

## **Adam and Christ: The Basic Story in Romans (Rom 5:12-21)**

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The Adam-Christ typology in the Letter to the Romans denotes Paul's basic story. It gives us the simple backbone of two narratives, one Adam-story and one Christ-story. Taken together, they form the foundational double story of the Pauline world of thought. A narrative exegetical approach is, therefore, a natural choice when we wish to understand the basics of Paul's story based theology, his narrative understanding of God, Human, and World.

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# Adam and Christ: The Basic Story in Romans (Rom 5:12-21)

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*“... Paul’s thought is grounded in a narrative logic, i.e., in patterns of order that are proper to story rather than to discursive reasoning.”*

Richard B. Hays (2002, 194)

## Introduction

In Romans 5:12-21 Paul compares Adam and Christ for similarities as well as differences. In 5:14 Adam is mentioned as “a type (τύπος) of the one who was to come,” i.e. of Christ, why we usually speak of an Adam-Christ typology. Whether we by *type* understand a (casting) mold, a pattern, a model or a (scare) image, we can say that Christ in some sense is marked by Adam who as such anticipates him. When Adam performs a sinful act, having negative consequences, then Christ must perform a righteous act with positive results as a counterpart. A more precise explanation is up to our close examination of the text, but we shall right away mention some principal issues.

## *A Structural Typology*

First, we shall mention, that we are dealing with a *structural* typology. By ‘structure’ we understand a relation between elements (here Adam and Christ), which mutually define each other due to their *systematic* similarities and differences. The semantic unity of similarity and difference represents the typological relation. Christ is the structural counterpart to Adam, and so Adam becomes the structural pattern of Christ in a syntagmatic process perspective (first came Adam, then came Christ as a corresponding part). At its basis, however, the typology represents a paradigmatic way of thinking. We have an antithetical correspondence between Adam as the type and Christ as the antitype, why they symmetrically resemble and differ from each other like -1 and +1. In this systemic perspective, they are each other’s antitype like ‘sinner’ as a contrary term to ‘righteous,’ since the two conceptual roles mutually define each other.

## *A Pre-Pauline Form of Understanding*

With his Adam-Christ typology, Paul is not only giving us insight into his world of ideas. The opposition of Adam and Christ was already part of the tradition in the frac-

tion of Christ-confessors by which Paul was shaped. The idea that Christ was to understand in the light of Adam (and inversely) is not something Paul invented (but perhaps he should be honored for explicating the typology as a reasoned form of theological reflection). Thus, in an indirect manner, Paul reveals that this fraction's conception of Adam formed their conception of Christ. It is more precisely the Adam-story's narrative semiotics (the narratively articulated semantic contents) that comes to determine the Christ-story by which this fraction interprets and comprehends the Christ-event and its consequences (cf. Davidsen 2014).

### *The Protological and the Eschatological Adam and Christ*

The story of Adam and Eve we know from Gen 2:4b-3:24. Since Paul in his presentation focuses on Adam only, we shall refer to it as the *Adam-story*. More places we can see that this Adam-story plays an influential role to Paul (who is well aware that Eve appears there too; cf. 1 Cor 11:7ff). In 1 Cor 15:45 he opposes "the first man, Adam" with Christ as "the last Adam" because they both perform like some representative of humankind, protologically and eschatologically respectively. In this regard is Adam "the first Christ." Paul thinks on the one hand syntagmatically (in the process), first came Adam, then came Christ. On the contrary, the connection between them is established paradigmatically (in system) as typology: they are systematically the structural inversion of each other.

### *Death versus Life as the Fundamental Semantic Contrast*

The typology in the First Letter to the Corinthians has certain aspects, which we shall not deal with here.<sup>1</sup> We only include the comparison in 1 Cor 15:21-22:

For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

Adam and Christ both act vicariously as representatives of humankind. They are paradigms of the human being in a universal sense, i.e. all humanity because their actions are forming humanity's fate. In the unconditioned sense as a direct consequence, in the conditioned sense as a model, soon as an antihero, soon as a hero. In the absolute

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars have been more occupied with Adam and Christ in 1 Cor 15 (Jervell 1960) than in Rom 5 (Brandenburger 1962). For a brief introduction to Paul's understanding and use of Adam, see Dunn 2003, 79-101. As reference translation, I use the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

sense, Adam's disobedience implies that all people shall die, while Christ's obedience means that all people shall live. Death vs. Life is the fundamental semantic structure of signification that the typology is narratively dramatizing.

More precisely we have a contrast between eternal death and eternal life. Our ordinary life is a provisional life because of Adam. Our life, short or long, is temporary and ends with eternal death, a permanent death. On the Adam side, we have provisional life and definitive death. However, Christ has changed the situation. Due to his achievement, the dead can and will be raised at the resurrection of the dead and have eternal life. The death is no longer permanent, but a provisional state of being, and will inevitably (unavoidably) be followed by definitive life, i.e. eternal life, where death has been conquered. On the Christ side, we have provisional death and definitive life. Such is the typological and semantic basic structure out of which Paul is thinking and which he, if necessary, must modify.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Present and Future Deliverance from Death to Life*

At the time of writing, Paul and his companions find themselves in a transitional phase. On the one hand, the outcome of Adam's disobedience is in effect and defines the state of affairs (all shall die with Adam). On the other hand, the result of Christ's obedience is about to take effect and change the world's nature. The death and resurrection of Jesus have originated a process of events. This process, however, will not be realized completely until the Parousia of Jesus Christ (his return in the future, when all people shall have eternal life and live with him). This future eschatological perspective points to the ultimate goal, the final salvation. According to Paul, however, may all – already after the Christ-event (the death and resurrection of Jesus), but before the Parousia – consider themselves “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). The belief that God has raised Jesus from the dead may entail a change in the way a person perceives and lives his provisional life. We may regard such a change, *a pneumatic transformation*, as a present salvation anticipating the future salvation. It raises the questions, how Paul understands the function of faith and confession, of the baptismal ritual, and of the ethical conduct under the guidance of the spirit of God/Christ. What connection he sees between the believers' behavior and their access to the final salvation as *a somatic transformation* (from a 'physical body' to a 'spiritual body,' cf. 1 Cor

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<sup>2</sup> Those who are not dead, but still alive at Jesus' Parousia, will be transformed in a direct transition from provisional life to definitive life, cf. 1 Thess 4:13-17.

15:42ff). Here, however, we will focus on the first perspective, the absolute understanding, irrespective of the nature of possible requirements needed to be met by humankind.

### *The Person Roles Subject of Being and Subject of Doing*

Before we analyze the text, we shall introduce two narratological concepts. Persons, who are performing in stories, we can identify in two distinct roles, soon as the *subject of being*, soon as the *subject of doing*. Narrative worlds relate how a person's *being* is being preserved or changed because of its own or another person's *doing*. We are dealing with complex relations, but in its simple (condensed and simplified) version the typology is saying that Adam's doing influences all people's being, just like Christ's doing will affect all people's being. The focus is on Adam and Christ as the subjects of doing, whose actions define humankind as the subject of being.

One cannot speak of everything at the same time, nor can Paul. From sentence to sentence his linear-sequential discourse reveals only some sides of a wider question. We can, therefore, inquire about the implicit and presupposed aspects of the matter overtly thematised by the text. We can thus, in a methodical way, ask how Paul likely perceived Adam and Christ as subjects of being, who's own doing determines their being. We can equally examine what Paul would have to say about humankind in the role as the subject of doing: Whether the belief that their being has been changed will influence their conduct and whether their doing and letting will or will not have any consequence regarding their salvation at the Parousia of Christ. Here we will first and foremost look at the stories about Adam and Christ as stories about their *fate*. Because, such an exegesis is quite decisive for the understanding of those sides of the matter, which Paul in his letter discourse focuses on and explicitly speaks about, the importance of Adam's and Christ's doing for the *fate of all people*.

### *Narrativity and Historicity*

The Adam-story is a narrative, why we may wonder if Paul understands Adam as a historical person and thus the story as an account of events that happened or as an invented figure in a fictive narrative. There is no doubt, however, that Paul understands the Christ-event as a historical event. Moreover, since it is hard to imagine that Paul in any plausible way can argue and convince, himself and others, by juxtaposing

fiction and history, we must assume that the historical Paul perceived Adam as a historical person.<sup>3</sup>

In a methodological sense, however, is this question without any importance for narrative exegesis' understanding of Paul's imagery world. Paul can only proclaim his message about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ using a Christ-story. He may try to validate the story's historicity, for example by insisting that the resurrected Christ has been seen by himself as well as by much more people (1 Cor 15:3ff). However, and that is methodologically quite decisive: Whether the story, the Adam-story as well as the Christ-story, is fiction or history, the story's literal wording is the same. One may, therefore, study the story as a story from a narrative point of view with no regard to the question of fiction or history. The claim for truth, the assertion that the message is not only a delightful story, but reality, is, of course, part of the proclamation, and Paul is evidently trying to convince his audience about the truth of his gospel. However, the contents of the announcement, its *propositional* statement, is the same whether true or false in a historical sense, and we wish to focus on that substance.

### *The Pauline Basic Story*

In Paul's proclamation, we find many themes, loosely connected. If we accept his world of notions as an at least relatively integrated whole, however, his contrasting Adam with Christ, i.e. an Adam-story with a Christ-story, institutes the very fundament of his narrative world of ideas. The Adam-story and the Christ-story are combined and inseparable stories constituting the Pauline *basic-story*. If we want to understand the theology of Romans, its notions of God, Human, and World, then we ought to begin right here.

#### 1. The Text's Discursive Process

Romans 5:12-21 is part of an ongoing argument and is thus pointing back to the previous and forth to the following passages. It forms, however, not simply an intermediary part of argumentation, since in this piece Paul is formulating the axiological

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<sup>3</sup> We are often uncertain how mythological texts, for example, the Biblical creation stories, were understood in Antiquity. Because even then texts of this sort were interpreted in a thoughtful allegorical way and as such philosophically 'demythologized,' as the Jewish author Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BCE – c. 50 CE) bears witness to. However, while Philo with his logos thinking is seeking a deeper symbolical sense behind the non-philosophical story, Paul seems to a higher degree to follow the story's narrative mythos thinking; cf. Dunn 2003, 94.

grounds on which his additional theological arguments are resting. The conception of the relation between Adam and Christ is the decisive grounds of his reasoning.

Paul is comparing Adam and Christ and presents his basic ideas about this correlation. The presentation, however, takes some knowledge for granted and is even quite condensed. He must make more moves until he reaches the core of the matter. The first word ‘therefore’ (Διὰ τοῦτο) gives the immediate impression that what is now said follows from the information provided above (5:1ff or perhaps 3:21ff). However, as a matter of fact, the reverse is the case. What he has previously said is resting on the core ideas in 5:12-21. The sense is rather “What I have presented until now is entirely accurate, because ...” In Rom 6-8 Paul will then explain what further follows from these basic ideas (cf. 6:1 “What shall we say then?”). Thus Rom 5:12-21 is the argumentation’s ground as well as the center of rotation when the focus is on the theological interpretation of the world’s condition.

It is arguable that the text falls into two parts which are obviously connected but we can discern. We may speak of two rounds of argumentation, the first being 5:12-17, introduced by ‘therefore,’ and the second being 5:18-21, presented by ‘consequently.’

**5:12:** Here Paul begins the comparison between Adam and Christ, but right away he interrupts with more digressions. These are part of the comparison all right, but come, as it were, into the picture all too soon. Paul starts his comparison with the words: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ...” From the context, we might expect a continuation like this: “so came also righteousness into the world through one man, and life came through righteousness, and so life spreads to all because all will behave righteously.” Paul is concerned about the Adam-Christ relationship from a particular perspective. His focus is on the relation between the “one man” and “all” human beings and thus on the consequences of Adam’s and Christ’s actions for humankind. However, Paul breaks off without completing the comparison which he will not resume until 5:18.

Paul may be disturbed because he initiates his reasoning in a way that immediately jars on his ear. Right away more severe problems appear, difficulties that have troubled and haunted exegesis. It especially concerns the argument “because all have sinned,” which should correspond to “because all will behave righteously.”

5:13-14a: Paul cannot wait to parry off possible objections against his comparison between Adam and Christ. First the question of the Law of Moses; to be taken up in chapter 7. Since sin per definition is a transgression of some commandment, of some law, the question is, whether it makes sense to speak of sin before the Law of Moses was given.

5:14b: Shortly Paul returns to the comparison when he mentions that Adam “is a *type* of the one who was to come,” i.e. an image of a kind of Christ; but again, he breaks off.

5:15-17: Instead of explaining this type theme, Paul once more anticipates possible objections and hurries to point to an asymmetry between the Adam-side and the Christ-side of the typology. How this asymmetry in an otherwise symmetrical typology is to be understood, we shall look at in part 3.

5:18-20: The argumentation’s second round is introduced by the conclusive ‘therefore’ (Ἄρα οὖν; ‘consequently’), although Paul presents us to the very premises for what he has said earlier on. (Thus, we have a difference between the presentation of the argument, the discursive process of the text, and the immanent logic of the subject matter). We have a clarification rather than a conclusion (“So, what I am trying to say is ...”). At last, we are given a clear explanation of the assessment, partly the demonstration of similarities and differences between Adam and Christ, partly the thematisation of the connection between the one and the all (cf. 5:12b). The fact that we have a relation between “the one man” and “all” human beings is an essential point of resemblance between Adam and Christ in all their symmetrical dissimilarity.

5:21: Here Paul returns to the question of the Law (cf. 5:13-14a) and once again thematises sin and death (cf. 5:11), the three issues he will take up in the following chapters. Once more he underscores an asymmetry between the Adam-side and the Christ side of the typology (cf. 5:15-17). The question of the Law, however, shall not be dealt with here.

Paul’s exposition is quite crooked. To understand his thoughts, we must, therefore, disclose the sort of rationality that establishes the argumentation’s immanent logic. Thus, to interpret Paul’s text means here to give an account of its elementary intelligibility, its fundamental *narrative logic*. We will, therefore, approach the case by focusing on the subject matter’s inherent rationality, why we shall start with the explicit contrasting in 5:18-19.



## 2. Narrative Analysis of Romans 5:12-21

Methodologically we will approach the case from the theory of storytelling. It may come as a surprise, since the Letter to the Romans, when it comes to genre, does not appear as a narrative discourse, a story, on the face of it. However, here we underline that Paul's imagery is organized narratively, why a narrative analysis may shed light over the rationality of the argumentation and the universe of notions, perhaps reveal a lack of such rationality. On reflection, it becomes quite evident that the comparison between Adam and Christ is a contrasting of two characters defined by their respective stories, one Adam-story and one Christ-story. In what follows we will, therefore, perform a narrative exegesis on Rom 5:12-21. By narrative exegesis, we understand an exegetical interpretation based on story-theoretical insights from the study of how a narrative way of thinking forms texts of different sorts.

As mentioned above we will start the analysis with Rom 5:18-19. We will, however, use information from the whole section and hence explicitly reconstruct the conception hiding in the more crooked and condensed exposition.

Our interest concerns the semiotics, i.e. the structural semantics that articulate the notions. We render it visible, for one thing by rephrasing the most relevant sayings into a present tense form, as we include 5:12.15b (and in parenthesis 1 Cor 15:21-22):

- 5:12a Sin comes into the world through one man, and death comes through sin.
- 5:12b Death spreads to all because all are sinning.
- 5:15b The many dies through the one man's trespass.
- 5:18a One man's trespass leads to condemnation for all.
- 5:18b One man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.
- 5:19a The many are made sinners by the one man's disobedience.
- 5:19b The many are made righteous by the one man's obedience.
- (15:21a Death comes through a human being.
- 15:21b The resurrection of the dead comes through a human being.
- 15:22a All die in Adam.
- 15:22b All are being made alive in Christ.)

All statements have the basic form “the one man’s doing implies a change of all humans’ being” – except for 5:12b, which mentions all people as subjects of doing, what creates difficulties, cf. below section 3.

We furthermore use *catalysis* in our interpretation. By the context (closer or more distant), we make the semantic items of content, absent from the exposition’s surface, from the phraseology of the individual sentence, explicit. Since the comparison is contrasting Adam and Christ in a systematic way, we can rephrase the mentioned statements from each other. In this way, we have catalytically reconstructed some plausible parasyonymous statements (marked with \*) by Paul’s vocabulary, i.e. statements that still express Paul’s conception, but in clarifying, alternative expressions:

- 5:18a\* Adam’s unrighteous action implies unrighteousness and death for all people.
- 5:18b\* Christ’s righteous action implies righteousness and life for all people.
- 5:19a\* The many become unrighteous because of Adam’s disobedience and transgression of the commandment.
- 5:19b\* The many become righteous because of Christ’s obedience and observance of the commandment.

We have inserted the names and made the statements clear using the semantic sets of contrary terms: unrighteousness/righteousness (*ἀδικία*; Rom 1:18.29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13/*δικαίωμα*; *δικαίωσις*); unrighteous/righteous (*ἄδικος*/*δίκαιος*) and death/life. At first, it is not possible to see what is concealed in ‘death’ and ‘life,’ but in the absolute sense, we must think of a definitive death and a definitive life, i.e. eternal death and eternal life. Disobedience (*παρακοή*) and transgression (*παράβασις*; 5:14) belong together (cf. Heb 2:2), and the transgression must be a violation of a commandment (*ἐντολή*; cf. Rom 7:8-13; 13:9; further 2:23). In the same way, Christ’s obedience (*ὑπακοή*; cf. Phil 2:8, *ὑπήκοος*, “obedient to the point of death”) must be related to his righteous action understood as the observance of a commandment.

These statements do not explain, *how* the actions of Adam and Christ change the being of all human beings. In these versions, Paul simply speaks unconditioned about the course of events initiated by Adam and Christ.

Besides the category of *person*, a *value* perspective plays a significant role in the narrative mind. The change of a person's being is either for the better (a progression) or, for the worse (a degression).

Degression and progression may be conditioned as well as unconditioned. So, it counts conditionally according to God's legal system (*δικαίωμα*) that if Adam transgresses the interdiction, then the consequence will be, that he and all human beings shall die. However, now Adam has met the condition, why all people unconditionally must die. The question is now if the doing of all human beings does not play any role at all in this process of tragic events. As we shall see, Paul is unclear at this point and inconsequent in his thinking, but in the absolute sense, the doing of the human being has no importance. Humankind turns out to be defined as a *victim of an ongoing fatal degression*, i.e. an inexorable, unfortunate fate, which it cannot change. The eternal death is inevitable.

On the other hand, God's legal system implies that if Christ obeys the injunction, then the consequence will be, that all human beings shall live. However, now Christ has met the condition, why all people unconditionally will live forever. Again, one could ask, if people's own doing does not count in this process of saving events, but in an absolute sense, it plays no role. Because of Christ's observance of the injunction, it turns out that the human being is defined as the *beneficiary of an ongoing fatal progression*, i.e. an inexorable, fortunate fate, which it cannot change. The eternal life is inevitable.

We have attached importance to the absolute formulations to establish a clear point of departure, an Archimedean standpoint. This absolute understanding, however, seems also to be Paul's point of origin, his idea of God's ultimate plan, and he may never wholly abandon it. The question is if Paul modifies the absolute conception and lets degression, as well as progression, depend on the person's doing, whether that doing consists in faith or action if not in both. So is the matter in all its aspects, which not only haunts contemporary exegesis but has been discussed currently during the Christian tradition's reception of Paul. Here we shall focus more strictly on Paul's presentation of the matter in Rom 5.

### 2.1. The Adam-story

First, let us look at the characterizations of Adam. He sins through his transgression (5:14), which will have consequences for all humanity. Paul presupposes knowledge of

the Adam-story, in which God issues a commandment, more precisely an interdiction (against the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), which Adam violates. God punishes the humans by expelling them from the garden of Eden and in doing so from the tree of life. In the story, God is performing as legislative, judicial, and executive power. He issues the interdiction, gives the law, Adam is violating. He sentences Adam to banishment and lastly executes the penalty, a kind of capital punishment. Because outside the garden of Eden is death Adam's (and Eve's) inexorable fate. The final execution of the death penalty will, however, not take place until death occurs. Death we must understand as definitive death, a fatal state of being, which cannot be changed. Only from hindsight, i.e. in the light of the Christ-event, death can be a provisional death, i.e. a state of being that can be changed.

From the perspective of narrative theory, we recognize some general features of the story in the Adam-story. We have a relation between two central actants, an Addresser (here God) and an Addressee (here Adam). The Addresser is the superior instance, which establishes the Addressee's conditions, typically as the stipulation of certain rules. The story now follows the narrative schema of the narrative mind. We distinguish three phases, manipulation, performance, and sanction.<sup>4</sup>

*The manipulation phase:* This is the initial phase, where the Addresser interpellates the Addressee and persuasively/coercively establishes the conditions defining their mutual relationship. So, we right away recognize, how these general narrative structures define what different Biblical texts term *covenant*. We shall, therefore, distinguish between a covenantal Lord (God) and a covenantal servant (Adam). The covenantal Lord is here the acting subject of doing; he decides the conditions:

The Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Gen 2:15-17)

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<sup>4</sup> Still another phase, the one of *competence*, closely connected to and following that of manipulation, is not to be analyzed here. But it should be mentioned that the modality *being able to do* defines Adam's ability in a particular way. Adam can (is able to) eat from the tree of knowledge, but he is also able not to eat from it. Without this dynamic freedom is the interdiction without sense. Initially, therefore, Adam must also *be able to* and *be able not to* eat from the tree of life; but after the expulsion, he is no longer able to eat from it, cf. further below. The phase of competence concerns the space of possibility, which God has established for Adam from the start. To the semionarrative concepts, cf. Greimas 1983; Davidsen 1993 and 2014.

The covenantal Lord issues an interdiction, which the covenantal servant is not allowed to violate. We have an arch-example of the significance of *the law* defined by interdictions (Thou shall not!) and prescriptions (Thou shall!). Covenant and law can be distinguished, but not separated. Thus, *covenantal nomism* represents a narrative way of thinking. We have covenantal nomism in the strict sense, although neither the word ‘covenant’ nor the word ‘law’ appears in the text.

*The performance phase:* This is the main phase when it goes to show whether the covenantal servant can observe the covenant, its rule. Here the focus is on the covenantal servant as the subject of doing, When Adam violates the law, he breaks the covenant:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, at that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. (Gen 3:6)

*The sanction phase:* It is the final step when the covenantal Lord as a judge will evaluate the covenantal servant’s action and either reward or punish him:

Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” – therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3:22-24).

In this phase, the focus is again on the covenantal Lord as the subject of doing, but at the same also on the covenantal servant as the subject of being, i.e. on its final state of being. After all, the story is about the covenantal servant’s self-inflicted fate. Death is inevitable. It will not happen immediately, but it will necessarily occur as the fulfillment of an initiated fatal process of degeneration. Eternal life, on its side, has become impossible. The cherubim and the sword flaming are hindering the access to the tree of life.

Paul does not speak of God as a judge (*κριτής*), but this role is implicitly given by his talking of God’s judgment (*κρίμα*) on Adam (5:16). We can explicate a sequence of implicit parts in the judicial *process schema*. God must, first of all, discover

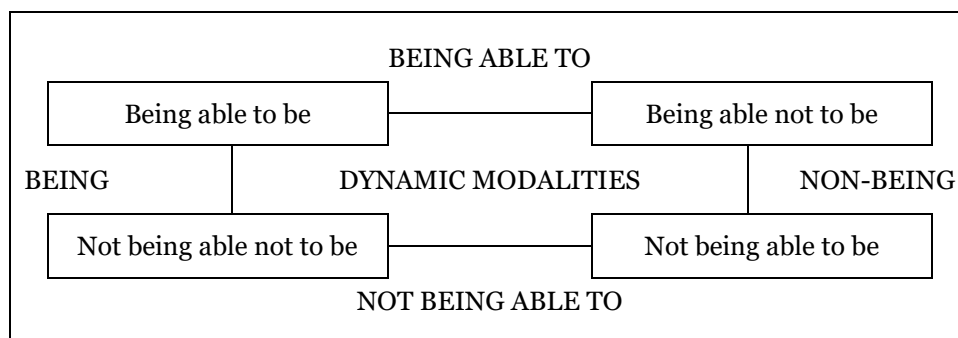
the transgression; then he must condemn (*κατακρίνω*) Adam and find him worthy of capital punishment (cf. 8:3; 1:32), pronounce the condemnation (*κατάκριμα*; cf. 5:16) of him. Finally, God must perform as the one who retaliates or punishes (*ἐκδικος*, 13:4; *ἐκδικέω*, 12:19), i.e. executes the penalty by changing Adam's being, in the ultimate sense from life to death.

Stories are about changing or preservation of persons' being. In principle, a story may be about any of the characters' being, but most often it will focus on the being of the Addressee (the covenantal servant). Neither does the Adam-story focus on God's being, but humans' being. Furthermore, Paul is not interested in Adam's subsequent life story. He fastens upon what is decisive: that Adam must die because of his violation of the commandment.

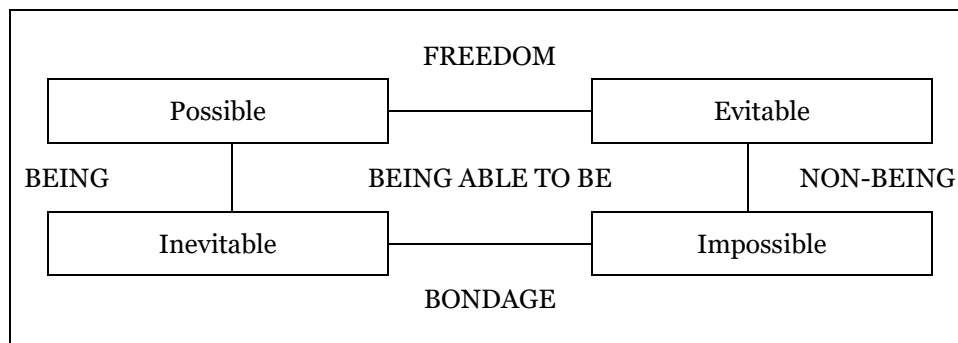
We have no difficulty in seeing that the expulsion from the Garden of Eden is a degression (from fortune/happiness to misfortune/unhappiness). On the contrary, it is far from evident that the change of Adam's being which should have our full attention is a *modal transformation*.

According to God's legal system, the humans would die the very day they ate from the tree of knowledge (because the fruit was lethal or because God would right away execute them). However, this does not happen. There is a waiting period between the decision and the execution in the form of a somatic transformation from life to death. According to Gen 5:5, Adam lived for "nine hundred and thirty years," and then he died. The modal aspect is given by the fact that the humans' being outside the garden of Eden, their Adamic existence, is defined by the inevitability of death (for how long a person may live is in this respect without importance). The access to the tree of life is blocked, why eternal life at the same time has been an impossibility.

This talk about the death's inevitability and life's impossibility refers to the *dynamic modalities*, i.e. the question of *ability/being able to* (cf. *δύναμις*):



corresponding with:



It is a peculiar property of the dynamic modalities that what can be, also cannot be. What is possible and what is evitable are given all together. On the contrary, the inevitable and the impossible are mutually exclusive modalities. If eternal death is evitable, then eternal life is possible and vice versa. However, if eternal death is inevitable, then eternal life is impossible and vice versa.

After the banishment from the Garden of Eden, the eternal life is impossible for Adam, while the eternal death is inevitable. Now there is a good reason to consider how Adam's being initially is modalized because this question is also of importance to our understanding of the Christ-side. The case is clear: In the Garden of Eden, Adam is able to eat from the tree of life, why eternal life is given as a possibility (and eternal death thereby is evitable). As the course of the story shows, eternal death is at the same moment a possibility (a risk, and eternal life, therefore, evitable, an opportunity to miss).

Every person performing in a story may act soon as the subject of doing (the one who is carrying out an action), soon as the subject of being (the one who is undergoing an act). When Adam as the subject of doing violates the interdiction (by his unrighteous action), his action will, first of all, have consequences *for his being*. If Adam in shame had hung himself in the tree of knowledge his action would immediately have had a consequence for his *somatic* being, the change from life to death. If God on the spot had hung Adam as punishment, then God's action would likewise have changed Adam's somatic being. The eating from the tree of knowledge does, in fact, imply a somatic change from life to death, but in a more sophisticated manner. Adam's action causes God's action, which will carry the somatic change into effect, however

only with a delay. The narrative schema is correctly showing us the course of such interactive and complex events.

To understand this complexity, we should at first observe that Adam by his action acquires status as *unworthy* because the law's normativity values the work. Adam is 'disobedient,' and his action is condemned. Thus, an action is either worthy (deserving, meritorious) or unworthy (underserving, demeritorious) and the subject of doing appears either as righteous or unrighteous, because of its morally/justly right or improper conduct. According to God's legal system, unrighteous sinners are punished with death, and so Adam receives his well-deserved penalty. However, he is punished because of his undeserving, disgraceful action. As a perpetrator, Adam has changed his *state of being* and now appears as unrighteous/sinner. One will not die directly because of such an *axiological transformation* (cf. ἀξίος, worthy, cf. 1:32 "deserve to die"). However, according to the idea of covenantal nomism, God will judge and punish the sinner. First, Adam is identified as a sinner. Then follows the sanction as a further change of Adam's being. Here the first step is the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, an action implying a *modal transformation* (death becomes inevitable); the next step is the final somatic change of being, the passing from life to death.

Now, the important thing is, that we in stories, which always are about preservation or change of being, can discern being in more respects. The very biological passage from life to death is a *somatic transformation* of the person's being. When a person acquires the status as a sinner because of some undeserving action, we will have an alteration of being too, but of another kind: *axiological transformation*. The person receives the *status* as unworthy or unjust from a judgment based on law. It is not a question of, how the person himself perceives of his action, but that is objectively evaluated by the story's moral foundation of values. The idea of God as a judge is only an elucidation of this fact.

In real life is the course from crime to punishment an *open* story. Maybe no one will discover the offense, or maybe one cannot find the perpetrator. The offender may be found and taken into custody, but escapes because of procedural error or succeeds in fleeing. Alternatively, the wrongdoer is convicted but later set free because of amnesty of a kind. The point is that in the real world we can never be entirely sure that crime leads to punishment. Otherwise in stories, where God is the superior authority, who in principle discovers all, judges rightfully, and guarantees that the penalty will be fully executed. The Adam-story is open (indeterminate) until Adams'



sinful action has taken place. Subsequently, it is *closed* (fatally determined) and determines even the fate of all humans since the rightful God will be faithful to his decree. However, as we shall see, God, the guarantee of justice, can – paradoxically – hit upon the idea to change a human’s axiological state of being (status of worthiness), from sinner to righteous, and thereby turn its fortune.

Now, in this context, Paul is not narrowly interested in Adam’s doing and being. He is concerned with the participative lot, the common destiny given for Adam and “all” human beings. Let us have a look at the following statements:

- 5:12a        Sin comes into the world through one man, and death comes through sin.  
5:12b        Death spreads to all because all sin.

The first statement is quite clear: death becomes part of the world’s nature, not only as a possibility but as a necessity. Death is inevitable; it has dominion over human life since all people find themselves outside the garden of Eden as Adam and Eve after the banishment. It is furthermore evident that this modal state of being (the Adamic existence) is a consequence of Adam’s sin. As the subject of being, “all” humans are the victim of a fatal degeneration. On the other hand, it is entirely unclear how one should then understand 5:12b (cf. below). If sin implies death, the death on its side presupposes sin. When all people die – must Paul infer – it is because all people are sinners. From the undeniable fact of death, Paul must acknowledge that all humans are sinners. All “are under the power of sin. ... There is no one who is righteous, not even one” (Rom 3:10).

Hence another modal aspect emerges concerning “all humans,” not as a modalised subject of being, but as a modalised subject of doing. That is, of course, interesting because the question of the human being’s own doing plays such a significant role in the interpretation of Paul’s theology, especially its doing after the justifying Christ-event. However, the situation before the Christ-event seems clear. It is the nature of the Adamic existence that “all humans” inevitably sin. They do not obey God’s law. They *are not able to* follow God’s (explicit or implicit) law under the Adamic conditions (cf. 8:7). They are enslaved (*δουλεύω*) to sin; sin reigns (*βασιλεύω*) over them (6:6.12.16-22).

The modalization of humankind’s being, we have seen, implies that death is inevitable, while eternal life is impossible. This modal transformation for the worse

Paul mentions as a fall (*παράπτωμα*; 5:15-18.20). The word *πτῶμα* means ‘fall’ but is used figuratively for ‘misfortune,’ ‘defeat,’ and ‘trespass.’ Therefore *παράπτωμα* can be translated ‘offense’ or ‘trespass’ and be parasyonymous to ‘false step,’ ‘sin.’ It is, however, better to translate with ‘fall’ (and thus adequate to speak of the Fall). The focus is not on Adam’s transgression (*παράβασις*, 5:14) or trespassing, but on the consequences of his sinful action, the passage from an abundance of being to want of being, a fall or decrease in value, from fortune to misfortune.

This fall concerns humankind’s doing, its ability to act. For the absolute understanding, it is given by humans’ constitution, their Adamic existence, that they are unable not to sin: “by the one man’s disobedience the many were made (*καθίστημι*) sinners (*ἁμαρτωλός*)” (5:19). Adams’s disobedience, of course, means his violation of God’s interdiction, and subsequently, defines all humans by the role of the *sinner*. The use of *καθίστημι* with the sense of ‘making someone into something’ is the crucial thing. Thus, “The many are made sinners by Adam’s disobedience.” Under the conditions of Adamic existence, understood as a modalised latitude, all humans are born as sinners and remain sinners (unless God intervenes). Adam’s wrongdoing has *reality-founding* consequences. For humankind, it establishes the world or reality with a particular nature. The world is under the dominion of sin, which concerns the modalization of doing (the human being is not able not to sin), and under the power of death, which involves the modalization of being (for the person death is inevitable and definitive). To alter this reality, a change for the better of humankind’s being and doing needs to take place: a rising (*ἀνάστασις*) must follow the fall (*πτῶσις*, cf. Lk 2:34).

## 2.2. The Christ-story

When speaking of Adam, Paul refers to a story (Gen 2:4b-3:24), which we know, and we have no difficulty following his process of thought and seeing that he thinks with the story, that its narrative logic forms his ideas. So, it is, even if Paul’s understanding of this story might represent a special reception of it. Things are different when Paul speaks of Christ. Because, we do not have a text that gives us that Christ-story, from which he speaks and with which he thinks. Indeed, we have four gospel stories in the New Testament, but they are in their present form written later than Paul’s letters. It is not impossible that the oldest of these gospel stories, the Gospel of Mark, contains

tradition, which Paul also has known, but in that case presumably only as oral tradition. Whatever the case, we should not only assume, but regard it as almost a fact, that the gospel, Paul proclaims, is based on a coherent Christ-story, i.e. a narrative account of the salvific events. *The typology reveals that Jesus' death was interpreted from the Adam-story in a structural inversion of it.* The nearest we can come to a real Christ-story in Paul is the brief Christ Hymn (or Creed) of Philippians 2:5b-11, which causes trouble because we do not know the more expanded story of which it is a stylized (presumably liturgical) reduction.

1 Cor 15:3-4 is even briefer. Here Paul mentions, that his gospel proclamation rests on a message which he has received. The essential point in this so-called *kerygma* is the information “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.” This kerygma, too, must be a shortened version of a more expanded Christ-story. We can hardly imagine that Paul could convert gentiles with this formulaic message unless he had developed it extensively beforehand.

The kerygma reminds of historical annals' brief record of events in temporal succession, for example, “The third of March, the King died”; “The seventh of April, the Queen died.” However, we only have a *historical narrative* revealing the *connection* between the events, when we are told that the Queen died of grief after the loss of her husband. Thus, here the question is in the first place, what the connection is between the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, and next what it means “that Christ died for our sins.” While Paul in more places throws light on the second question, he is almost silent about the first one. As it comes to Adam as well as to Christ, Paul is mostly occupied with the consequences of their action for “all humans,” including himself. Therefore, we must reconstruct the basic structure of his Christ-story, i.e. bring it to the light of the scattered and elliptical information we find in his text.

For this catalytic procedure, we have two safeguards against interpretative arbitrariness. Primarily, Paul's assertion of a typological relation between Adam and Christ. They are the semantic inversion of each other, so if the one is a disobedient sinner causing death, the other is an obedient, righteous person causing life. Next, from the theory of story, we have general knowledge of the narrative way of thought, which makes us able to demonstrate the supposed narrative logic or semiotics that create the coherence of the conceptual world.

Let us take a closer look at the following statements:

5:18b        The one man's righteous action implies righteousness and life for all people.

5:19b        The many are made righteous by the one man's obedience.

They are about Christ's causative "righteous action" and "obedience." One way or another, the work implies a change of humankind's being, from 'sinner' to 'righteous' and from 'death' to 'life.' However, before looking at this change of all humans' being, we have reason to take a closer look at the obedient Christ's righteous doing.

However, about what action are we talking? Well, we can answer that question solely from the previous passage, 5:1-11. It gives us more relevant pieces of information which we can summarize in the following statements: "Christ died for the ungodly/the sinners," "All human beings are justified/saved through the death of Christ." Thus, the just and justifying action is the death of Christ. It is decisive that Christ is identified as an intentional subject of doing dying in obedience, i.e. according to God's will. When we come to think of it, the implication is, that Christ has not his life taken in the crucifixion, but is giving it for a cause in compliance with a command. It further implies that the resurrection of Christ from the dead is God's sanction as a reward for Christ's just action. Thus, we can reconstruct the narrative schema presupposed by the Christ-story by proceeding backward.

Pointing forward, the course of action is open. For example, it is prototypically the case that a young woman having had her first menstruation can become pregnant; but she does not become pregnant because she has had her first menstruation. On the other hand, we can for certain infer that a pregnant woman has had her first menstruation. A pregnant woman is a prospective mother, but it is not confident that a fully developed baby is born. Unintentional or intentional abortion may hinder the accomplishment. We cannot infer from pregnancy to motherhood, but we can for certain assume that a biological mother has been pregnant. Motherhood necessarily presupposes pregnancy, which necessarily implies menstruation. A typical story, for example, telling us about a young girl, who gets into trouble and gives birth in concealment, needs not to say us that she has been together with a man, nor that she has had her first menstruation. We can conclude so ourselves from our knowledge of the world's nature. Likewise, stories presuppose our narrative competence, our ability to

interpret and comprehend the world from stable cognitive schemata for courses of events. The narrative schema is such a cognitive schema of sequence, which creates the coherence of the course of action. When God intervenes by raising Jesus from the dead, it is presupposed, that the death of Jesus is a meritorious deed and thus that there exists a *meaningful causal connection* between death and resurrection. On its side, Jesus' exemplary action presupposes compliance with a command, which again implies that God has issued that command. It is not sure that a text informs us about all the parts of the order, but its storyline presupposes them, why we can explicate them by catalysis. Thus, we can identify the narrative schema of the Christ-story as follows:

*Manipulation phase:* Paul does not thematize this phase. Hence, we can only identify it by an inference of implication, which is, in fact, an inference of presupposition. If Christ is obedient, he must be obedient towards God and the command issued by him (cf. Phil 2:8). Obedience is obedience to God's command, and here it cannot concern respect for an interdiction ("You shall not ...") but must be compliance with a prescription ("You shall ..."). The relationship between God and Christ is also a covenant-relation between a covenantal Lord and a covenantal Servant, and Adam is to Christ as interdiction is to prescription (cf. John 10:18; Davidsen 2014).

*Performance phase:* The main action/performance is Christ's death as a justifying action. (Nor is a presupposed *Competence phase* thematised as a scenario in its right, but it should be considered, of course, how Christ must be modalized to be able to perform his commanded task; cf. below).

*Sanction phase:* In the Christ-story, God also acts as legislative and judicial as well as executive power. God stages the trial (the manipulation), which Christ must pass. After Christ's performance, it is up to God as a judge to assess, whether the imposed conditions have been met, whether a meritorious deed has been performed. Next God must live up to his decree and reward Christ when the result is positive. The wages of sin is death; likewise, the wages of just performance is life (Rom 6:23). The reward is the resurrection to eternal life. Christ's access to eternal life – and thereby access to eternal life for all people – depends upon, whether Christ passes the trial or not. To Christ, eternal life is a reward, in return for his just action; to his followers, however, it is, to be explained below, a free gift.

In Rom 6:9 Paul writes that Christ "will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." God's sanction implies a change of Christ's being, from death

to life, more accurately to definitive life, eternal life. This change of Christ's somatic being is attended by a modal transformation because the risen Christ is now in a state of being, where death is impossible. That gives us the opportunity to ask, what modal state of being Christ was in earlier on, partly before God's sanction, partly before his performance. We shall look at the last one first.

We are in search of the story's narrative rationality and therefore must conclude that Christ before his obedient action was in a state of being, which we can identify concerning his being as well as his doing. As we have seen, being is a question of life and death. In the intermediate state, before the performance and his just action, Christ's being is thus modalised as follows: Eternal life is possible as well as evitable. Likewise, Christ's doing is modalized by dynamic freedom in a sense, that what he must do according to God's commandment, he is able to do as well as able not to do. Thus, Christ is found to be in a situation comparable to Adam's situation in the garden of Eden before the trespassing, when Adam was able to as well as able not to eat from the tree of knowledge (and from the tree of life). The implication is, that already in this moment death no longer has dominion over Christ because where death dominates, death is inevitable and eternal life impossible. In a presupposed manipulation phase, therefore, God must not only have issued a commandment for Christ to observe. He must also have endowed Christ with a special competence, so that sin no longer has dominion over him as a subject of doing. Otherwise, he would not be able to keep the law, i.e. to comply with the commandment in a world dominated by sin.<sup>5</sup> Christ must be able to obey the law, i.e. the commandment.<sup>6</sup> Here, we cannot follow the case, but

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<sup>5</sup> Paul is focusing on performance and sanction but is silent about manipulation and competence. And yet, he could hardly avoid thinking about all the phases. Considering the resemblance Paul sees and seeks between Christ and the Christ-confessors, we might here infer from his view of the latter to his opinion of the former. The similarity necessarily goes both ways. If the reception of holy spirit qualifies the competence of the Christ-confessors, their ability to act rightfully, it is likely that also Jesus' special abilities is thought to be due to possession of holy spirit. Such is the idea we meet in the Gospel of Mark (where Jesus receives holy spirit in continuation of the baptismal event, 1:10), and Paul might have known it, even if he does not mention it. Notice, that Paul in the typology consistently speaks of Christ as a human being. Hence, Christ must be a person with unique abilities, and the most obvious explanation would be that God's spirit has overshadowed him.

<sup>6</sup> This qualification should not be confounded with the idea of Jesus' sinlessness, understood as if Jesus lived a sinless life even before his reception of holy spirit. Here it means, that the spirit has liberated Jesus from the dominion of sin, why he is now able to sin as well as able not to sin. He *ought* to comply with the commandment, but he *can* refrain from doing so. Without this dynamic freedom, there would be no achievement to reward, and any talk of obedience would be meaningless.

it is obvious to understand Christ's compliance as the obedience of faith (1:5.16:26). Christ must trust that God is able to raise someone from the dead.<sup>7</sup>

In Rom 11:35, Paul asks a rhetorical question: "... who has given a gift to him [God], to receive a gift in return?" The answer is "Nobody." No human being has given God anything that obligates him to repay. This statement is essential for the understanding of the Christ-event. God was in no way indebted to stage the possibility of salvation for humankind. On the contrary, the righteous and angry God was bound to destroy humanity because of Adam's sin. Therefore, it is a favor (*χάρις*), when God tempers justice with mercy and stages the possibility for reconciliation and salvation. It is in no way caused by a human being's meritorious work (cf. 4:4). However, the reconciliation and the salvation are only established as a possibility. They demand the fulfillment of particular requirements.

First, the realization depends upon whether Jesus vicariously is able to meet the request, to observe the commandment. When Jesus with his just deed meets the conditions, then God, thanks to his covenantal promise, is obliged to reward Jesus in return. Therefore, to start with, eternal life is also impossible to Christ. God must open the prospect of eternal life by a change of Christ's competence. At the same time, he must define the terms of the task (the instruction) and the possible positive outcome of it (the reward). At this moment, after the manipulation and before the performance, eternal life is at the same time possible and evitable to Christ. In the next place, his just action (performance) qualifies him as *deserving of* eternal life, from now on modalised as inevitable. The (provisionally) dead Christ does not have eternal life but has the right to it (as *heir*, cf. 8:17; 1 Cor 15:50; Mk 10:17).

At this moment, Christ is already/not yet saved from death to life. Next, the righteous God, who per definition cannot but live up to his by a promise established obligation, raises Christ, who then has eternal life, a state of being, which cannot be changed. On its side, death has become impossible. That is how we should understand the plot of the Christ-story presupposed, but not unfolded, by Paul.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Heb 11, especially 11:17-19. Therefore, it has been debated, whether Paul, when speaking about "justification by faith," has Christ's faith, his (Abraham like) covenantal obedience, which implies righteousness, in mind, rather than the faith of the Christ-confessors (Stowers 1994, 194-206). However, here it is not a question of either-or, but of both-and. Or the statement is sufficiently ambiguous to be referring to Christ's obedience of faith as well as to the Christ-confessors' confidence in the message of that obedience of faith.

If we by ‘hero’ mean a person, who by his deed can save an entire community, then Christ is a hero. His achievement is not only benefitting himself. Because he is a representative of humankind, his meritorious action opens the possibility of salvation for all human beings. Until pedantry, Paul is carefully insisting on this interplay between God’s action and Christ’s action. God’s mercy initiates the goal oriented course of events, but this cannot be realized as planned without the co-operation of Jesus Christ through his meritorious action. Cf. for example 5:21: “... just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through (διά, by means of, thanks to) Jesus Christ our Lord” (further 5:1.11; 1 Thess 5:9, and 1 Cor 15:57).

As on the Adam-side, so Paul focuses on the consequences of the reality constituting actions on the Christ-side too. He is supposed to explain, how Christ’s just work leads to justification and life for all human beings (cf. 5:18b). Taken in the absolute sense, all people have their *status* changed, from sinner to righteous, and this new *status of being* will be rewarded with eternal life, even if they never have heard of Christ or refuses the proclamation of him.

So, it works on the Adam-side, indeed, since people die, even if they do not know, who Adam is. Paul can hardly mean that one must believe in Adam to obtain common destiny with him in death.

Things are different on the Christ-side. People need to be informed about the Christ-event and its implications, including how to respond to this message to secure common destiny with Christ in eternal life (cf. 10:9-15). It is, therefore, correct to speak of salvation as a possibility. However, even if salvation is given as an objective possibility (established by Christ), for the individual its realization demands a subjective response, at least as faith and confession. Thus, salvation is not given unconditionally in an absolute sense, although the request for faith and confession as acceptance of God’s gift may appear almost cost free. It is debated, as well known, whether salvation demands other requirements met according to Paul, for example, that one is baptized and conducts a sinless life, but we shall not pursue that further here.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It only needs to be mentioned, that Paul tends to regard the life of the Christ-confessor in (vertical) likeness to Christ’s life. So, it seems that the dynamic freedom, characteristic of Jesus’ competence (he is able to sin, and he is able not to sin), is also the model for Paul’s understanding of the Christ-confessor’s re-modalized competence after having received the holy spirit. If so, the Christ-confessor has been set free from the dominion of sin and must now slave for righteousness instead. However, while one



### 3. Supplementary comment

We cannot leave Romans 5:12-21 without touching on a couple of matters hinted at above. First, the interpretation of 5:12, which has played a significant role in the history of theology. The question is, what “because (ἐφ’ ᾧ) all have sinned” implies. The Greek expression is the best understood as a shortened version of ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὅτι (because of this, that), but other translations and thereby other interpretations have been suggested.<sup>9</sup> Especially the translation “in whom [that is Adam] all sinned” has played a role in the conception of the so-called doctrine of original sin, generally connected to Augustine (the Vulgate accurately translates with “*in quo*”). Of course, exegesis is not bound by the theological tradition’s interpretations of Paul (not at all by its speculative aberrations). However, exegesis preposterously blows itself up, when it spreads the impression that tradition simply has misunderstood an otherwise unambiguous Paul. The problem is that Paul is giving double grounds for the death, soon Adam’s sin, soon each human’s sin, and that does not make sense. It is presupposed, of course, that all people are sinning, but the question is, whether they do so in dynamic freedom or dynamic bondage. If it happens in dynamic bondage (as the doctrine of original sin implies), Adam is the responsible person on behalf of all people, but if it happens in dynamic freedom, then the individual is the responsible person. Thus, the question is, whether the person’s death, in a way the death as such, is an effect of humans’ *guilt* (their sinning in freedom) or humans’ *destiny* (their sinning in bondage because of Adam). In its basic form, the doctrine of original sin is a speculative folk theory trying to solve a tricky difficulty, with which Paul himself is struggling. Due to Adam’s reality constituting trespassing, his sin, all people are subsequently born as slaves under the sin, why they are not able not to sin. However, then one could ask if it is just to hold people responsible and to punish them with the death when they are unable not to sin.

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slave for sin, because one cannot but do so (a negative version of dynamic bondage), one now slave for righteousness in freedom (understood dynamically). Here the bondage is given by the fact that one must live in obedience to God’s commandment, and that refers to the modality *having to do* (deontological bondage; cf. δεῖ, δεῖον ἐστίν). Otherwise, we would have to assume that the possession of holy spirit makes the Christ-confessor unable to sin (a positive version of dynamic bondage), and that does not correspond to Paul’s constant need to admonish and to improve his communities. On the other hand, there can hardly be any doubt that Paul, ideally speaking, imagines that the Christ-confessor might be able to live a sinless life.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzmyer (1993) mentions 11 different interpretations, but finds himself, that Paul is ascribing death to two causes, to Adam’s sin as well as to the sins of all human beings, since the individual’s sin ratifies the sin of Adam (416). This interpretation represents to some extent what Paul is asserting, but it does not nullify the contradiction between destiny and guilt, between Adam being responsible and the individual human being responsible.

However, Paul is disregarding this question, why he speaks paradoxically seeing sin as an interplay between guilt and destiny. If “the wages of sin is death” (6:23), and if all people die (as experience shows), then Paul must conclude, that all people have sinned. As the subject of being, humankind is identified as the victim of a *fatal* degression, what strictly speaking suspends its status as a subject of doing. Paul is primarily focusing on this fatality, why Adam appears as the subject of doing responsible for all people’s death. We have met a similar problem on the Christ-side, where it was to reflect, whether all individuals are the beneficiary of a fatal progression, which likewise is suspending the question of their doing.

The other item concerns the question, how to understand the asymmetry between the Adam-side and the Christ-side in an otherwise symmetrical typology, which exists according to Paul. Here, we shall only clarify the problem using 5:15 as the example. There, Paul underlines a difference between the fall and the free gift: “For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.” This asymmetrical difference, asserted by “much more surely,” does it not contradict our narrative analysis’ symmetrical definition of the Adam-Christ typology? No, not at all. Paul understands Christ as an intermediary, why we should have an eye for God’s action as well as for Christ’s work in all their interactive connection. It is further important that Paul speaks in absolute terms about the two fatal courses of events.

The fall is a result of Adam’s doing, but the free gift is a result of first Gods’ doing, and then Christ’s doing. Christ’s doing corresponds to Adam’s doing, but it is God who to some extent tempers justice with mercy, when he opens the possibility, that Jesus may remedy the damage caused by Adam. Christ compensates for Adam, but only because of God’s merciful establishment of this possibility. The righteous God sanctions Adam’s doing as well as Christ’s doing. However, the possibility of reconciliation and expiation is brought about by God’s love. It is God, who takes the initiative and opens the possibility of reconciliation. In this case, the asymmetry is because Paul opposes deserved punishment and underserved mercy. Adam is receiving his deserved punishment, all right. However, Christ too, on his side, is receiving his deserved reward for his obedience until death, so on this point, we have full symmetry. They are both sanctioned as deserved. In contrast, those justified by Christ’s action, receive no deserved reward. On the contrary, they receive an underserved gift thanks to the justification, which ends in eternal life. So, here the asymmetry consists of justice versus

mercy/love. Paul speaks of “abundance,” because “the many,” in principle all people, unmerited is awarded the right to be – because of Christ’s deserving righteousness.

### Closing Remarks

We have analyzed the Adam-Christ typology in Rom 5:12-21 using the approach of narrative exegesis because a narrative mindset forms Paul’s way of thinking. He is thinking in and from an Adam-story and a Christ-story, and this *twofold story* provides the basis for his world of ideas, his conceptions of God, Human, and World. We have not tried to “demythologize” Paul but wanted to make his mythological universe comprehensible by clearing up the narrative rationality that forms it. It is often said, that Paul is no systematic theologian, that he has no coherent theology, but *ad hoc* formulates his religious thoughts owing to often quite practical questions. However, that is an exaggeration, because even if Paul develops his ideas over time, and even if his occasional letters are occupied with occurring problems, then not least the Letter to the Romans suggests that his theological reflections have a set of relatively stable fundamental axioms as their basis. It is quite right that these foundational ideas do not form a philosophical, conceptual system. The systematics come from the basic double story’s narrative structures of signification. However, Paul does not confine himself to recite this basic story. He is thinking with its narrative logic, and whatever else he might think of this or that, he infers from his governing understanding of it. That is why Romans 5:12-21 is so important to our comprehension of Paul’s thoughts and thinking.

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