throughout his lectures (cf. Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 61; Gill, *Structured Self*, 381-85).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 115. Long, *Epictetus*, 188 (emphasis original), argues (correctly I think) that Epictetus understands the social instinct of οἰκείωσις to be something with which all people are "innately equipped" rather than being a process of development (as other Stoics seem to indicate). As such, according to Epictetus, everyone is endowed with the capacity for seeking the welfare of others from birth (cf. Inwood and Donini, "Ethics," 680; Inwood, "L'*oikeiôsis*," 245).

<sup>128</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 115, rightly draws attention to the fact that Epictetus' "principle of non-dependence does not . . . in the least exclude an attitude of real care and love for other human beings, that is, of being genuinely 'affectionate' towards them." Engberg-Pedersen also recognizes that this other-directed care is set within the context of "a heightened awareness of self with freedom of mind and mastery, even in relation to one's own body" (*ibid.*, 113; see also 178). Freedom thus requires constant attention to the state of one's mental life, which (when functioning properly) "aligns human beings with God, thereby giving them a freedom of genuine agency" (*ibid.*, 108, emphasis removed). Again, I find such statements difficult to synthesize with Engberg-Pedersen's subordination of "post-conversion" individuality to community, both in Stoicism and in Paul.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 5. Although Inwood ("Comments," 197) is correct in saying that Epictetus' method of reconciling the necessity of seeking individual and communal good is to tie both dispositions to nature's prompting (cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 182-83), it does not follow that Epictetus has failed to answer the question of how social οἰκείωσις is derived from personal οἰκείωσις. Epictetus makes this derivation clear in 1.19.15 (slightly modified LCL translation): there is "one and

### 3.3.2 Self-Interest... For the Sake of All (*Diatr.* 2.22)

*Diatr.* 2.22 is a discourse on the nature of friendship that begins with a statement of the basis of social life: “whatever a man is interested in he naturally loves” (2.22.1: Περὶ ἃ τις ἐσπούδακεν, φιλεῖ ταῦτα εἰκότως). Epictetus is aware that such a claim seems starkly counter-productive in a treatise on friendship. Thus, the discourse moves on to an analysis of what constitutes true love.

First, Epictetus questions his hypothetical interlocutor’s insistence that it is possible to be both foolish and loving: true love must be based on true wisdom (2.22.1-14).<sup>130</sup> However, a knowledge of good by itself is insufficient for genuine friendship. One must come to grasp what the good is *as it pertains to oneself*. Thus, in 2.22.15, Epictetus states that self-interest is the driver of all devotion to others: “It is a universal truth—be not deceived—that every living thing is to nothing so devoted as to his own interest.”<sup>131</sup> In fact, nature itself dictates that it is self-interest (τὸ αὐτοῦ συμφέρον) *alone* that determines what or whom one will love, raising self-concern to the functional level of God in motivating ethical behavior (2.22.16).<sup>132</sup> This is entirely in line with what is to be expected based on what we have seen above about the primacy of the self and self-regard in Epictetus.

However, just as in 1.19, here too Epictetus moves effortlessly from speaking of this all encompassing human impulse toward self-preservation into a discussion of its necessarily social outcome. To do this, he maintains in 2.22.18 that a person has two options: either one’s honor, country, family and friends are placed together

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the same principle for all (μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρχὴ πᾶσιν), namely, that of appropriation (οἰκείωσις) to their own needs.” Thus, it is not simply that nature endows one with an individually-centered desire *and* a socially-directed outlook, but that the process of cosmic appropriation itself is one of bringing both social and individual well-being under the same heading, that of self-preservation. Whatever the merits of Epictetus’ logic, in distinction from Inwood, I believe that Epictetus *does* make the connection between personal and social οἰκείωσις explicit.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Reydam-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 80, although I believe my analysis in this chapter will show that she is mistaken to say that Epictetus’ “form of self-control does not entail that we *reduce other people* to the status of (preferred) indifferents” (emphasis original). It is true that Epictetus does not place much emphasis on the distinction between preferred and dispreferred indifferents, but not true that he refrains from placing other people into the category of things indifferent for happiness, even if he usually uses other terminology to do so.

<sup>131</sup> Gk: Καθόλου γάρ—μὴ ἐξαπατᾶσθε—Πᾶν ζῶον οὐδενὶ οὕτως ὠκείωται ὥς τῷ ἰδίῳ συμφέροντι. Following LSJ, s.v. καθόλου 2, I have translated καθόλου as “universal truth,” rather than “general rule” (as in the LCL edition), in order to bring out the comprehensive scope of the statement, which in its context is a categorical assertion of the priority of self-interest in human decision-making.

<sup>132</sup> *Diatr.* 2.22.16 reads: “For nothing by nature causes one to love so much as one’s own interest. This is one’s father and brother and relatives and homeland and God” (my translation). Gk: οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτως φιλεῖν ἐφύκεν ὥς τὸ αὐτοῦ συμφέρον· τοῦτο πατὴρ καὶ ἀδελφὸς καὶ συγγενεῖς καὶ πατρίς καὶ θεός.

with one's self-interest (συμφέρον), or they are treated as separate goods in competition with personal interest. Self-interest, which by its very nature is paramount, will always outweigh and overrule social responsibilities if the latter are considered as independent of self-interest (cf. 2.22.21). The only sure ground for communal responsibility, then, is to integrate love for others within love and care of oneself, although in a way that does not impinge upon one's personal invulnerability from external circumstances.<sup>133</sup> Even justice cannot sufficiently motivate right relations with others; in the end it too will give way to the self-preservative instinct. As Epictetus pithily puts it, "For where there is an 'I' or a 'mine,' there a creature must incline." (2.22.19).<sup>134</sup>

Volition (προαίρεσις) is the key to the melding of individual and communal interests: it is only when the volitional ruling power (κυριεῦον) is functioning rightly that one can "be the friend and son and the father that [one] should be," since only then will the maintenance of proper social relations be enfolded within the scope of self-interest (2.22.19-20).<sup>135</sup> Epictetus does not believe that guarding the volition is simply a *good* way to preserve and prosper relationships; he believes it is the *only* way. If something outside of one's volition is driving a person's life (even something as exemplary as personal honor; 2.22.21), then there is no hope for the faithful maintenance of goodwill toward others (2.22.26-27, cf. 2.2.37). Such merely external constraints are worthless because the only infallible regulator of proper conduct is the internal power of volition. Put differently, only when "I am where my volition is" (2.22.20),<sup>136</sup> that is, only when one sets value on that which certainly can be obtained through the exercise of mental self-control, is one actually able to love others. External things will always fail to provide the necessary impetus for seeking

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<sup>133</sup> In other words, to change from seeing their welfare as a concern that is "not yours" to one that is "yours" (cf. 2.6.24). Cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 199-200, 236-37; 238: "There is clearly a strong and coherent link between Epictetus' introverted recommendations and his social prescriptions." Cf. Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 43. On how inviolability must be maintained throughout this process see Sorabji, *Self*, 194.

<sup>134</sup> My translation. Gk: ὅπου γὰρ ᾖν τὸ "ἐγὼ" καὶ τὸ "ἐμόν," ἐκεῖ ἀνάγκη ῥέπτειν τὸ ζῶον.

<sup>135</sup> Epictetus is able simply to assert here that one's power of choice (volition) will automatically lead to right communal relations when one places others into the category of one's own interest. As we saw above, this assertion makes sense for Epictetus because of his commitment to the notion that the governing faculty of the soul always chooses that which is good, or at least what it perceives to be good (cf. 2.22.2-3, 36). Thus, loving others is automatic if it is placed on the side of loving oneself—an impulse that itself requires no prompting in anyone. Cf. *Diatr.* 4.5.27-37: "For [volition] is God's gift to each person, free of impediment. These judgments generate love in the household, concord in the community, peace among nations, gratitude to God, and complete confidence, since they treat of things that are not one's own, things of no importance." Cf. esp. Sorabji, *Self*, 193; Long, *Epictetus*, 30.

<sup>136</sup> Gk: ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐγώ, ὅπου ἡ προαίρεσις.

the communal good: a suitably strong countervailing desire (power, money, sex, etc.) inevitably sours even the most seemingly unshakeable love between people. This is the lesson of history and of literature (2.22.16-17, 22-26, 32-34), and is backed up by Epictetus' philosophical system. This is also an inviolable law of nature (cf. 2.22.16).

Yet all need not be lost socially speaking. Others do not have to remain outside the sphere of volition; if one sees the well-being of others as an extension of one's own, then the problem of an external thing being considered inherently good *on its own* disappears, since social fidelity merges into self-interest.<sup>137</sup> Then—and only then—can one confidently claim that true friendship exists, the kind of friendship that cannot be subverted, precisely because it is built on self-preservation, nature's unshakeable foundation (2.22.29-30). The person who has vigilantly guarded his or her volition will then be genuinely faithful and loving toward those who are similarly wise, and tolerant and patient with those who have not risen to the same heights of moral and philosophical excellence (2.22.36).

Although the word οἰκείωσις is not employed in this discourse, the basic idea is obviously present: self-concern branches out into other-regard.<sup>138</sup> Even more explicitly than in 1.19, self-interest in 2.22 is the *basis and foundation* for care of family, city, nation and world. It is fundamentally flawed to see the social as doing away with the personal and individual; it is wrong to even posit a priority for the social, since communal concern is so absolutely connected with, and derivative of, self-interest and self-preservation. For Epictetus, an ethic that begins with the communal destroys the possibility of real love and friendship because it makes these states into external things (cf. τοῖς ἐκτός - 2.22.19), thus turning them—like all external things—into capricious slave-masters of the soul.

### 3.3.3 Body and Members (*Diatr.* 2.5)

Epictetus, in line with much philosophical thought of the time, employs the metaphor of the body and members as representing social order to further his distinctive approach to communal life. In this regard he offers a variant on what he says about οἰκείωσις, thus leading to a richer understanding of how individuals are assimilated into the cosmos.

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. George B. Kerferd, "The Search for Personal Identity in Stoic Thought," *BJRL* 55 (1972): 195.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Gill, *Structured Self*, 381-82; Long, *Epictetus*, 222.

One of the clearest examples of Epictetus' use of the body image is in *Diatr.* 2.5. The discourse as a whole is an attempt to show how high-mindedness (μεγαλοφροσύνη) and carefulness (ἐπιμέλεια) are compatible with one another. As he sets up the issue in 2.5.1-5, the potential tension between these two states of mind lies in the fact that one desires to be high-minded in the sense of being steadfast (εὐσταθής), which means being unshakably resolved to treat all external things as indifferent (ἀδιάφορος) to one's peace of mind (ἀτάραχον), while also desiring to maintain a careful spirit (ἐπιμελής). By "carefulness" Epictetus means essentially an attitude that desires to maintain a firm grasp on one's own possessions. It is essentially an attitude of fear that one's possessions may be lost. Epictetus does not condone this type of attitude, but he does use this notion of "carefulness" in a transformed way: instead of being careful to keep all of one's external possessions, one must exercise equally diligent care in treating external things as "indifferents." Epictetus turns the notion of carefulness on its head. The use of matters that are indifferent in and of themselves is not itself indifferent.<sup>139</sup> Thus, the wise person will preserve his or her steadfastness of mind by treating indifferent things with the same attitude of care that most people foolishly exhibit toward their possessions (2.5.6-9).<sup>140</sup> From whence can such an attitude arise? Only from "within me, in what is mine [ἔσω ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς]" (2.5.5). And what is "mine"? The power of choice, namely one's volition (προαίρεσις - 2.5.4),<sup>141</sup> which is the only thing that matters for proper living.

This foundation for right living, then, is centered on the individual and his or her mental control. But as with the previous two discourses we have examined, Epictetus does not leave things on this individualistic basis. Individual volitional empowerment is the basis for the important social outcome that Epictetus begins discussing in 2.5.24. Here he lays out the communal implications of the prescription for happiness through indifference (cf. 2.5.26-9) that he has just finished unpacking in the first part of the discourse. To do so, Epictetus employs the metaphor of the

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<sup>139</sup> Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 43.

<sup>140</sup> I.e., it is a combination of "the carefulness of a man who is devoted to material things and the steadfastness of a man who disregards them," a difficult but not impossible union (2.5.9).

<sup>141</sup> *Diatr.* 2.5.10-23 consists of a series of illustrations that illuminate Epictetus' point.

body, a rhetorical feature that had become commonplace in philosophical-ethical teaching by that time.<sup>142</sup>

The specific question Epictetus attempts to answer (in 2.5.24) using the body and members imagery is whether certain “externals” can be seen as natural, and whether some are unnatural. While certain things may *seem* beneficial for a detached foot in its severed state, the situation is quite different when the foot is seen as part of a whole body. It may seem counterintuitive to consider trampling on thorns beneficial for the foot *considered simply as a foot*; but when one sees the foot as a part of a whole body, suddenly the damage done by the thorns does not seem so terrible, since the foot serves the broader interests of the whole body, which itself will not be overly troubled by pain being applied to one of its members. Thus, external things (like health or wealth) may seem necessary for one’s happiness, but when one sees oneself as simply a member of the cosmos-body then one will recognize that all that is necessary for the good life is to play one’s part in the drama of fate.

In the last sentence of 2.5.24 Epictetus states that his audience “ought to hold some such view of” themselves: they are individual members of a broader cosmic whole. This whole is in the first instance the city-state (πόλις). Even more fundamentally, however, people should recognize that they are parts of a city-state that “is made up of gods and men,” and finally of the city state “that is a small copy of the whole” (ἢ τί ἐστὶ μικρὸν τῆς ὅλης μίμημα - 2.5.26; cf. 2.5.13).<sup>143</sup> Because every person is united into a world-body, nothing happens to one member that does not create the same effect in the body as a whole (2.5.27). Thus, the well-being of society and self are tightly connected.

Even here, however, the initially self-preservative desire to remain unaffected by the circumstances of life remains the foundation and cognitive presupposition for community. The dynamic at work in 2.22 is also at work here: the benefit of the many is based on a rational evaluation of the benefit to the individual. That is to say (summarizing 2.5.2-29), only when one grasps one’s place in the cosmos, in the body made up of all gods and people, is one enabled to see that his or

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<sup>142</sup> For the background to this image see Lee, *Body of Christ*, 29-45, who focuses on how it was developed in Stoicism. Cf. Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 38-47.

<sup>143</sup> The whole refers to the entire universe, conceived of as a giant city-state of gods and men. Cf. Blundell, “Οἰκείωσις,” 231-32.



her own well-being is part and parcel of the well-being of others. Individual mental control and self-regard by no means disappear, as is evident in the continual strictures throughout the discourse to maintain a firm control over how one evaluates external things. But at the same time, this “individualistic” mindset is completely synthesized with a communal one.<sup>144</sup>

### 3.3.4 The Self and Duty (*Diatr.* 2.10)

One of the most explicit links Epictetus draws between the primacy of the self and the importance of social obligations is found in *Diatr.* 2.10.<sup>145</sup> The discourse begins with a definition of human identity: we humans are creatures who have “no quality more sovereign than volition” (2.10.1),<sup>146</sup> thus making us superior to all other living beings (2.10.2-3).<sup>147</sup> Yet, this individually-centered facet of our identity is not a ground for complacent selfishness. Epictetus rules that out with the question and answer in 2.10.4:

What then is the profession of a citizen? To treat nothing as a matter of private profit, not to plan about anything as though he were a detached unit, but to act like the foot or the hand, which if they had the faculty of reason and understood the constitution of nature, would never exercise choice or desire in any other way but by reference to the whole.

While this quote contains many important statements, the most noteworthy is that Epictetus—having just described the core of human identity as the power of choice in service of self-preservation—immediately qualifies this understanding by saying that such cannot be simply “a matter of private profit” (μηδὲν ἔχειν ἰδίᾳ συμφέρον) because, as in 2.5, individuals are bound together into a unified organism, a world-encompassing body. The cognitive dimension is even more explicit here than in 2.5: Epictetus assumes that no one with “the faculty of reason” and a right “understanding of the constitution of nature” could possibly fail to “exercise choice

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<sup>144</sup> While I agree with Long that Epictetus is arguing “that we cannot achieve our good unless we see ourselves as integral parts of the world in general and of our society in particular,” it does not follow that “our identity is . . . irreducibly social” (Long, *Epictetus*, 201, emphasis added; see the similar sentiments in Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 17; Inwood, “*L’oikeiôsis*,” 244), as the analysis of *Diatr.* 3.13 below will attempt to prove in more detail.

<sup>145</sup> On the great importance Epictetus attaches to social duties see Bonhöffer, *Epictet*, 86-108.

<sup>146</sup> Gk: οὐδὲν ἔχων κυριώτερον προαιρέσεως.

<sup>147</sup> Assuming one’s volition is “free from slavery and subjection.”

or desire” “by reference to the whole” of humanity.<sup>148</sup> If a person knew the future he or she could even desire adverse circumstances to come one’s way because they would be seen in light of the “orderly arrangement of the whole” where the individual parts themselves are insignificant since the whole is more sovereign (κυριώτερον) than the parts (2.10.5). However, since no one knows the future, we must do our best to seek out what we know to be good (through controlled judgments; cf. 2.10.1), aware that this is the pathway to cosmic harmony (2.10.6).

In the rest of the discourse Epictetus ranges across three other dimensions of human identity, but in distinction from 2.10.1, these are all expressed in terms of their outworking in concrete social situations. First, sons must show respect and deference to their fathers (2.10.7). Second, siblings must show “deference, obedience, kindly speech,” to each other and never lodge a claim against one another (2.10.8-9). Third, those sitting on a city council are obligated to mark their tenure with “appropriate acts” (τὰ οἰκεῖα ἔργα - 2.10.10-12) of civic responsibility. All of these actions are grounded in “a natural sense of fidelity, a natural sense of affection, a natural sense of helpfulness, a natural sense of keeping our hands off one another” (2.10.23).<sup>149</sup> There is no tension posited between the individual and the community. A communal concern is bestowed on all creatures by nature; this is a part of who we are by virtue of our common humanity. And yet, all things are subordinate to the human power of choice (volition) in those who are wise (cf. 2.10.1). The second sentence of 2.10.23 provides the bridge between the individual and the social: because of the intimate linkage between individual members and the one cosmic body, if any of a person’s social relations are discordant, that person suffers injury and loss. That is to say, the cosmic harmony of the universe is such that self-interest and communal-interest coincide. Neither the seeking of individual well-being, nor the obligations that arise from life in human community, obviate the need for self-preservation or community-centeredness.

### 3.3.5 The Contingency of the Communal (*Diatr.* 3.13)

I have just discussed several ways in which Epictetus integrates a communal impulse within his thoroughly self-focused ethical system. I have noted how the

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 1.11 where Epictetus provides an extended argument for the reasonableness of familial affection.

<sup>149</sup> Gk: ἔχομεν φύσει τι πιστόν, φύσει στερκτικόν, φύσει ὠφελητικόν, ἀλλήλων φύσει ἀνεκτικόν.

desire for self-preservation remains the primary impulse of human life throughout one's progress in moral living. However, I have also attempted to show how for Epictetus the desire for self-preservation does not remain on the level of base self-love. It necessarily branches out into genuine care for others. With any given social relation one has certain responsibilities. Yet, these responsibilities are not in themselves intrinsically significant. That is to say, preserving one's own self, rather than caring for others (in and of itself), is what is truly important. As Epictetus puts it in numerous places, social relations (like all external things) are simply "materials for the volition" (ὕλαι τῇ προαιρέσει - cf. 1.29.2); they provide a chance for one's virtue to be developed, for it to be perfected in the resolute determination to live one's life according to nature. Abstracted from this context, the life of the communities in which one lives threatens to become a desired good in its own right, which would completely undo Epictetus' prescription for the life of happy and peaceful indifference.

This by itself is clear from what has already been discussed above. However, in *Diatr.* 3.13 Epictetus takes things one step further. Not only is community secondary to the individual, *it is in fact an entirely contingent component of the good life.*<sup>150</sup> How you live in community matters, because once you are confronted with others, your own well-being dictates that you act in a certain (considerate and faithful) fashion toward them. Nonetheless, community is not in any way necessary for one to live the good life, to find peace and rest in the midst of an uncertain future.

*Diatr.* 3.13 is a discourse on what it means to be in a forlorn (ἐρημία) condition. Epictetus begins with his thesis, and then follows it up by countering a potential misunderstanding: one is forlorn if one is without help (ἀβοηθητός) from others, rather than if one is simply alone (ὁ μόνος) in the world. Conversely, the presence of others does not guarantee the absence of human deprivation (3.13.1). This misunderstanding of what it means to be forlorn reflects the common way that people perceive the world: losing someone dear to us creates loss (makes us feel ἐρημία), no matter how many people are physically near us. The simple presence of others cannot bring happiness (3.13.2). In 3.13.2 Epictetus states that being forlorn—

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Inwood, "L'οἰκειότης," 264.

by definition—means that we are without help, apparently assuming that this definition was accepted by his hearers.

However, Epictetus does not stop with a simple assertion of his point. He goes on to add a series of proofs to further convince his audience. First, we may say that we are alone when we have lost someone very dear to us, even if we are in the middle of populous Rome. Epictetus' equivocation on the meaning of being alone (ἄβοηθός) is put to use to prove to his hearers that being around others does not guarantee that we will not also be forlorn (3.13.2). Epictetus's second example is even more dependent on equivocation: travelers will feel utterly forlorn if they come across bandits on the highway. In other words, the presence of others means nothing in and of itself with regard to whether one will be happy or forlorn; only the right sort of people will bring gladness to one's soul (3.13.3).

The third proof is the most important for our purposes. Here Epictetus contends that if simply being alone makes one forlorn, then at the world conflagration (ἐπύρωσις) at the end of history Zeus himself would be forlorn since he is alone (μόνος) at that point in time (3.13.4).<sup>151</sup> It would be as if he was sitting by himself in the heavens mourning the absence of his fellow gods and goddesses with great cries of wretchedness. Those who say that being forlorn means being without human company rightly recognize there to be among humans a "natural common interest, mutual love and joy in living with others" (3.13.5),<sup>152</sup> but they fail to place this social dynamic in its properly subordinate position. For, as Epictetus continues in 3.13.6, those who understand how to live peaceful lives should be "able to be content by oneself" (τὸ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ ἀρκεῖν)<sup>153</sup> and be "able to commune with oneself" (δύνασθαι αὐτὸν ἑαυτῷ συνεῖναι) without any sense of loss at the absence of interpersonal interaction. In other words, self-sufficiency—the most important human impulse—creates contentment without community. Just as "Zeus communes with himself" and "has inner rest" while alone at the world conflagration, so should we be able to be happy when we are completely alone

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<sup>151</sup> For more on the Stoic doctrine of the world conflagration see Furley, "Cosmology," 434-41; Jaap Mansfeld, "Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought," in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (ed. M. J. Vermaseren; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 129-88.

<sup>152</sup> My translation; Gk: φύσει κοινωνικοῦ εἶναι καὶ φιλαλλήλου καὶ ἡδέως συναναστρέφεσθαι ἀνθρώποις.

<sup>153</sup> My translation.

(3.13.7).<sup>154</sup> Although men and women must be able to carry out their earthly social obligations, they must do so without in any way *needing* others (μὴ προσδεῖσθαι ἄλλων). An eternity spent alone would actually be beneficial since it would provide one with the opportunity for giving extended and undivided attention to the things that really matter in life such as understanding our place in the world and perfecting our mental response to external circumstances (3.13.8). Human relationships are all too often distractions from the process of perfecting the self.<sup>155</sup>

How then can one avoid becoming forlorn in life? For Epictetus, the answer is complete self-sufficiency (cf. 3.13.5-13). Self-sufficiency means that we are not reliant on anything for our well-being, including community. Communal-concern is an entirely contingent expression of virtue.<sup>156</sup> It is true that we must act rightly in whatever communities we find ourselves in, but even this is first of all a matter of preserving our own virtue and self-interest.<sup>157</sup> We do not *need* community. We are not such social animals at the core of our being that we somehow cease to be fully human when not in community. In other words, Epictetus does not see his students as “dyadic first-century Mediterranean persons.”<sup>158</sup> Humans naturally seek the company and well-being of others, but this is not the same thing as saying that human identity is *inextricably* bound up within the relationships of human society.

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<sup>154</sup> The Greek of 3.13.7 reads: ὡς ὁ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ σύνεστιν καὶ ἡσυχάζει ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐννοεῖ τὴν διοίκησιν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ οἷα ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν ἐπινοίαις γίνεται πρεπούσαις ἑαυτῷ, οὕτως καὶ ἡμᾶς δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς λαλεῖν, μὴ προσδεῖσθαι ἄλλων, διαγωγῆς μὴ ἀπορεῖν: “Just as Zeus communes with himself, has inner rest and reflects on his own administration [of the world] and whatever else is in his thoughts that is appropriate for him, thus also we should be able to converse with ourselves, not needing others, not at a loss with regard to how to pass our time” (my translation).

<sup>155</sup> *Diatr.* 3.13.9-17 goes into detail about the way in which Caesar cannot provide peace and happiness in all circumstances and how this is the provenance of true philosophy alone (3.13.18-19).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 3.3.4-5: “The instant the good appears it attracts the soul to itself, while the evil repels the soul from itself. A soul will never refuse a clear sense-impression of good, any more than a man will refuse the coinage of Caesar. On this concept of the good hangs every impulse to act both of man and of God. That is why the good is preferred above every form of kinship.” Cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 5.20: “In so far as any of them [other human beings] stand in the way of our closest duties, a human being then comes to be one of the things that are indifferent to me, no less than the sun, or the wind, or a wild beast” (cited by Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 66; cf. 67-69). Reydams-Schils (*Roman Stoics*, 75) notes that even such a strongly worded statement placing community into the category of “things indifferent” to happiness is modified in 3.3.8 when Epictetus argues (in line with his normal practice when discussing social responsibility) that “if we set [the good] in a correct volition, then the preservation of the relationships of life itself becomes a good” (my translation).

<sup>157</sup> Cf. *Diatr.* 2.4.2-3 where Epictetus insists that personal wrongdoing is first and foremost self-destructive of one’s own “fidelity, self-respect, [and] piety,” but also “overthrows” (ἀναιρέω) “neighborly feeling, friendship, [and] the state.” Cf. 3.13.4-8 and 3.24.54-70 on the compatibility of self-interest and “affection” for others. Thus, it is true that Epictetus can even call love for a child “a good” (3.3.8; thus Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 78), but this is so only because the preservation of one’s own virtue demands that one deal faithfully with family, friends, fellow citizens, etc.

<sup>158</sup> *Contra* Malina and Neyrey, “Personality.”

#### 4. Conclusion: A Community of Self-Interest?

In this chapter we have seen that Epictetus' philosophy is driven by an almost obsessive concern with self-preservation. His teaching on how to make moral progress in life is centered squarely on the individual and his or her own mental responses to external circumstances. To be happy and at rest is to be completely indifferent to external things. In this connection, Epictetus *defines* what constitutes one's "self" as one's volition, or power of choice. One's volition must be guarded above all else because "no one is dearer to me than myself" (ἐμοὶ παρ' ἐμὲ φίλτερος οὐδεὶς). It must also not be allowed to become dependent on others in any way (3.4.10).

Yet we have also seen that Epictetus by no means neglects familial, communal or political responsibility. Preserving one's virtue demands faithful living in community. Right social relations flow out of, although they are subordinate to self-preservation (cf. 4.10.12-13), which must be maintained throughout one's entire life.<sup>159</sup> Anything less would destroy the very possibility for living in harmony with others, since it would take one's focus off of the one place where virtue can be found (one's volition) and shift it onto external things, which are inherently unstable producers of well-being. There is, then, never a point in Epictetus's system where the individual is swallowed up in community.<sup>160</sup> What we find instead is a societal concern driven by self-interest.

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Inwood, "L'*oikeiōsis*," 255: "Avant de finir je vais explorer ce rapport, en vue de montrer pourquoi la réconciliation du souci orienté vers soi-même et du souci orienté vers les autres doit être fondé sur la primauté du souci pour soi-même."

<sup>160</sup> Epictetus is hardly radical in this regard (cf. Long, *Epictetus*, 114-16, 200; Burnett, *Salvation*, 30-90; Inwood and Donini, "Ethics," 681). Despite their differences of emphasis, numerous thinkers in the ancient world articulated a definition of the human person with foundationally individual dimensions (although without neglecting a communal perspective). Chrysippus, for example, states that the "dearest thing [*oikeion*] to every animal is its own constitution and its consciousness of it" (Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 7.85; quoted by Holowchak, *Stoics*, 36). Seneca also captures this facet of Stoic thought well: "Each animal at the same time consults its own safety, seeks what helps it, and shrinks from what will harm it. Impulses towards useful objects and revulsion from the opposite are according to nature. Without any reflection to prompt the idea and without any advice, whatever nature has prescribed is done" (*Ep.* 121.21; quoted in *ibid.*, 36; cf. Inwood and Donini, "Ethics," 679-80; Seneca, *Ep.* 124.23 [cited by Downing, "Persons," 59]; cf. Striker, "*Oikeiōsis*," 286-87). Even Aristotle, who sees community as indispensable to one's happiness (see e.g., *Eth. nic.* 1099a30, 1099b7-8 [1.8.15, 17]), crafts a definition of the human person that centers on the thinking self and the quest for virtue: "If then the function of man is the active exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with rational principle. . . it follows that the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue . . ." (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.*, 1098a7-8, 16-17; cited by Burnett, *Salvation*, 37, nn. 29-30).

This investigation of Epictetus has made several things clear. One of the most important is that it has shown the falsity of claiming that there was no important sense of the individual in Paul's world. Equally important, it has also revealed how at home the attempt to relate individuals to community would have been for someone like Paul. As we turn to Paul's letter to the Romans, having seen how Epictetus approaches questions of *both* the individual and community enables us to look with new eyes not only at the presence of the individual in Paul's thought, but also at how Paul himself relates the individual to community. As we do so, the false assumption that the individual and the community are antithetical concepts can be set aside.

## CHAPTER 4

### Pauline Individuals (1)

“There is no self-conscious notion of ‘the self’ in Paul . . . he thinks in terms of membership in groups: Jews, Gentiles, Christ followers.”<sup>1</sup>

“Paul saw clearly that God’s purposes were worked out, fundamentally, with individual selves . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Introduction: The Quest for the Pauline Individual

The individual is a problematic and disputed figure in modern Pauline scholarship. It is often simply assumed that the word individual represents one single thing that can then be safely dismissed as an imposition of modern, Western categories onto the text of Paul’s letters. This assumption is deeply problematic.<sup>3</sup> Thus, one of the central aims of this chapter is to show that without an adequately nuanced

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<sup>1</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 142. Cf. Campbell, *Quest*, 49: “It just does not seem possible to combine the individual and the corporate . . . .” In a forthcoming book chapter, Engberg-Pedersen appears to soften the stark denial of a post-conversion Pauline self found in his earlier works quite significantly. See e.g., Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “A Stoic Concept of the Person in Paul? From Gal 5:17 to Rom 7:14-25,” in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Essays on Early Christian Concepts of Personhood* (eds. Clare K. Rothschild and J. Trevor Thompson; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming 2011), emphasis original: “there is a clear sense of a ‘self’ in Paul, and even of a ‘person’.”

<sup>2</sup> Burnett, *Salvation*, 229. On the same page that this quote comes from Burnett does qualify himself by stating that Paul was not a “radical individualist” and that he did not concentrate “on the individual in such a way that the people of God within the purposes of God became of secondary importance.” However, as I have already noted in my introductory chapter, Burnett restricts the communal dimension of Paul’s thought almost exclusively to the question of Jew-Gentile unity in Christ, neglecting the numerous ways in which the Pauline individual must be understood as embedded within the community of which it is a part.

<sup>3</sup> As was just noted, Troels Engberg-Pedersen has recently nuanced his own view of the Pauline individual substantially. In so doing he has offered a devastating critique of many modern anti-individual readings of ancient thought that is very helpful for the purposes of my own argument in both this and the following chapter. Engberg-Pedersen, interacting with the classicist Christopher Gill, has taken Gill’s definition of the individual to task for only refuting what Engberg-Pedersen calls a “strong” form of individualism. In other words, scholars like Gill have equated the very concept of the individual with something “like a modern, ‘Sartrean’ individualism” and in so doing have quite rightly shown that such a form of individualism did not exist in the ancient world (“Person in Paul?” [emphasis original]). Engberg-Pedersen rightly wonders, however, whether a “weaker” form of individualism (a notion of self, a cognitive center of being, etc.) has been thereby proven false as well. While I find Engberg-Pedersen’s discussion extremely helpful, I think that it would be better to speak in terms of “modern individualism” and “ancient individualism” so as to avoid the automatic assumption that the kind of individualism to be found in the ancient world is somehow lacking in robustness, an impression that could result from labelling such a view of the individual as “weaker.” Nonetheless, the point remains: simply proving that there is no modern individual in Paul’s letters says nothing whatsoever about whether the individual is a fruitful category for analyzing Pauline theology.



understanding of the individual (or individuals) in Paul's thought, the entire debate over the individual versus the community is wrongly framed.<sup>4</sup>

There is indeed no Pauline individual. Instead, there are *many* Pauline individuals, or rather, many ways of conceptualizing the individual in Paul's letters. Thus, to make clear the comprehensive significance of the individual for Paul, I have presented the first half of a typology of the individual in this chapter. It, along with the remainder of the typology in the next chapter, is an attempt to isolate and classify some of the most important ways Paul conceptualizes the individual in his letters. In presenting the material in this way I hope to give a selective, although truly representative, account of the Pauline individual.

The Pauline individual, however, is not simply an individual. Although there are many ways in which Paul integrates individuals into his argument, with each of them the communal coloring of his theology is evident, although more prominently in some places than others. That is to say, there is no *isolated* individual in Paul; there is no "individual qua individual," at least as far as Paul's view of the redeemed individual is concerned.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Paul conceives of the individual within a communal framework.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, at points in this chapter I will attempt to show not only how pervasive and central the category of the individual is in Paul's theology, but also how communal concerns *necessarily* shape Paul's understanding of the individual. The communal shaping of the Pauline individual, however, will receive a much fuller treatment in chapter five, since that chapter deals with Romans 12-16, the most important chapters in Romans for understanding Paul's theology of individuals-in-community.

It will be beneficial at this point to give a skeletal outline of the portion of the typology that I will present in this chapter. First, in Romans 2 (specifically 2:1, 17) we encounter an example of what I will call the *characteristic* individual, a stereotyped figure of sorts, who represents a possible (although faulty) response to Paul's gospel. In service of developing this individual type Paul also brings the

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<sup>4</sup> Again, as was mentioned in chapter 1 above, in this dissertation I am attempting to describe the *function* of individuals and community in Paul's argument, rather than to enter into modern debates about the ontology and psychology of the self.

<sup>5</sup> Pace Burnett, *Salvation*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> While there is one place where the individual (simply as an individual) is important for Paul's argument (namely Rom 2:6-16, which will be discussed further below), this is the eschatological individuality of the human being before the judgment seat of God. In the time before the eschaton, however, when Paul speaks of individuals as the beneficiaries of God's redemptive work in Christ, he *never* conceives of them in isolation from their being embedded within the believing community.

*generic* individual into his argumentation (in 2:6-16; see ἕκαστος in 2:6). The generic individual comes into its own, however, in Romans 3, where Paul speaks of it in order to state one of the most foundational truths of his gospel message, namely that justification is by faith apart from works, and that this places every human being in the exact same position before God. However, despite the prominence (even centrality) of the generic human being in his understanding of individuals, Paul does not completely do away with another kind of individual, what I will call the *binary* individual (as exemplified in the Jew-Gentile distinction), even though he does radically relativize the importance of this oppositional classification. Romans 4 is dominated by yet another kind of individual: Abraham the *exemplary* individual, whose faith in God sets a pattern for future believers. Types found elsewhere in Romans will be addressed in the next chapter.

It should be noted from the outset that the different types of individuals are not airtight categories. Even though several types can be isolated for the purpose of analysis and comparison, they often bleed into one another, making a radical separation impossible.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, each kind of individual within the typology I will set forth tells us something vitally important about how Paul conceives of individuality itself, how he relates individuals to community and how the different types of individuals function with regard to other important themes in Romans.

Furthermore, this typology is textually selective. Although there may be more types of individuals in the letter than I have indicated, I contend that the typology presented here represents many of the most important ways of conceptualizing the individual in Romans.<sup>8</sup> Any other individual types that could be uncovered would simply add support to my argument that the individual is a central category in Paul's thought, and that he has a wide variety of ways of expressing this fact. The reader will also note that several parts of Romans (specifically chapters 1, 6 and 9-11) receive little treatment in this or the next chapter. It should be borne in mind, however, that I am offering a typology rather than providing an exhaustive, linear exegesis of Romans. It should not be assumed that I think these chapters unimportant, but simply that I believe the typology

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Max Weber's "ideal types" in e.g., Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (eds. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1949), 89-99, 110-12.

<sup>8</sup> In the conclusion I will point to other texts that could be used to fill my typology out, although without adding new *kinds* of individuals into the discussion.

presented here is sufficient to capture—if not *all*—at least the most important ways Paul thinks of individuals in Romans. The reason for choosing to focus on Romans is simple: the major debates pitting individuals versus community in Pauline theology by and large arise out of competing readings of this letter.

As we have seen in looking at the writings of Epictetus, there is no inherent tension in the ancient world in positing the importance of the individual as well as the importance of the individual's social location. Epictetus attaches supreme importance to the idea that the individual must be unconstrained by external circumstances (including community) in order to be a flourishing human being. In this regard he is at a considerable remove from Paul, who insists on the *absolute necessity* of the individual being bound up within community. Nonetheless, Epictetus' discourses make it clear that it is by no means anachronistic to speak of individuals in the first-century, nor of a strong sense of individualism tempered by sociality.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, he is an excellent conversation partner for Paul, both because he addresses an issue of obvious importance to the apostle, and because the way in which he handles it (highlighting a kind of necessarily *isolated* individualism) brings the priorities of Pauline theology (with its necessarily *communal* form of individualism) into sharp relief.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Characteristic Individual and the Generic Individual (Romans 2)

With each individual in this typology I will provide an initial and tentative definition that will be filled out as the exegesis progresses. The *characteristic* individual is a typical individual, a figure who represents a kind of action, or a possible response to Paul's proclamation. It is a rhetorical tool Paul uses to make certain points about his gospel. The *generic* individual, on the other hand, is an

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<sup>9</sup> Epictetus largely focuses on what will be termed below the *generic* individual (the individual guarding his or her volition from external compulsion). The generic individual in fact is at the heart of his discourses. His unrelenting focus on the generic individual, who can be perfectly happy apart from all social interaction, is at odds in a foundational way with Paul's understanding of the individual, who, as we will see in this and the next chapter, must always be understood as communally situated.

<sup>10</sup> Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 177 (cf. 175–89), is right to insist—against some New Testament scholars—that “there is no sustainable reason . . . to suspect that the Stoics were only vaguely interested in social matters or that their interest was only on the surface.” Yet, this does not change the fact that for Epictetus (and other Stoics) social relations are not *necessary* for one to be virtuous and happy. Only insofar as one is already embedded in such relationships does a proper regard for others become important; and this is only true because one's own self-preservation and honor is at stake in how one relates to others. The fact remains, however, that these social relationships are not indispensably necessary for Epictetus in the way they are for Paul.

individual before the face of God, an individual who is neither a Jew nor a Greek, nor anything else, but simply a human being. In other words, the generic individual is one whose *only* distinguishing marker of identity is his or her humanity shared in common with every other individual in the world.

## 2.1 The Characteristic Individual, or the Judging Judge (Romans 2:1-5, 17-25)

The characteristic individual makes its appearance in Rom 2:1 as Paul comes rhetorically face to face with the human being (ἄνθρωπος), specifically with “every human who judges” (πᾶς ὁ κρίνων). As is now widely recognized, in 2:1 Paul shifts to a type of argumentation that fits the basic contours of the diatribe style.<sup>11</sup> As such, the individual judge Paul addresses is not a concrete individual,<sup>12</sup> but instead represents a hypothetical interlocutor. This individual is introduced not because Paul necessarily expects to find such a person among his audience in Rome, but in order for Paul to make a point about his gospel.

Besides recognizing the basically diatribal nature of 2:1, recent scholarship has focused largely on one facet of the judge’s identity: whether or not the judge is to be identified with the Jewish interlocutor in 2:17.<sup>13</sup> Despite the protestations of some scholars, there seems to be no way of evading the simple fact that the singular “you” (σύ) of 2:17 cannot refer back to anything other than the singular person who judges (2:1: ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων) in 2:1-5. No other person is directly addressed in the intervening verses. Whereas Rom 2:17 refers to the singular Ἰουδαῖος with no introduction, and thus to someone the audience is already familiar with, 2:1 not only addresses someone in the second person singular, but also provides an introductory appellation that is carried over in 2:17.<sup>14</sup>

While determining the identity of the judge is important, more important is attending to the *function* of the characteristic individual (ἄνθρωπος) in this section of the text. Whereas in Rom 1:18-32 Paul speaks primarily in terms of a collective

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<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 193, n. 1; 196, n. 17; Stowers, *Rereading*, 100-104, 144-49; see also 16-21; Stanley E. Porter, “The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?” *JBL* 110 (1991): 656-61. Although I believe Stowers wrongly splits the diatribal disputant of 2:1 and 2:17 in half, the first half becoming a Gentile, the second a Jew.

<sup>12</sup> Rightly Stowers, *Rereading*, 101-2.

<sup>13</sup> On this debate see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* (ConBNT 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 159-231.

<sup>14</sup> Rightly Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 197-99 (see also the other scholars listed on 197, n. 11); James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 108; *contra* Stowers, *Rereading*, 101-4. Thorsteinsson (e.g., *Paul’s Interlocutor*, 199) is correct to see that Rom 2:1 and 2:17 refer to the same person, but I believe wrong to take both as referring to the same *Gentile* interlocutor.

humanity engaged in a cooperative revolt against divine rule,<sup>15</sup> 2:1 shifts to a pointedly individual frame of reference. Here, the judge, who characterizes a specific, individual disposition, is one who sits in lofty judgment upon the unrestrained wickedness of the previously described sinners in 1:18-32. However, this judgmental judge is also condemned because he too practices the very things he rails against in others (2:1-2).<sup>16</sup> As a character type, or “encoded explicit reader” (to use Stanley Stowers’ language), he provides a negative example for Paul’s actual audience to avoid. In other words, the judge is the foil for the type of individual Paul seeks to shape (the “encoded implicit reader”) through the implicit exhortations he puts forward in this section, including the censure of hypocrisy (2:1-3) and the condemnation of the various, typically Gentile vices (2:21-23) that the judge himself has fallen into.<sup>17</sup> The individual form of address, while not referring to a “real” individual, is nonetheless significant because it places Paul’s whole argument in Romans 2 on the plane of individual ethical action. Paul’s gospel demands a response from every individual it confronts, the characteristic individual being one of the central types of individuals Paul envisions needing to hear his message.

In order to understand the parenetic import of the judging judge two functions must be attended to. First, the judge serves to begin laying the groundwork for Paul’s claim in 3:19 that every single person (lit. “every mouth” [πᾶν στόμα]) in the world, whether Jew or Gentile, will be held accountable to God for transgressing his law.<sup>18</sup> Paul uses the Jewish judge to show, through his

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<sup>15</sup> However, the common scholarly appeal to the second person plural as if it alone proves that a certain passage in the NT is *exclusively* communal is significantly misleading, on which see Gerald W. Peterman, “Plural You: On the Use and Abuse of the Second Person,” *BBR* 20 (2010): 183-96. Just one example from Romans 2 clearly highlights the rightness of Peterman’s argument: in Rom 2:6 Paul argues that God will repay every individual person (ἕκαστος) according to his or her works, although when he goes on in the next clause (2:7-8) to show how this will be worked out, he shifts to speaking in the plural of those individuals who are to be recompensed by God, either positively or negatively. He then finally returns to the singular to describe these same people in 2:9. If one wishes to emphasize the collective features of a text, this must be based on a variety of contextual features, and not simply argued from the presence of second person plural verbs, pronouns, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 548.

<sup>17</sup> On encoded implicit and explicit readers see Stowers, *Rereading*, 21; cf. Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (SNTSMS 105; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 149. Whether or not one adopts Stowers’ terminology, his point is valid and helpful: there are three kinds of readers of Romans: those who actually received the letter (the empirical readers), those addressed explicitly in the text whether or not they are real or rhetorical (encoded explicit readers), and those implicitly addressed (the encoded implicit readers; i.e. the ideal readers who respond to Paul’s letter in exactly the way he intends).

<sup>18</sup> While ἐν τῷ νόμῳ may refer only to Jews (which would be in line with Paul’s normal way of speaking of Jews and the “sphere” of the law; cf. e.g., Rom 2:12, 14; 4:14, 16; 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 4:5; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 204-6; Dunn, *Romans*

hypocrisy, that Jews who do not keep God's law are just as guilty as the Gentiles, who by common Jewish knowledge, are known to be law-breakers (2:2). Contrary to this judge's supposition, the judgment of God is impartial and will be unveiled against *all* law-breakers (2:3-5).<sup>19</sup>

Second, the judge's hypocrisy makes it clear that there is no soteriological privilege, even for the Jew, in light of the fact that the Jewish judge, just like the mass of common humanity, has been caught in overt rebellion against God's law. He is not more culpable than others,<sup>20</sup> but he is not less culpable either.<sup>21</sup> For that matter, the judge's Jewishness is not the point; his *hypocrisy* is.<sup>22</sup> Stowers' polemic against the way "Romans has been abstracted, generalized, and individualized by interpreters" in order to mount "an attack on 'the typical Jew'" seems to assume that an individualizing reading of this passage necessarily entails taking the Jewish judge as a representative of Judaism in and of itself. This is not the case at all:<sup>23</sup> the Jewishness of the judge is brought into the argument precisely in order to show that the Jew and the Gentile are all together in the same plight, that those Jews who hypocritically condemn Gentiles have no soteriological safe haven, since all law-breakers will be judged in the same way as the disobedient Gentiles described in 1:18-32.

With the flood of research on the Jewishness of Paul in the latter half of the twentieth-century objections have increasingly been raised by scholars to the notion that Paul rejects his Jewish covenantal heritage in his letters.<sup>24</sup> Such arguments often rightly point to passages in which Paul speaks highly of the covenantal blessings of Judaism such as Rom 3:1-2; 7:12 and 9:4-5 (cf. Rom 1:16; 2:17-

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1-8, 152), the main point of Rom 3:19 is nonetheless to speak of the universal plight of humanity with reference to the law's condemnation.

<sup>19</sup> On the eschatological nature of judgment in Rom 2:5, 12-13, 16, see Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1.18-3.20* (WUNT 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 148.

<sup>20</sup> Rightly Stowers, *Rereading*, 143-44. It is, however, unnecessary to argue that the interlocutor in 2:1 is a Gentile in order to show that the Jew is made out by Paul to be a sharer in the common plight of humanity (*pace* *ibid.*, 149; Oda Wischmeyer, "Römer 2.1-24 als Teil der Gerichtsrede des Paulus gegen die Menschheit," *NTS* 52 [2006]: 365, 372). The fact that the judge of 2:1 condemns the sins of 1:18-32 while practicing them himself is sufficient to show this.

<sup>21</sup> Rightly Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 270-1, n. 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Pace* Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT; Zürich/Neukirchen: Benziger, 1980), 1.121.

<sup>23</sup> Rightly Campbell, *Deliverance*, 559-60, although for different reasons than mine.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g., *mutatis mutandis* Dunn, "New Perspective," 103-5; Wright, *Fresh Perspectives*, 3-4, 108-29; Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 236-47; Stowers, *Rereading*, 149-50; William S. Campbell, "Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter," *NovT* 23 (1981): 37-40.

20, 25; 11:13-16, 28-29; 15:8-12). However, while there are indeed many covenantal privileges enumerated in passages such as these, in none of them is there a notion of *soteriological* privilege, of the idea that the covenant somehow grants Israel immunity from the impartiality of divine judgment.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely this kind of privilege that the argument throughout Rom 2:1-3:20 subverts, with 2:1-29 specifically targeting the judge's hypocrisy, which is symptomatic of the fact that, in the final analysis, the Jew is simply a human, an individual, ὁ ἄνθρωπος, and as such will face judgment on the same terms as the Gentiles of 1:18-32.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2 To Each His Own: the Judgment and Justification of the Generic Individual (Romans 2:6-16)

In order to explain in more detail the outcome of the judge's unrepentant hardness of heart (2:5) Paul shifts into a nonspecific mode of individual address in 2:6. Here we are introduced to the generic individual.<sup>27</sup>

It is appropriate that Paul cites a maxim of biblical wisdom (found almost verbatim in LXX Ps 61:13 and Prov 24:12) to introduce the generic individual into his argument in chapter 2, enumerating as this maxim does a “timeless” or generalized insight about the grounds of God's judgment of humanity.<sup>28</sup> According to this principle of divine justice, God will pay back (ἀποδίδωμι) each individual person (ἕκαστος) according (κατά) to his or her works.<sup>29</sup> In light of the fact that judgment will be rendered according to human works, and contrary to the covenant presumption of the judgmental judge, there are only two classes of people in the

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.127. I thus agree with Campbell, *Deliverance*, 552 (emphasis original), that for Paul “once it has been conceded that final, eschatological judgment will be in accordance with desert, then by definition *no other considerations are relevant*.”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Wischmeyer, “Römer 2.1-24,” 361.

<sup>27</sup> Or *re-introduced* as far as the flow of the letter is concerned (see Rom 1:16).

<sup>28</sup> Romans 2:6: ὃς ἀποδώσει ἕκαστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ; Ps 61:13b LXX (62:13 MT): σὺ (= κύριε) ἀποδώσεις ἕκαστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ; Prov 24:12e: ὃς ἀποδίδωσιν ἕκαστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. Cf. Peter Spitaler, “An Integrative, Synergistic Reading of Romans 1-3,” *BibInt* 19 (2011): 45; Yinger, *Judgment*, 157; Ernst Synofzik, *Die Gerichts- und Vergeltungsaussagen bei Paulus: eine traditionsgegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (GTA 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 80. For early Jewish and Christian appropriation of this kind of language of judgment, which alternates between individual and plural recipients, see Roman Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen. Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung der menschlichen Taten im Frühjudentum, Neuen Testament und Frühchristentum* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 172-75.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, “Romans,” 438, recognizes that “individuals being shown up as sinners . . . is indeed one element in Paul's argument,” but subordinates this motif to the larger theme of God's “setting the whole world to rights” through “Jesus the Messiah.” The broader theme that Wright draws attention to may indeed have a role to play in Romans (one thinks particularly of Rom 8:18-25 and 11:11-36), but does not seem especially germane to Paul's discussion of individuals and judgment in Romans 2.

world, but not the two classes the judge expects (i.e., righteous Jews and unrighteous Gentiles): those who patiently and righteously pursue eternal life (2:7), and those who selfishly disobey the truth (2:8). In speaking of works (ἔργα) in 2:6 Paul has no thought of distinctively Jewish practices; these are simply works done by humanity, whether good or bad, whether done by Gentiles or Jews. Divine impartiality, as manifested in an unbiased reckoning according to the goodness or badness of one's actions or works, obliterates covenant privilege, at least soteriologically speaking. In so doing, divine justice affects a re-categorization of humanity, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but simply the generic human, or ἄνθρωπος.<sup>30</sup> This is what it means for God to show no partiality (προσωποληψία).<sup>31</sup>

In 2:12-16 Paul elaborates upon the implications of this new classification of humanity: one's *relationship* with Torah is irrelevant (2:12); one's righteousness comes from doing what the law commands rather than simply being within the sphere of the law's governance (being a mere hearer [ἄκροατής] of the law; 2:13).<sup>32</sup> Law-keeping is held out as an equal possibility for both the Jew and the Gentile even though "Gentiles . . . do not have the law by nature" (ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει).<sup>33</sup> In 2:16 Paul closes his discussion of the generic individual begun in 2:6 by making it explicit that the rendering according to works described throughout this section will take place at the eschatological judgment, "on the day when God, through Christ Jesus, judges the secrets of all according to my gospel" (2:16).

What does all of this have to do with the question of individuals and community? First, as we have just seen, the relativization of Jewish covenant privilege places individuals *as individuals* before the bar of divine justice. Whereas the mention of God's wrath being stored up for the characteristic, judging individual in 2:1-5 places Jews and Gentiles alike into the category of sinners, Paul's

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jonathan A. Linebaugh, "Announcing the Human: Rethinking the Relationship Between Wisdom of Solomon 13-15 and Romans 1.18-2.11," *NTS* 57 (2011): 220; cf. 233. Linebaugh speaks of the "generic individual" in Rom 2:1, but I believe this designation is more appropriate for the kind of individual described beginning in Rom 2:6. The specific terminology is not the most important thing: what matters is capturing the way in which Paul, in this section of Romans, uses universally applicable, individually-centered language to press home his claim that every individual is accountable to God on the basis of individual action (cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 204; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 141).

<sup>31</sup> The statement οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ is explanatory of what precedes it (note the γάρ).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Yinger, *Judgment*, 149.

<sup>33</sup> I follow Simon Gathercole, "A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2.14-15 Revisited," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 35-37, in taking φύσει to modify ἔθνη, for among other reasons, that φύσει in Paul is everywhere else a marker of identity, rather than action.



purpose in shifting in 2:6 to speak of a generic individual is to individualize and personalize the nature of the coming assize of God. Before the all-seeing eye of divine justice the individual stands before God simply as an individual, unable to hide behind the various collectivities and solidarities of the world.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the personalizing of God's justice seen in 2:6-16 has important implications for Paul's understanding of justification. If it is true that God will judge every single person (ἕκαστος - 2:6) simply according to the criterion of works (and irrespective of covenant status), then justification too is a matter of pointedly individual concern. Paul's argument in 2:6-16 revolves around this connection between individual judgment and individual justification. It makes no sense to suggest that Paul shifts from speaking of the individual in 2:6 to speaking of justification in exclusively, or even primarily, communal terms in 2:13. This would destroy the logic of Paul's argument: justification being granted "to the doers of the law" (2:13) *means* that judgment is rendered according to the works of the individual (2:6). In fact, despite the claims of those such as N. T. Wright that "there is no such thing as an 'individual' Christian" since "Paul's gospel created a community" and "his doctrine of justification sustained it,"<sup>35</sup> it is highly significant that Paul's first direct mention of justification in the letter speaks *simply of the justification of the generic, "timeless" individual*. The corporate and covenantal ramifications of justification become apparent as Paul's argument develops (particularly beginning in 2:25, and continuing throughout Romans 3), but in Romans 2 Paul can refer to judgment and justification in a strongly individualizing manner without any reference to community (either its creation or maintenance).

In sum, the logic of Paul's argument in 2:6-16 can be paraphrased like this: God will judge every individual according to works, whether good or bad, making no distinction between Jews or Gentiles according to covenant status (2:6-12); thus, justification is based on obedience to Torah, and will be parcelled out impartially to each individual on the eschatological day of divine reckoning (2:13-16).<sup>36</sup> While

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<sup>34</sup> This, then, is the main (perhaps *only*) place in Romans where Burnett's talk of the "individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity" (Burnett, *Salvation*, 10) is appropriate. Such language, however, is *highly* problematic if used indiscriminately in speaking of Paul's thought more broadly.

<sup>35</sup> Wright, *Saint Paul*, 197; cf. idem, *Fresh Perspectives*, 120; Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 142.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5, where Paul warns the Corinthians not to judge others in the church "before the time," that is, before the final judgment ("before the Lord comes"). On that day praise

there are communal implications in this section of text, they are almost entirely negative in the form of Paul's argument to eliminate communal soteriological privilege.<sup>37</sup>

Importantly, the generic individual in 2:6-16 is more immediately relevant to the real individuals that Paul is attempting to reach (and transform) with his letter than is the characteristic individual of 2:1-5, 17-25. This is seen in the fact that Rom 2:1-5 addresses in general terms a problem Paul feels is important enough to deal with in the exposition of his gospel, even though the characteristic Jewish judge may or may not be assumed to be present in Paul's actual audience. In fact, his possible presence or absence is largely irrelevant to Paul's intention in bringing him into his argument; the successful functioning of the hypocritical judge—rhetorically speaking—is brought about in and through the characterization of the judge and the implicit paraenesis that is meant to be read off of the negative example he provides. All of this focuses Paul's exhortation firmly on individuals.<sup>38</sup>

With the generic individual of 2:6-16, however, Paul has shifted to describe the fate that awaits *actual* individuals, even though he is of course speaking here in generalizing terms. The shift to a generic description of individuals and divine judgment is intended to bring this out: the impartiality of divine judgment places each and every human being on the same soteriological plane. Paul speaks of the judgment that awaits every single individual in the world in order to remove the last hope of the hypocritical judge to evade the implications of the human plunge into sin and depravity described in more universal terms in 1:18-32. In other words, there may have seemed to be room to hide in that passage's collectively oriented descriptions of human depravity, but with 2:6-16 the possibility of hiding beneath

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(ἕκαστος) will be given to "each individual from God" (ἐκάστῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ). Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 4-8, cf. 144, importantly argues that divine impartiality is manifested in the single way of justification, rather than the single way of justification being derived from an abstract principle of divine impartiality (pace Jouette M. Bassler, "Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *NovT* 26 [1984]: 43-58). I would only add that the one way of justification flows directly from the fact that judgment comes to each individual as an individual, with the result that justification does as well, even as it also reshapes the boundaries of the people of God.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 552-53; Synofzik, *Gerichts*, 80-1. Thus, Donaldson's (*Gentiles*, 161-62) contention that Paul's understanding of the human predicament "arises not from any basic conviction concerning humankind as an undifferentiated whole but from a conviction that the community of salvation is to be determined by the boundary marker of faith in Christ" cannot make sense of Paul's argument in Romans 2. It is precisely such a "basic conviction concerning humankind as an undifferentiated whole" that we see at work in Rom 2:6-13: because God will one day judge every individual according to works, there is no divine partiality, with the result that before God each and every human being is simply *human* (rightly Wischmeyer, "Römer 2.1-24," 373-76).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Yinger, *Judgment*, 163.

the camouflage of covenant solidarity disappears completely.<sup>39</sup> Every “einzelne Mensch” will stand before God’s eschatological judgment simply as a “verantwortliches Individuum.”<sup>40</sup> One’s present response to God as such an individual is determinative of that future verdict.<sup>41</sup>

Communally-centered challenges to a position such as the one I have just articulated are certainly not lacking. Calvin Roetzel, for example, while admitting that Paul “is not unmindful of the individual believer,” strongly contends that “Paul’s emphasis falls on the corporate aspects of judgment.”<sup>42</sup> This, then, also contributes to Roetzel’s downplaying of the importance of individual justification in Paul, since the problems of individual sin and judgment have largely fallen out of the picture. Such a line of reasoning, however, simply cannot do justice to the pronounced individual language in Rom 2:6-11, and to its implications for justification. Somewhat inexplicably, there are only two sentences in Roetzel’s entire book discussing Rom 2:6-11, and these are found on a page where Roetzel reaffirms that “wrathful judgment is corporate” in Paul rather than individual.<sup>43</sup> In

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<sup>39</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, “The Narrative of Scripture and Justification by Faith,” *CTQ* 72 (2008): 43-44. Cf. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; 6th ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 63: “Here again the Jew and the Greek, the men of God and the men of the world, are assembled together on one line under the threat of judgement.”

<sup>40</sup> Wischmeyer, “Römer 2.1-24,” 375.

<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that Paul *ultimately* envisions that anyone will be justified by works, which I along with many others (see the list of scholars in Spitaler, “Romans 1-3,” 44, n. 20; Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006], 215, n. 137; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 134, n. 11) take to be hypothetical, or as Moo (*Romans*, 86) better phrases it, “theoretical.” While many scholars (see e.g., Spitaler, “Romans 1-3,” 45-48; VanLandingham, *Justification*, 215-32; Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace - to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *NTS* 32 [1986]: 72-93) have recently balked at the idea that Paul could be describing an unattainable justification by works in Rom 2:6-16, this is actually quite similar to Rom 10:5-13, where Paul mentions the possibility of receiving righteousness through law-keeping (10:5) only to immediately exclude that possibility in reality (Rom 10:6-13; cf. Gal 3:10-14; Phil 3:9; Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 272, 326-30; Synofzik, *Gerichts*, 81). Those who argue for an *actual* justification by works (future or not) have not attended sufficiently to the way in which Paul closes this possibility off in Rom 3:9-20 (cf. Rom 4:5; and see Otfried Hofius, “Werke des Gesetzes”: Untersuchungen zu der paulinischen Rede von den ἔργα νόμου,” in *Paulus und Johannes: Exegetische Studien zur paulinischen und johanneischen Theologie und Literatur* [eds. D. Sanger and U. Mell; WUNT 198; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 290-91; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 162, 250-56; see also Wischmeyer, “Römer 2.1-24,” 361; G. P. Carras, “Romans 2, 1-29: A Dialogue on Jewish Ideals,” *Bib* 73 [1992]: 185, on the need to read Rom 2:12-16 in light of all of 1:18-3:20).

<sup>42</sup> Calvin J. Roetzel, *Judgement in the Community: A Study of the Relationship between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 178 (cf. 79-80, 90, 100-1, 107, 176).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

light of what has been argued above, Roetzel's failure to figure Rom 2:6-11 into his overall argument is a problematic omission, to say the least.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.3 Invisible Cutting and Impotent Commands: Heart Surgery and the Generic Individual (Rom 2:25-29)

In Rom 2:25-29, Paul again brings together both the characteristic and generic individuals. Romans 2:25 consists in Paul's rebuke of the Jewish judge in light of the judge's hypocritical law-breaking described in 2:21-24: circumcision (and thus covenant privilege) "is of benefit if you do [πράσσω] what the law says," but not if you transgress it.<sup>45</sup> In 2:26, Paul shifts back to generic individual address to make the exhortative implications of all that has preceded in chapter 2 more explicit: the uncircumcised individual (ἡ ἀκροβυστία) who keeps (φυλάσσω) the righteous stipulations of the law (τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου) is the one who is pleasing to God, who is considered (λογίζομαι) by God to be one of his people, a *truly* circumcised individual. In 2:28 Paul further critiques the judge's hypocrisy—again speaking of a generic individual—with an even more markedly individualizing comment: to be a Jew truly, that is, to be a member of God's people, is not a matter of an outward circumcision of the flesh (ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή - 2:28), but of a circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit (περιτομή καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι - 2:29). Only a person who has been circumcised in this manner is inwardly a Jew (ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος) who will receive praise from God (ὁ ἔπαινος . . . ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>46</sup>

The individual implications of the language of Rom 2:28-29 are strongly reinforced in 2:29 when Paul indicates that the location of spiritual circumcision is the human heart.<sup>47</sup> Put simply, there is no collective heart in Paul (or the rest of the

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<sup>44</sup> Like many other scholars, much of Roetzel's argumentation is based on an equation of communal language (i.e., second person plurals) with wholly (or nearly so) corporate concerns (see e.g., *ibid.*, 84), an equation that has been effectively challenged by Peterman, "Plural You," 183-96.

<sup>45</sup> Romans 2:25: Περιτομή μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης· ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖ, ἡ περιτομή σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν.

<sup>46</sup> See Simon Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 206-7. Paul also makes use of an inner/outer contrast in a few other places in his letters (Rom 7:22-23; 2 Cor 4:16; cf. Eph 3:16), a contrast that focuses on inner renewal and the locus of individual moral action as opposed to outward characteristics and physicality.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 2:15 and 2:29 almost certainly both allude to LXX Jer 38:33, and if so, this fact highlights the individual focus of Rom 2:29 all the more. In LXX Jer 38:33 (ESV) God's promise to Israel is that "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be my people" (δίδους δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς καὶ ἔσονται αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν). The creation of a renewed and cleansed people of God in this passage in Jeremiah, then, is enacted in the

New Testament for that matter); καρδία in Paul's letters *without exception* indicates an internal and, thus, individual human focus.<sup>48</sup> Although John Barclay is correct to note that the meaning of heart-circumcision in the Old Testament and in Paul centers on the issue of "obedient response to God,"<sup>49</sup> this fact should not be taken as militating against a focus on interiority in Rom 2:29,<sup>50</sup> since Paul explicitly speaks here of heart-circumcision as an "inward" (κρυπτός) action. Although Paul's use of κρυπτός does not entail an inwardness in a Platonic sense (soul vs. body),<sup>51</sup> it does entail inwardness in the sense of being directed toward a divine transformation of individual volition leading to obedience, in distinction from an outward transformation in the sense of a physical change to the body. A focus on the inner seat of emotion and ethical action in the human person does not require one to import Platonic dualities into Paul's anthropology. As Herman Ridderbos puts it: for Paul there is no "dualistic man consisting of two 'parts,' or of a more or less 'real' or 'essential' part of man . . . Rather . . . man does not only 'have' an outward and inward side, but is as man both 'outward' and 'inward,' exists both in the one way and in the other."<sup>52</sup> Heart-circumcision pertains to the latter of these aspects of human existence, and is as such centered on individual, inner, ethical action.

Paul, then, can define the very essence of what it means to be a member of the true covenant community by referring to the inner and personal operation of the Spirit on the hearts of individuals. As such, it is misleading to suggest that other (admittedly important) issues (e.g., about the scope of the people of God, etc.) eliminate—or even subordinate—questions about the place of individuals within that people.

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deposit of Torah within, and the transcription of Torah on, the hearts of each *individual* Israelite (cf. ἑκάστος in LXX Jer 38:34). For further defense of the claim that Rom 2:15 and 2:29 allude to LXX Jer 38:33 see Gathercole, "Romans 2.14-15," 41-43.

<sup>48</sup> The heart (καρδία) metaphor is employed with great frequency by Paul (following frequent Semitic usage of the same type; see e.g., Deut 28:19; 1 Sam 16:7; Jer 31:33 [LXX 38:33]; Zech 7:10) to speak of emotions, desires, agency, etc., which are inner and personal, often as opposed to that which is outward and external. See e.g., Rom 2:5, 15; 5:5; 6:17; 8:27; 9:2; 10:1, 6, 8, 9, 10; 16:18; 1 Cor 2:9; 4:5; 7:37; 14:25; 2 Cor 1:22; 2:4; 3:2, 3, 15; 4:6; 5:12; 6:11; 7:3; 8:16; 9:7; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:7; 4:7; Col 2:2; 3:15, 16, 22; 4:8; 1 Thess 2:4; 2:17; 3:13; cf. Eph 1:18; 3:17; 4:18; 5:19; 6:5, 22; 2 Thess 2:17; 3:5; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22. All of the standard dictionaries make the inner focus of biblical heart language abundantly clear (see e.g., F. Baumgärtel, J. Behm, "καρδία," TDNT 3:605-13).

<sup>49</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Romans 2.25-9 in Social and Cultural Context," *NTS* 44 (1998): 551-52.

<sup>50</sup> *Pace* *ibid.*, 554.

<sup>51</sup> *Contra* Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 93-95.

<sup>52</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard De Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 115 (cf. 119-20, 227).

### 3. The Generic Individual (Romans 3)

#### 3.1 The Law's Condemning Speech: Universal and Particular (Romans 3:9-20)

In order to substantiate his claim that both Jews and Greeks are equally under the power of sin, Paul strings together a list of biblical citations, taken from the Psalms and Isaiah.<sup>53</sup> As with the allusion to LXX Ps 61:13 and Prov 24:12 in Rom 2:6, in Rom 3:10-18 Paul again generalizes the human condition by citing several sapiential maxims from OT texts that speak of a generic individual. With this chain of scriptural references Paul eliminates any remaining hope in the mind of his interlocutor that righteousness can be found simply by inclusion within the covenant community: “no one is righteous” (οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος), “no one understands” (οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ συνίων), “no one seeks God” (οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν), “all have turned aside together and become worthless” (πάντες ἐξέκλιναν ἅμα ἠχρεώθησαν), “no one does what is right” (οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα), “not a single one” ([οὐκ ἔστιν] ἕως ἑνός).

The reference to the generic individual is unmistakably central in this catena: in light of the ubiquity of human sin, every individual stands alone as an individual before the bar of divine justice. In 3:10-12 every single phrase is a scriptural citation that speaks of individuals and individual action, with the exception of 3:12a, which notes that “all [πάντες] have turned aside together and become worthless.” This one plural form makes it clear that side by side Paul both individualizes and universalizes. There is no tension in this move: taken together, Paul’s scripturally-based description of individual, sinful responses to God (in 3:10-12) gives him warrant to speak of the entirety of humanity in its collective “worthlessness” (3:12). The collective human rebellion against God is the aggregate of every individual act of revolt, rather than some sort of amorphous conglomeration that erases individual volition and personality. There are communally significant overtones in this section of Romans, but, as with 2:6-16, they are almost entirely negative in that the community here described is simply a

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<sup>53</sup> Psalms 14:1-3 (13:1 LXX) and 53:1-3 (52:1 LXX) in Rom 3:10-12; Pss 5:9 (5:10 LXX) and 140:3 (139:4 LXX) in Rom 3:13; Ps 10:7 (9:28 LXX) in Rom 3:14; Isa 59:7-8 in Rom 3:15-17; and Ps 36:1 (35:1 LXX) in Rom 3:18.

community of the unrighteous.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the generic individual is a completely negative example of unrighteous rebellion in this section of the letter.

Furthermore, although Paul speaks in 3:10-12 of the generic individual (or more accurately, of a variety of generic individuals), he shifts to speaking in the plural in 3:13-18. However, there is no indication that Paul has begun to speak of anyone other than the aggregate of generic individuals mentioned in 3:10-12, who all together have turned away from God in disobedience and who thus substantiate Paul's point that Jews and Greeks are equally under sin (3:9).

In 3:19-20, Paul's argument reaches a major point of summary and transition.<sup>55</sup> Essentially the whole narrative of human sin and hypocrisy (encompassing Jews and Gentiles) that Paul began in 1:18 is summarized in 3:19: the law, even though given as the covenant charter of Israel, speaks its word of command and rebuke to everyone who is under the law, which, as the second half of 3:19 makes clear, includes "every mouth" (πᾶν στόμα) and "the whole world" (πᾶς ὁ κόσμος). In other words, the law makes the whole world, that is, each and every individual in the world, answerable (ὑπόδικος) to God's inscrutable reckoning.<sup>56</sup> It is for this reason that "all flesh" (πᾶσα σὰρξ) will not be justified by works of the law (3:20). While the universality of this statement is important (it indeed includes all of humanity within its scope), it is invalid to suggest that this universality swallows the individualizing particularity of πᾶν στόμα in 3:19.

In 3:19-20, then, the individualization and universalization of sin in 3:10-18 comes to a head with the corresponding individualization and universalization of guilt and judgment, even as these two verses point ahead to Paul's positive statement of the path to justification (of the generic individual).

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<sup>54</sup> Although the fact that there is a single and universal community of the unrighteous paves the way for Paul's talk of a single and universal way of justification, and thus of a single and universal (comprising Jew and Gentile) community of the saved later in the letter.

<sup>55</sup> On which, see Wischmeyer, "Römer 2.1-24," 364.

<sup>56</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 258, in commenting on the increasingly popular scholarly argument that Paul never speaks of "universal sin," (see e.g., the scholars listed in Yinger, *Judgment*, 150, n. 28) rightly concludes that Paul does indeed "make precisely this case and he does so effectively" (cf. Wischmeyer, "Römer 2.1-24," 369, 375; Wright, "Romans," 456-58, 63; Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 151-52; and esp. Stowers, *Rereading*, 112; contra Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* [WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983], 99) even though Jewett does not find Paul's logic compelling.

### 3.2 The Generic Individual: Faith and Fame (Romans 3:20-31)

Having established that God will judge each individual impartially according to works (2:6-16), and that all of humanity (each and every individual) is indeed under condemnation for sin (3:9), and in this way made answerable to God through the law (3:19), Paul programmatically announces the consequences of all of this in 3:20: because of the universal condemnation the law pronounces over a guilty world, it is therefore (διότι) the case that no one (lit. “all flesh [πᾶσα σὰρξ] will not . . .”) will be justified before God by works of the law, because (γάρ) the law can only declare sin to be sin, without being able to provide sin’s remedy. If works of the law cannot justify a person, what can? Answering this question occupies Paul in 3:21-31.

In 3:21 Paul emphatically (νυνὶ δέ) contrasts justification by works of the law (3:20) with the righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) that has appeared apart from the law (χωρὶς νόμου). This righteousness, Paul says, comes through the “faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe.”<sup>57</sup> Just as there is no partiality (προσωποληψία - 2:11) on God’s part, seen in his judgement of every individual on the same terms (2:6-16), so also God does not show favor to Jews or Gentiles in justification: there is only one way of receiving the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ and it is διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

As is well known, the meaning of both of these phrases is highly contested in recent scholarship. These debates have important bearings on the issue of the individual in Pauline thought.<sup>58</sup> Particularly common in recent decades has been the dismissal of the notion that Paul is speaking in 3:22 (as well as Phil 3:9; Gal 2:16; 3:22) of individuals believing in Christ and being justified as a result.<sup>59</sup> It is not difficult to understand why such debates have developed, especially given the compressed nature of the references to πίστις in 3:22<sup>60</sup> (and the similarly compressed nature of the connection between faith and righteousness in 1:16-17<sup>61</sup>), but even opponents of

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<sup>57</sup> Gk: δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας.

<sup>58</sup> On debates over δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ see the literature cited throughout Jewett, *Romans*, 141-48. On πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (and variants) see the survey of positions in Debbie Hunn, “Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 15-31; Matthew C. Easter, “The Pistis Christou Debate: Main Arguments and Responses in Summary,” *CBR* 9 (2010): 33-47.

<sup>59</sup> On these debates see Dunson, “Faith,” 19-23.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 244, who speaks of the “relationship between ‘faith’ and ‘Jesus [Christ]’” in 3:21-22 as being “relatively undefined.”

<sup>61</sup> Which Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 72, calls “brief, cryptic Pauline formulations.”



an “anthropological” understanding of faith and righteousness in 3:22 must admit that the phrase that qualifies διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, namely εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, makes at least minimal reference to individuals who exercise faith and thus receive the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (whatever this phrase means).<sup>62</sup>

However, the individual is not nearly as reticent in 3:20–31 as is commonly suggested in recent scholarship. To begin with, Paul insists in 3:26 that because God has dealt with sin through the blood of Christ (3:25), his own righteousness is upheld even as he justifies “the one who is from the faith of Jesus” (τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ).<sup>63</sup> Just as the focus of Paul’s discourse in the beginning of chapter 3 has been the sinful individual (3:10–20; see also 3:4), so now Paul speaks of the converse: the justified individual who is justified by faith. No matter what position one takes in the *pistis Christou* debates, τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ refers to the *individual* who has πίστις, although the symmetry of Paul’s plight (3:9–20) to solution (3:21–28) argumentation throughout Romans 3 points quite decidedly against a subjective genitive reading of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Rom 3:22. The *pistis Christou* debate has perhaps led to an overly hasty dismissal of the generic individual from Paul’s argumentation in 3:21–31 because interpreters have not paid sufficient attention to how prominent this individual is in the material directly preceding 3:21–31. It makes little sense for Paul to argue so extensively for the sinfulness of the generic individual, and for the consequent exclusion of justification by works of the law for this individual (3:10–20), only to speak in the next breath of the remedy for this situation (πίστις) in non-individual terms.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Cf. “The gift of righteousness” (τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης) in Rom 5:17. Many proponents of a christological understanding of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (e.g., Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 283, 292; cf. 161; Campbell, “Romans 1:17,” 277, n. 39, although cf. *ibid.*, 274–75, n. 28) recognize this, but many also greatly tone down the significance of this fact in order to highlight the supposedly non-anthropocentric meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

<sup>63</sup> This is stated directly after Paul has said that righteousness comes to *all* who believe “because there is no difference, *all* have sinned and lack the glory of God” (οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή, πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ - 3:22d–23, emphasis added), thereby continuing Paul’s pattern of setting the individual and universal dimensions of his gospel side by side, a procedure which (rather than inexplicable redundancy) accounts for Paul’s consistent practice of attaching πᾶς to πίστις and πιστεύω (on which see R. Barry Matlock, “The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9,” *JSNT* 30 [2007]: 184–87).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Matlock, “Detheologizing the πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *NovT* 42 (2000): 21; *idem*, “Rhetoric of πίστις,” 184. The individual nature of justification and faith in Rom 3:20–22 is evident from the following considerations. First, it is evident that the individual should be conceptually included in Paul’s statement that ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ (Rom 3:20) when this verse is compared with Gal 2:16a, which uses a nearly identical phrase as Rom 3:20, but which substitutes ἄνθρωπος for the πᾶσα σὰρξ found in Rom 3:20. In other words, in Gal 2:16 πᾶσα σὰρξ (2:16f) and ἄνθρωπος (2:16a), while having universal and

It is in Rom 3:21-31, in fact, that we find the most theologically significant instantiation of the generic individual in the letter so far: Paul's rhetorical question in 3:27 (which sums up 3:21-26) makes this clear: "Where then is boasting?" Paul states emphatically that boasting has been excluded, not by a "law of works" ([νόμου] τῶν ἔργων), but by a "law of faith" (νόμου πίστεως). The proof? "Because [γάρ] we consider a person [ἄνθρωπος] to be justified by faith apart from works of the law" (3:28). Justification by faith excludes all human boasting, and it does so on explicitly individual grounds: ὁ ἄνθρωπος, the generic human, cannot be justified by works of the law.<sup>65</sup>

In 3:29 Paul poses another rhetorical question, this time asking whether God is the God of Jews alone.<sup>66</sup> This too Paul emphatically rejects since the oneness of God demands that he justify both Jews and Gentiles in the same way (3:30). Despite the importance of Jews (and Israel), Gentiles and Greeks in Romans, Paul does not

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particular overtones respectively, are seen to be essentially interchangeable (cf. *ibid.*, 199). Πᾶσα σὰρξ should be understood in the same way in Rom 3:20, which is exactly identical with Gal 2:16f. Second, the individual focus of πίστις in Rom 3:22 can be substantiated by noting how Paul uses δικαιοσύνη and δικαιώω interchangeably in Gal 2:16-21 to refer to *individuals* being justified. In Gal 2:16-21 Paul writes three times of the same law-faith contrast that is present in Rom 3:20-22 using the verbal form of δικαιώω, twice with third person singular forms. The occurrence of ἄνθρωπος together with the third person singular of δικαιώω in Gal 2:16, then, makes it clear that it is an individual that is justified by faith. Combined with the conceptual inclusion of ἄνθρωπος within πᾶσα σὰρξ in Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20, it is seen that Rom 3:20-22—which makes exactly the same point about justification apart from works of the law as Gal 2:16-21—should be understood similarly (and indispensably) to include the generic individual within its scope. One could argue that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 3:22) is different since it uses the nominal δικ- form δικαιοσύνη, rather than the verbal form δικαιώω, but this also happens in Gal 2:21, which uses the nominal form δικαιοσύνη to make the same point about individual justification by faith that Paul makes in Gal 2:16-17 using the verbal form δικαιώω. No matter what else is said about it, justification by faith in Paul is the justification of the individual. Galatians 2:16 is worded as follows (with the relevant phrases bolded): εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεῦσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθείσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ. Cf. Rom 3:20: διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθείσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας.

<sup>65</sup> In Rom 4:2 Paul makes this theoretical exclusion of boasting in works concrete with the example of Abraham. As Moo, *Romans*, 246-47, rightly insists, the basis for boasting cannot be restricted to ethnic or religious markers, since any works Abraham could have done were prior to the giving of Torah to Israel.

<sup>66</sup> As Simon Gathercole, "Justified by Faith, Justified by His Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21-4:25," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (eds. P. T. O'Brien, D. A. Carson and M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 155, notes "Paul often uses ἢ with questions to get to the answer he wants to explore." See e.g., Rom 2:3-4; 6:1-4; 9:20-21; 11:34-35; 14:10; all referred to by Gathercole. Thus, Paul's question in 3:29, whether God is a God only of the Jews does not flow directly from 3:27-28 as a substantiation of his point in those two verses, but rather introduces a new question that Paul answers immediately in the same verse, and in 3:30 as well (i.e., ἢ is not an explanatory conjunction like γάρ [on which see BDF §§ 446, 452; cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 672-73]; contra James D. G. Dunn, "Paul and Justification by Faith," in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 372-73; idem, *Romans 1-8*, 188; Wright, "Romans," 482.

refer only to people groups in Rom 3:29-30, but also to the individual Jew (“the circumcised one” [περιτομή]) and non-Jew (“the uncircumcised one” [ἀκροβυστία]) (cf. Rom 2:26-29). Justification by faith, then, has an important role in the transformation of group identity in Romans, but it has an expressly individual application as well: it is precisely through the justification of the circumcised person and the uncircumcised person in the same way (by faith) that God is seen to be the God of both Jews and Gentiles. The individual and community are two distinct, yet inseparable, realms of divine redemptive action.

Thus, in 3:27-31 Paul has succinctly restated the two contentions pertaining to justification he has developed throughout 2:1-3:26: obedience to the law cannot justify any individual (3:27-28; cf. 3:9-26) and Jews have no special soteriological privilege when it comes to God’s eschatological judgment (3:29-30; cf. 2:1-3:8). The latter of these contentions is indeed important in Paul’s argument, but cannot be made (as it is by many) to represent the “fundamental problem . . . in Romans,”<sup>67</sup> since, as the discussion above has shown, the sorting out of the nature of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Christ is largely a by-product (although an important one) of the more fundamental reality of the eschatological judgment of the individual as neither a Jew nor a Gentile, but simply as ἄνθρωπος. For Paul, neither privilege nor praxis can bring justification; there is only one thing that matters: the faithfulness (or not) of the generic ἄνθρωπος, the individual *coram Deo*. Bultmann’s exegetical sensitivities are precisely on target here: “Vor Gott verschwinden alle menschlichen Differenzierungen; vor ihm steht der Jude wie der Grieche gleichermaßen als ἄνθρωπος (Rm 3, 28 f.). Menschliche Größe und menschliche Wertungen sind vor Gott nichtig.”<sup>68</sup>

#### 4. Summary: Characteristic and Generic Individuals in Romans 2-3

Romans 2-3 represents an interweaving of two individual types: the characteristic individual and the generic individual. The hypocritical judge in 2:1 is a character type, a characteristic individual, in service of Paul’s argument for the abolishment of Jewish soteriological privilege (2:1-5, 17-25; 3:1-9). The generic individual (2:6-16, 26-29; 3:10-20) is brought into this argument in order to show that in light of divine justice and impartiality, every individual will face judgement on the basis of actions

<sup>67</sup> Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 69.

<sup>68</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 227.

(obeying the law or not) rather than mere possession of the law (cf. ἕκαστος in Rom 14:12). Paul holds out hope for the generic ἄνθρωπος under the threat of the law's judgment through finding righteousness in Christ, and being justified on account of Christ's sacrifice (3:21-26), rather than by means of a law that can only condemn (3:20).<sup>69</sup> Since God is one, he justifies in one way, thus further relativizing Jewish covenantal privilege (3:27-31).<sup>70</sup>

In sum, claims for the absence—or even unimportance—of the individual in Romans 2-3 must be deemed a failure. Without attending to the ways in which Paul uses the characteristic and generic individual “types” in Romans 2-3, his argumentation cannot be properly grasped, nor his central theological motifs fully apprehended. Most importantly, both the characteristic individual and the generic individual make clear that individual action is indispensable to Paul's explication of the gospel; sin, judgment, faith, justification and salvation are all individual actions. No communal themes, however important, should be allowed to obscure this fact.

Yet there *are* important communal implications to be seen in Romans 2-3. The use to which Paul puts both the characteristic and the generic individual in these chapters has highlighted the fact that Paul speaks of sin, faith and justification in strongly individual terms because of the way he relates the final judgement to present human experience: every individual will stand before God at the final judgment simply as an individual. In light of this impartiality of divine justice, the only way to enter into the true community of God is through having the verdict of God's condemnation for sin (Rom 2:6-12; 3:19; etc.) overturned through participation in the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross (Rom 3:21-28).<sup>71</sup> As Romans 6 will go on to show, redemption in Christ is an incorporation *into* Christ. This incorporation, as we will see in the next chapter when discussing

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<sup>69</sup> On the vital connection between justification and Christ's work of redemption in Rom 3:21-4:25 see esp. Gathercole, “Romans 3:21-4:25,” 169-83.

<sup>70</sup> Although it is somewhat tangential to my argument, I am in agreement with Gathercole (*ibid.*, 214-15) that Jewish covenantal presumption should not be understood as excluding Jewish confidence in final vindication on the basis of “obedient fulfillment of Torah.”

<sup>71</sup> As already noted Burnett sees Jews and Gentiles entering God's single people by faith as the only significant agreement to be found with communally-minded interpreters (see e.g., Burnett, *Salvation*, 18, 221-23, 229-30). He is therefore unable to do justice to the *comprehensively* communal dimension of Paul's thinking. In so arguing, Burnett takes what is at most an implication (however important) of the impartiality of God's judgment of humanity to be essentially the *only* communally important facet of Paul's thought (rightly Keay, “Review of Burnett,” 779-80). This is just as problematic and misleading as arguing that Paul does not have any place for the individual in his theology.

Romans 12, is also (and necessarily) an incorporation into the corporate body of Christ. The individual dynamics of Romans 2-3 must not be understood apart from the communal aspects of redemption as these are seen in the rest of Romans. The *explicit* communal dynamic of Romans 2-3, however, is largely a negative one in that it is about the tearing down of a once foundational definition of the people of God, and the building up of a new one that is centered on faith-initiated participation in Christ.

### 5. The Binary Individual (Romans 2-3)

The *binary* individual is a category that captures the remnants of Paul's main ways of ordering the universe according to an oppositional system of classification (Jew/Gentile, male/female, slave/free, etc.). The binary individual, while radically relativized by the generic individual, is nonetheless present in a diminished form at points in Paul's letters.

As we have just seen, in Romans 2-3 Paul has radically undermined the notion that salvific privilege resides within the covenantal boundaries of Israel. In these chapters Paul provides his readers with the inverse of Gal 3:28: in judgment there is neither Jew nor Greek, for you are all one in damnation (see esp. Rom 2:9).

And yet, the Jew-Gentile divide, even though it has become "secondary and devalued" in relation to Paul's anthropological universalism,<sup>72</sup> does not completely disappear from the letter.<sup>73</sup> Already in the letter opening, Paul expresses his desire to bear fruit among the Gentiles spread across the Mediterranean basin (1:13-14), even though he attaches a kind of temporal priority to the Jew (Ἰουδαῖος) over against the Greek (Ἕλλην) in the promulgation of the gospel (1:16).<sup>74</sup>

Even in the thick of Paul's argument for the relativization of covenant privilege in chapters 2-3, the Jew-Gentile/Greek divide registers a presence, however fleeting; we still see the binary individual, the Jew or the Gentile, serving an important function. For example, despite the fact that Paul is arguing *against*

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<sup>72</sup> Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 286 (emphasis original): "They are different, *Jews* and *gentiles*—yet *equal* in Christ. The distinction remained, but discrimination did not."

<sup>74</sup> While Paul does indeed attach temporal priority to the gospel going out to "the Jew," this is a more subdued sense of priority than that argued by some (e.g., *ibid.*, 21, 27; James D. G. Dunn, "The Formal and Theological Coherence of Romans," in *The Romans Debate* [ed. Karl Donfried; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991], 249).

Jewish privilege in 2:1-24, he nonetheless retains the categories of Jew and Gentile (see 2:9-10). This is the case in chapter 3 as well: 3:9 indicates that Jews and Greeks are all “under sin,” while in 3:29-30 Paul emphatically denies that God is a god for Jews alone. In both of these passages, the binary individual—the Jew or the Gentile—is relativized without being fully eliminated from Paul’s thought world.

However, in Rom 2:25-29, Paul appears to take the basic framework of the binary contrast between Jew and Gentile and transmute it into a new key where being a Jew is a matter of obedience from the heart, rather than of one’s physical descent or covenantal “badges.”<sup>75</sup> The old categories of binary opposition, Jews or Gentiles “by nature” (cf. Rom 2:14; Gal 2:15), are not the categories that matter when defining membership in God’s people; rather, faith is (cf. Rom 3:29-30).<sup>76</sup>

Despite even this, however, the *old* binary distinction of Jew and Gentile does not completely vanish, as Rom 3:1 makes clear: there is still an advantage in being a Jew, even if it is not the advantage Paul’s debating partner imagined. Furthermore, Jewish, or more properly, Israelite identity remains an important classification throughout Romans 9-11, where Paul envisages that—despite what he has said about the elimination of salvific priority earlier in the letter—God’s plans for “natural” Israel have not come to an end with Christ’s coming (see esp. Rom 11:25-32), although Paul still insists that Israel “according to the flesh” will only find salvation through faith (11:23).<sup>77</sup>

In sum, the binary contrast between Jew and Gentile or Jew and Greek remains present in Romans, even if only in a radically modified and diminished form. Paul’s binary individual shows something of the tension in his thinking on individuality between the importance of Jew-Gentile particularity on the one hand, and the all-controlling anthropological universalization (seen in the generic individual) that he saw as having taken place through the death and resurrection of Christ on the other hand. It also reiterates the fact that individuals play an

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (LNTS 410; London: T & T Clark, 2009), 153-54. Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 166-69, is exactly right to highlight how for Paul a sense of binary opposition between community insiders and outsiders did not disappear when he became a believer in Jesus; it was simply transformed into a new set of oppositions, those “in Christ” versus those outside of him (cf. John M. G. Barclay, “Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?” *JSNT* 60 [1995]: 110). Even so, Paul still retains something of his *old* understanding of the Jew-Gentile opposition, especially when contrasting Jewish and Gentile codes of morality, on which see Barclay, “Anomaly or Apostate?” 107.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 123.

<sup>77</sup> Pace e.g., Donaldson, *Gentiles*, 159. On this see Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 133, 141-45.

indispensable role in Paul's theology: the individual Jew and the individual Gentile, while less important to Paul than the generic individual, have not ceased to exist as meaningful figures in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. The same could be said of the binary community as well: despite Paul's radical downgrading of covenant privilege, both Gentiles (understood as a unified whole) and Israel play important corporate roles throughout Romans, as seen for example in Rom 1:18-32 (Gentiles) and Romans 9-11 (Israel).

## 6. The Exemplary Individual: Abraham our Father or the Ungodly Proselyte? (Romans 4)

The *exemplary* individual is a model put forth for emulation by Paul's audience. Unlike the generic individual, the exemplary individual may retain characteristics that distinguish him or her from other individuals, as in Abraham's case, who is a unique historical figure in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption. However, this uniqueness (historical or otherwise) does not diminish the fact that the exemplar's chief significance lies in the example it sets for others.

Abraham is a self-evidently important individual in Romans 4. Yet, his significance for Paul's unfolding argument in the letter as a whole has come under close scrutiny and widespread debate in recent scholarship. By and large three main options are put forward in these discussions, one more or less traditional, and the other two revisionary.<sup>78</sup> The first view, by far the most common in the history of interpretation, and exemplified in the modern period by Charles Cranfield, contends that Romans 4 highlights "the relevance to all Christians of Abraham's faith as a paradigm of their own . . . ."<sup>79</sup> The second, with some variations, maintains that Paul sees Abraham's significance to lie in his irreplaceable function as head of the covenant community, and that the focus of Romans 4 is on issues of covenantal definition rather than individual salvation. Wright, for example, insists that Romans

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<sup>78</sup> For more extensive surveys see Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6* (WUNT 2.224; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 222-36; Maria Neubrand, *Abraham-Vater von Juden und Nichtjuden. Eine exegetische Studie zu Röm 4* (FB 85; Würzburg: Echter, 1997), 32-79; Friedrich E. Wieser, *Die Abrahamvorstellungen im Neuen Testament* (EurH 317; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987), 35.

<sup>79</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.225. Cf. Gathercole, "Romans 3:21-4:25," 156-68; Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 217; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 218-39; Moo, *Romans*, 255-57; Thomas H. Tobin, "What Shall We Say That Abraham Found? The Controversy behind Romans 4," *HTR* 88 (1995): 450; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2d ed.; BNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 86; Gunther Klein, "Römer 4 und die Idee der Heilsgeschichte," *EvT* (1963): 157.

4 is “a chapter about the scope and nature of Abraham’s family, rather than a chapter about ‘justification by faith’ as a doctrine about how people become Christians.”<sup>80</sup> Finally, the third view (which is often combined with some form of the second) insists that Abraham is in some sense “a representative figure whose destiny ‘contains’ the destiny of others,” that he is a “type” of Jesus Christ’s faithful service to God, a service which—culminating on the cross—serves as the basis for God’s salvific action in the world.<sup>81</sup>

Despite their differences, all three of these positions, recognizing that in Paul’s mind what was written of Abraham in scripture was not written “for him alone” (δι’ αὐτὸν μόνον), but also “for us” (δι’ ἡμᾶς) (Rom 4:23-24), are aware that Abraham’s significance—whether exemplary or representative—is supra-individual, that it affects the lives of believers in the present. Some interpreters understand this supra-individuality to have an important bearing on what Paul says about the generic individual (included in the “us” of 4:24) who shares Abraham’s πίστις,<sup>82</sup> although many others attempt to silence the voice of this individual, or at least to consign it to essential irrelevance. It is my contention that such attempts are seriously misguided and that the main importance of Abraham in Romans 4 lies in his being an exemplary individual, although I will argue that he cannot be exhaustively described as such.

Romans 4 begins with a syntactically difficult phrase. The major options for translating Rom 4:1 are that Paul either asks his Jewish interlocutor what “Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found,”<sup>83</sup> or, with Richard Hays and others,

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<sup>80</sup> Wright, “Romans,” 489. Cf. Joshua W. Jipp, “Rereading the Story of Abraham, Isaac, and ‘Us’ in Romans 4,” *JSNT* 32 (2009): 231-38; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 260; Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 80; Pamela Eisenbaum, “A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 687; Neubrand, *Abraham*, passim; David M. Bossman, “Paul’s Mediterranean Gospel: Faith, Hope, Love,” *BTB* 25 (1995): 76-77; Michael Cranford, “Abraham in Romans 4: The Father of All Who Believe,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 83; Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 75; Stowers, *Rereading*, 227; idem, “ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ τῆς πίστεως in Romans 3:30,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 667; Campbell, “Romans III,” 38; Lloyd Gaston, “Abraham and the Righteousness of God,” *HBT* 2 (1980): 57; Roetzel, *Judgement*, 99; Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Heilsgeschichte bei Paulus?* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1965), 10.

<sup>81</sup> Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 76. Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 721, 748-49; Jipp, “Rereading,” 228-31.

<sup>82</sup> Even anti-individual interpreters admit this. See e.g., Campbell, *Deliverance*, 746; Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 80.

<sup>83</sup> Among others, see Moo, *Romans*, 259. An additional (and important) question when 4:1 is read in this basic way is whether κατὰ σάρκα refers simply to physical descent from Abraham, or whether it has more negative notions of fallen human reasoning or sinfulness attached to it (as argued by e.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 308; Moo, *Romans*, 260). There is no reason to attach any negative connotations to the phrase in 4:1, since it appears to function (as is often the case in Paul; see e.g., Rom 1:3; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 10:18) simply to designate physical descent (rightly Jipp, “Rereading,” 228; cf. Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief*



whether “we have found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh.”<sup>84</sup> I believe the first option is the soundest, but as Gathercole rightly contends: “Even if the proposed translation of Hays and Wright is correct, it does not necessarily follow that Romans 4 is therefore concerned with the definition of Abraham’s family *at the expense of* questions of ‘soteriology’.”<sup>85</sup> One cannot simply assume, based on one’s translation of Rom 4:1, that the entirety of Romans 4 is about the definition of the people of God *and nothing else*.<sup>86</sup>

Many scholars have noted that Romans 4 is structured around many distinct questions or issues. In this regard there is a large degree of unanimity about how the chapter should be divided: first, Rom 4:1 introduces the chapter.<sup>87</sup> Second, in 4:2-8 Paul expands on the language of boasting that he introduced in 3:27.<sup>88</sup> Third,

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*an die Römer* (KEKNT 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 147, n. 5; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.227).

<sup>84</sup> See Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 61-84; Neubrand, *Abraham*, 184; Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (KNT 6; Leipzig: Deichert, 1910), 212-18. The syntactical difficulty is compounded by the various locations of εὐρηκέναι in the manuscript tradition, the main two options being 1) directly in front of Ἀβραάμ, and 2) after Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν (see Jewett, *Romans*, 304). Either option still requires one primarily to determine from the context what exactly is being said.

<sup>85</sup> Gathercole, “Romans 3:21-4:25,” 156 (emphasis original). Of the two basic translation options, I believe the former should be adopted for the following reasons. First, and most importantly, it makes the best sense of the context: there is simply no reason, given what is said in Rom 3:27-31 or 4:2-25, why Paul’s hypothetical objector (or Paul asking a question in rhetorical mode) should ask whether anyone has found Abraham to be his or her physical forefather. Jews (and Jewish Christians) would have assumed this to be true, whereas the thought would never cross the mind of a Gentile believer. Questions that *would* naturally arise include whether descent from Abraham guarantees one a place in God’s justified people, or what Abraham has found regarding justification, works, faith and boasting. Both of these questions are in fact answered throughout 4:2-25. Furthermore, as Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 261, n. 8, notes: “If Hays were right, one would expect further development of the κατὰ σάρκα motif in Romans 4.” See also Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 363, n. 3, who points out the extreme awkwardness of translating “our forefather” (with the article) as a predicate noun correlate with Abraham. Hays, “Abraham as Father,” 74, believes that his reading is only odd for those committed to the idea that Paul is opposed to “Judaism” in Romans. It is true that Paul is not opposed to some sort of abstract conception of Judaism. However it is equally true that Paul sets the Mosaic Torah over against faith with regard to justification, which is quite different from saying that there is an antithesis between *Judaism* and grace. Thus, a reading that takes Rom 4:1 to be asking what Abraham has found concerning what Paul has said in Rom 3:27-31 does not require one to adopt an anachronistic understanding of Romans as a “treatise on the problem of how a person may ‘find’ justification” (ibid., 63). Jewett’s (*Romans*, 307, n. 16) argument that “in this attempt to downplay the conflict between Paul and what is ordinarily called ‘Judaism,’ Hays skips the abrasive topic of boasting that links 3:27 with 4:2,” and which shapes the entire discourse in Romans 4, seems precisely on target.

<sup>86</sup> Pace Wright, “Romans,” 489.

<sup>87</sup> Importantly, understanding 4:1 to be asking what Abraham found concerning what was said in 3:27-31 allows one to take the verse as an introduction to the whole of chapter 4, without having to force the entire contents of the chapter to conform to the single issue of Abraham’s significance for the boundaries of the people of God.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 727-28, 730-2; Jipp, “Rereading,” 222-24; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.258; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.224. All of these scholars (who represent a fairly consistent agreement found across the whole range of literature) also point out that each subsection of Romans 4 appears to

Paul transitions in 4:9-12 to a question about whether the blessing of justification/forgiveness is restricted to those who are circumcised.<sup>89</sup> Forth, 4:13-16a (sometimes extended to 17a) addresses the motif of God's promised inheritance and Abraham's reception of it.<sup>90</sup> Finally, 4:16/17-25 is usually taken as a discrete unit, although according to the two main interpretations it is alternatively understood to address, according to Cranfield, "the essential character of Abraham's faith,"<sup>91</sup> and according to Douglas Campbell, the scope of "the illustrious Jewish patriarch's paternity."<sup>92</sup> Romans 4:23-25 could also be isolated, since this unit applies what has been said previously in the chapter to believers in the present, showing the basis of redemption to lie in Christ's death and resurrection for his people.<sup>93</sup>

This brief survey of the structure of the chapter is important because it highlights the diversity of themes and issues present there, the diversity of which has often been obscured in the debate over whether Romans 4 *only* portrays Abraham as an example of Christian faith or *only* as a representative figure whose significance lies in his role as progenitor of Israel and father of all believers. In other words, there are more ways than one to be reductionistic in reading Romans 4. Exegesis sensitive to how Paul shifts between several *foci* in the chapter enriches our understanding of Abraham's significance as an individual, and of the implications of his person for all those individuals who would come after him, whether Jews or Gentiles. The following analysis will be divided roughly into the section breaks described above.

## 6.1 Once Again, Where is Boasting? (Romans 4:1-8)

Whatever is being asked in Rom 4:1, the explanatory γάρ in 4:2 makes it clear that the latter verse answers the question posed in the former.<sup>94</sup> As has already been

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point back directly to a portion of 3:27-31: 4:2-8 (to 3:27); 4:9-12 (to 3:29-30); 4:13-16 (to 3:31). There is more controversy over how (if at all) to relate 4:16-25 with anything in 3:27-31.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 728, 733-34; Jipp, "Rereading," 224-25; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.258; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.224. Romans 4:9 is obviously connected to 4:6-8 in that it probes the implications of what those verses state, but it also introduces what follows in 4:10-12.

<sup>90</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 728-29, 734-35; Jipp, "Rereading," 225-26; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.258. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.224-25, sees this section ending *conceptually* in 17a, even though 16-17b are part of the same sentence.

<sup>91</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.225.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 737.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 738; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.225. Campbell and Cranfield are good representatives of the two opposing sides that dominate in the scholarship on Romans 4.

<sup>94</sup> Rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 227.

noted, many scholars believe that Paul asks two questions in 4:1 and that the nature of Paul's second question (εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα;) indicates that Romans 4 is almost solely about the boundaries of the Abrahamic family, and thus unconcerned with issues of individual faith or salvation. However, those who identify 4:1 as a question about the scope or nature of Abraham's family are forced to ignore the explanatory γάρ in 4:2 and the way that Paul answers his own rhetorical question: rather than beginning to speak about Abraham's ancestry, Paul answers the question of 4:1 directly by returning to the theme of boasting he touched on in 3:27. We are told that Abraham could not have been justified by works (ἐξ ἔργων) because this would have given him a boast (καύχημα) before God. However, scripture itself excludes such boasting when it describes the counting (λογίζομαι) to Abraham of righteousness as occurring when he trusted (πιστεύω) God (citing Gen 15:6).

Theoretically at this point, 4:1 *could* still be understood to be about the scope of Abraham's parentage, but only if works, boasting and faith in 4:2-3 all refer merely to markers of identity, or wrong attitudes about the restrictive function of the law, rather than human actions, specifically actions done in conformity (or not) to God's revealed will.<sup>95</sup> This is plainly impossible in Abraham's case, however, since no such markers of identity existed that could define him or his seed at the point when he believed God and had it counted to him as righteousness. Nor could works have been excluded because they signified "the whole mindset of 'covenantal nomism' – that is, the conviction that status within the covenant (= righteousness) is maintained by doing what the law requires ('works of the law'),"<sup>96</sup> since, of course the covenant law did not exist, and Abraham could not have been tempted to think that his righteousness was constituted through covenant membership, since he was justified *prior* to the initial covenant having being made. Furthermore, circumcision was only instituted by God as a mark of the covenant *thirteen years after* Abraham was justified (see Gen 16:16-17:1). While Paul does not mention the time gap in 4:2-3, it is foundational for his argument in 4:9-12, which builds directly upon 4:2-8. Thus, while Paul does indeed exclude circumcision from the role of marking out the

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<sup>95</sup> For the first two views see e.g., James D. G. Dunn, "Yet Once More - 'The Works of the Law': A Response," in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 214-15; Wright, "Romans," 490. For the third, see e.g., Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 172.

<sup>96</sup> Dunn, "Works of the Law," 214.

believer's identity (4:9-12), the contrast between works and faith in 4:2-3 cannot be a dispute about the scope of the covenant community, since the works in view cannot have been anything other than simple human actions.

Further developing the contrast between justification by works versus justification by faith, Paul employs a partially-formed accounting metaphor in 4:4-5 to establish that works merit compensation as a matter of obligation (ὀφείλημα, which, as 4:4 indicates, is the total opposite of grace), whereas faith, rather than working (an *individual* working: τῷ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ), causes one to be counted righteous before God. In 4:6-8 Paul substantiates his exclusion of boasting through a scriptural appeal to the example of David: the blessings of God's salvation come only to those who are counted righteous by God by faith, rather than works, which is roughly equivalent to one's "lawless deeds" being forgiven and covered over, to having one's sin not counted against oneself. Romans 4:1-8, as Simon Gathercole observes, is not about the criteria for covenant inclusion, but is rather about disobedience and grace, since Abraham's righteousness and David's forgiveness come to those who are *positively* ungodly and sinful (Abraham is ἀσεβής [4:5], and David is guilty of ἀνομία and ἁμαρτία [4:7]).<sup>97</sup>

As in Rom 2:6-16, Paul brings a generic individual into his argument in 4:4-9 in order to generalize and universalize the point he is making: the individual who works (ὁ ἐργαζόμενος) receives pay rather than grace (4:4), the individual who does not work, but believes (τῷ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ πιστεύοντι), has righteousness counted to her (4:5), the individual (ἄνθρωπος) who has righteousness counted to him apart from works is truly blessed (4:6), and finally, the man (ἄνθρωπος) is blessed who does not have sin counted to him by the Lord (4:8).<sup>98</sup> With these uses of the generic individual, Rom 4:4-8 has something of the "timeless" feel of Rom 2:6-16, but like those verses, also has direct parenetic relevance for the individuals in the actual (or at least intended) audience of Paul's letter, which is made all the more explicit in that Paul's entire scriptural exposition in chapter 4 is written "for us" (4:24).<sup>99</sup> Paul

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<sup>97</sup> Gathercole, "Romans 3:21-4:25," 159. Paul further highlights the generic and universal quality of this section of text by speaking simply of "works" rather than "works of the law." See Tobin, "Romans 4," 445.

<sup>98</sup> Romans 4:7 is the only verse in this section that speaks in plural terms.

<sup>99</sup> The generic quality of the individual in Rom 2:6 (citing LXX Ps 61:13/Prov 24:12) and Rom 4:6-8 (citing Ps 31:1) appears to be due to both being taken from scriptural citations from wisdom texts (namely from Proverbs and the Psalms) that attempt to make "timeless" observations about the human condition.

is telling the readers of his letter what Abraham (and David) found concerning boasting, works and faith, and to do so he speaks in strongly individual terms about how righteousness is counted, first to Abraham, but then by analogy to the individual in the present who “walks in Abraham’s footsteps” (4:12). The generic individual figures prominently in Paul’s argument in 4:1-8, as does Abraham the exemplary individual, although the latter motif is mostly implicit (though no less significant) at this point in the chapter.

Paul’s underlying logic seems to run like this: if those pillars of Israelite identity, Father Abraham and King David, have no grounds for a boast before God on account of their ungodliness and sin, surely no one (i.e., no generic individual) would be so foolish as to suppose that he or she could receive the recompense of righteousness/justification in return for his or her righteous works.<sup>100</sup> Both Abraham and David are examples of positively unrighteous individuals justified by faith.

## **6.2 Who is Blessed? And When? (Romans 4:9-12)**

Romans 4:1-8 has established that an individual is blessed (= forgiven = credited with righteousness) by faith rather than works. Romans 4:9, then, asks whether this blessing is for the circumcision or the uncircumcision. This is the first point in Romans 4 in which an explicit concern for the boundaries of the covenant community emerges, and it appears as Paul asks whether the individual who is righteous by faith must be a Jew, must be circumcised. As 4:9b indicates (γάρ), Paul takes this to be the natural question to ask in light of what has just preceded, namely the claim that Abraham’s faith, rather than works, was counted to him as righteousness. In other words, if we claim that Abraham was righteous by faith (which we do), what does this say about the nature of the community where the blessings of salvation are to be found, about who is, and is not, in that community? To answer this, Paul reads the Abraham story in Genesis in chronological sequence. For him, it is as simple as this: determine if Abraham had righteousness counted to

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<sup>100</sup> Many exegetes complain about the elevation of the accounting language in 4:4-5 to the level of a controlling framework for Pauline interpretation (see e.g., Wright, “Romans,” 491). Whatever legitimacy there may be to such complaints, it is nonetheless still the case that as Watson rightly argues, Paul “does use this image,” (*Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 265, emphasis original) and he does so to “speak of two human possibilities, remuneration and gift, that provide contrasting models of the divine-human relationship” (ibid., 263).

him by faith before or after he was circumcised. Reading Genesis according to its narrational order shows that this happened while Abraham was un-circumcised (4:10: ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ). Circumcision came after justification and was a sign (σημεῖον) and seal (σφραγίς) of the justification Abraham had already received by faith when he was uncircumcised (4:11).<sup>101</sup> All of this was for the purpose (εἰς τὸ εἶναι) of Abraham becoming “the father of all those who believe even though they are uncircumcised” (4:11a-b) as well as “the father of the circumcision, although to those not merely circumcised, but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith our father Abraham had while uncircumcised” (4:12). To those who believe, whether circumcised or not, they too (like Abraham) will have righteousness counted to them (4:11c). While Abraham is certainly not less than an exemplary individual here (the blessing of righteousness only comes to those who follow in his footsteps - 4:12), there is more going on in 4:9-12 than the exposition of an exemplary paradigm. The nature and configuration of the covenant community is being transformed and redescribed. Thus, it is true that Abraham in Romans 4 is “a uniting figure in the church composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians,”<sup>102</sup> and that his own relationship with God has critically “important social implications,”<sup>103</sup> but it is equally true that this “paulinische Heilsgeschichte” only works insofar as Abraham is seen “als Beispiel und Urbild.”<sup>104</sup>

It is easy to understand the origins of the polemic against Abraham as mere example, with the attendant fear that such a view would lead to a wildly individualistic reading of Romans 4, but the mimetic pattern—even in 4:9-12—simply does not work unless “der Glaube Abrahams den christlichen in gewisser Weise vorwegnahm, mit diesem letztlich sogar identisch war,”<sup>105</sup> especially since his reception of righteousness by faith (4:11) leads to a call for direct mimesis in 4:12. What is true of the uncircumcised and the circumcised (though not merely so) believers *is only true of them insofar as they too believe*: just as Abraham believed and was counted righteous (4:9-10; cf. Gal 3:5-9), so too must everyone else (whether Jew or Greek) “in order to have righteousness counted to them” (εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι αὐτοῖς

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 214-16; Tobin, “Romans 4,” 446.

<sup>102</sup> Campbell, “Romans III,” 35.

<sup>103</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 261.

<sup>104</sup> Käsemann, “Römer 4,” 152.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

δικαιοσύνην - emphasis added).<sup>106</sup> Whatever else might be said about 4:9-12, Abraham as exemplary individual is a key motif in this passage.

### 6.3 Grace and Promise (Romans 4:13-17a)

Having established that Abraham was counted righteous before God when he believed, rather than when he was circumcised, Paul begins in 4:13 to work out the implications of this fact with regard to God's promise (ἐπαγγελία) to Abraham, as well with regard to the inheritance of that promise. The promise to Abraham and his seed did not come through the agency of law (διὰ νόμου) but through the righteousness that comes from faith (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως - cf. Gal 3:22).<sup>107</sup> To argue that the law could secure the inheritance nullifies (κενόω) faith and voids (καταργέω) the promise (4:14).<sup>108</sup> That is to say (γάρ), as Paul continues, the law works (κατεργάζομαι) wrath and creates transgression (4:15). The law, built as it is on a principle of strict remuneration (Rom 4:4; cf. Rom 10:5; Gal 3:10-12) cannot secure anything but wrath, death and sin (cf. Rom 7:5-6). This is not a statement about Jewish attempts to make circumcision into a meritorious work (regardless of whether any such attempts can be uncovered historically), nor is it a disparagement of the law. It is rather a simple statement of what the law *itself* does when it encounters human sin and rebellion (cf. Rom 7:8-12). For this reason (διὰ τοῦτο) the promise (ἐπαγγελία) is understood from what precedes) is by faith (ἐκ πίστεως) in order that (ἵνα) it might be according to grace (κατὰ χάριν) and in order that (εἰς τὸ εἶναι) it might be secure for all of Abraham's descendants (his "seed"), not just the (generic) individual who is of the law (τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου), but also to the (generic) individual who shares Abraham's faith (τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ).<sup>109</sup> Abraham's faith

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<sup>106</sup> Various important manuscript readings of 4:11 (even though probably secondary) pick up this explicitly mimetic pattern by inserting either an adjunctive conjunction before αὐτοῖς (καί; thus reading: "in order that it might be counted to them *also*") and/or an anaphoric article before δικαιοσύνη (τὴν; thus reading: "the *same* righteousness [that was counted to Abraham in 4:9-11]").

<sup>107</sup> The genitive in δικαιοσύνης πίστεως should be taken as a genitive of source ("righteousness derived from faith"), setting it in contrast to the agency of law for securing the promised inheritance. This is clear in context: Abraham's faith is what led to his being counted righteous (4:3, 9).

<sup>108</sup> That Paul is speaking primarily of Jews with the designation οἱ ἐκ νόμου seems likely, but there is nonetheless a strong sense that Paul is also referring to the *doing* of the law here, rather than simply to being defined by the law. This comes out in 4:15 which speaks of the law working wrath and creating transgressions, both of which make little sense if the law in 4:14 is taken simply as marking out Jewish identity.

<sup>109</sup> Ironically, a christological reading of faith in Romans 4 (esp. 4:16) requires Paul to say of Abraham exactly what his Jewish contemporaries were saying, which appears to be the exact

(πίστις) has already been qualified as his act of believing (πιστεύω - Rom 4:3), and so it is with those who walk in his footsteps: they too are guaranteed a share in the promised inheritance by faith rather than adherence to the law (4:16). In this way Abraham is the father of everyone who believes (4:16e-17a).

Many of the “anti-individualistic” scholars already cited above find a presentation of 4:13-17a that focuses on generic individual action or Abraham’s exemplary status to be problematic since it cannot do justice to the salvation-historical language of inheritance and promise.<sup>110</sup> However, the focus in 4:13-16 on the scope of those who would receive God’s promised inheritance does not diminish a concern for the believing individual. The promise, even in its universal scope (i.e., ὁ κόσμος), is intended to evoke faith among its recipients (4:18-21), which itself is the means through which Abraham (4:22), and those in Paul’s audience who follow Abraham’s example (4:23-24), have righteousness counted to them.

#### **6.4 Abraham’s Faith in a Faithful God (Romans 4:17b-25)**

Romans 4:17 begins with a scriptural confirmation of Abraham’s (redefined) role as “father of many nations” and continues with an affirmation of God’s approbation of Abraham in this role.<sup>111</sup> In this verse, too, Paul begins a lengthy description of the character of Abraham’s faith: he trusts in the creative and life-giving power of God (4:17b), he has a faith that overcomes the earthly obstacles (a “hope against hope”) that might thwart God’s promise (4:18), his faith does not weaken despite the decrepit state of his or Sarah’s bodies (4:19), and his faith does not waver in doubt concerning God’s promise (4:20) because Abraham was “fully convinced that [God] was able to do what he promised” (4:21).<sup>112</sup>

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opposite of Paul’s argumentative strategy throughout Romans 4. That is to say, Abraham is hardly being held up as an example of “faithfulness” in this chapter: he is the prototypical ungodly convert to true faith who cannot be justified through the due recompense of his works, because he, like David, is sinful and needs forgiveness and righteousness to be counted to him. On early Jewish depictions of Abraham as the archetypal pious Israelite see e.g., Nancy Calvert-Koyzis, *Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham Traditions for Early Judaism and Christianity* (JSNTSup 273; London: T & T Clark International, 2004); Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 220-69.

<sup>110</sup> See e.g., Campbell, *Deliverance*, 734-35; cf. Jipp, “Rereading,” 225-26.

<sup>111</sup> The syntax of Rom 4:17b is somewhat difficult: among the four main interpretive options I think a reading that understands “before” (κατέναντι) as referring to Abraham’s truly being a father “before God” of Gentiles in addition to Jews (i.e., “in God’s sight Gentiles too are Abraham’s offspring”) is the most contextually sensitive. For this interpretation see Cranfield, *Romans*, 243-44; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 145-47.

<sup>112</sup> Isaac’s birth (and thus Abraham’s literal parentage) is surely implicit in 4:16-22, but not in the way Campbell, *Deliverance*, 736-39, envisages: Isaac (as the seed) was *what* was promised to Abraham.



Campbell finds this account of Abraham's "heroic faith" to be the final nail in the coffin of the "anthropocentric" reading of Abraham's faith because he sees such a description as entailing on the patriarch's part "an extraordinarily difficult if not superhuman action" which "looks extremely unrealistic as a manageable criterion for sinful humanity to exercise."<sup>113</sup> It should be noted, however, that Abraham's faith is quite specifically centered on the promise. Thus, as Paul describes it, faith is not a generic, superhuman power, but rather trust in God's provision, trust that God would do precisely what he promised when he vowed to make Abraham a father of many nations (4:18), despite the strongly adverse circumstances standing in the way (4:19). As was the divine intention, the promise itself evoked in Abraham the appropriate response of trust, and for this reason was counted to Abraham as righteousness (4:22).<sup>114</sup>

Although it is difficult on a strictly textual level to evaluate Campbell's extreme incredulity toward what is said of Abraham's faith in 4:17b-21, it can nonetheless still be noted that Paul is not actually claiming as much as Campbell takes an exemplary view of Abraham's faith to be saying: again, it is a matter of God's promise, and Abraham's trust in that very *specific* promise; the robustness of the faith is portrayed as being in direct proportion to the trustworthiness of the promise, and even more importantly, to the one who made the promise. This comes out in many ways in 4:17b-21: Abraham believed the promise "according to what had been said" (κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον - 4:18, emphasis added), his faith was "in the promise" (εἰς τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν - 4:20), he was strengthened (passive of ἐνδυναμόω) by means of faith in this promise (4:20), and finally, his faith was a matter of conviction that God was able to do what *he* had promised (4:21), rather than constituting a generic quality that led Abraham to accomplish heroic, even

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This fact, however, hardly brings into question an exemplary reading of Abraham (in favor of a representational one), since Isaac's implicit presence does not serve any purpose other than to inform the (already scripturally knowledgeable) reader that Abraham's belief was directed toward a concrete realization of the promise (i.e., it was not a vague faith in God's trustworthy nature; cf. Gathercole, "Romans 3:21-4:25," 163). Abraham's patronage, however, is not in any way restricted to, or focused on, physical genealogy, a point which is made forcefully in Romans 4. It is quite hard to see the benefit in emphasizing the centrality of literal biological descent (as does Campbell, *Deliverance*, 395; cf. Stowers, *Rereading*, 243) in a chapter with a section like 4:9-17a, which emphatically separates that which is physical and physically genealogical from that which leads to one being counted righteous (faith). If this is a "spiritualizing" (cf. Campbell, *Deliverance*, 754; Stowers, *Rereading*, 244) of the text, so be it.

<sup>113</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 735.

<sup>114</sup> See Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 196, 217-18.

inhuman, feats of religious devotion.<sup>115</sup> Abraham did not waver “concerning the promise of God” (4:20) because he deemed *God*—rather than his own faith (a strange notion indeed)—trustworthy (4:21).<sup>116</sup>

Summing up chapter 4, Paul declares that Abraham’s trusting response to God’s promise is explicitly recounted in Scripture “for us also” who will, like Abraham, be counted righteous upon believing in the same God, the God who raised Jesus from the dead (4:24). It is certainly true, as has been noted by several scholars who attempt to diminish Abraham’s exemplary role, that chapter 4 is capped off with a “christological conclusion” in 4:24-25. However, it does not appear that enough weight has been placed by these interpreters on how this christological ending describes what God will do for those who follow Abraham’s example of faith and thereby, like Abraham, have righteousness counted to them as well (4:23). It is most definitely not the case that in Romans 4, as Stowers contends, “Paul does not speak of the believer’s justification by his or her faith, but of covenants and promises that God established in response to the faithfulness of certain individuals” like Abraham.<sup>117</sup> Rather, Paul (following the narrative of Genesis) sees Abraham’s faith as a *response* to the divine promise, rather than the other way around. Thus, the exemplary view is not (or at least need not be) “individualist, rationalistic, and introspective.”<sup>118</sup> The promise-response structure of Abraham’s faith shows this to be false: the divine word comes from without, is not dependent on Abraham’s reasoning abilities and does not leave Abraham as an isolated individual, but places him at the head of a community of faith that stretches across the centuries to Paul’s own day.

In 4:17b-25 we have seen yet again that, rather than being “impossible to integrate with”<sup>119</sup> an exemplary account of Abraham’s faith, this section of text incorporates just such a telling of the significance of Abraham with a corresponding focus on him as Father of all who believe.

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<sup>115</sup> Pace Campbell, *Deliverance*, 735-45.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 172.

<sup>117</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, 248.

<sup>118</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 723

<sup>119</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 735.

## 6.5 Summary

Despite the concerted effort of many Pauline scholars to argue otherwise, the exemplary interpretation of Abraham must be retained. Abraham's exemplary role is explicit in several places (e.g., 4:12, 23-24) and much of the argumentation of the rest of the chapter is dependent upon this construct.<sup>120</sup> This does not mean, however, that Abraham is nothing more than an example. His actions clearly have consequences for the history and composition of God's people.<sup>121</sup> What this does mean, however, is that his extra-individual function must be carefully defined: for example, there are no markers in Romans 4 that should lead one to conclude that Abraham is a vicarious individual whose actions *in and of themselves* have consequences for those "in Abraham" (to borrow a phrase). Despite the large amount of things Paul has to say about the significance of Abraham for the individuals and communities of those who come after him, the apostle *never* separates Abraham's actions (specifically his faith) from, or has them stand in for, a corresponding reproduction of those actions among individuals in the present.

While Abraham is a unique and unsubstitutable individual (i.e., he cannot be replaced with anyone else in the way Paul's generic individual can be), he is not a representative individual. Romans 4 is not Romans 5 or 6 where explicit markers of vicariousness and representation abound (although only with reference to Christ and Adam).<sup>122</sup> All this being said, many of Campbell's protestations against an "anthropological" understanding of Abraham's faith offer a salutary reminder to the exegete not to ignore the important corporate and salvation-historical dynamics of the chapter (covenant definition, etc.). Nonetheless, his contention that "it ultimately makes little sense to speak of a comprehensive mimetic relationship" in Romans 4 is quite wide of the mark.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, contrary to the anti-

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Karl Olav Sandnes, "Abraham, the Friend of God, in Rom 5," *ZNW* 99 (2008): 125.

<sup>121</sup> Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 217, puts it well: "There is therefore a christological component in Paul's complex appeal to Abraham as exemplar, as well as an ecclesiological and a soteriological one. Genesis 15.6 is the fundamental and unsurpassable soteriological statement that Paul finds in the Abraham narrative, and its ecclesiological implications come to light as he demonstrates its universal normativity." See also Tobin, "Romans 4," 450. William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (LNTS 322; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 63, goes much too far, however, in insisting that in Romans 4 "Abraham is first and foremost father of the Jewish people . . ."

<sup>122</sup> Pace Stowers, *Rereading*, 243, Abraham (unlike Jesus in Romans 5-6 and elsewhere) is not "essential for Paul precisely as [an] individual who [has] made possible divine benefits inherited by whole peoples." Instead, Abraham responds in faith to *what God has done* in promising him a seed, and with that seed, the inheritance of the world (4:13).

<sup>123</sup> Campbell, *Deliverance*, 756.

individualism of scholars such as Campbell, Abraham's own example makes it clear just how integral the individual is in Pauline soteriology. Individuals experience salvation, not in order to remain *mere* individuals, but also not through the bypassing of their individuality. When individuals are saved, they are incorporated into Christ (see Romans 6) and into his corporate body, where they are to serve as individual members of the integrated whole (see Rom 12:3-8).

While Abraham's example may not provide us with much more information about the nature of Pauline community than Romans 2-3, this should not be surprising: Romans 4 is largely a continuation, and concrete instantiation, of what has already been said in the two preceding chapters of the letter. Like those chapters it is only one step in the progression of Paul's argumentation in the letter, which has not yet delved deeply into the concrete nature of life in the believing community.

## 7. Summary and Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary

In order to bring together the results of the preceding investigation it will be beneficial at this point to summarize the contents of this chapter in a point-by-point format, indicating along the way further texts in Romans that could have been fitted into the typology:

- (1) **The Characteristic Individual.** The characteristic individual is one of the central tools Paul deploys (in conjunction with the generic individual) in service of his argument for the abolishment of Jewish soteriological privilege. The characteristic Jewish judge appears in Rom 2:1-5, 17-25; 3:1-9. The other important characteristic individuals in Romans are the weak and strong in Rom 14:1-15:7, who as character types allow Paul to present "his general moral teaching to Christ-believers . . . in the form of potential, even likely, examples."<sup>124</sup> Most fundamentally, the characteristic individual places

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<sup>124</sup> Thorsteinsson, *Ancient Morality*, 100 (cf. 91-92, 101-4). However, Thorsteinsson is wrong to insist that the presence of these characteristic individuals means that "it is not the individual believer himself or herself who benefits from the particular position or 'gift' which he or she enjoys but the community of believers as a whole, of which the individual is a member."

Paul's entire exhortative program firmly (but emphatically not *solely*) on the level of individual action.

- (2) **The Generic Individual.** The generic individual is more pervasive in Romans than any of the other categories in this typology, and yet this type of individual, as well as its significance, has been widely dismissed in recent scholarship. The analysis in this chapter has centered on the generic individual in Romans 2-3, where Paul writes of this individual in order to show his readers that there is no soteriological privilege for anyone, Jew or Gentile, because each individual will stand before God at the final judgment simply as an individual with his or her works and nothing else. In Rom 14:10-12 Paul similarly brings together the generic individual (ἕκαστος) and judgment in order to urge his readers to accept one another in love.

Generic individuals pervade the rest of the letter as well. There is a generic sinful individual, the “old human” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) of Rom 6:6, which appears to be a particularly vivid way of describing the pre-believing stance of individuals who have since been united to Christ in baptism (cf. Rom 3:19; 7:7-12). There is also a generic believing individual, as became clear in the analysis of Romans 4 above (see esp. 4:16 [τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ]; cf. Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-31 [esp. 3:27-28]; 5:1-2; and esp. Rom 10:6-13<sup>125</sup>), even though the focus of that discussion was on Abraham the exemplary individual.

Paul often speaks of the benefits of redemption in terms of reception by the generic individual, on which see e.g., individual forgiveness (Rom 4:6-8, 25 [ἄνθρωπος]), removal of individual condemnation (Rom 8:1-2 [“those in Christ Jesus” in 8:1 includes the σε of 8:2]), the justification of the individual (Rom 1:16-17 [Ἰουδαῖος . . . Ἕλληνα . . . ὁ δίκαιος]; Rom 2:6-13 [ἕκαστος]; Rom 3:26 [τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ]; Rom 3:27 [ἄνθρωπος]; Rom 3:30 [περιτομή . . . ἀκροβυστία]; Rom 10:9-11 [e.g., only singular verbs are used for salvation/justification . . . πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων, etc.]) and individual hope in a future salvation (Rom 8:24 [τις]). Some scholars argue for the basis of these benefits of redemption to be located in individual election (pointing esp. to

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<sup>125</sup> On which see Dunson, “Faith,” 30-34.

Rom 9:7-18; cf. Rom 8:29), even though this is widely dismissed in recent scholarship.<sup>126</sup>

When Paul speaks of spiritual renewal, he also often employs the category of the generic individual. We have seen this with the motif of heart circumcision in Rom 2:28-29 (cf. obedience from the heart in Rom 6:17), but it also appears elsewhere: the individual who has died to sin (ὁ ἀποθανών) through union with Christ in his death has been set free from sin (δικαιώω); the individual believer (see Rom 8:2: σε) is set free from sin and death through the Spirit (Rom 8:2-11); etc.<sup>127</sup>

Finally, Paul's ethical exhortation in Romans has a definite focus on the individual, even as it makes it clear that proper ethical living cannot be undertaken apart from a properly functioning community of believers. Eternal glory awaits the individual who does good (e.g., Rom 2:10: παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν), each individual member of the body is called to love and service within the single body (see e.g., Rom 12:3: παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν - Rom 13:8: ὁ ἀγαπῶν), every individual is called to obey worldly authorities (e.g., Rom 13:1: πᾶσα ψυχὴ), and the discrimination called for on issues of personal scruple is a matter for individuals to think through (see Rom 14:5: ἕκαστος).

This list could be expanded even further, but the point should already be clear: despite widespread scholarly assertions to the contrary, the generic individual is a central and ever-present category for Paul. In light of the impartiality of divine justice and judgment all other formerly significant categories and collectivities fall to the ground, leaving the generic human *coram Deo*, although as we will see (especially) in the next chapter, this individual is inextricably bound up with life in a new community.

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<sup>126</sup> Arguing for individual election see e.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, "Corporate and Individual Election in Romans 9: A Response to Brian Abasciano," *JETS* 49 (2006): 351-71; idem, "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation?" in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (eds. T. R. Schreiner and B. A. Ware; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 89-106; arguing against individual election see e.g., Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1-9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis* (LNTS 301; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 185-89, 215-19; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC 38b; Nashville: Nelson, 1988), 567-68; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.479; Barth, *Romans*, 346-47.

<sup>127</sup> Possession of the spirit is described in Rom 8:9 in both communal and individual terms: the Spirit dwells "among you" (ἐν ὑμῖν), while an individual (τις) must have the Spirit to have Christ.

- (3) **The Binary Individual.** Despite Paul's radical relativization of the Jew-Gentile distinction, as we have seen, he still speaks in terms of that distinction (see Rom 1:13-14, 16; 2:14-29; 3:9, 29; 9:24-3; 15:9-12; 16:4; etc.). However, for Paul, this binary classification of individuals is something of an anomaly: he still employs the Jew-Gentile distinction, although it has almost completely lost its meaning as a marker of identity, and has certainly lost its meaning as a marker of salvation or the boundaries of the genuine community of God's people. That being said, retaining elements of one's Jewish identity is not problematic as long as they are not elevated to levels incompatible with the new all-controlling reality of finding one's fundamental identity in Jesus Christ (see e.g., 1 Cor 7:19). The binary individual (and the binary community) appears throughout Romans 9-11, where Paul holds together the centrality of salvation through faith in Christ (see Rom 10:6-13) with an ongoing place for Israel in God's redemptive plan (see esp. Romans 11).
- (4) **The Exemplary Individual.** In Romans 4, Paul portrays Abraham (and to a lesser degree, David) as an exemplary individual whose trust in the divine promise sets a pattern that Paul's audience is explicitly called to emulate (see Rom 4:5-8, 11-12, 16, 23-25). While Abraham is also a historically irreplaceable individual within the divine plan whose actions have important ramifications for the future of God's people, he is not a "vicarious individual" whose actions define future peoples irrespective of their following in Abraham's footsteps of faith.

## 7.2 Conclusion

Although the typology of the individual in this chapter awaits completion in the next chapter, it should be becoming clear just how often Paul's theological vision is shaped by the individual. In fact, his argumentation in so many of the places we have examined in this chapter simply does not make sense when the category of the individual is neglected or dismissed, as seen, for example, in the way in which Paul's explication of justification depends upon his having already established that there is a generic individual who is alternatively sinful (see Rom 3:10-12, 19), judged (see Rom 2:6), and finally, believing (see Rom 3:28).

I have also noted several ways in which the various individual types must be understood as communally shaped, or ways in which they help define the nature of community in Pauline thought. For example, although Abraham's importance lies chiefly in the exemplary pattern he establishes for future believers, his role as patriarch and forefather of Israel serves an important function in Romans 4 with regard to the shape of the new-creational people of God. Likewise, the interplay of the generic and characteristic individuals in Romans 2-3 has much to say about the nature of Pauline community, both positively in the centrality attached to faith with regard to the formation of that community and negatively in the way it radically relativizes the Jew-Gentile distinction. As important as all of these communal dimensions are, however, the communal location of the Pauline individual becomes much more pronounced as Romans progresses, and thus is especially clear in the discussion of the four individual types to be discussed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### Pauline Individuals (2)

#### 1. Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that the category of the individual is ever-present and theologically foundational in the first four chapters of Romans. As we move into the rest of the letter this remains true. It is in this latter portion of the epistle, however, that the communal location of the Pauline individual becomes especially prominent. Thus, the degree to which one must speak of the individual in Pauline thought as a communally-engrafted individual emerges throughout the material we will examine in this chapter. As I have already noted, Paul's argument for the *indispensability* of individuals being situated within community sets him apart from Epictetus in an extremely important way.

Again, a brief outline of the material included in this portion of the typology can be beneficially presented at this point. In sharp contrast with Abraham the exemplary individual, we see Paul in Romans 5 telling the epoch-spanning story of Adam and Jesus Christ, two *representative* individuals whose actions determine the destiny of those whom they represent. In Romans 7, despite strong scholarly currents arguing otherwise, we come face to face with Paul the individual, who in the depiction of his agony on account of Torah's death-dealing power in his life, provides a negative counterpart to the positive exemplar Abraham, thus giving us the *negative exemplary* individual. Vitally important for understanding how Paul sees the individual incorporated into community is the *somatic* individual of Romans 12, which is a reference to the body-and-members metaphor that Paul employs in 12:3-8. Finally, in Romans 16 Paul introduces us to a host of *particular* individuals, both among his own friends and companions, as well as among the believers in the church or churches in Rome.

As I noted in the last chapter, there are several portions of Romans that do not receive extended treatment in the typology I am presenting. The reason for these omissions, again, is simply that I am presenting Paul's understanding of the individual in the form of a typology, which by its very nature is textually selective, rather than providing an exhaustive, linear exegesis of the entire letter of Romans.

Nonetheless, I contend that this typology addresses most of the major individual types in the letter, even if other individual types may be discernible in portions of the text not addressed.

## **2. The Representative Individual (Romans 5)**

The *representative* individual, unlike the exemplary individual, is one whose actions are significant for others completely apart from their being reproduced in those others. Put differently, a representative individual is a vicarious individual, an individual who, in some way or another, determines the fate of others.

### **2.1 Adam and Christ (Romans 5:12-21)**

In Rom 5:12-21 Paul tells a tale of cosmic and universal proportions. It is a story that spans the ages and recounts both humanity's plunge into sin and death, as well as the divine triumph over that state of affairs accomplished through the mission of Jesus Christ. In order to map out the precise significance of Christ's death for his people Paul sets up a contrast between Adam and Christ: one man (5:12: ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου), one action (5:15: τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι - cf. 5:18, 19), death for all; a second man (5:17: τοῦ ἐνὸς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), one action (5:18: ἐνὸς δικαιώματος - cf. 5:19), life for all. The details of this contrast must be attended to with precision in order to understand the kind of individuality that is expressed in Paul's Adam-Christ typology.

To begin with, Paul, with a protasis (ὥσπερ) at the head of a stretch of text extending all the way to 5:17,<sup>1</sup> introduces Adam into his storyline by arguing that it was through this one man (δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου) that sin entered into the world, and that with sin's appearance, death came in its trail (5:12a-b). In this way (οὕτως) death spread (διέρχομαι) to all of humanity "from which it follows that all sinned" (ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον - 5:12d). The meaning of this verse, and especially the last clause (5:12d), has been widely disputed, in addition to being highly significant historically in a variety of theological debates over the nature of sin, death and the transmission of both among humans. It is thus necessary to sort out its meaning as well as how it contributes to Paul's unfolding argument.

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<sup>1</sup> See Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.272-73.

First of all, this much is clear in the 5:12: sin and death entered into the world through (διὰ) the agency of a single individual, namely Adam, even though “Paul’s focus is not at this point on the corporate significance of Adam’s act but on his role as the *instrument* through whom sin and death were unleashed in the world.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον seems to explain or qualify the immediately preceding clause.<sup>3</sup>

Moving to the immediate context, a sense such as “from which it follows” seems best.<sup>4</sup> Paul goes on in 5:13-14 to explain the meaning of ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον (cf. γάρ in 5:13), and his reasoning appears to be this: we know from the narrative of Genesis that sin, and through it death, came into the world through Adam (5:12a-b); in this way (οὕτως) death also spread to all people, “from which it follows” (ἐφ’ ᾧ) that all must have sinned, or else death would not have spread to them (5:12c-d).<sup>5</sup> To substantiate this Paul states that sin was indeed in the world prior to the giving of the law (5:13a; which simply restates 5:12c-d), even though sin is not “charged” to one’s account (ἐλλογέω) in a legally precise fashion in this pre-Mosaic age (5:13b). As Paul puts it in Rom 4:15: “Where there is no law there is no transgression (παράβασις).”<sup>6</sup> The presence of sin in the world (as stated in 5:12-13), then, is proved by the fact that death reigned (i.e., everyone died) from Adam until Moses even though they did not sin in the same way (ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι) Adam did, who

<sup>2</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 321 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> Rightly Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.275. The Greek of the preceding clause: καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to my postgraduate colleague Lionel Windsor for pointing me in the direction of this understanding of ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. I also owe to him my basic understanding of how 5:13-14 works as an explanation of 5:12, and is grounded in Paul’s understanding of the narrative of Genesis. See further Matthew Black, *Romans* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1973), 88-89, who shows that ἐφ’ ᾧ can be read in the way I am interpreting it, citing Stanislas Lyonnet, “Le sens ἐφ’ ᾧ en Rom 5, 12 et l’*exégèse des Pères grecs*,” *Bib* 36 (1955): 436-56, as an antecedent of this understanding.

<sup>5</sup> The alternative presented by most modern English translation of ἐφ’ ᾧ as “because” (see e.g., ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, RSV) seems to be ruled out by 5:12a-b which states that death came into the world through Adam’s sin, rather than through the sin of common humanity (cf. Black, *Romans*, 86). It would be odd, then, (although not impossible) for Paul to finish the sentence by saying that death came to all people because *all* sinned. A possible rejoinder would be that Paul only says that sin (understood as a power) entered the world through Adam, and that this power did not concretely manifest itself in the rest of humanity (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) until all sinned (πάντες ἥμαρτον). However, despite the way Paul at times personifies sin as an enslaving “power” (e.g., in Romans 6-7), he does not radically separate sin as a power from sins as corrupt human actions (see e.g., Rom 6:12, 19; 7:5, 13, 15, etc.; on this point see esp. Engberg-Pedersen, “Person in Paul?”). Therefore, understanding sin in 5:12a as a force at work in the world without any actual manifestations in concrete human sinning would not fit the consistent pattern of language about sin as *deed* in Paul’s letters (pace Käsemann, *Römer*, 137; rightly Thomas H. Tobin, “The Jewish Context of Rom 5:12-14,” *SPhilo* 13 [2001]: 171-72.).

<sup>6</sup> Not: “Where there is no law there is no *sin*,” which Rom 2:12 (among other places) clearly disallows.

committing a legally “chargeable” transgression (παράβασις) of the divine prohibition given him in the garden of Eden, or in the way those after the giving of the law did, who like Adam, have sin clearly marked off as transgression by the legal prohibitions enshrined in the Mosaic law-code (5:14).<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, the most important thing to keep in mind is that no matter how one translates ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον, Paul is still insisting that sin and death have come into the world through Adam. Thus, in 5:12 Paul has established a basic principle of vicariousness, the details of which he begins parsing out in 5:15, and especially in 5:18-19.<sup>8</sup> This vicarious relationship is what Paul means to draw attention to in calling Adam a “type” (τύπος) of “the coming one” (τοῦ μέλλοντος – 5:14); a pattern of representative action is initiated with Adam that decisively shapes how the action of the coming Messiah should be understood.

Although Paul has set up the expectation that he will explain in more detail how Adam serves as a type of the coming one, in 5:15 he instead seeks to rule out a false implication of this typological arrangement: the grace of God is “not like [Adam’s] trespass” (οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα), because (γάρ), although it is true that many (οἱ πολλοί) died on account of the trespass of the one man (τῷ τοῦ ενός παραπτώματι), it is all the more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) true that the grace of God and the gift found in the grace of “the one man Jesus Christ” abounded to many. Paul has in this verse reconfirmed that Adam’s (single) transgression is causally responsible for the death of many; his single action has vicarious repercussions for an as of yet undefined group labelled simply “the many.” Notably—and perhaps shockingly—absent is any statement of the involvement of “the many” in the transgression that leads to their own death.

As in 5:15, again in 5:16 Paul, even though he is still arguing typologically, continues his argument by highlighting the inequality of sin and gift: the gift, in a fundamentally important way, is not like that which comes “through the sin of the

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<sup>7</sup> Rightly Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 241; John C. Poirier, “Romans 5:13-14 and the Universality of Law,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 353-56; Rudolf Pesch, *Römerbrief* (3d ed.; NEchtB 6; Würzburg: Echter, 1994), 53; N. T. Wright, “Adam, Israel and the Messiah,” in *The Climax of the Covenant* (London: T & T Clark, 1991), 39; cf. Otfried Hofius, “Die Adam-Christus-Antithese und das Gesetz: Erwägungen zu Röm 5,12-21,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; WUNT 89; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 186-87, 192-97.

<sup>8</sup> As we will see shortly, the reading of ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον I am proposing, in distinction from a view that sees Paul arguing in some sense for an equally ultimate agency of Adam’s and all of humanity’s sin with regard to the entrance of death into the world, fits more closely with how Paul goes on to argue (in 5:15-19) for a direct and causal link between Adam’s single sin and death, the reign of death, judgment and condemnation. *Pace* e.g., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 405-6.

one man” (δι’ ἑνὸς ἁμαρτήσαντος), because (γάρ) the judgment (τὸ κρίμα) resulting from this single sin leads to condemnation (κατάκριμα), while the gift that comes “after many sins” (ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων) leads to justification (δικαίωμα).<sup>9</sup> Paul cannot bring himself, even while arguing typologically, to place the gift and grace of God on the same level as the transgression and sin of Adam. While Adam’s act of transgression does indeed establish a pattern, it is a pattern that shines a light on the triumph of God’s grace, rather than a pattern of mere equality, with transgression and grace on two sides of a ledger, waiting to be shuffled around by strokes of the accountant’s pen.<sup>10</sup> What this means in sum is that even though death reigned “on account of the trespass of the one” (τῷ τοῦ ἑνὸς παραπτώματι) and through “the one man,” it is much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) the case that “those who have received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one [man] Jesus Christ” (5:17).<sup>11</sup> Sin and death have a purely negative function; they do nothing but destroy. Yet life and righteousness correspond with God’s creational intention, and are brought in decisively through the redemptive transformation accomplished in Christ (see Rom 5:20–21).<sup>12</sup> As such they far surpass the havoc wreaked by Adam’s transgression.

In 5:18 Paul once more restates the causal connection between Adam’s trespass, Christ’s obedience and the fate of those who come after them: not only does Adam’s act kill (5:15), thus ushering a reign of death into the world (5:17), it is also “through the trespass of the one” (δι’ ἑνὸς παραπτώματος) that “all men” (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) are condemned (εἰς κατάκριμα), just as it is “through the righteous act of one” (δι’ ἑνὸς δικαιώματος) that “all men” (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) receive the “justification of life” (εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς). In explanation (γάρ) of this contention Paul in 5:19 states the causal link between Adam’s and Christ’s actions and the fate of the many in a slightly different form in order to bring out the ramifications of the two representational spheres further: just as “through the disobedience of the one man” (διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου) the many (οἱ

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Wright, “Romans,” 528; Moo, *Romans*, 338; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.324–25.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wright, “Romans,” 528: “It is not . . . that Paul is denying *similarity* between the gift and the trespass; he is denying that there is a *balance* between them.” See also John Calvin, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 209–10; Hofius, “Adam-Christus-Anthithese,” 168–71; Wright, “Adam,” 37.

<sup>11</sup> Gk: οἱ τὴν περισσεῖαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἑνὸς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. As in 5:15, the causal connection between Adam’s transgression (τῷ τοῦ ἑνὸς παραπτώματι) and death is restated in 5:17.

<sup>12</sup> See also the connection of life and righteousness, as well as the creational (and new-creational) context for both, as this is developed at length in Romans 8.

πολλοί) were constituted (passive of καθίστημι) as sinners, so also “through the obedience of the one” (διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνός) man Jesus Christ will the many (οἱ πολλοί) be constituted (future passive of καθίστημι) as righteous.<sup>13</sup>

To explain the disparity between grace and transgression, and to round out his typology of Adam and Christ, Paul speaks in 5:20 of the law entering into history in order to (ἵνα) make transgression abound.<sup>14</sup> Although Paul’s claim would surely have appeared to his audience (especially any Jews) to be a scandalous claim about God’s holy law (cf. Rom 7:14), Paul insists that the law’s transgression increasing role is not ultimate: wherever the law causes sin thus to abound, grace super-abounds. In fact, sin is swallowed up in the superabundance of God’s gift, as 5:21 makes clear: even as (ὥσπερ) “sin reigned in death,” stirred up by the law, grace, in its superabundance *in and through* (lit. “in this way” [οὕτως]) sin’s death-dealing rule, will “reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>15</sup> Mysterially, and surely counter-intuitively (hence Rom 6:1), sin is nothing more than a subservient knave in the divine economy. Grace has the final word.

In light of the above, what can be said about the type of individuality expressed in the Adam-Christ story Paul tells in Romans 5? First, unlike Abraham in Romans 4, Adam and Christ are not exemplars, but rather vicariously representative individuals.<sup>16</sup> Although Abraham’s significance extends far beyond his own person, it does not do so in the way that Adam’s or Jesus Christ’s do.<sup>17</sup> This is so because, while it is true that Abraham, like Adam and Christ, is “unsubstitutable” in his

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<sup>13</sup> The common English rendering of καθίστημι as “make” in 5:19 can be slightly misleading. The verb should be translated here as “constitute” rather than “make,” if the latter is understood in any sort of transformative or creative sense (*contra* Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1966], 78). This is evident in the way 5:19 directly clarifies 5:18 (cf. the γάρ in 5:19): the many being constituted sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί) in 5:19 corresponds with all being condemned (εἰς κατάκριμα) in 5:18, just as the many being constituted righteous in 5:19 corresponds with all receiving justification (εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς) in 5:18. In other words, καθίστημι in 5:18-19 pertains to negative representative action (Adam’s disobedience) leading to negative *status* (condemnation) as well as positive representative action (Christ’s obedience) leading to positive *status* (justification).

<sup>14</sup> The ἵνα should be understood purposively (intended to increase sin), rather than epistemologically (showing sin to be sin); rightly e.g., Lohse, *Römer*, 183; Wright, “Romans,” 530; Moo, *Romans*, 347; *pace* e.g., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 422; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1.329; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.292-93.

<sup>15</sup> Gk: ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Calvin, *Romans*, 201; Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 201.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEKNT 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 186: “So Großes ist von Jesus Christus ausgesagt worden, daß es berechtigt ist, in ihm den Anfänger der neuen Menschheit zu sehen. Er kann also nicht mit einem Menschen innerhalb der israelitischen Heilsgeschichte (wie Abraham oder Moses) verglichen werden, sondern kann nur dem Anfänger der alten Menschheit gegenübergestellt werden.”

individuality, his actions are not in and of themselves epoch shaping. What is true for him must be reproduced in others in the present. Appropriation is a non-negotiable in Romans 4. In Rom 5:12-21 there is not a single reference to appropriation in the present, nor a single reference to faith (which is striking given the dense concentration of πίστις language in 3:21-5:2).<sup>18</sup> There is an account of the effects of Adam's and Christ's actions on groups of people (see e.g., Rom 5:12, 17), but no exhortation to follow (or avoid) the example of either. The dominant motif is one of representation: one man brings sin and death into the world (5:12-15), and his sin is responsible for judgment, condemnation, the reign of death and the constitution of humanity as sinners (5:16-19); another man initiates an outpouring of grace, justifies transgressors, extends the gift of righteousness and constitutes others righteous (5:15-19), he ushers in eternal life to a world crushed by Adam's sin (5:20-21). With Adam and Christ the correspondence between act and effect is absolute. They are both individuals with universal significance, even though the typological relationship between the two is asymmetrical, with the emphasis most emphatically on the power of God's grace as manifested in Jesus Christ.

Further corroborating this principle of absolute vicariousness is the disappearance of the generic individual from Paul's argumentation in 5:12-21. The generic individual is ubiquitous and central in Paul's argumentation Romans 1-3, appears often in Romans 4, and while not explicitly mentioned in 5:1-11, is implicit in the continuous (and dominant) language of "us" and what Christ has accomplished "for us" (see e.g., ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀποθανεῖν in 5:8).<sup>19</sup> Without absolutizing this (since the "all" and "many" of 5:12-21 cannot be made to *exclude* individuals), the language of Rom 5:12-21 should be taken in a primarily corporate, and even cosmic, sense:<sup>20</sup> the actions of Adam and Jesus Christ radically effect, and even constitute the identities of, "the many" and "all," while the generic individual

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<sup>18</sup> Contra Hans Weder, "Gesetz und Sünde: Gedanken zu einem Qualitativen Sprung im Denken des Paulus," *NTS* 31 (1985): 364, 368.

<sup>19</sup> There is a first person plural pronoun or verb in every single verse in 5:1-11, except 4 and 7, both of which continue thoughts from the verse preceding them. There is only one third person plural pronoun in 5:12-21 (and no such verbs), and it simply indicates that Jesus Christ is τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (5:21). Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 410.

<sup>20</sup> Rightly Moo, *Romans*, 315. Thus Käsemann, *Römer*, 131, is correct to insist that Rom 5:12-21 clearly evinces the "kosmische Dimension" of Paul's doctrine of justification which encompasses "die Weite der Schöpfung," although he is wrong in setting this in (even partial) antithesis to individual concerns, as my preceding analysis of Romans 2-4 has shown. The individual and community must be understood in a mutually qualifying manner: there is no isolated individual in Paul, nor is there a community without individuals.

essentially drops out of sight, as is especially clear from the complete lack of exhortative and imitative material in this portion of the letter. The dynamic at work here is one of representative actions and their aftermath, of contrasting epochs and communities and the two men who stand at the head of each. Romans 5:12-21 tells the story of the ages of sin and righteousness, of condemnation and justification, of death and eternal life.

## 2.2 Summary

Representative individuality is the key motif in Rom 5:12-21, as is especially clear in the absoluteness of Paul's language in 5:15-19: one man's sin, all died; one man's righteous act, all made alive.<sup>21</sup> In drawing out the representative and typological relationship between Adam and Christ, Paul does not feel the need (as do most modern interpreters) to insert a caveat about personal responsibility.<sup>22</sup> The central point instead is a description of Adam and Christ in completely representative terms where the spheres of each are "alternativ, exklusiv und ultimativ."<sup>23</sup>

We thus see in Rom 5:12-21 that individuality cannot be reduced to the sphere of individual volition and action, but entails being caught up in the actions of one of two representative individuals whose actions have universal significance. That is to say, Paul's understanding of individuality is communally and corporately qualified: the kind of individuality exemplified in Adam and Christ is one that determines the destiny of entire groups of people independently of the actions of those groups or the individuals who comprise them. The individuals Paul writes to are to understand themselves as subject to powers and forces outside of themselves even as they must constantly struggle with internal forces (sin, flesh, etc.) and are called to participate in a variety of individual actions (faith, hope, etc.).<sup>24</sup> Most

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<sup>21</sup> This principle of absolute representation is significantly stronger than saying, as does Brendan Byrne, that Paul understood Adam's sin as simply exercising "a fateful influence on many" (Brendan Byrne, "'The Type of the One to Come' [Rom 5:14]: Fate and Responsibility in Romans 5:12-21," *ABR* 36 [1988]: 29). Rather, we see in Rom 5:12-21 set "in schroffem Dualismus jene beiden Gestalten, welche allein Welt in Unheil und Heil inaugurierten" (Käsemann, *Römer*, 133; cf. 143).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hofius, "Adam-Christus-Anthithese," 184-86. *Contra* Barrett, *Romans*, 111; Byrne, "Type," 29; Weder, "Gesetz und Sünde," 360-1; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Theological Structure of Romans V. 12," *NTS* 19 (1972-1973): 349-52; Scroggs, *Last Adam*, 75, 79.

<sup>23</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, 137. Cf. Hofius, "Adam-Christus-Anthithese," 181; Chrys C. Caragounis, "Romans 5.15-16 in the Context of 5.12-21: Contrast or Comparison?" *NTS* 31 (1985): 146.

<sup>24</sup> See Engberg-Pedersen ("Person in Paul?") on the necessity of holding "apocalyptic" (external) and "cognitive" (internal) aspects of Pauline theology together.



importantly, they are to revel in the grace that has come “through the one man” (5:15: τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου) “Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21).

### 3. The Negative Exemplary Individual (Romans 7)

The *negative exemplary* individual is simply one who establishes a pattern (whether implicit or explicitly stated) for Paul’s audience to avoid.

#### 3.1 Paul’s Vanishing Act: Autobiography and Impersonation in Romans 7:7-25

In Rom 7:5-6 Paul recounts what happens to those “living in the flesh” when they come in contact with the law: the sinful passions are aroused, thus bearing fruit for death, which ends with human captivity to sin. The natural question to ask in light of this is the one Paul poses in 7:7: is the law *itself* sin (ἁμαρτία)? Paul answers with his typically vehement “by no means” (μὴ γένοιτο). Rather, the law causes one to know (γινώσκω) sin (7:7).

In order to explain how this is so Paul shifts into the first person singular in 7:7: the law does not simply make a generic human, or a generic Jew, aware of sin, it makes Paul aware of *his* sin, yet in such a way as to provide a negative example to dissuade Paul’s audience from turning to the law in order to find deliverance from sin. In distinction from the positive example of Abraham’s faith in God in chapter 4, Paul portrays himself in chapter 7 as a negative exemplary individual.<sup>25</sup> However, the significance of Paul’s depiction of his struggle with sin and law extends far beyond his own experience: combined with what Paul has already written about the nature of individuality (particularly in Romans 1-3 and Romans 5), Romans 7—despite being directed primarily at Paul’s fellow Jews—paints a picture of a universalized humanity, with Paul as a vivid instantiation and example of both Adam’s and Israel’s deathly encounter with divine command.

None of this, however, is undisputed in recent scholarship. While the first person singular is a dominant feature of this unit of text (being introduced in 7:7,

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 282, n. 51 (cf. 296): “The focus on the individual ‘I’ should not be played down . . . . The individual focus is entirely consistent with the pragmatic aim of this chapter, which is to dissuade Roman Christians from the practice of a communally normative mode of life.” The reason the alternative “communally normative mode of life” must be shunned is because it teaches one to rely on the law in order to find freedom from slavery to sin. Such an alternative can be found e.g., in 4 Macc 2:5-6b, on which see Francis Watson, “Constructing an Antithesis: Pauline and Other Jewish Perspectives on Divine and Human Agency,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (eds. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 108-16.

and used consistently until 7:25), since Werner Kümmel's influential proposal arguing that Paul is merely employing a rhetorical form in Romans, this chapter has increasingly been interpreted in non-autobiographical—and ultimately, non-individual—terms.<sup>26</sup> The main attempts to read Romans 7 without reference to Paul's own autobiography are those that see Paul using a rhetorical device like *προσωποποιία* (speech-in-character),<sup>27</sup> those that see Paul speaking as Adam,<sup>28</sup> and those that see him speaking as Israel.<sup>29</sup> In all of this a good deal of ink has been spilled attempting to erase what—on the surface at least—is undeniable in 7:7-25: Paul is speaking of himself and no one else. While all of these revisionary readings can point to certain features of the text, as Stephen Chester (following Gerd Theissen) has argued, there is really only one element—namely the phrase “I once was alive apart from the law” (ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ) in 7:9—that, combined with an alleged incompatibility with Phil 3:4-12, has led interpreters to “come up with the idea of considering the ‘I’ fictive.”<sup>30</sup> Scholars insist that Paul could never have spoken as a Jew of a time in which he lived “apart from law” (χωρὶς νόμου),<sup>31</sup> and that the wretched struggle between flesh and law that Paul

<sup>26</sup> Werner G. Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen in Neuen Testament* (Munich: Kaiser, 1974), which was originally published in 1929. Chester, *Conversion*, 183-84, summarizes the post-Kümmel consensus well: “Kümmel influentially argued that the wretched person of 7:14-25 simply cannot be the same person as the confident individual who, in Phil. 3:4-6, has so many reasons for confidence in the flesh. When Paul uses the first person singular in Rom. 7, he does not mean what he appears to say. The ‘I’ of Rom. 7 does not include Paul himself.” See also Hermann Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams und das Ich der Menschheit* (WUNT 164; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 72-74; Burnett, *Salvation*, 174-87. L. Ann Jervis, “‘The Commandment Which is for Life’ (Romans 7.10): Sin’s Use of the Obedience of Faith,” *JSNT* 27 (2004): 193-216, is one of the few recent interpreters to argue that Paul describes Christian, individual experience in the present.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 441-45; Stowers, *Rereading*, 264-69. I agree with Chester, *Conversion*, 184, n. 122, (following Lauri Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (WUNT 124; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 118-19) regarding Paul's alleged use of *προσωποποιία* in Romans 7: it is “unlikely that Paul had mastered such a high-level technique, typical only of the actor or orator with many years’ training, and even more unlikely that he would have expected his Roman audience to recognize its unsignalled use.” See also the critique of Kümmel's arguments for a purely rhetorical “I” in Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (trans. John P. Galvin; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987), 192, n. 17, 200; cf. Douglas J. Moo, “Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7-12,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 128-29.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 282-87; Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams*, 125-86; Otfried Hofius, “Der Mensch im Schatten Adams: Römer 7,7-25a,” in *Paulusstudien II* (WUNT 143; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 110-21, 134-35; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.343-44; Käsemann, *Römer*, 185-87; Stanislas Lyonnet, “L’histoire du salut selon le chapitre VII de l’Épître aux Romains,” *Bib* 43 (1962): 117-51.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 356-80; Frank Thielman, “The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5-8,” in *Pauline Theology. Volume 3: Romans* (eds. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 190-4; N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Pauline Theology. Volume 3: Romans* (eds. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 49-54; Moo, “Romans 7.7-12,” 122-35.

<sup>30</sup> Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 201, quoted by Chester, *Conversion*, 185, n. 127.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g., Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 231.

depicts in Romans 7 could not possibly describe the experience of one who even prior to coming to know Jesus Christ saw himself as “blameless” (ἄμεμπτος) “according to the righteousness found in the law” (κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος - Phil 3:6).<sup>32</sup> With autobiography taken out of the picture, the individual can easily be dispensed with.

However, as Chester has argued, Philippians 3 and Romans 7 should be seen as recounting Paul’s past from different vantage points. In Philippians 3 Paul describes his former way of life as he experienced it then, as a Jew intent on persecuting believers in Christ because of his intense zeal for Jewish law and customs (Phil 3:4-6).<sup>33</sup> In contrast, in Rom 7:7-13 Paul recounts his past primarily from the epistemological vantage point of present Christian experience and knowledge (cf. Rom 12:2), which, as Chester details through extensive engagement with modern sociological study, is the normal way in which “conversion experiences” are recounted across diverse times and cultures.<sup>34</sup> In Paul’s case, while his pre-Christian self would never have spoken of the law as death-dealing and sin-inflaming, from the new perspective of faith in Christ, he insists that the law (despite—or perhaps *because of*—its holiness and righteousness, as per 7:12) does these very things (7:13-14; cf. Gal 2:19-20).<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Paul says in 7:9 that, although he was once alive apart from the law, there was a time when sin “came back alive” (ἀναζάω).<sup>36</sup> In 7:11 he clarifies (γάρ) what he means by this: Paul’s “death” came through the deceptive (ἐξαπατάω) agency of the commandment, and the entrance of sin into his life that was provided through this commandment. It is not that Paul had no sin prior to sin’s coming back

<sup>32</sup> One of Kümmel’s main arguments against an autobiographical reading. See Kümmel, *Römer* 7, 104-17.

<sup>33</sup> See Chester, *Conversion*, 183; cf. Gathercole, *Boasting*, 208.

<sup>34</sup> Chester, *Conversion*, 184-85; cf. Wright, “Theology of Paul,” 51.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Eine neuere Paulusperspektive?” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus* (eds. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 50-1; Chester, *Conversion*, 185; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 243; Moo, “Romans 7.7-12,” 125; Käsemann, *Römer*, 187.

<sup>36</sup> Although ἀναζάω is often translated simply as “come to life” (e.g., ESV, NASB, NIV), as BDAG, s.v. ἀναζάω 1-2 (cf. LSJ), indicates it is properly translated in every NT usage as “come back to life” or “come out of a state of dormancy,” which is more accurately captured in the KJV’s “sin revived” (cf. RSV, NRSV; *pace* Käsemann, *Römer*, 187). This adds even more support to seeing Paul in the second half of 7:9 as describing his past experience from his present vantage point: only with Christ-believing hindsight does Paul recognize that the “life” he thought he was enjoying at the time (7:9a) was false, since sin was—unknown to Paul—lurking in his heart, waiting for the opportunity (provided by the commandment) to reactivate, deceive and kill Paul. The meaning of ἀναζάω should alert the interpreter to the danger of pressing links with Genesis 3 too far: there was of course no sin dormant in Adam that could be revived prior to his and Eve’s initial sinful acts.

to life—contradicting Paul’s categorical denial of such a notion in Rom 3:9-19, and especially 3:23—but that there was a time in his life in which he believed himself to have had true spiritual life, although in reality sin, using the commandment, was at that time deceiving him. It seems clear, as Chester notes, that this refers to Paul’s present understanding of his past experience, for had he known he was being deceived, Paul surely would not have allowed himself to be co-opted by sin’s wicked machinations.<sup>37</sup>

All of this is to say that it is not necessary to posit a conflict between an autobiographical understanding of Romans 7 and how Paul describes his past in Phil 3:4-6. Given the dominant first-person singular features of Rom 7:7-25 and the absence of any explicit cues that Paul intends to be taken as speaking *primarily* of someone other than himself, it is surely more difficult to redact Paul’s own past out of Romans 7 than it is to see this chapter as recounting this history from a different vantage point than Philippians 3.<sup>38</sup> In neither Romans 7 nor Philippians 3 do we have unmediated access to Paul’s state of mind at the point of his conversion. To insist that we can uncover detailed information about Paul’s state of mind in Philippians 3 and then place this in antithesis to a biographical account in Romans 7 is to attempt to extract far too much information about Paul’s psyche than Philippians 3 provides. Instead, the accounts in Philippians 3 and Romans 7 give us a perspectival telling of Paul’s former life primarily geared toward shaping the theology and praxis of his audience in the present. The way in which Paul tells his story differs in both accounts, but only insofar as his didactic purposes differ in the two passages. The following analysis of Rom 7:7-25 should make the genuinely personal, autobiographical and individual nature of this text even clearer.

To begin with, the very scriptural prohibition against illegitimate desire (Exod 20:17) that Paul cites as he begins to explain the effects of the law on sinful humanity is a second person singular (7:7). Scholars, in the attempt to read Paul as speaking strictly as Israel, sometimes miss this simple fact; no matter what

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<sup>37</sup> Chester, *Conversion*, 186-90.

<sup>38</sup> On the opposite side of the interpretational spectrum, however, Burnett (e.g., *Salvation*, 197) rarely moves beyond the bare fact that Romans 7 has a “personal feel,” or a “highly personal tone,” etc. Such statements could of course be very easily assimilated into a purely rhetorical “I.” It is necessary not only to provide a more thorough investigation than Burnett offers of the variety of textual (and intertextual) features in Rom 7:7-25 that bring to the fore important autobiographical dimensions of the text, but also to provide an analysis of what this indicates about Paul’s conception of individuality.

relevance Paul's speech has in Romans 7 with regard to Israel's experience of the law, the commandment itself in its Old Testament context was directed at *individuals* within Israel. Thus, even if Paul is speaking as Israel, or as a representative Israelite (which is likely), he also speaks as an *actual* Israelite who is subject to the individualized form of the commandment just like his ancestors were.<sup>39</sup> If the historical experience of this commandment was the occasion for a collective rebellion against God, it was only such as each individual found within him- or herself a craving for that which the law prohibited. Paul too knows on a deeply personal level the pain and "death" attendant upon the counterintuitive cycle of proscription, desire and death that marked Israel's history (7:8).<sup>40</sup>

The overall sense of 7:9-11 is relatively straightforward, despite the scholarly debates swirling around the expression ἐγὼ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ in 7:9: the commandment, through an act of deception (7:11), activates latent sin (7:9), which results in Paul's spiritual death (7:10). As I have already noted, the central difficulty in fitting this phrase into a personal and autobiographical reading of Romans 7 is that it does not seem to make sense for Paul to say that there was ever a time in which he lived without being subject to the law. While it is indeed true that an autobiographical reading will fail if it cannot make sense of the fact that Paul as a Jew was born within the realm of the law, recent scholarship has been led somewhat astray from the outset in assuming that χωρὶς in 7:9 must mean that the "I" is recounting a time in which he or she was alive either before the law was given or outside the governing realm of the law.<sup>41</sup> However, a more satisfying explanation of χωρὶς νόμου is possible that retains its autobiographical focus.

The most significant thing to note from the outset is that Paul has already used the exact phrase χωρὶς νόμου in 7:8c.<sup>42</sup> In 7:8c Paul speaks of the fact that sin was dead χωρὶς νόμου. Rather than meaning that sin was dead *before* the law came, or independently of the law's rule, Paul is indicating that sin is not activated in the human heart *apart from* the work of a law that defines sin as sin, and in so doing,

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 200-1.

<sup>40</sup> On which see Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 363-80; cf. Lohse, *Römer*, 212.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g., Jewett, *Romans*, 450-1; Moo, *Romans*, 437; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 467; Wilckens, *Römer*, 2.81-82; Käsemann, *Römer*, 186.

<sup>42</sup> Calvin, *Romans*, 254, says that 7:8c "is a general truth, which he presently applies to his own case." While I have not followed Calvin in every detail of his interpretation, his reading has most helped me see that a temporal understanding of χωρὶς νόμου does not make the best sense of the phrase in context.

provokes the commission of sin.<sup>43</sup> This has been Paul's point since 7:7: sin is not recognized as sin without a commandment to mark it off as sinful (7:7), just as sin does not produce its deathly fruit apart from the opportunity (ἄφορμή) provided by the divine commandment (7:8). This is what Paul means (cf. γάρ) in 7:8c when he says that sin is dead χωρὶς νόμου, namely that sin is not known as sin, and does not work its devastation apart from divine prohibition and command. This is not a primarily temporal designation, but rather one of explaining the necessary prerequisites for sin to be active in Paul's (or anyone's) life.

Therefore, when Paul says in 7:9 that he once lived χωρὶς νόμου, he is reflecting on his perception at the time that he had true life, but also noting that from his present perspective he realizes that the only reason he thought he had life at that time was because he had not yet recognized that the law (combined with sin) only kills. When the commandment came (ἔρχομαι) sin revived (ἀναζάω) (7:9b) and Paul died (7:10a). Although Paul speaks of the law coming (ἔρχομαι – 7:9b), which could seem to indicate a primarily temporal activity, he makes it clear that this is rather to be understood cognitively when he says that this coming should be equated with Paul's having discovered (passive of εὕρισκω) that the commandment—despite its promise of life (7:10b; cf. Lev 18:5 in Rom 10:5; Gal 3:12)—in actuality leads to death (εἰς θάνατον).<sup>44</sup> This whole process Paul summarizes as one of sin's having deceived (ἐξαπατάω) him, and having killed him through the agency of the commandment (7:11). It is not the case, then, that Paul is arguing in 7:9a that the “I” of Romans 7 once lived before the law/commandment was given, or independently of its rule, but rather that the “I” (Paul himself) once believed himself to be enjoying the life promised in the law, but only because the law had not yet destroyed this illusion by activating the dormant sin in his heart. Although the phrase ἐγὼ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ, as many have argued,<sup>45</sup> may echo

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Romans 3:21, where Paul uses the exact phrase χωρὶς νόμου to show how the righteousness of God has been revealed in a source outside of the law (even though the law did testify to it), without at all indicating that the law had not yet been given by God. While ποτέ in 7:9 points to the past, it cannot be thereby assumed (as it is by many) that its use with χωρὶς νόμου indicates that Paul is speaking of a time in which the “I” was not governed by law. Such a notion would have to come from the broader context, which is in fact against such a reading.

<sup>44</sup> Whether Rom 7:10 is an allusion to Lev 18:5, or simply puts forward “a more general law-life concept” (Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul* [WUNT 2.241; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 186) is fairly immaterial since the concept is almost certainly present.

<sup>45</sup> See e.g., Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams*, 127-34; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.351-52.

the story of Adam in his primeval “pre-fall” bliss, Paul is the primary speaker in 7:9, and the example his past provides is the central point of 7:7-13.<sup>46</sup>

When Paul says that “the commandment that leads to life” (ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ εἰς ζωὴν) “was found by me” (εὗρέθη μοι) to “lead to death” (7:10), he is not simply saying that the law made him aware that sin is sin, but that he has come to *experience* in his own life the dreadful effects of the law when combined with human sin: the commandment “was found by me” [μοι] to cause death, rather than merely revealing this truth in a general sense.<sup>47</sup> While εὕρισκω can have the sense attached to it in the passive simply of something being “proved,”<sup>48</sup> it is likely that Paul is indicating with this verb the existential nature of his “discovery,” since he is explaining throughout 7:8-11 how he came to *understand* and *experience* the effect the commandment has on sinful humanity. Further pointing to the existential dimension of Paul’s discovery is the fact that covetousness is a purely inward disposition, and deception, while involving one in an action against one’s will, is nonetheless cognitive; one is deceived only insofar as one mentally receives and acts upon information, even if that information is ultimately misleading. In all of this, Paul’s argumentation is seen to be intensely personal and cognitive in a way that is difficult to explain according to a purely rhetorical understanding of the first person singular. This could have been spoken in the persona of Adam, but even if this is the case, Paul has added his own flourish to the Genesis account by attempting to penetrate deeper into the existential and psychological *effects* of the commandment-deception-death sequence than does the straightforwardly descriptive narrative of Genesis 3.

In 7:14, Paul’s narrational time frame shifts to the present, which adds a heightened sense of urgency to the already personal and existential dimensions of the battle between the law and sinful flesh described in 7:7-13.<sup>49</sup> Throughout 7:13-25 the war being waged between flesh and sin is portrayed in strongly cognitive (particularly “revelational”), inner and individual language.<sup>50</sup> Sin is revealed (passive of φαίνω) to be sin through the death it produces (7:13). I do not

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<sup>46</sup> *Contra* Käsemann, *Römer*, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Emphasis added. Cf. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 243-44.

<sup>48</sup> See BDAG, s.v. εὕρισκω 2.

<sup>49</sup> And thus largely marks a turn away from the more “storied” material of 7:7-13, with its resonances with Adam and Israel, on which see Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 184-90.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, 184.

understand (γινώσκω) the battle going on in myself, which prevents me from doing what I want (θέλω) to do (7:15; cf. θέλω in 7:16-20).<sup>51</sup> Sin dwells “inside of me” (ἐν ἐμοί), that is, “in my flesh” (ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου), neither of which designations can be abstracted from the individual self and personal volition (7:18). Especially significant is Paul’s statement in 7:22 that the “I” delights in God’s law “according to the inner person” (κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον), a designation that, as is the case with the other Pauline uses of ἔσω ἄνθρωπος (2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16), clearly refers to the location of divine renewal and transformation *within* a Christ-believer.<sup>52</sup> Finally, as in 7:10, Paul speaks of personally discovering (εὐρίσκω) the law’s death-dealing nature (7:21), while in 7:23 he writes of seeing (βλέπω) the law’s slavery-creating power at work “in my body parts” (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου), which traps Paul in a miserable “body of death” (τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου) even while he is still biologically alive (7:24).

As is the case with 7:7-13 it is not possible to abstract the language of 7:14-25 from the context of inward struggle and mental processes, which points decidedly against taking 7:14-25 as referring *exclusively* to Israel’s “hypostatized” experience or to a purely fictive rhetorical figure. If there is any doubt that Paul is writing of himself as an individual, for the sake of individuals in the present, the way in which he articulates in Romans 8 the solution to the plight he has detailed throughout Romans 7 should put it to rest: the whole corporate body of believers (τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) has had its condemnation taken away in Christ; this means freedom for “you” (σε), the individual, in the present (cf. νῦν in 8:1).<sup>53</sup> While the narrative of Romans 7 is a story of sin and death that spans the ages, it is also a narrative that culminates in the redemption and freedom each individual believer enjoys in Christ in the present, even as this is enjoyed only within the corporate context of the body of believers.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> On which see Chester, *Conversion*, 191.

<sup>52</sup> Whether or not Paul wrote Ephesians, the same perspective on ἔσω ἄνθρωπος is present in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.

<sup>53</sup> Some mss. substitute με for σε (A D 1739<sup>c</sup>. 1881 ℳ lat sy<sup>h</sup> sa; Cl), although a few, in an attempt to correlate 8:2 with the plural pronouns in the rest of chapter 8 substitute ἡμᾶς for σε (Ψ bo; Meth). Σε, however, is the best attested reading (ℵ B F G 1506\*. 1739\* ar b sy<sup>p</sup>; Tert Ambst) as well as being the most likely reading to have been changed, since the second person singular feels somewhat out of place in the context of the plurals of chapter 8 or the first person singulars throughout chapter 7. On Paul’s reasons for using σε in 8:2 see C. E. B. Cranfield, “Changes of Person and Number in Paul’s Epistles,” in *The Bible and the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985), 219.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g., Rom 8:9.



### 3.2 Echoes of Eden in the Law of Moses?

In Romans 7, we see Paul the individual, caught in a desperate struggle with sin for mastery of the self. What then about Adam and Israel? Are resonances of Adam or Israel present at all in Romans 7, and if so, do they prove that Paul's banishment from his own life story in Romans 7 is justifiable, or indeed, mandatory?

To begin with, echoes with Adam's story seem to be present, at least with regard to 7:7-13. First, Paul refers to a single commandment (ἐντολή) in 7:8, echoing the language of God's prohibition (ἐντέλλομαι) of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Gen 2:16 (and 3:11, 17).<sup>55</sup> Just as a single commandment proved to be Adam's undoing, so too is it Paul's.<sup>56</sup> Paul's writing of a *single* commandment (cf. the definite article) six times in 7:7-13, when in the rest of chapter 7 he writes of the law in a more general sense, lends itself toward being understood as a reference to the one story of a single commandment's transgression that would have immediately come to mind for any Jewish reader, namely the story of Adam and Eve.<sup>57</sup> The presence of an allusion to the first sin in Eden would fit with the way Paul has already described Adam's sin in Romans 5. In that chapter Paul unambiguously describes Adam's sin as a trespass (παράπτωμα - 5:15 [x2], 16, 17, 18, 20) and a transgression (παράβασις - 5:14), which are both designations that entail the violation of an explicit, individual commandment. This can only mean the single prohibition Adam was given in Eden.<sup>58</sup> By the time readers get to Romans 7 they will have already been primed to see the reference to a single commandment as alluding to Adam's story in Genesis 3.

Taken on its own, the reference to a single commandment is probably not enough to confirm that Paul is intentionally echoing Genesis 3. However, the connections continue. Many have pointed to the likely connection between deception (ἐξαπατάω) in Rom 7:11 and Eve's claim in Gen 3:13 that the serpent

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<sup>55</sup> See Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 283.

<sup>56</sup> The commandment cannot be understood as something entirely different from the Mosaic law, as the specific commandment (the 10<sup>th</sup>) that Paul refers to in 7:8-13 is precisely a commandment of the law (7:7). My point is not that the mention of the commandment in 7:8-13 is something completely separate from the Mosaic law, but rather that Paul has carefully woven both Adam's and Israel's experience of the divine commandment together with Paul's own autobiography. Although the commandment in 7:7 is explicitly taken from the Mosaic legislation, Paul transitions into a description of the commandment in 7:9 that in my estimation intentionally echoes Genesis 3.

<sup>57</sup> Paul is primarily addressing Jews in this section; see 7:1. But cf. Jervis, "Romans 7.10," 197: "Of course, when Paul speaks to matters of immediate relevance to Jewish believers he does not expect (or want) his Gentile hearers to stop their ears."

<sup>58</sup> Pace Moo, "Romans 7.7-12," 124.

deceived (ἀπατάω) her, causing her to eat of the forbidden fruit.<sup>59</sup> Paul was tricked into thinking that the law could tame his covetousness (Rom 7:7), just as Eve was deceived into thinking that she would become like God if she ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:5-6).<sup>60</sup> Finally, the link between transgression and death throughout chapter 7, while also true with regard to the Mosaic legislation, is one of the central themes of the narrative in Genesis 2-3.<sup>61</sup> While echoes of the story of Adam's transgression in Eden may not be at a particularly high "volume," they do seem to be genuinely present, even though Paul's own story remains central.

Do echoes of Adam in Romans 7 mean that scholars who posit an Israel-centered focus have misunderstood Paul's purposes in this chapter? This seems unlikely, as many features of the chapter appear to indicate that Paul is *also* speaking, if not *as* Israel, at least as a representative Israelite.<sup>62</sup> To begin with, he makes it clear in 7:1 that he is primarily speaking to fellow (believing) Israelites, or at least to those who have sufficient knowledge of the law as to be able to make sense of what he says. Furthermore, the connection between law and death, as is the case with Adam's transgression and (promised) death, is one Paul consistently makes when referring to the Mosaic law (see e.g., 1 Cor 15:56b; 2 Cor 3:7; etc.).<sup>63</sup> More straightforwardly, Rom 7:7 quotes from the Mosaic law (specifically the Decalogue) itself (Exod 20:17); excising or downplaying Israel's history would, then, on the surface of things seem like an odd procedure. That Paul has Israel in mind is also signalled in the abbreviation of the tenth commandment in 7:7 to the simple form of "you shall not desire" (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις), which Paul takes as summarizing the entire content of the Mosaic law-code.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, as Francis Watson has argued, the pattern of legal prohibition leading to enflamed desire and rebellion fits in well with the scriptural narrative of Israel's early post-Sinai experience.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> On which, see Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 283; Hofius, "Röm 7,7-25a," 132; Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 206-7; Käsemann, *Römer*, 186.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Lohse, *Römer*, 212.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 284; Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 209.

<sup>62</sup> On which see Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 374-80; Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 237-38; Hans-Martin Lübking, *Paulus und Israel im Römerbrief: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11* (EurH 260; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986), 44-47; Moo, "Romans 7.7-12," 129.

<sup>63</sup> See Moo, "Romans 7.7-12," 127.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 360; Moo, "Romans 7.7-12," 123.

<sup>65</sup> Watson, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 363-80; cf. Wright, "Theology of Paul," 50-1.

It is my contention that Echoes of Adam and Israel should be seen as cohering in a single story spanning the major periods of Old Testament history (creation → law). The same pattern is evident in both: prohibition creates desire, which leads to death.<sup>66</sup> Paul himself, who stands as a representative of the condition of Israel in the present, although writing from the vantage point of faith in Christ, brings biblical history into the present. As I have already noted, all of this fits smoothly with the way Paul has already schematized salvation history in Rom 5:12-21: Adam's transgression (παράβασις), just like all transgressions marked out as such (as violations of law), is uniquely legal (and thus "countable" [ἐλλογέω - 5:13]) in nature. Mosaic Torah, of course, is also clearly legal in its demarcation of transgressions. Paul the Israelite—subject as he is to legally defined righteousness and transgression<sup>67</sup>—has seen recapitulated in his own life the two most crucial encounters with divine commandments in biblical history (Adam and Moses).<sup>68</sup> The echoes of both reinforce, rather than refute the notion that in Rom 7:7-25 Paul is telling his own life story. Paul is describing himself, but he also presents the reader with an individual self that is caught up in a drama of sin and death that begins with Adam, is amplified and communalized in Israel, and that has been existentially re-enacted in Paul's own past.<sup>69</sup> Although Paul is speaking primarily as an individual in this chapter, Adam casts his long shadow forward, and in so doing marks the death-dealing effect of the law out as a universal and primeval human phenomenon.<sup>70</sup> It is equally important, however, that Paul depicts himself as a representative Israelite struggling (and failing, just as his forbears did) to find freedom from the flesh and sin through obedience to the law. *Whenever sinful humanity comes into contact with God's law, death results.*

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. J. A. Ziesler, "The Role of the Tenth Commandment in Romans 7," *JSNT* 33 (1988): 47-49, who also notes that the prohibition of illegitimate desire is the only commandment that possibly could refer to both the Adamic and the Mosaic situations. *Contra* Emma Wasserman, "Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Romans 6-8," *JSNT* 30 (2008): 405, who goes so far as to insist that "nothing here alludes to God's instructions to Adam, the garden, Eve or the serpent."

<sup>67</sup> On which see Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 266-71.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams*, 127-29; Hofius, "Röm 7,7-25a," 119; Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 203-4.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Chester, *Conversion*, 187, n. 129; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 282; idem, *Hermeneutics of Faith*, 360, n. 10; Thielman, "Story of Israel," 193.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Hofius, "Röm 7,7-25a," 119-21. Since Moo, "Romans 7.7-12," 128, clearly recognizes the "basic similarity in the situations of Adam confronted by the Paradise command and Israel confronted by the law" and the "conceptual parallels with the Paradise narrative" it is difficult for me to see why he downplays the notion of Adamic echoes in Romans 7.

The individual in Romans 7, then, is Paul. However, Adam and Israel hover in the background. Anti-individual and anti-autobiographical readings of Romans 7 that posit an exclusively Adamic or Israelite “I” tear asunder what Paul has joined together. Rather than simply attempting to amalgamate three things that do not belong together,<sup>71</sup> the interpretation above posits that this three-way juxtaposition—even though the primary story in Romans 7 remains Paul’s own—further enhances Paul’s theology of anthropological universalization, even in a context (Romans 7) that does not completely eliminate particularization (i.e., Paul is still speaking as an Israelite, even as he continues to relativize the importance of that distinction). Ultimately, the experience of Paul the individual reflects the histories of Adam and Israel and reveals the presence of a repeating pattern of law, illegitimate desire and death in salvation history.<sup>72</sup>

When seen in these cosmic terms, Paul’s own history becomes that of every individual in the world, even as it is particularly relevant for a Jewish reader who has been born “under the law.” In portraying himself throughout Romans 7 in the first person singular (as a negative exemplary individual) Paul’s “‘I’ models the main contention of his argument” in a particularly vivid and individualizing manner:<sup>73</sup> the personal and autobiographical touches are absolutely necessary in order to dissuade the Jewish members of his audience from seeking to find freedom from slavery to sin under the law, or for those Gentiles who would “overhear” this section, to convince them not to turn to the law for freedom in the first place.<sup>74</sup> In other words, this is no disinterestedly objective treatise on law and sin; it is Paul’s agonized plea to the Roman Christians to turn from the law toward Christ, a plea that is all the more dramatic and persuasive because of Paul’s having himself gone through the experiences he describes in Romans 7.

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<sup>71</sup> Pace Jewett, *Romans*, 442.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Oda Wischmeyer, “Paulus als Ich-Erzähler: Ein Beitrag zu seiner Person, seiner Biographie und seiner Theologie,” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus* (eds. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer; WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 101-2; Brian Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’: Personal Example as Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 225-26; Moo, *Romans*, 431. Thus, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 465, is correct to argue that Paul speaks in Romans 7 “from a historical and corporate point of view” but wrong to contend that “the confrontation of the Ego with sin and the law is not considered by Paul on an individual, psychological level.”

<sup>73</sup> As Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 243, puts it: “Paul very clearly chooses this form of speaking here because his whole theme is *the effect on the individual* (an I!) of the law” (emphasis original).

<sup>74</sup> Dodd, *Paradigmatic ‘I’*, 234; cf. Michael Paul Middelndorf, *The ‘I’ in the Storm: a Study of Romans 7* (Saint Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 237-42; Wilckens, *Römer*, 2.79.

### 3.3 Summary

In sum, Rom 7:7-21 presents the reader with a picture of the experience of humanity with law and sin, and does so primarily through the negative example of Paul's own past. As *an individual*, Paul has passed through slavery to sin into the freedom of life in Christ (Rom 8:2), and as *an individual* he provides a negative example to dissuade his audience from taking on the "yoke of the law." Paul's implicit plea to turn from the law would simply lose its plausibility and force were the "I" of Romans 7 someone who had not experienced the battle therein described.

Nonetheless, despite the pointedly individual and autobiographical perspective of Romans 7, freedom from the slavery described in this chapter is also a thoroughly communal enterprise, as seen for example in Rom 8:9, which speaks of the Spirit at work and dwelling "among [plural] you" (ἐν ὑμῖν), although this does not make the struggle (or the outcome of this struggle) any less personal and individual. The sphere of the Spirit's activity is the body of believers as a whole; while the Spirit works within the individual (see Rom 8:2), it does not work *solely* within the individual, or within an individual who is not a part of the community of believers. As we will see, Paul goes on to articulate the work of the Spirit in terms of community formation and edification (Rom 12:1), as well as indicating the necessarily communal outworking of the Spirit's activity in the peacefulness it instills within the church as a whole (see Rom 14:17). The interpersonal and corporate dynamics of the Spirit's transformative work are extremely important in Galatians as well (see esp. Gal 5:22-26). In fact, one could even say with Bultmann that the fundamental orientation of Pauline ethics "receives its stamp not alone from the demands that apply to the individual by himself . . . but *especially* from the obligations that arise from human fellowship."<sup>75</sup> Paul's ethical vision is far more centered on how redeemed individuals treat one another than it is with the fostering of a kind of private piety that has no necessary connection to the development of a peaceful and self-sacrificially loving ethos within the believing community.

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<sup>75</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 342 (emphasis added).

#### 4. The Somatic Individual (Romans 12)

The *somatic* individual is an individual in the body of Christ. The word somatic is meant to capture the necessary connection in Paul's thought between the individual and the community; there is no individual who is not united to Christ, no member cut off from the singular body of the Lord.

In Romans 12 Paul enters into an extended section of primarily exhortative material that continues all the way until Rom 15:13. The opening verse of this long stretch of paraenesis provides a supreme example of the way in which Paul holds the individual and community together as vitally interconnected dimensions of his theological and ethical vision: the bodies of each believer (τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν) in Rome are to be presented as a *single, communal* "living sacrifice" (θυσίαν ζῶσαν) to God (12:1);<sup>76</sup> here individual and corporate categories meld together.<sup>77</sup> From the outset of Paul's major section of ethical exhortation, then, the individual can only be understood insofar as it is found within the community, just as the community can only be understood insofar as it is comprised of individual bodies. This will become even clearer as Paul elaborates on this principle of unity-within-diversity in 12:3-8.

In 12:2 Paul states that the communal act of sacrificial presentation (12:1) entails a resistance to being conformed to the dominant mode of life in the world, and is founded upon the renewal of the mind. All of this will enable the Roman believers to know how to live according to God's will (12:2). The first major ethical implication of the renewed mind of the believer is a proper self-estimation, a thinking about oneself that is not overly high in its self-opinion, but instead, is soundly founded (σωφρονέω) on the true state of affairs in the world (12:3). This call to transformed thinking is explicitly directed at each individual (παντὶ τῷ ὄντι) among you (ἐν ὑμῖν), and the basis for this proper thinking is the "measure of faith" (μέτρον πίστεως) that is apportioned (μερίζω) to each individual (ἕκαστος) by God (12:3).<sup>78</sup> The prominence of cognitively focused exhortations in 12:1-3 points to the indispensably personal and individual nature, as well as the inward location (in the mind [νοῦς]), of the moral revolution that is meant to take place among every

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (London: SPCK, 2009), 99.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Michael Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13* (JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 84.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Lohse, *Römer*, 339: "Jeder einzeln Christ wird als Glied der Gemeinschaft angesprochen, der er angehört und zu dienen hat."

individual Roman believer: the transformation (μεταμορφώω) that comes with the renewal (ἀνακαίνωσις) of the mind (12:2b), as the opposite of being conformed (συσχηματίζω) to the present age (12:2a), leads to testing (δοκιμάζω) the will of God (12:2c), refraining from thinking too highly (ὑπερφρονέω) of oneself (12:3b) and thinking (φρονέω) with sound judgment (σωφρονέω - 12:3c).<sup>79</sup>

The meaning of the phrase μέτρον πίστεως in 12:3 has proven difficult for interpreters to agree on, but I believe it should be understood as an objective standard (faith) given to each individual believer to enable him or her to carry out the necessary self-evaluation that will lead to humble thinking, which in turn will produce the sought after harmony within the body of believers that Paul describes in 12:4-8.<sup>80</sup> In explaining the function of the μέτρον πίστεως, Paul provides the most explicit and extensive elaboration of the interconnectedness of the individual and the community in the entire letter.

In 12:4 Paul, adopting a metaphor common in antiquity, speaks of a single body (ἐνὶ σώματι) comprised of many individual members (πολλὰ μέλη), each of whom, as I have just noted, has already been tasked *as an individual* (παντὶ τῷ ὄντι/ἕκαστος) with a radical transformation of one's thought patterns (12:3).<sup>81</sup> Just

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<sup>79</sup> On the personal and individual nature of this transformation see Jeremy Moiser, "Rethinking Romans 12-15," *NTS* 36 (1990): 575; Hans Dieter Betz, "Das Problem der Grundlagen der paulinischen Ethik," *ZTK* 85 (1988): 213; on the inward location of the transformation see Moo, *Romans*, 753; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 641.

<sup>80</sup> Two main interpretations of the phrase have been debated in scholarship. The first, which is essentially the position I am arguing for, is represented by C. E. B. Cranfield, "μέτρον πίστεως in Romans 12.3," *NTS* 8 (1962): 345-51. The second, as argued by, among others, Dunn, *Romans* 9-16, 721-22, maintains that the genitive πίστεως is a unique gift, a portion of faith given in larger measure to some, and smaller measure to others. For the following reasons I believe something like Cranfield's interpretation must be adopted (see also Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* [NTD 6; Göttingen and Zurich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989], 172). First, this is seen primarily in the fact that 12:4-8 is not simply an explanation of the clause "as God has apportioned out to each person a measure of faith" (ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως) in 12:3e, but rather of the entire verse. That is to say, the diversity of functions in the single body enumerated in 12:4-8 is founded, not on a unique μέτρον πίστεως for each individual, but rather on the call to sober-mindedness described in the first half of 12:3. Furthermore, it is the call to sober-mindedness, and not the diversity of gifts, that is based on the μέτρον πίστεως. A distributive understanding of the phrase (something unique given to everyone) does not make sense as a foundation for wise thinking: while humble self-judgment could be grounded in a diversity of functions and gifts *in the one body*, 12:3e ("as God has apportioned out to each person a measure of faith")—on the distributive reading of μέτρον πίστεως—only mentions diversity, and not diversity-within-unity. A call to humility in light of diversity *on the basis simply of that diversity* defeats the purpose of this whole section of text, which is to reinforce, through appeal to the common metaphor in antiquity of the body and members, the notion that difference does not entail inferiority. For more extended argumentation in support of the reading I am offering here see Dunson, "Faith," 34-38.

<sup>81</sup> On the body-members metaphor in antiquity see Lee, *Body of Christ*, 27-58; Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Paul and Roman Stoicism: Romans 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics," *JSNT* 29 (2006): 150-2.

as each member of a body does not have the same function (πρᾶξις) (12:4), so also are the many individuals (οἱ πολλοί) in the Roman church “one body in Christ” (ἐν σῶμά . . . ἐν Χριστῷ), with all of these individuals being “members of one another” (τὸ δὲ καθ’ εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη) (12:5). Furthermore, each individual member is indispensable to the single body because all members have been given different gifts (χαρίσματα . . . διάφορα) from God (12:6).<sup>82</sup> While two of these gifts are described in generic terms (prophecy and service in 12:6), gifts given to *individuals* predominate in 12:7-8: individuals are gifted with teaching abilities (ὁ διδάσκων) (12:7), the gift of exhortation (ὁ παρακαλῶν), the gift of generosity (ὁ μεταδιδούς), the gift of leadership (ὁ προϊστάμενος), and finally, the gift of mercy (ὁ ἐλεῶν) (12:8). The outworking of God’s grace in the community does not bypass individuals or make them superfluous. Rather, individuals are central to the manifestation of this grace in the community; without them the gifts of the Spirit would be empty abstractions.

While the individual nature of the divine gifts is clear, it is equally clear that such gifts cannot be exercised properly outside of the context of the single body, or community, of all believers. The very purpose of God having given the various gifts is that they be used for the mutual edification of the whole community. As Paul explains more extensively in the similar passage in 1 Cor 12:12-31, individual members of the body with their unique gifts should not think of themselves as worth less because their gifts are not identical with everyone else’s, but should recognize that the body could not survive were everyone to have the exact same function (1 Cor 12:18-26). Just as in Rom 12:3-8, Paul makes clear the interweaving of the individual and the community in 1 Cor 12:11 and 12:18: in both verses he explicitly states that the gifts of the Spirit are given to each individual (ἕκαστος) within the one body.<sup>83</sup> The same is true in Rom 12:3-8: there is one body of Christ and it is comprised of individual members with distinctive gifts.

The principle that emerges in Rom 12:3-8, then, is one of diversity-within-unity. This principle could also be articulated as the individual-within-community,

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<sup>82</sup> As Kenneth Berding, “Romans 12.4–8: One Sentence or Two?” *NTS* 52 (2006): 433–39, has persuasively shown, Rom. 12:4-8 should be read as one sentence, rather than two (12:4-6 and 12:7-8). Thus, the diversity of gifts (12:6-8) is the precise way in which individuals contribute toward a unified body (12:4-5).

<sup>83</sup> See also 1 Cor 12:27, where all of the Corinthian believers (ὅμοιοι) are the singular body of Christ (σῶμα Χριστοῦ), but only insofar as that body is made up of individual members (μέλη ἐκ μέρους); cf. 1 Cor 12:12: Καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ μέλη πολλὰ ἔχει, πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος πολλὰ ὄντα ἓν ἐστὶν σῶμα, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός.



the somatic individual. *There is no Pauline individual who is not also a somatic, or bodily integrated, individual, just as there is no body without individual members.* In framing things in this way Paul makes clear the indispensability of the individual, but also that this individual absolutely cannot be understood as an *isolated* individual, that for Paul the community of believers is the *only* context in which salvation and spiritual transformation can take place. As W. D. Davies puts it “Paul knows nothing of solitary salvation; to be ‘in Christ’ is not for him the mystic flight of the alone to the alone.”<sup>84</sup> However, it is just as false to contend, as does Harink, that Paul’s language of salvation is “cosmic and social more than inner and individual.”<sup>85</sup> Any interpretation that downplays the significance of the individual *even to a small degree* destroys the very balance that Paul has so artfully constructed between the individual and the community in Rom 12:1-8.

The significance of what Paul says in 12:3-8 is not restricted narrowly to the use of the spiritual gifts enumerated in 12:6-8. Instead, As Engberg-Pedersen has noted, the principle of diversity-within-unity serves as a “bridge” that introduces the large exhortative section of Romans stretching from 12:9-15:13 that is focused primarily on love, harmony and peacefulness within the community of believers.<sup>86</sup> That is to say, the diversity of gifts in the single body has been given by God with the specific goal in mind of forming a community of love (see Rom 12:9; 13:10; 14:15; 15:30) and mutual concern (which is dominant in chapters 12-15, but especially in the discussion of the weak and the strong in 14:1-15:7).<sup>87</sup> Paul captures all of this well when he says in 14:7 that “none of us lives for self, nor dies for self,” evoking as this does the unity of the individual members within the single body of Christ (12:5; cf. the repetition of ἀλλήλων throughout this section: 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7).<sup>88</sup> The specific injunction given in 12:6 (“let us . . .”), that every individual is to use his or her specific gifts in service to others (12:6), resounds several times throughout the closing section of Paul’s exhortation (see 14:19; 15:1-7): the right

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<sup>84</sup> Davies, *Rabbinic Judaism*, 86; As Käsemann, *Römer*, 280, puts it: “Das Heil wird in der christlichen Gemeinde gefunden.” Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 645-47.

<sup>85</sup> Harink, *Postliberals*, 59, who is following Martyn, *Galatians*, and John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) in particular.

<sup>86</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul’s Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12-13: The Role of 13.1-10 in the Argument,” *JSNT* 29 (2006): 165; cf. Halvor Moxnes, “The Quest for Honor and the Unity of the Community in Romans 12 and in the Orations of Dio Chrysostom,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; SNTW; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 217-19, and esp. 223.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Berding, “Romans 12.4-8,” 436-37; Halvor Moxnes, “Honour and Righteousness in Romans,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 74.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Moxnes, “Quest for Honor,” 226.

thinking—derived from the μέτρον πίστεως—that comes from rightly recognizing unity in diversity in the body must also work itself out in “pursuing what makes for peace and for building one another up” (14:19). Just as all believers are one body in Christ, so they “with one voice” (ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι) glorify God (15:6), a phrase which, like the “living sacrifice” in 12:1, emphasizes the collective nature of Paul’s exhortation without obscuring its individual coloring.

#### 4.1 Summary

The sound self-evaluation of every member of the body of Christ that results from the renewal of the mind leads to a new way of thinking that enables the individual members of the single body to see that a diversity of functions within the body of Christ is not a problem to be overcome, but a divine gift to be celebrated. It should not be a cause of arrogance for individuals who have distinctive gifts, but rather the grounds for the elimination of haughty thinking.<sup>89</sup> Interpretations of Pauline theology that pit the individual against the community destroy the necessary balance and integration that Paul seeks to create among his readers on this issue and demolish a foundational element of Paul’s ethical thought, namely that each individual believer should look out for the interests of others precisely because every individual is a somatic individual, a member of a single body. The properly functioning body cannot exist unless each individual member is mentally and morally transformed *as an individual*, just as the individual members will all suffer irreparably if they are cut off from the distinctive blessings God has distributed throughout the body, since no single individual *as an individual* has all of the divine gifts necessary for the body to be healthy. In the final analysis, a community without individuals makes no sense; a body without members is a contradiction in terms, but no more so than a healthy individual member severed from the body.<sup>90</sup>

It is significant that Paul introduces the largest exhortative section in Romans with a statement of a principle of individuals within community: nearly his entire (explicit at least) ethical paraenesis in the letter is thus seen to be founded on a careful formulation that does justice both to the communal context of individual

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Philip F. Esler, “Paul and Stoicism: Romans 12 as a Test Case,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 116.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ: a Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: SPCK, 1955), 102: “A multiplicity of function is not only always present in a body; it is necessary for a body to possess such—or else there would indeed be no real body.”

life and the individual outworking of corporate oneness.<sup>91</sup> Paul's overarching understanding of the believing life, in fact, is shown to be built at its core upon the notion of individuals embedded within community.

### 5. The Particular Individual (Romans 16)

The *particular* individual is a category that covers real flesh-and-blood individuals in Paul's letters. It highlights the importance of each person's distinct identity, as well as the ways in which every particular individual must be understood in connection with the various groups and communities of which he or she is a part, especially the connection these individuals *necessarily* have with individual church gatherings.

Paul's continual exhortations to communal love and mutual honoring throughout Romans 12-15 (see e.g., Rom 12:10; 13:8; 14:1, 7) come to a head in Rom 15:5-7 where Paul prays for God's enabling to strengthen the Roman believers collectively to align their thoughts among each other according to the principles Paul has laid out beginning in 12:1 (see 15:5). The purpose (ἵνα) of this sought for harmony of thought is that the whole corporate body of believers "with one accord, in one voice" (ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι) would glorify God (15:6). With this divine enabling, those in Rome are to receive one another, just as they have been received by Christ (15:7). The sum total of the Roman believers acts as one, because it is one body (12:5), one living sacrifice, pleasing to God (12:1). All of this is signalled in Rom 16:16 with the command that all (whether slave or free, male or female) are to greet one another with a "holy kiss," which in a Roman cultural context was a shocking and unprecedented display of communal solidarity and the erasure of prominent cultural boundary markers within the primitive Christian churches.<sup>92</sup> And yet, as we have just seen, this single body is made up of individual members (12:4). The significance of this principle of individuality-within-diversity is evident throughout Romans, but is worked out in concrete form in chapter 16.

Reciprocity within the context of "familial" love is the dominant feature of this chapter. Phoebe has been a servant (διάκονος) and benefactor (προστάτις) of

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<sup>91</sup> Although it is true that Romans 12-16 should not be radically isolated from the rest of the letter as if it is pure exhortation, while the rest of the letter is pure theology (rightly Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* [3d ed.; NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009], 98-101), it is also true that the vast majority of exhortations occur in these chapters (31 of 42 imperatival forms according to Furnish [ibid., 99]).

<sup>92</sup> On which see Jewett, *Romans*, 973-74; cf. Oakes, *Pompeii*, 103-4.

Paul and many others (16:1-2), just as Gaius currently serves as host (ξένο) to Paul and the other believers in Corinth.<sup>93</sup> Prisca, Aquila (16:3-5) and Urbanus (16:9) are fellow-workers (συνεργοί) in Paul's ministry, while a certain Mary has been hard at work in support of the Roman church (16:6), as have been Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (16:12). Rufus' mother has supported Paul to such a degree that he says that she has been a mother to him (16:13). From the other end, Timothy, who directly co-labors with Paul, sends greetings to the Roman believers (16:21). Every individual addressed is called to greet (ἀσπάζομαι, which occurs 21 times in Romans 16) every other individual (or group of individuals) with honor as a concrete manifestation of the unity they all have in Christ.<sup>94</sup>

Paul's greetings have a host of distinctive features that provide a window into the importance he attached both to particular individuals in the concrete circumstances of life and to the communities in which these individuals were necessarily found. To begin with, Paul has two main ways of grouping people together. Often, he mentions entire churches, sometimes regional ("the church in Cenchrea" [16:1]; "the whole church" in Corinth [16:23]), sometimes contained within a single household (16:5), and once he speaks of the totality of the churches "among the nations" (16:4). Paul even speaks of "all of the churches in Christ" (16:16). Paul also lists important groups who have helped him in his work ("those of Aristobulus" [16:10]; "those of Narcissus" [16:11]; "Hermes and the brothers with him" [16:14]; "all the saints" [16:15]), as well as smaller groups that have given him specific, and indispensable, aid (Prisca and Aquila, who even saved Paul's life [16:3-4]; Andronicus and Junia, who are kinsmen of Paul and have been fellow prisoners with him [16:7]). Most of these groupings are related in some important way to individual believers, yet at the same time, the fact that Paul speaks so often of groups themselves makes clear the importance he attached to individuals being integrated into community. It is an unquestioned assumption that every individual who has believed in Christ will express that belief within the context of fellowship with an *ekklesia*.

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<sup>93</sup> On Phoebe as benefactor, and the reciprocity inherent in her relationship with Paul, see Erlend D. MacGillivray, "Romans 16:2, προστάσις/προστάτης, and the Application of Reciprocal Relationships to New Testament Texts," *NovT* 53 (2011): 183-99.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 952.

Particularly noteworthy are the small details attached to almost every greeting in chapter 16. For example, Paul mentions not only that Epaenetus is his “beloved” (ἀγαπητόν μου), but also that he is the “firstfruits” (ἀπαρχή) among all the converts in Asia. Epaenetus’ *individual* conversion, then, is distinctive enough to mention, even as Paul’s use of the word firstfruits—as it does everywhere he uses it (see Rom 8:23; 11:16; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:25)—stresses the organic connection between Epaenetus and the entire body of believers in Asia. In other words, even as Epaenetus’ conversion singles him out as unique and particular (the firstfruits), this can only be understood as it is part of a larger, collective whole (the harvest); the individual and the community are so vitally connected that one cannot exist in its fullness without the other. When telling the Roman believers to greet Andronicus and Junia, Paul mentions that they were converted before he was (οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ [16:7]). Salvation, far from doing away with the importance of the individual, as Andronicus’ and Junia’s conversions show, is an individual action in time and space, even as it is one that brings individuals into community. Numerous other particularities are emphasized in Paul’s greetings, such as when he describes someone named Apelles as “approved in Christ” (16:10) and Rufus as “elect in the Lord” (16:13), both of which are distinctive among the appellations in Romans 16, and which were perhaps meant to encourage two individuals in particularly trying circumstances. Paul also groups people according to familial relationships, both genetic (Andronicus and Junia [16:7]; Herodion [16:11]; Luke, Jason and Sosipater [16:21]) and “fictive” (“Phoebe our sister” [16:1]; Rufus’ mother = Paul’s “mother” [16:13]).<sup>95</sup> The natural family is not unimportant to Paul, but the bonds of fellowship in the new community are so strong as to create a new family among the Roman believers that transcends the culturally appropriate groupings of antiquity. Just as there is no such thing in Paul’s theology as a member disconnected from the body, there can be no such thing as an individual believer outside of the new creational family of faith. Faith creates community and binds individuals to it. Individuals are not free to choose whether to accept or reject the bonds of this familial communion any more than they are free to choose their own *natural* parents.

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<sup>95</sup> See further Oakes, *Pompeii*, 107–10, and Wilckens, *Römer*, 3.131, on the significance of this “fictive” familial language for inter-community life in the Roman churches.

Given the role of women in society in Paul's day it is also noteworthy how much he has to say about the role of women in the furtherance of the gospel. Phoebe is called both a "servant [δίακονος] of the church in Cenchrea" and a "benefactor" (προστάτις) of Paul and many others (16:2). Prisca is listed as a fellow gospel associate of Paul's, who (along with her husband Aquila) is also mentioned several times elsewhere in the New Testament as being active in the mission of the earliest churches (Rom 16:3; cf. 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19; Acts 18:2, 18, 26). Paul's love for Prisca and Aquilla is obvious: not only have they labored with him in the gospel, they even placed their own lives in danger to save Paul from an unspecified threat.<sup>96</sup> In addition, Mary did much work with Paul and his associates (16:6), while Junia was well known among the apostles for her Christian service (16:7).

Romans 16, then, is not simply an itemized list of acquaintances; it is Paul's preaching, in miniature, enacted in real communities, made up of particular individuals. Romans 16 shows the reader what it means in concrete practice that "no one of us [οὐδεὶς ἡμῶν] lives to oneself [ἑαυτῷ], and no one [οὐδεὶς] of us dies to oneself [ἑαυτῷ]" (Rom 14:7), and that "each one of us" (ἕκαστος ἡμῶν) must please our neighbors for their good, to build them up (Rom 15:2). This chapter makes it clear that in Paul's preaching there is no isolated individual, no "individual qua individual,"<sup>97</sup> in Romans, or in Paul's thought in general. Earle Ellis captures the dynamic of Romans 16 well: "Given the numerous and varied contributions of Paul's fellow ministers to his mission, it is clear that they were an essential factor in its accomplishment and that even Paul's letters were not an individual enterprise."<sup>98</sup> Paul's very gospel itself could not have been proclaimed across the Roman empire without a community of believers to support him in his mission.

Yet it is equally true that no individual is insignificant according to Paul's thinking, since the single body of Christ has many individual members (12:5: μέλη), each with a different function (12:4: πρᾶξις). The communities Paul writes to in Romans 16 are unintelligible abstractions apart from the particular (and indispensable) individuals that make up each of these groups of believers. The individuals in this chapter are engaged in essential acts of service for one another,

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<sup>96</sup> "They risked their necks" (τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν) for him (16:4).

<sup>97</sup> Burnett, *Salvation*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Co-workers Revisited," in *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 97.

and the work of the gospel is only successful as each individual works together according to the common mission of the entire ecclesial body.

### 5.1 Summary

Someone uninterested in the place of the individual within God's salvific scheme does not write Romans 16. The detail and warmth with which Paul speaks about so many fellow believers (including many he has never met) in their concrete individuality puts such a notion to flight. The particular individual in Romans 16, as much as any other type in the letter, reveals the centrality of the individual in Paul's teaching. And yet, while Paul is at pains throughout Romans 16 to emphasize the particularity of the numerous individuals whom he urges the Romans to greet with affection, he also insists that each individual must be comprehended only as they are found "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ = Jesus Christ; see Rom 15:30; 16:18; etc.), which is a communal and collective designation that highlights the unity that exists between every believer despite their particularity and individuality (see 16:2, 8, 11, 12 [twice], 13, 22). In other words, Romans 16 is a real-life manifestation of the "one body in Christ" (ἐν σῶμα . . . ἐν Χριστῷ [12:5])—comprised of a multitude of individuals (cf. ἕκαστος [12:3])—functioning as the singular organism it has been fashioned by God to be.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary

As with the last chapter it will again be beneficial to summarize the contents of this chapter in a point-by-point format:

- (1) **The Representative Individual.** Unlike Abraham and David in Romans 4, Paul sets up a contrast between Adam and Jesus Christ in Romans 5 that is truly representational: the actions of each define the destinies of the groups (and individuals) they represent to an extraordinary degree. This is a corporately and communally determined individuality.
- (2) **The Negative Exemplary Individual.** In Romans 7 Paul tells of his own experience (as a typical Israelite) of sin's use of God's holy law to kill him spiritually, despite the law's promised goal of life. While there are resonances of the story of Adam in Genesis 3, as well as of the biblical story

of Israel's post-Sinai experience with Torah, the focus remains on Paul throughout the chapter. The reason for this is simple: Paul is recounting his own experience in order to heighten the vividness and emotional power of his appeal to his audience to turn away from the law as a means of finding freedom from spiritual slavery.

- (3) **The Somatic Individual.** The individual in community, or the member within the body, is fundamental to Paul's theology and ethics. For him, the only individual that exists within the sphere of God's grace is a somatic individual, an individual necessarily embedded within the believing community. The logic of Pauline ethics crumbles when the relationship between the individual and the community is not properly understood. This is a critical point to make both against those who elevate the isolated individual to prominence in Paul's letters *and* against those who relegate the individual to the periphery of Pauline thought, if they discuss it at all.<sup>99</sup>
- (4) **The Particular Individual.** Finally, Paul writes at length of many particular individuals in the church at Rome, as well as among his fellow ministry companions. While they are indeed one single body in Christ, each individual retains his or her distinctive identity, significance and function within that larger body, not as isolated individuals, but as individuals fully integrated into the single body of Christ.

## 6.2 Conclusion: The Individual-within-Community

The typology of the individual in Romans is now complete. Unlike the hints of community-mindedness in the previous portion of the typology, Paul's *comprehensively* communal theology has become evident in the material analyzed in this chapter. We have seen that there is no such thing as an isolated individual in Paul's thought. Every individual *must* be a part of the believing community, *must* be a somatic individual. Paul is no individualist, modern or otherwise. Yet, Paul's theology, even in its most communally-determined expression, never ceases to

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<sup>99</sup> In order to explicate the precise way in which individuals become incorporated into community—the way in which they become somatic individuals—in Paul's thought, further work would need to be carried out with regard to the christological foundation of Pauline individuals-in-community. Romans 6, in particular, is one place in Paul's letters where such a study could profitably begin, given the prominence of the language of incorporation into Christ in that chapter.



pertain in foundationally important ways to individuals and individual action within the life of the community.

The part of the typology presented in this chapter has further developed the notion that the individual is a complex and multilayered component of Pauline theology; this complexity must be carefully attended to in any attempt to describe Paul's understanding of the individual. In this chapter, I have explained the cosmic and corporate aspects of Paul's understanding of the individual who is caught up in forces outside of his- or herself, in a spiritual battle of the ages (Romans 5). I have also analyzed Paul's deeply personal expression of spiritual angst and law-induced moral impotence in Romans 7, although noting how this expression is situated in an allusive retelling of the negative historical experience of God's people with Torah, and of Adam's experience of the original divine prohibition in the garden of Eden. It is thus a corporately significant instantiation of individuality in addition to being a deeply personal one. We have also seen the theological basis of life in the believing community (Romans 12), as well as the concrete realization of this theology in the specific circumstances of the lives of the particular individuals that are described in detail in Romans 16.

In all of this three possible interpretational errors have been isolated, namely 1) that of seeing the redeemed individual as nothing but an isolated individual, and redemption as nothing but a transformation of inner piety, 2) that of seeing the individual in abstraction from the cultivation of love and peace within the life of the believing community and 3) that of dismissing the importance of the individual and individual spiritual enabling within the church's continuing life together. Put positively, it has become clear that the Pauline individual—a vital and complex category in Romans—is *necessarily an individual in community*.

## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

#### 1. Paul and Epictetus

In this study, through the example of Epictetus, I have endeavored to show that an integration of individual and communal concerns is by no means foreign to Paul's own socio-historical and philosophical context. This much is clear in Epictetus: a concern for oneself and one's mental self-mastery is vitally important and yet must also include a concern for the proper maintenance of all of one's social relations. However, it has also become clear that major differences exist in how Paul and Epictetus actually go about relating individual and communal concerns, differences that warrant mention at this point as a way of highlighting the specific nuances and priorities of Pauline thought.

For Epictetus, the individual's power of choice (volition, or προαίρεσις) is the central concern of life. Protecting one's volition is paramount in the life well lived. The volition must be vigorously guarded so that it does not become in any way dependent on external things or circumstances. Otherwise, one becomes a slave to fortune, a bond-servant to the whims of fate. Keeping the volition free from external domination requires extreme vigilance throughout the duration of one's life, since at no point in time will one be free from potentially unpleasant circumstances. Only when a person militantly guards his or her volition will it be possible to be free from the normal uncertainties of life. Furthermore, this process of guarding one's volition requires a foundational epistemological transformation. That is to say, the person who would be free must learn to see the world, and what happens in it, in a radically different way. Supreme value must be placed on protecting oneself from external circumstances by seeing them as outside of one's concern. The guarding of one's honor and virtue is what matters, not what happens in life. Once this revolution of thought has occurred it must be furthered throughout life. Only then will a person be truly free, able to rest in utter serenity and calm, no matter what happens.

As such, Epictetus' moral philosophy is necessarily and unashamedly centered on individual action and personal, rational decision-making. The

individual, and the individual's self-preservation, is at the core of his thought. This is the only way that true emotional invulnerability is possible. While social relations are important for Epictetus, these can never impinge upon the more ultimate concern with self-preservation. Community for Epictetus is only important insofar as one's own honor is at stake in the preservation and betterment of social relations. One's honor, however, can be maintained no matter what other people do. Honor is wholly within the realm of one's volition; it is not, and indeed cannot be, subject to the actions of others, or else it places one in a position of being open to the potential harm others could cause to oneself. That is to say, a truly free person cannot allow him- or herself to be placed into a position of *vulnerability*, emotional or otherwise. Such vulnerability with regard to others is a catastrophic failure according to Epictetus' philosophy. Such vulnerability with regard to *anything* external (including community or society) is the very definition of human slavery.

Paul's understanding of individuals and community points in a very different direction. For him, individuals experience a fundamental deficiency apart from being embedded into community, into the body of Christ. The Epictetan ideal of the isolated individual floating in the serenity of self-mastery through mental control is far from the picture that emerges in Paul's letters. In Romans, as we have seen, the individual is absolutely incomplete apart from the wider body of Christ. Individual members of the one body *need* one another, which is the point of Paul's body and members analogy in Romans 12. Otherwise, they are merely severed appendages with no proper function in the world.

More than this, individuals are told by Paul that love within the community is a binding obligation; love is a debt owed by all in the body of Christ (Rom 13:8). As such, individuals are in a very important sense not free *at all*. The individual has been freed from bondage to sin (the point of Romans 6:1-8:17) in order to become a slave of righteousness (Rom 6:18, 19) and of God (Rom 6:22). Such slavery brings with it binding obligations within the community of fellow slaves of God. Whereas for Epictetus the actions of others are completely outside the concern of self-preservation, for Paul the way in which others respond to oneself is of supreme importance. As he says in Romans 14:14: "If your brother or sister is grieved because of food, you are no longer walking in love." The Pauline individual is not an autonomous agent free to pursue immunity from the possibility of being affected by

the fate of others in the community. Although it is true that Epictetus firmly insists on the necessity of doing good to those within one's social sphere, he parts company with Paul over Paul's insistence, as expressed, for example, in the body and members analogy of 1 Cor 12:26, that "if one member suffers, all suffer together." One's own well-being is in a very important sense dependent on the well-being of every other member of the community. A sentiment like this strikes at the heart of Epictetus' moral system. For Epictetus other people are ultimately "external things" (cf. τοῖς ἐκτός - 2.22.19) that have the potential to interfere with the quest for personal mastery and emotional quietude.<sup>1</sup>

Another, and related, difference between a Pauline and Epictetan view of the individual revolves around the idea of weakness. Moving outside of Romans, it is seen that Paul's own view of himself and of the ideal life of faith centers on the concept of weakness and frailty. Especially in 1 Corinthians weakness defines what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ. God specifically "chose what was weak in the world to shame the wise" (1 Cor 1:27) so that God, and not human beings, might receive all glory (see 1 Cor 1:29). Paul's own proclamation of Christ was "in weakness and in fear and much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3), a weakness that provides a dramatic "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4) in the world. Epictetus, while also attempting to provide his students with a solid ground on which to stand in the midst of adversity, could never countenance the notion that fearful weakness is evidence of the powerful work of God within an individual. Vulnerability to external circumstances by definition undermines everything central to Epictetan and Stoic teaching.

In sum, it is true that both Paul and Epictetus are concerned with individuals and individual action. Both thinkers also attach great importance to how individuals are related to others. It is most certainly not the case, however, that Paul and Epictetus relate the individual and the community in the same way. Paul, following the example he sees laid out in the example of Jesus Christ, teaches of the weakness, humility and vulnerability that lies at the very heart of belief in Jesus Christ, which

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<sup>1</sup> The closest Epictetus comes to Paul's teaching on vulnerability towards, and sympathy within, the community is found in places such as *Ench.* 16, where he counsels his students not to "hesitate to sympathize with [a suffering friend] so far as words go [μέχρι λόγου], and if occasion offers, even to groan with him; but be careful not to groan also within [ἔσωθεν]" (LCL translation modified). Pretended sympathy for the sake of a distraught loved one? Yes. Vulnerability and participation in that very suffering? Absolutely not.

is a sentiment that Epictetus could never accept.<sup>2</sup> The Epictetan individual, even in its relatedness to others, is necessarily an *invulnerable* individual. The Pauline individual-within-community is necessarily a *vulnerable* individual.

## 2. Individual and Community in Romans

The individual is ubiquitous in Romans. The widespread dismissal by modern scholars of any significant notion of the Pauline individual represents a flawed perspective on the apostle's thought. In Paul's theology the individual and the community are two necessarily (and tightly) integrated concepts. *There is no individual outside of community, and there is no community that relegates the individual to the periphery.* Interpretations that obscure this fundamental connectivity of individual and community significantly distort Paul's articulation of the believing life. The purpose of this dissertation has been to explicate the necessary relationship between Pauline individuals and community, and in so doing to provide resources for a theological understanding of the relation between the individual and the community in the broader Pauline corpus.<sup>3</sup>

We have seen that Romans displays a wide variety of theologically foundational ways of thinking about the individual and individuality. A bare concession to the *presence* of individuals in Pauline thought, however, is not sufficient. As I have labored to show, the theology of the entire letter, as well as of many particular Pauline themes, cannot be made adequate sense of without duly attending to the numerous ways Paul conceptualizes the individual. Each individual type, in its own distinctive way, makes clear just how centrally important—even indispensable—the category of the individual is in Paul's thinking.

The fundamentally *communal* context of the Pauline individual(s) has also been highlighted. This point cannot be stressed enough, especially in light of those who have swung the pendulum too far in the other direction in their attempts to reintroduce the category of the individual into discussions of Paul's thought. Most important in this regard has been the somatic individual of Romans 12; the principle

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g., Phil 2:1-11.

<sup>3</sup> As was mentioned in the last chapter, to provide a full articulation of Paul's theology of individuals and community this study would need to be supplemented by further work relating Paul's Christology and pneumatology to his understanding of individuals in community. Relating the motif of Spirit-wrought union with, or participation in, Christ to the present study would be particularly useful.

of unity-within-diversity, of the “body and members,” reveals as clearly as anything in Paul’s letters the impossibility of either speaking of a community in which individuals play little or no role, or of an individual who is not inextricably embedded into the ongoing life of the believing community.

This dissertation has not attempted to say everything that could be said about Pauline individuals. In presenting the material in the form of a typology of individuals in Romans I have attempted to provide a limited, but truly representative, account of the individual in Paul’s thought. Romans was selected both because of its prominence in recent scholarly debates over the place of individuals in Paul’s theology, and because its size and detailed level of theological argumentation make it ideal as a test case. The fact that *detailed* pastoral problems do not seem to have driven the letter’s composition also makes it a good choice, since Paul appears to have set out some of his foundational conceptions about individuals and community in a more, dare it be said, systematic and unhurried manner. This is not to suggest that pastoral *concerns* do not drive Paul’s exposition in Romans, but simply to state that the way in which Paul articulates his gospel and applies it to the diverse range of issues he deems significant for the Roman believers is more conducive to the kind of analysis I have provided in the chapters above than would be the case in Paul’s other letters.

Other significant Pauline texts could also have been discussed, but these would simply add detail to the typology presented above. For example, a crucially important text for getting at the heart of Paul’s deeply held convictions about individual, spiritual experience is Gal 2:19-20. For those scholars unconvinced—despite the prominence of the first person singular—that Paul speaks for himself in Romans 7, there is no mistaking that he does so in Gal 2:19-20. In a remarkably similar sentiment to that expressed in Rom 7:9-11, Paul states in Gal 2:19-20 that through the law he died to the law (ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον – Gal 2:19a). The purpose (ἵνα) of this death was that he might live to God (θεῷ ζήσω – Gal 2:19b) by faith in Jesus, the son of God (ἐν πίστει . . . τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ – Gal 2:20d; cf. Rom 7:24-8:4). Through this faith Paul has come to see, not simply that Jesus Christ is a redeemer, but that he has personally showered his love on Paul as an individual and given himself for Paul’s own justification (τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ – Gal 2:20e). A polemic against the individual

simply evaporates when confronted with Gal 2:19-20. Yet, a verse such as this by no means overturns Paul's firm insistence on the community-centric nature of salvation: the redemption that all of the Galatian believers have in Christ (see e.g., Gal 1:3; 2:16; 3:13-14) is described in Gal 3:27 as a baptism into Christ (εἰς Χριστόν). This baptism eliminates all human markers of status and worth and makes the entire body of individual Galatians (πάντες ὑμεῖς) "one in Christ Jesus" (εἷς . . . ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ - Gal 3:28).<sup>4</sup> As in Romans 12, so also in Galatians 3 there is no salvation outside of incorporation into the single body of Christ. *Paul knows nothing of an isolated individualism.*

Galatians 2:19-20 is simply one example that makes it clear that if scholars were able to step back from the exegetical quagmire of Romans 7 they might be able to see that there is much more to be said about Paul's use of the first person singular, and about what it expresses regarding his personal (and others') experience of Christ's redemption.<sup>5</sup> One could look to many other texts as well to develop the deeply personal and individual nature of Paul's understanding of redemption in Christ (see e.g., Rom 9:3; 1 Cor 15:10; Gal 1:11-12; 6:17; Phil 3:13-14). Pauline uses of second person singulars could also receive a similar treatment. In Philemon 5, for example, Paul rejoices in Philemon's own faith (τὴν πίστιν ἣν ἔχεις) "toward the Lord Jesus" (πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν). Just as Paul shifts to a second person singular (σε) to highlight the intimately personal nature of spiritual life in Christ in Rom 8:2, so does he speak of faith to Philemon in strongly experiential and individual terms. The individual is an indispensably central category in Pauline theology, although it is always the individual-within-community.

First Corinthians 12 has been touched on in chapter five above, although it is worth mentioning again. In 1 Cor 12:12-31 Paul articulates his vision of the individual and the community in such a way that both the individual and its necessarily communal location predominate in the discussion. In fact, in this text Paul brings together his understanding of baptism as incorporation into Christ (cf. Gal 3:27-28), and his use of the body and members metaphor (cf. Rom 12:3-8). Baptism into Christ creates a single, corporate body (1 Cor 12:13), but this body is

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<sup>4</sup> On Paul's subversion of ancient notions of grace (gift) given according to worth see John M. G. Barclay, "Paul, the Gift and the Battle over Gentile Circumcision: Revisiting the Logic of Galatians," *ABR* 58 (2010): esp. 48-51, 56.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g., Dodd, *Paradigmatic 'I'*.

not a true body without its individual members (1 Cor 12:12). The body made up of all believers is such a unity that if one member suffers or is honored, all suffer or are honored together with that individual (1 Cor 12:26). The main point of Paul's use of the body and members metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 is to impress upon the Corinthians that each individual (ἕκαστος – 1 Cor 12:7) among them has been personally gifted by the Spirit for the good of the whole body.

All of these examples, and more, could be used to provide a thicker description of the Pauline individual-in-community than has been provided in the analysis in the chapters above, although without fundamentally altering the picture of the individual we have observed in Romans. The pervasiveness of the communally-determined individual in Paul's theology will be all the clearer the more one engages in similar investigations of his other letters.

The individual and the community form an inextricable unity in Pauline theology. Several false assumptions about either the individual or the community have been subjected to scrutiny in this dissertation:

- (1) That in "Christian communities, the main problem was to keep the Christian group, the individual Church, in harmony and unity, in sound state (e.g. 1 Cor 12; Rom 12,3-21). The individual as such our dyadic personality, is expendable."<sup>6</sup> Paul's ethical vision did in fact place the life of the community at its pinnacle. It did not, however, treat the individual as expendable. Instead of a social-scientific model (or any other kind of model) of the Pauline individual that emphasizes its necessarily communal-relatedness in such a way as to make the individual expendable, we find, as Paul states in Rom 12:5, that all believers together are one body in Christ (οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ), *but also—and just as importantly—that they are "individually members of one another"* (ὁ δὲ καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη).<sup>7</sup>
- (2) That "there is no such thing as an 'individual' Christian" since "Paul's gospel created a community."<sup>8</sup> Paul's gospel indeed created a community; it created

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<sup>6</sup> Malina, "Personality," 130.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. First Corinthians 12:27 (NRSV): "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (Gk.: ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους).

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Saint Paul*, 197.



a community of individual Christians baptized into the single body of Christ. Furthermore, there is not a single way of conceptualizing the individual in Paul's letters; a rich variety of ways of defining individuality exist in Pauline thought that must all be attended to in order even to begin addressing the question of individuals and community. A broad-brush dismissal of "The Individual" is simply a category error.

- (3) That the believer's "experience of Christ . . . lifts the individual . . . out of his or her individuality, leaves it behind and carries him or her over to a state of communality."<sup>9</sup> Rather, the believer's faith-initiated experience of Christ lifts him or her out of a state of individualistic self-absorption, leaves *it* behind and carries the individual *as an individual* over to a state of individuality-within-communality.
- (4) That "Paul was concerned with the individual qua individual, irrespective of social or, indeed, historical identity;" that "Paul's understanding of God's work in the world was primarily operative at the level of the individual, as opposed to being largely concerned with people groups and group identity."<sup>10</sup> There is no individual *qua* individual in Paul's letters. Nor is God's work in the world *in any sense* operative at an individual level *as opposed to* a communal one. There is no Pauline individual other than the individual-in-community, other than the self in vital communion with Jesus Christ and all of those who are united to him by faith.

In future, Pauline scholarship should abandon these false assumptions. Paul's anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology and ethics (among other things) have for too long been obscured by constructs that place either the individual or the community over against the other. They belong together.

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<sup>9</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 294.

<sup>10</sup> Burnett, *Salvation*, 10.

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