

“All Creation Groans” (Rom 8.18-30)

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The “newness of life,”² “new creation,”³ and the hope of creation for freedom⁴ are central to Paul’s “theology,” and yet these concepts seem to have played little role in shaping Christian thinking about the defense and renewal of creation. Pauline scholars are largely to blame for that, since we have paid little or no attention to those issues. James D. G. Dunn, for example, devotes a mere five pages to “God and the cosmos” and two paragraphs on Rom 8.19-22 in his *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*⁵ without saying a word about the relationship of Paul’s “theology” to such issues as environmental racism, animal rights, genetically altered food products, the role of economic markets in the spread of global hunger, poverty, and disease—let alone their failure to address such problems—and the degradation of all creation as a result of the idolatry of wealth, an idolatry that infects all so-called “developed” nations, including self-avowed “Christian” nations and their churches, and threatens to engulf all so-called “developing” nations.⁶

Recent work on Wesleyan theology has done much better.⁷ M. Douglas Meeks has written both on economics and Wesleyan theology but I am unaware of how or whether he includes Pauline “new creation” theology in his thinking.⁸ From Randy L. Maddox’s book on “John Wesley’s Practical Theology,” which devotes a little over a page to “God/Father as Creator and Sustainer,” a half-page to “Ecological Ethics,” under the heading of “Wesley’s Eschatological Ethics,” and two pages to “The New Creation,” which concludes the chapter on “The Triumph of Responsible Grace,” we can infer or deduce an outline of how Wesley’s thinking about “responsible grace” could lead to an eco-theo-logical ethics.⁹ Such an ethics would include strong emphases on God’s grace as sovereign and universally “therapeutic,” an eschatological vision of the renewal of all creation—including at least non-human animals,¹⁰ if not all elements of the non-human world, along with human beings—and the on-going responsibility that non-human animals will share with humans in the age to come.¹¹ These themes are strong talking-points in a dialogue with Paul’s theology of “the new creation,” Wesleyan theology, and the situation of creation today. This paper, a work in progress, engages what these authors tell me about Wesley’s thinking about creation with Paul’s treatment of God’s eschatological renewal of creation in Romans 8.18-30, with the primary focus being on the latter.

A starting-point for this dialogue is to recognize that Paul is partly responsible for the Western idealist tradition that separates the “natural world” and the “human world,” though this paper argues that tradition is a misreading of Paul. So much of what has survived of the Pauline letters can legitimately be read as having to do with humanity in a narrow sense, and even with the individual interior life of faith. Readers of these letters, however, have allowed these dimensions of the Pauline letters to obscure and silence their equally fundamental global and social dimensions. Nowhere is that more evident than in Christian theologies of “justification” and “sanctification,” which are commonly and widely thought to be doctrines about private, inward, and individual human piety. Nothing is further from the truth!

For Paul, “justification” (or “righteousness”) and “sanctification” are fundamentally social and global. The global reach of “justification” is evident in Romans 8.18-30, since the affirmation in 8.30 (“those whom God justified God also clothed in splendor”)¹² contributes to Paul’s proof, not only that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the splendor that is about to be revealed in us” (8.18), but also that “the creation itself will also be liberated from the slavery of decay” (8.21). This promised transformation of creation, which Paul says will be like that of “the freedom of the splendor of the children of God” (8.21) and “the redemption of our bodies” (8.23), will come with “the revealing of the children of God” (8.19). In this eschatological renewal of creation, God fixes what is wrong in the world—the power of sin entered the world when the first human disobeyed God, and with sin death also entered the world, so that all human beings became subject to sin and death (5.12-21) and “fell short of God’s splendor” (3.23), and all creation, as a result of the introduction of sin and death in the world, became subject to “worthlessness” and “the slavery of decay” (8.20-21). To remedy this plight, not just of human existence, but of all creation, God’s eschatological “purpose” in calling those who love God (8.28) is to redeem their bodily existence and bring them into the presence of God’s splendor, which sin and death have prevented them from reaching, so that all creation might be “liberated from the slavery of decay.”

“Justification” is also fundamentally social. At least since the Reformation, “justification by faith” has come to be understood as Paul’s solution to the predicament of sinners who cannot survive God’s justice apart from God’s grace received through faith. That is sound Christian theology, and the Pauline letters are rightly foundational sources of this doctrine! Nevertheless, a revolution in Pauline studies, led by Krister Stendahl¹³ and E. P. Sanders,¹⁴ whose views were foreshadowed in significant ways, by Albert Schweitzer¹⁵ and Nils Dahl,¹⁶ though also with significant differences, and for which James D. G. Dunn is a leading spokesperson,¹⁷ has led to a widespread recognition that “justification by grace through faith” is best understood within the social world of the interaction between Jewish gospel¹⁸ missionary movements with competing views about the grounds for including gentiles in gospel-centered assemblies, whose members and founding leaders considered themselves and their assemblies to be in continuity with some forms of “Judaism.”¹⁹ The interaction of these competing Jewish gospel movements focused on conflicts about the social status of gentiles (equal, subordinate, or superior),²⁰ their social behavior (common meals, even if they were allowed;²¹ eating meat purchased from pagan temples where it had been sacrificed to idols;²² sexual conduct, including marriage and divorce;²³ paying taxes²⁴), their social relations with Jews (fully integrated or segregated, at least at meals),²⁵ and the “marks” that signify their identity as authentic lovers of God (the “mark” of circumcision or the “marks of Christ”).²⁶

Romans 8.18-30 also shows that, for Paul, “sanctification” is global. For it is precisely those who have received “the first fruits of the Spirit” (8.23), which guides their lives and bears witness to them that they are adopted “children of God,” “heirs of God and heirs together with Christ” (8.14-17), whose “bodies” will be “redeemed” (8.23) and who will be set free in the coming “splendor of the children of God” (8.17, 18, 21, and 30). The eschatological renewal of all creation—liberation from futility and decay—will come when those who are thus sanctified by the Spirit are fully liberated from the power, work, and consequences of sin and death (8.18-30).²⁷

It follows from these reflections on Romans 8.18-30, in which Paul shows that “justification” and “sanctification” are social and global realities, that Paul takes for granted a relational world. Paul’s “world” is not one in which “nature” and human beings are unaffected by each other. For Paul, the human body is one among many bodies that make up the world;²⁸ and, just as the resurrection of the dead entails the transformation of the mortal body of flesh and blood,²⁹ so also the eschatological renewal of all creation and the “redemption of our bodies” are connected. The reason for these connections is that human behavior affects the rest of world; as Paul says, sin—and death through sin—entered the world through human disobedience to God.³⁰ The world also affects the lives of human beings, since, for Paul, sin finds an opening in the weakness of the mortal body of flesh, where it exercises its power to make people slaves of the body’s passions and to turn “members” of the body into instruments of wickedness.³¹ That is why the law is ineffective in dealing with sin,³² why it takes the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God to take dominion away from the power of sin,³³ and why God’s eschatological purpose includes the transformation, not only of human bodies, but also of the rest of creation.

A final comment of Romans 8.18-30 before turning to Wesley’s theology of “the new creation.” This passage has to do with hope, grounded in God’s knowledge of and sympathy for the world’s groaning, which the Spirit conveys to God, and in God’s goodness and sovereignty. If we focus on the seemingly deterministic aspects of this passage, which cannot easily be denied,³⁴ we will miss two concepts that are foundational for this text. The first is that, both rhetorically and substantively, this passage is about the only trustworthy ground of hope. It becomes clear from the wider context of Romans that Paul has rejected other possible grounds: namely, any human or other created thing³⁵—since sin has taken over the “members” of human bodies for its own purposes³⁶ and the rest of creation has been made “worthless” and bound to “decay”³⁷—and “works of the law.”³⁸ The only trustworthy ground is God, because only the love of God is steadfast, while all others are not, and because God’s sovereignty will not let anything in all creation subvert God’s eschatological purpose to transform all who love God and, with them, all the rest of creation.³⁹

It would be wrong to shift the focus from God’s unbounded love and sovereign purpose as the only firm foundation of the hope Paul expresses in Romans 8.18-30 to metaphysical questions about God’s sovereignty and freedom, which means genuine contingency and openness in the future. Nevertheless, can the hope Paul expresses in Romans 8.18-30 be separated from its implicit metaphysics? If not, what effect would the latter have on our sense of responsibility for our behavior and its consequences for the rest of creation? Is it possible to hold together hope, grounded in the sovereignty of God’s grace, and responsibility in human affairs and in the rest of creation?

It is well known, of course, that Paul upholds both the indicative of salvation and the imperative of human responsibility. More than that is involved in the metaphysics that Paul’s understanding of hope grounded in the sovereignty of divine knowledge and providence but this dialectic of indicative and imperative is instructive. Paul’s understanding of the indicative of salvation is that God, and God alone, determines that human salvation is by God’s own, freely offered grace.⁴⁰ He also holds that this grace brings salvation when it is received by faith.⁴¹ Though in some strands of Reformation theology try to assign faith wholly to divine agency, to avoid implying that, if faith involves human responsibility, faith becomes a “work,” to be

consistent that view would have to get rid of the Pauline imperatives. Two alternatives are either to admit that the indicative and imperative imply conflicting metaphysical views of divine power and human power and freedom, or to adopt a metaphysics that removes the conflict. Paul was not a systematic metaphysician and the Pauline letters contain many instances where underlying structures of thought would not cohere in a single system.⁴² What does seem constant, however, is the equal affirmation of divine initiative taken in God's own absolute freedom, human dependence on the initiative and power of God's freely offered grace, and the need for a human response of faith.

With little or no change, the same can be said about the rest of creation's subjection to "worthlessness" and "the slavery of decay" and about the rest of creation's renewal. I have no reason to think that Paul thought the rest of creation was endowed with the ability either to resist the consequences of human sin or to respond to God's restorative grace. Romans 8.3, however, implies that the flesh is not merely a passive field in which God and sin battle it out; rather, it has the power of agency to weaken the law. In a similar fashion, Gal 5.16-21, where the flesh, which has its own "desires," so far from being a passive battle field, is itself an active, though inferior, combatant against the Spirit of God. If "all creation" has been subjected to "worthlessness" and is engulfed in "decay" (Rom 8.20-21), was that because of human disobedience, which introduced sin and death into the world, or because God punished human disobedience by subjecting creation to vanity and decay, or because the world, through the desires of the flesh, was an accomplice in human disobedience, so that the world suffers from the consequences of its own participation in human disobedience and from God's punishment? Textual complexities make a definitive answer, or even a consensus, impossible.⁴³ Whatever your answer is, the metaphysical problems and their possible solutions are the same as those above.

Elements of John Wesley's theology are consonant with the threads of this dialogue with Romans 8.18-30. As Randy Maddox points out, John Wesley's earlier view about "the new creation," "heaven" or "paradise"—that it would be limited to "spiritual" beings—gave way to a wider view that included animals whom God would endow with "reason" in "the new creation," which was needed to ensure that the eschatological vision was not of a static state of "perfection" but of a "new creation" in which all included beings would continue without ceasing toward still higher levels of "perfection," and that God would provide more means to eliminate evil in the "new creation" than was provided in the "original creation."⁴⁴ The attribution of "reason" to animals in the "new creation" goes beyond Romans 8.18-30 and, as Maddox says, might "strike modern readers as pointless speculation!"⁴⁵ As an expression of God's eschatological providence for all creation, and not just for human beings, however, Wesley faithfully reflects Paul's vision for creation.

Nevertheless, Wesley's view fails to solve the theodicy problem that it was intended to solve. For if God is willing and able to provide sufficient means to prevent evil in the "new creation," that begs the question why God didn't do so in the "original creation" or is taking so long to bring in the "new creation." It also begs the question whether the "more" that God will provide in the "new creation" will eliminate even the possibility of evil; and if so, how Wesley would address the questions that would beg about the loss of freedom and responsibility, which depend on real possibilities; but if the elimination of actual evil does not also entail the

elimination of its possibility, that would beg questions about how real the “new creation” would be better than the “original creation.”

Finally, Wesley’s eschatological vision of “the new creation,” like Paul’s, is of an observable replacement or successor to this present world. Wesley believed that God created the “original creation” *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing,” which means not only that God once existed in “emptiness,” but that God made “things” literally out of “nothing.”⁴⁶ That belief does not apply to “the new creation,” since the latter is an eschatological transformation of the “original creation.” One aspect of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, however, carries over in both Paul’s and Wesley’s eschatological vision. God, and God alone, will replace the present, observable world with a new, observable world. Neither one allows room for creatures to participate in any way in the creation of “the new creation,” any more than the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* allows creatures to participate in any way in the creation of the “original creation.”

Here, again, metaphysical questions arise about the nature of power and being as fundamentally and necessarily relational.⁴⁷ At stake in these questions, in addition to the coherence of God’s power and the responsibility and freedom of creatures, as in the previous questions, is the coherence of hope and responsibility. To the extent that hope requires assurance that God can, and will, replace this observable world with an observable “new creation” without the participation of any creatures, sanctified and spiritual or not, hope is incompatible with genuine creaturely responsibility. Without the expectation that genuine creaturely responsibility, in faithful response to God’s gracious power of creative transformation, could lead to behaviors that would heal the damage of at least some evil in the world and more generally contribute to a better world, it is difficult to imagine what would motivate creatures to change their behavior or to risk very much to improve the condition of the world. To the extent that we affirm the necessary contribution of genuine creaturely responsibility in bringing into being an observable “new creation,” hope is weakened. How do we get out of this dilemma?

The way out that I propose, and there are many others that others can propose, is to take seriously the Pauline, and Wesleyan, dialectic of the indicative and imperative, but without the conflicted metaphysics that Paul and Wesley’s theologies imply. I also take Paul’s view of hope as having to do with what is not seen. We can be assured that God’s freely offered grace has and will continue to lead us toward God’s vision of a creatively transformed world even when we cannot be sure we feel God’s urging grace and cannot see clearly the vision to which it seeks to lead us. Our hope can be that God’s love never gives up urging all creation toward a creatively transformed world, from which nothing in all creation can turn God aside. Even if we cannot expect God to create a grand, once and for all, eschatological replacement of this observable world with an observable “new creation,” we can trust the efficacy of God’s grace to creatively transform our world incrementally when creatures respond faithfully to it. We can trust that, in God’s love, God sees and knows all creation as it truly is and as it truly could be—that God hears the creation’s groans as it yearns for freedom from worthlessness and decay, envisions what that “new creation” would be like, and offers all creation possibilities which, if taken, would lead to incremental creative transformations of the world.

To know the world as God does in God’s love, from which nothing in all creation can separate us, is to listen to the groaning of creation under the heavy burden of sin and its

consequences. In that listening, if we take the leading of the Spirit of children of God, we will work for ecological justice. Because all creation is connected, all creation groans for justice for species at risk of extinction due to the dumping of toxic wastes into land and water and the destruction of old growth forests. All creation groans for justice for the poorest of the poor, whose share of the earth's resources are consumed by the world's wealthiest of the wealthy, whose lives are damaged by false, consumerist notions of "development," and who are denied adequate health and education because of stinginess, greed, and indifference in the so-called "developed" world. All creation groans for justice for victims of physical violence by those who hate and are indifferent to life. Those who are led by the Spirit of children of God are called to listen, as God does, to the groaning of all creation for its renewal as God envisions it.

Annotated Translation of Romans 8.18-30

18 For⁴⁸ I consider⁴⁹ that the sufferings of this present time⁵⁰ are not worth comparing⁵¹ with⁵² the splendor⁵³ that is about to be revealed⁵⁴ in us.⁵⁵ **19** For⁵⁶ the anxious longing⁵⁷ of the creation⁵⁸ longs⁵⁹ for the revealing⁶⁰ of the children⁶¹ of God;⁶² **20** for⁶³ the creation⁶⁴ was subjected⁶⁵ to worthlessness,⁶⁶ not willingly⁶⁷ but by the one who subjected it⁶⁸ in hope,⁶⁹ **21** because⁷⁰ the creation⁷¹ itself⁷² will also⁷³ be liberated⁷⁴ from the slavery of decay,⁷⁵ so that it might come to⁷⁶ the freedom of the splendor⁷⁷ of the children of God.⁷⁸ **22** For⁷⁹ we know that⁸⁰ the whole⁸¹ creation⁸² has been groaning and⁸³ in labor pains together⁸⁴ until now;⁸⁵ **23** and not only the creation,⁸⁶ but since⁸⁷ we ourselves⁸⁸ also⁸⁹ have the first fruits⁹⁰ of the Spirit,⁹¹ we ourselves⁹² also⁹³ groan⁹⁴ inwardly⁹⁵ while we long⁹⁶ for adoption,⁹⁷ the redemption⁹⁸ of our bodies.⁹⁹ **24** For¹⁰⁰ in hope¹⁰¹ we were saved.¹⁰² But hope that can be seen¹⁰³ is not hope. For¹⁰⁴ who¹⁰⁵ hopes¹⁰⁶ for what they¹⁰⁷ see? **25** But if¹⁰⁸ we hope for what we do not see, we long for it¹⁰⁹ patiently.¹¹⁰ **26** But also,¹¹¹ in the same way,¹¹² the Spirit¹¹³ shares¹¹⁴ in our weakness;¹¹⁵ for¹¹⁶ we do not know¹¹⁷ what¹¹⁸ we should¹¹⁹ pray for,¹²⁰ but¹²¹ the same Spirit intercedes¹²² with inexpressible¹²³ groans.¹²⁴ **27** Now,¹²⁵ the one who searches¹²⁶ the heart¹²⁷ knows what is the mind¹²⁸ of the Spirit, for¹²⁹ the Spirit, according to the will of God,¹³⁰ intercedes¹³¹ for the saints.¹³² **28** And¹³³ we know that, for those who love God¹³⁴—those who are called¹³⁵ according to¹³⁶ God's purpose¹³⁷—all things¹³⁸ work together¹³⁹ for¹⁴⁰ good,¹⁴¹ **29** because¹⁴² those whom God knew beforehand¹⁴³ God also destined beforehand¹⁴⁴ to be conformed¹⁴⁵ to the image¹⁴⁶ of God's son,¹⁴⁷ in order that¹⁴⁸ God's son might be¹⁴⁹ the firstborn¹⁵⁰ among¹⁵¹ many brothers and sisters.¹⁵² **30** Now,¹⁵³ those whom God destined beforehand¹⁵⁴ God also called; and those whom God called God also justified;¹⁵⁵ and those whom God justified God also clothed in splendor.¹⁵⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ Presented at the 15th Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, Christ Church College, Oxford, 13-22 August 2002.

² Rom 6.4.

³ 2 Cor 5.17 and Gal 6.15.

⁴ Rom 8.19-23.

⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 38-42 and 100-1.

⁶ Of course, at one level, this criticism of Dunn is unfair, given the limited agenda of his book. For discussion of these issues by a leading United Methodist theologian, see John B. Cobb, Jr., *Is it too late? A Theology of Ecology* (Beverly Hills: Bruce, 1972; revised edition, Denton: Environmental Ethics Books, 1995); Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life: From the Cell to the Community* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981 and 1984); Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., with contributions by Clifford W. Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989; 2nd edition, updated and expanded, 1994); *Sustainability: Economics, Ecology, and Justice* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992); "A Critique of Economics," in his *Becoming a Thinking Christian* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), chapter 8, pp. 109-27; *Sustaining the Common Good: A Christian Perspective on the Global Economy* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1994); Clifford W. Cobb and John B. Cobb, Jr., with contributions by Carol S. Carson et al., *The Green National Product: A Proposed Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare* (Lanham: University Press of America; Mankato, MN: Human Economy Center, 1994); *The Earthist Challenge to Economism: A Theological Critique of the World Bank* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and *Speaking of Religion and Politics: The Progressive Church on Hot Topics*, *The Mobilization for the Human Family*, edited by John B. Cobb, Jr. (Claremont: Pinch Publications, 2000). For his treatment of Wesleyan theology, see John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

⁷ I regret that, for the preparation of this paper, I have not had access to Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998). Judging from Abingdon's web page, the table of contents promises substantive discussion of these issues in at least four of its chapters.

⁸ M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); "God's Oikonomia and the New World Economy," in *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era*, edited by Max L. Stackhouse, Abingdon Press Studies in Christian Ethics and Economic Life, 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 111-126 and 133; reprinted in *Theology & Corporate Conscience: Essays in Honor of Frederick Herzog*, edited by M. Douglas Meeks (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1999), 202-215; *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995); and "Sanctification and Economy: A Wesleyan Perspective on Stewardship," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism: Festschrift in Honor of Theodore Runyon*, edited by Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), Chapter 5 (83-98 and 233-235).

⁹ See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 58-59, 246-47, and 252-52. The phrase "eco-theo-logical ethics" is my own.

¹⁰ See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 62 and 253.

¹¹ See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 253.

¹² All translations of scripture are my own, unless otherwise indicated. For notes on this translation and the rest of this section of Romans, see p. 6 below.

¹³ See Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963), 199-215, reprinted in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96; and *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

¹⁴ See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

¹⁵ See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, with a prefatory note by F. C. Burkitt, and translated from the 1931 German original by William Montgomery (New York: Seabury Press, 1968).

¹⁶ See Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications," in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission*, assisted by Paul Donahue (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 95-120.

¹⁷ See James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul" (a review of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*), *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65/2 (1983), 95-122.

¹⁸ I am engaged in an on-going experimentation with terms with which to describe assemblies or communities of followers of the gospel, since the terms “Christian,” “Jewish-Christian,” and “Christian-Jewish” have come to imply the establishment of “Christianity” as a “religion” distinct and separate from, or at least for a while attached to, “Judaism.” Since the term “gospel” is central to the missionary movements of Paul and his rivals, and became almost proprietary to those movements early on, I prefer, at least for now, that term. Moreover, I am no longer sure that what those movements were about should be called “religion,” especially since that term has come to carry with it all sorts of modern baggage and lenses that overburden and distort these gospel movements and other similar movements in Greco-Roman society in the period of the early Roman empire (e.g., those of moral philosophers of all sorts, but especially itinerant Cynic preachers, Pythagoreans, and the more settled Stoics and Epicureans). For instance, the modern category of “religion” is loaded with bifurcations like “religion and cult,” “sacred and secular,” “religion and politics,” “religion and ethics,” “authentic religion and civil religion,” and so on, none of which fit the ancient Greco-Roman world. I owed an explanation for my somewhat awkward neologisms but I hope these issues will not sidetrack us from our assigned topic.

¹⁹ The comments in n. 18 apply, with some adjustments, to the quotation marks around “Judaism.” The term “Judaism,” like “Christianity,” has come to be understood as the term for the “religion” of Jews, which becomes problematic for the same reasons stated above. Moreover, it is not clear to me that Paul would have thought of calling that to which he was calling gentiles “Judaism.” Gal 1.13-14 is the only place where Paul uses the term, and there he uses it only of himself; and in 2.11-15 he rejects the idea that gentiles should be compelled to “live like Jews,” and even suggests that, though Paul, Peter, Barnabas, certain people who “came from James,” and others in Antioch distinguish themselves, as “Jews,” from “gentile sinners.” It is also clear that those in Israel about whose salvation Paul is concerned in Romans 9-11 do not need to be converted to “Judaism”! And yet Paul clearly takes for granted that the gospel movement, which he once sought to destroy, but in which he is now an eager and aggressive participant (Gal 1.13-24), is rooted in and consonant with the traditions of his Jewish ancestors (compare Paul’s appeals to Jewish scriptures throughout Romans, especially 3.31-4.25 and chapters 9-11, and Gal 1.14).

²⁰ See, e.g., Romans 9-11 and 14.

²¹ See Romans 14 and Gal 2.11-13.

²² See 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

²³ See 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Thess 4.1-8.

²⁴ See Rom 13.1-7.

²⁵ See Gal 2.11-13.

²⁶ See 1 Cor 7.18 and Gal 6. 17.

²⁷ For more detailed discussion of Rom 8.18-30 and other related passages in the Pauline letters, see the notes on the translation below (p. 6).

²⁸ See 1 Cor 15.35-41 and compare 2 Cor 5.1-8.

²⁹ See 1 Cor 15.42-57 and compare 2 Cor 5.1-8.

³⁰ See Rom 5.12-21 and the notes on the subjection of creation to “worthlessness” and “the slavery of decay” in the translation of 8.20 and 21 below (p. 6).

³¹ See Rom 6.12-23, 8.2-17, and Gal 5.19-21.

³² See Rom 7.7-25 and 8.3.

³³ See Rom 8.2-17 and Gal 5.16-24.

³⁴ See comments on the agent of the subjection of creation in Rom 8.20 and God’s “foreknowledge” and “predestination” of those whom God “calls” in 8.29 in the notes on the translation of 8.18-20 below (p. 6).

³⁵ See Rom 1.18-32.

³⁶ See n. 31.

³⁷ See Rom 8.20-21 and nn. 31 and 32.

³⁸ See Rom 3.20, 27-28, 4.2, 4, 6, 13-16, 6.14, 7.1-6, 8.3-4, 11.6, Gal 2.16, 19, 21, 3.2, 5, 10-13, 17-19, 21, 23-24, 4.4-6, 21-5.1, 4, 18, 22-23, 6.15, and Phil 3.9.

³⁹ Compare Rom 8.18-39 and chapters 9-11.

⁴⁰ See Romans 9-11.

⁴¹ This formulation obviates the debated issue of whether the “Christ-genitive” is objective (Jesus Christ’s faith in God) or objective (our faith in Jesus Christ or God, which comes to the same thing), since the former brings salvation when Jesus’ faith is received by faith. See the debate between Richard B. Hays and James D. G. Dunn in David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (eds.), *Pauline Theology IV: Looking Back and Pressing On* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 33-92.

⁴² Two examples, in addition to the indicative and imperative, are views about the law—though Pauline scholars disagree on coherence or inconsistency, no consensus exists on how they cohere, even among those who think they do cohere—and the rich variety of “mythic structures” in terms of which Paul writes about the saving significance of Jesus’ death.

⁴³ See the comments on 8.19-21 in the notes on the translation below (p. 6).

⁴⁴ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 58-59, 62, 246-47, and 252-53.

⁴⁵ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 253.

⁴⁶ Compare Rom 4.17.

⁴⁷ See the vast literature about “process theologies,” including evangelical Christian literature about the “openness” of God.

⁴⁸ Stanley K. Stowers (*A Rereading of Romans* [New Haven: Yale University, 1994], 251, 252) argues that Romans 5-8 “attempt to show how gentiles obtain obedience and life in Christ and do not propose a scheme of sin and salvation for humanity. The argument in this section of the letter develops in opposition to the view that works of the law provide a route for gentiles to attain self-mastery. . . . Rom 6-8 also return to the ethic of self-mastery after 1-5 have established a Pauline discourse for thinking about the law, passions, and desires and the gentile situation before God.” The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement in 8.15-17 (especially the relationship between suffering and being glorified with Christ in the final clause, “if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him”). John Wesley, who writes on Rom 8.17 in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (1754; all quotations are from files derivative of an electronic edition copyrighted by Sulu Kelley, reproduced with his permission at <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/WesleysExplanatoryNotes/>), “If we suffer with him [Christ] - Willingly and cheerfully, for righteousness’ sake,” takes this verse as a real condition (so also the RSV and NAB). For this hortatory understanding of the conjunction *eiper*, see James D. G. Dunn (*Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary 38A & 38B [Waco: Word Publishing, 1988], 1.456) and Ernst Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans*, translated by G. W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980], 229). For the understanding of the conjunction *eiper* as a marker of an existing condition and, therefore, as having a causal force rendered “since,” see Rom 3.30, 8.9, and 1 Cor 8.5, and compare 1 Cor 15.15, where the true tentative conditional is expressed by *ara*; also see BDAG (*ei* 6,1), C. E. B. Cranfield (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975], 1.407-8), Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida (*A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Helps for Translators 14 [London: United Bible Societies, 1973], 156), and Stowers (*Rereading*, 245 and 283); compare the NIV, NRSV, Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*Romans*, Anchor Bible 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 502), and Luke T. Johnson (*Reading Romans* [New York: Crossroad, 1997], 126), who, though ambiguous, seem to lean toward this interpretation of the conjunction. In the second interpretation, suffering with Christ is not something that “heirs of God and heirs together with Christ” must seek out; on the contrary, it is taken for granted as something that comes with being “heirs of God and heirs together with Christ.” That interpretation is consistent with 8.18-23, where suffering is the assumed condition of human existence and of all creation: namely, suffering due to the destructive power of sin.

⁴⁹ Johnson (*Reading*, 127) observes that *logizomai* “is Paul’s perception or calculation.”

⁵⁰ Compare the phrase *ta path mata tou nyn kairou* (see *en t nyn kair* in 3.26 and 11.5; and cf. 13.11) with *tou ai nos tou enest tos pon rou* (Gal 1.4). The preceding context suggests that this phrase refers to the effects of “sin in the flesh,” which is the subject of Rom 8.1-17 (see also 5.12-21). The mention of “suffering with Christ” (*sympaschomen*) at the end of 8.17 and the catalogue of hardships in 8.35 (“hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword”), however, point more specifically to the suffering of the righteous at the hand of sinners, which is understood as one of the results of “sin in the flesh” in the “present age.” The list in 8.38-39 returns to the more general condition of existence in the “present age.” Compare Johnson (*Reading*, 127), though he makes a dubious distinction between sufferings “inflicted from without” and from within “the very life of faith according to the pattern of Jesus’ life for others.”

⁵¹ The adjective *axia* (nominative neuter plural from *axios*) is a predicate nominative—a complement to the subject “the sufferings.” For the translation, see BDAG (*axios* 1,a).

⁵² For the translation of the preposition *pros* with the accusative as “marking a point of reference,” see BDAG (*pros* 3,e,delta).

⁵³ For the interpretation of *doxa* as a reference to the “state of being in the next life,” see BDAG (*doxa* 1,c,beta). Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 283) proposes that Paul uses *doxa* in 3.23 as a translation of *k bod* (“honor”), so that the phrase *h doxa tou theou* (“the glory of God”) refers to God’s “honor” or “praise” (cf. Rom 5.2, 15.7, 1 Cor 10.31, 2 Cor 1.20, 4.6, 15, and Phil 2.11) and is a translation of *k bod* YHWH (“the radiant splendor of God’s presence”). This is

the “splendor” from which all human beings have “fallen short,” since “all have sinned” (Rom 3.23). See also n. 147.

⁵⁴ According to BDAG (*mell_*, 1, b and c), the more common use of *mell_* in the NT is with the present infinitive (see, e.g., Rom 4.24 and 8.13), instead of the aorist infinitive *apokalyphth_nai* here (cf. Gal 3.23). The “divine passive” shifts the emphasis from God as the logical subject of the action to the object of the action—the impending unveiling of “the radiant splendor of God’s presence” that will fill the age to come (see n. 53). The verb *apokalypt_* refers to an act of causing what was hidden or unknown to become visible or known (cf. BDAG). The use of this verb in Rom 1.17 shows that a publicly observable event is involved, as the parallel use of the verb *phanero_* in 3.21 and its interpretation as public “proof” or “demonstration” in the following verses suggest (compare Cranfield’s comments on a revelation that is not only “internal” but also “outwardly manifest . . . done to us” [*Romans*, 1.410]). That life in the age to come involves “the radiant splendor of God’s presence” has already been made known in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (6.4; cf. 2.10 and 5.2), so that the point here is that God is about to make life in “the radiant splendor of God’s presence,” real (see the aorist *edoxasen* in 8.30 [see n. 156]) but still hidden from full view, a visible reality. Compare what Paul says about “hope” (8.24-25) and ignorance about “what to pray for” (8.26 [n. 118]), and Cranfield’s comments (*Romans*, 1.409). Compare comments in n. 60 on the noun *apokalypsis* in 8.19.

⁵⁵ The preposition *eis* in the phrase *eis h_mas* is close to the locative meaning of *en* (“in us” [see the KJV and NIV; BDAG *eis* 1,a,delta and 1,b,beta; Cranfield’s comments in n. 54 above; Johnson, *Reading Romans*, 127 (who appeals to the next verse, because it “picks up precisely that connection”); and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 506]), though it could also be equivalent to the dative of the indirect object (“to us” [see the RSV and NRSV]) or of advantage (“for us” [see the NAB and BDAG *eis* 4,g]). Compare NRSV 2 Cor 4.17 (“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure”).

⁵⁶ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement in 8.18.

⁵⁷ The noun *apokaradokia*, which appears only in this verse and Phil 1.20, is formed from a double compound (*apo* + *kara* + *dokia*) and seems to be derived from “stretching the head forward” (Gerhard Dellling, *TDNT* 1.393 and BDF §119.1). The verb *apekdechomai* appears in Romans here and in 8.23 and 25 (also 1 Cor 1.7, Gal 5.5, and Phil 3.20). BDAG proposes that *apokaradokia* in the phrase *h_apokaradokia t_s ktise_s* is adjectival, equivalent to the substantive participle *h_apokaradokousa t_s ktisis* (“the eagerly awaiting creation”), which at least recognizes that this phrase is the subject (literally, “the anxious longing of the creation longs . . .”). The RSV, NRSV, NAB, and NIV translate the nominative *h_apokaradokia* as if it were a dative of manner (“waits or awaits with or in eager longing or expectation”), and the genitive *t_s ktise_s*, which is dependent on the preceding nominative, as if it were the subject of the verb *apekdechomai*. This word group has been interpreted as having both a positive and negative sense—“eager expectation” and “despair” respectively (see Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 507). The next verse, which is explanatory of 8.19, however, tends to support an equivalence of this word group and the *elpi*-word group, though perhaps it heightens the sense of uncertainty that is part of “hope” (cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 507). John Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, writes of this word, “The word denotes a lively hope of something drawing near, and a vehement longing after it.”

⁵⁸ Due to the distinction between “creation” and “we ourselves” in 8.23 (note the contrastive *ou monon de, alla kai autoi . . . h_meis kai autoi . . .*; see n. 86), *ktisis* must focus on the whole non-human world (compare Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.411-12; and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 506), which is personified and portrayed as being both a victim of human affairs and a beneficiary of the redemptive transformation of human beings (8.20-23). These verses express the inseparable creative transformation of all creation through God’s redemptive action, of which Jesus’ death and resurrection are the decisive public demonstration (3.12-26). Wesley writes, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, that this verse refers to “all visible creatures, believers excepted, who are spoken of apart; each kind, according as it is capable. All these have been sufferers through sin; and to all these (the finally impenitent excepted) shall refreshment redound from the glory of the children of God. Upright heathens are by no means to be excluded from this earnest expectation: nay, perhaps something of it may at some times be found even in the vainest of men [sic]; who (although in the hurry of life they mistake vanity for liberty, and partly stifle, partly dissemble, their groans, yet) in their sober, quiet, sleepless, afflicted hours, pour forth many sighs in the ear of God.”

⁵⁹ For the interpretation of the verb *apekdechetai* (present indicative, middle or passive deponent, 3rd person singular, from *apekdechomai*), see n. 57.

⁶⁰ The noun *apokalypsis* must refer to more than a cognitive event, since the Spirit of God already witnesses to the identity of the children of God (8.14-16). It must refer to an event in which the existence of children of God becomes a full and efficacious reality for all of creation—not just for non-believers and believers, but also for the whole non-human world (see n. 58). Cranfield (*Romans*, 1.412-13) is almost right when he says, “their sonship is veiled and their incognito is impenetrable except to faith”: “hope,” not “faith,” is the focus of this section of

Romans, and the emphasis seems to be more on the reality of what is revealed than on its reception (compare comments in n. 54 on the verb *apokalyp̄t̄*).

⁶¹ The genitive *t̄ n̄ huī n̄* is objective, since it is God who is about to make this revelation (see n. 54).

⁶² Paul uses *huioī theou* (8.14 and 19) and the gender-neutral *teknā theou* (8.16, 21, and 9.8) interchangeably for “all who are led by the Spirit of God” (8.14), who are “children of the promise” (9.8). For the “already/not yet” character of the reality to which this phrase refers, see n. 78.

⁶³ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement in 8.19.

⁶⁴ For *h̄ kt̄isis*, see n. 58.

⁶⁵ The aorist passive *hyp̄et̄aḡ* (3rd person singular, from *hyp̄ot̄ass̄*) refers to an event completed in the past without any concern for its internal aspects. For a discussion of the logical subject of this passive—a “divine passive” (cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.413; also see his comment on the participle [*Romans*, 1.414])—see n. 68 on the substantive participle (*ton̄ hyp̄ot̄ax̄anta*).

⁶⁶ The noun *mataiot̄ ti* (dative, feminine singular, from *mataiot̄ s̄*), a dative of reference or respect, refers to a “state of being without use or value” (BDAG). Although the LXX uses *mataiot̄ s̄* to translate a variety of Hebrew words—meaning “emptiness” or “vanity,” in the sense of “without benefit” (in Ps 4.3), “emptiness” or “vanity” (in Ps 25.4), and figuratively “destruction” (in Ps 37.13 and 51.9)—Rom 8.20 is “a valid commentary” on Ecclesiastes (Otto Bauernfeind, *TDNT* 4:523), where *mataiot̄ s̄* consistently translates a Hebrew word meaning “vapor” or “breath,” and figuratively “worthless” or “vanity.” Johnson (*Reading*, 128) notes the reference back to the treatment of idolatry in Rom 1.18-23, though the two contexts are not the same. Whereas Rom 1.21 has to do with idol-worshippers who become what they worship—empty-headed and worthless (cf. LXX 2 Kings 17.15)—8.20 has to do with the non-human world, whose “worthless state” is not the result its own doing (see the comment on *hekousa* in n. 67). See the parallel term “decay” (*ph̄thora*) in 8.21.

⁶⁷ The adjective *ekousa* (nominative, feminine singular, from *ek̄ n̄*) expresses a willingness to do something without pressure (BDAG). The negation (*ouch*) implies that there was a time when the non-human world was not “subjected to worthlessness” (cf. 5.12-21).

⁶⁸ Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 507-08) outlines the issues related to the referent of the substantive participle *hyp̄ot̄ax̄anta* (aorist active, accusative masculine singular, from *hyp̄ot̄ass̄*), which could be God, Christ, Adam, sinners, or Satan: namely, how one interprets the preposition *dia* and the phrase *eph̄ help̄idi*, and which conjunction (*hoti* or *dioti*) one supplies at the beginning of 8.21. If *dia* is taken as a marker of the reason why “creation was subjected to worthlessness,” which is the normal use of *dia* with the accusative in the Pauline letters (compare BDAG B,2,a and BDF §222; so the NAB), Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 508) thinks that the referent would be “Adam” (so also Christopher Bryan, *Preface to Romans: Notes on the Epistle in Its Literary and Cultural Setting* [Oxford/New York: Oxford University, 2000], 151), for which he finds support in 4 Ezra 7.11-12 and Gen 3.17-18. Johnson (*Reading*, 128) argues that “the most straight-forward way to read [this clause] . . . is as a reference to humans who distorted creation and ‘brought it into subjection’ by their idolatry.” Though the singular participle (*hyp̄ot̄ax̄anta*) presents a slight problem for Johnson’s view, a reference to “Adam” would imply the complicity of all humanity, as Paul argues in Rom 5.12 (“through one person [‘Adam’] sin entered the world,” and “through sin death, so also death spread to all people, because all have sinned”). If *dia* is taken as a marker of agency, “instead of *dia* w[ith the] gen[itive] to denote the efficient cause” (BDAG *dia* B,2,d; so also the KJV, followed by the RSV, NIV, and NRSV, though the latter unnecessarily add “the will of”; see Johnson’s comment that the RSV “over-reads” this prepositional phrase [*Reading*, 128]), the referent would be God, for which Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 508) finds support in 1 Cor 15.27. Rom 1.18-32, with its triple use of “God handed them over” (*pared̄ ken̄ autous̄ hō theos̄*), provides better support, since it refers to God’s subjection of humanity to passions that bring dishonor (compare 11.32), whereas 1 Cor 15.27 has to do with the subjection of everything to God. Cranfield (*Romans*, 1.414) says that the subject of the participle “can only be God” (also see his comment on the passive voice of the main verb). For the next phrase in 8.20, *eph̄ help̄idi*, and the conjunction at the beginning of 8.21, see nn. 69 and 70 respectively. Wesley writes, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, “By him who subjected it—Namely, God, Genesis 3:17, 5:29. Adam only made it liable to the sentence which God pronounced; yet not without hope.” Stowers (*Rereading*, 283) writes, God “has for a time subjected that creation to decay and futility in order that his [sic] ultimate goal of glory might be achieved (8:19-22).”

⁶⁹ The phrase “in hope” (*eph̄ help̄idi*) belongs with the preceding participle, rather than the main verb, if for no other reason than proximity, though it makes little difference in meaning (cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 508); the placement of the comma, whether before or after this phrase, also makes little difference. The best manuscripts have *eph̄ help̄idi*; the rough breathing mark governs the use of *eph̄* instead of *ep̄* (cf. the discussion in BDF §14); the preferred form, *ep̄ el̄pidi*, appears in Rom 4.18, 5.2, and 1 Cor 9.10 (cf. *en̄ t̄ el̄pidi* in Rom 15.13 and *t̄ el̄pidi* in

Rom 8.24 and 12.12). Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 508) thinks that, if *dia ton hypotaxanta* refers to “Adam,” this phrase is elliptical for “(yet it was) with hope”; however, if the referent is God, this phrase expresses the manner in which God subjected creation to worthlessness, almost in a concessive sense (“though in or with hope”). Rom 11.32, with its marker of purpose or result (*hina*), provides support for the latter. In any case, what is excluded is that the hope is “Adam’s” or God’s; it is the creation’s hope. For the implications of these options for the conjunction at the beginning of 8.21, see n. 70. Also see n. 101.

⁷⁰ The textual variant *dioti*, instead of the *hoti* found in the oldest and best manuscripts, may be due to the duplication of the *di*—*elpidioti* became *elpididioti* (see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. [London & New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 517). It is also possible to see in it a scribal interpretation of the original *hoti* as a causal conjunction (BDAG *hoti* 4)—stating the reason why “the one who subjected” to “worthlessness” did so “with or in hope”—instead of as a marker of the content of that hope (BDAG *hoti* 1,d). Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 508) proposes that a causal conjunction is consistent with taking the preposition *dia* as marking the reason, the participle *hypotaxanta* as referring to “Adam,” and the phrase *eph’ helpidi* as elliptical; but a marker of content is consistent with taking the preposition *dia* as a marker of agency, the participle *hypotaxanta* as referring to God, and the phrase *eph’ helpidi* as a dative of manner with a concessive sense. Compare Rom 11.32, with its marker of purpose or result, *hina*.

⁷¹ For *h_ ktisis*, see n. 58: the text is still dealing with the non-human world.

⁷² The pronoun *aut_* is intensive, adding emphasis to the subject, *h_ ktisis*, though the combination of *kai* and *autos* could also be translated “even” (BDAG *autos* 1,f). The latter would introduce an element of surprise that creation also hopes for liberation.

⁷³ The *kai* is additive, introducing what is true in addition to the creation’s subjection to worthlessness, as an explanation of the phrase “in hope” (*eph’ helpidi*).

⁷⁴ The future passive *eleuther_ th_ setai* is a “divine passive.” Paul has already established that those who were baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection have been liberated from sin (Rom 6.18 and 22) and that the Spirit liberates them from sin and death (8.2); now creation also hopes for liberation from the effects of human bondage to sin (see the comments on *apo t_ s douleias t_ s phthoras* in n. 75). See also nn. 78 and 156.

⁷⁵ The first definite article *t_ s* could be in place of a possessive pronoun. The second genitive *t_ s phthoras* is a genitive of reference. The term *phthora* is parallel to *mataiot_ s* (8.20). Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, writes on this verse, “Destruction is not deliverance: therefore whatsoever is destroyed, or ceases to be, is not delivered at all. Will, then, any part of the creation be destroyed?”

⁷⁶ The preposition *eis* here marks the goal of the main verb’s action (“be liberated”), indicating “entry into a state of being” (see BDAG *eleutheria* 4,a and 10,d). For *eleutherousthai eis*, BDAG (*eleutheria* 10,d) offers the translation “be freed and come to” and cites Rom 8.21 (see also, with slight differences, the RSV, NRSV, NIV, NAB, and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 509). The implication is that the liberation of the non-human world will be like that of those whom God adopts as God’s children (see nn. 77 and 78).

⁷⁷ The KJV, followed by the RSV, NIV, and NAB, translate the genitive *t_ s dox_ s* as an attributive adjective. For agreement, see BDAG (*eleutheria*), Daniel B. Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 87-88), and Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 509). The parallel phrase, *apo t_ s douleias t_ s phthoras*, however, favors taking *t_ s dox_ s* as a possessive genitive or a genitive of production or the producer (see the NRSV, Cranfield [*Romans*, 1.415-16], and Bryan [*Preface*, 151, n. 87]): just as “slavery” (*t_ s douleias*) is characteristic of, or produced by, “decay” (*t_ s phthoras*), so “freedom” (*t_ n eleutherian*) is characteristic of, or produced by, “the splendor of the children of God” (*t_ s dox_ s t_ n tekn_ n tou theou*). The distinction that Cranfield and Bryan make between the freedom of creation and that of “the children of God,” however, lacks support in the text and is a remnant of the western idealist tradition’s nature/humanity dualism. For *doxa*, see n. 53 and BDAG (*doxa* 1,c,beta).

⁷⁸ The phrase *t_ n tekn_ n tou theou* (see n. 62) refers to those whom God adopts through the Spirit (Rom 8.14-16), who are also called “children of the promise” (9.8, *ta tekna t_ s epangelias*). Just as Paul can refer to the “adoption” of “children of God” a past event (8.14-16) that, nevertheless, awaits fulfillment in the future (8.23-25), so also can he refer to this “freedom of the splendor of the children of God” as a past event effected through baptism and the Spirit (see n. 74) that, nevertheless, awaits fulfillment in the future (8.23-30). The life of the baptized, under the guidance of the Spirit, is a prolepsis, a foretaste, of the promised life to come (8.23; see the comments on this verse in nn. 91 and 99).

⁷⁹ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement in 8.21.

⁸⁰ Twice Paul appeals to common knowledge, here and in 8.28 (see n. 134).

⁸¹ For “the whole” as the translation of *pas* with an articular noun in the singular, see BDAG (*pas* 4,b).

⁸² For *pasa h ktisij*, see n. 58.

⁸³ This *kai* could form a hendiadys, in which one thought is expressed by two verbs—*systemazei* and *syn dinei* (cf. BDAG *kai* 1,a,delta and *syn din*_, RSV, NRSV, and NAB)—but the *kai* could also be explanatory (cf. the NIV and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 509), since *syn dinei* explains the nature of the “groaning” (*systemazei*).

⁸⁴ The verb *din*_ refers to the labor pains of childbirth (BDAG *syn din*_). For translating both present tense verbs as expressing actions that began in the past and are still in progress (i.e., as equivalent to the English present perfect), see the RSV, NRSV, NIV, and Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 509). The prepositional prefix *syn-* in the verbs *systemazei* and *syn dinei* expresses the solidarity of the whole creation in its lament (cf. BDAG *systemaz*_). Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 509) thinks that it expresses the non-human world’s solidarity with humanity—a point, however, that isn’t brought out until the following verse. BDAG (*syn din*_) suggests a comparison with Heraclitus Stoicus c. 39 p. 58, 9 (1 BCE – 1CE), “when [after the winter’s cold] the groaning earth gives birth in pain to what has been formed within her”; but, of course, more is involved in Rom 8.18-25 than the renewal of the earth’s fecundity in the changing seasons, though that could be the metaphor in play here. Fitzmyer doubts that it refers to “the ‘woes’ of the messianic times,” an idea that appears in “later rabbinic literature,” but we have no undisputed evidence of it in the first century (*Romans*, 509). For the use of childbirth/labor pains in the Old and New Testament—as expressions of hope and “eschatological tribulation”—see Johnson, *Reading*, 128-29.

⁸⁵ For the substantive *tou nyn*, see BDAG (*nyn* 1,a,beta,bet).

⁸⁶ The phrase *ou monon* is elliptical for “not only the creation” (cf. BDAG *monos* 2,c,alpha). This elliptical phrase distinguishes between the non-human world and human “children of God,” as the contrast with *alla kai autoi* and *h meis kai autoi* shows (see n. 58).

⁸⁷ The participle *echontes* is adverbial and causal (cf. BDAG *aparch*_ 1,b,beta).

⁸⁸ The pronoun *autoi* is intensive and emphatic.

⁸⁹ The conjunction *kai* is additive.

⁹⁰ BDAG offers this explanation of the figurative use of *aparch*_ here: “as much of the Spirit as has been poured out so far and a foretaste of things to come” (*aparch*_ 1,b,beta), which would make it equivalent to *arrab_n* (see 2 Cor 5.5 and BDAG *arrab_n*: “payment of part of a purchase price in advance, *first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge*”); but BDAG (*aparch*_ 2) also proposes that “*birth-certificate* also suits the context of Ro 8:23.” What needs to be determined is whether the reference is to a more complete imparting of the Spirit in the future, or to a pledge of the future “splendor” that awaits those who are led by the Spirit, or to the Spirit as a “birth-certificate” attesting to the bearers’ identity as children of God. Johnson (*Reading*, 129) argues that Paul’s use of this term for the Spirit shows he “understands the Holy spirit as a kind of indwelling power that can grow to new proportions.”

⁹¹ The genitive *tou pneumatos* is a “genitive of material” (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 91), referring to that in which the *aparch*_ consists. Fitzmyer proposes that it is “appositional, so that it refers to the work of the Spirit in us, i.e., the foretaste of glory” (*Romans*, 510).

⁹² The pronouns *h meis kai autoi* are intensive and emphatic.

⁹³ The conjunction *kai* is additive.

⁹⁴ For *stenazomen*, see comments on *systemazei* in n. 84 and BDAG (*stenaz*_ 1), which implies a sense of duress or complaint. Fitzmyer proposes that *en heautois stenazomen* is “but another way of expressing the ‘sufferings’ of 8:18” (*Romans*, 510) but those “sufferings” are, in reality, the occasion and cause of the “groaning,” which the Spirit prompts and which, as such, is the ground for hope (8.24-27). The “groaning,” in other words, is a different kind of “suffering” from that caused by sin and death—it is a “suffering with hope.”

⁹⁵ See the comments below on the phrase *en heautois*. Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 510) proposes that the phrase *en heautois* could be understood in two ways: as a dative either of place (“within us” or “inwardly”) or of reference (“with reference to ourselves”). The latter would continue the distinction between the non-human world and the “children of God”; the former (cf. the RSV, NRSV, NIV, NAB, and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 510) would anticipate the Spirit’s “groans” (*stenagmoi*) in 8.26-27. BDAG (*stenaz*_ 1) offers a third, but weaker, translation (“sigh to oneself”).

⁹⁶ The adverbial participle *apekdechomenoi* is temporal. See the use of *apekdechomai* in 8.19 and 25 (see n. 57).

⁹⁷ Several, “chiefly Western,” manuscripts omit the legal technical term for adoption, *huiiothesia*, perhaps because some copyists thought it contradicted 8.15 (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 517). The UBS gives it a “C” rating and the NA²⁷ includes it. Fitzmyer prefers to omit it (*Romans*, 510), though he proposes a way to understand it if it is kept (511). Here *huiiothesia* is not gender-specific (BDAG *huiiothesia*). The Spirit witnesses to those who are baptized that they are “children of God” (Rom 8.14-16), but their “adoption” must still be made complete (see comments on *apekdechomenoi* and *t_n apolytr sin tou s_matos h_m_n* in nn. 99, 98, and 99). Compare Fitzmyer,

Romans, 511. Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, writes, “Persons who had been privately adopted among the Romans were often brought forth into the forum, and there publicly owned as their sons [sic] by those who adopted them. So at the general resurrection, when the body itself is redeemed from death, the sons [sic] of God shall be publicly owned by him [sic] in the great assembly of men [sic] and angels.”

⁹⁸ The clause that begins with *t_n apolytr_sin* is appositional, giving a further definition to or explanation of *huiiothesian*, which is the direct object in this sentence. The term *apolytr_sis* (also see 3.24) has its origins in the manumission of slaves through “payment of a ransom” (BDAG *apolytr_sis*). Here *apolytr_sis* is used in a transferred sense for “release from a captive condition . . . the release fr[om] sin and finiteness that comes through Christ” (BDAG *apolytr_sis* 2)—namely, “the freeing of our body fr[om] earthly limitations” (BDAG *apolytr_sis* 2a). According to BDAG (*huiiothesia* b), “The believers enter into full enjoyment of their *huiiothesia* only when the time of fulfillment releases them fr[om] the earthly body.” See comments on *tou s_matos h_m_n* in n. 99.

⁹⁹ The genitive *tou s_matos h_m_n* is the object of the verbal action of the noun *t_n apolytr_sin*. The emphasis here is on the body’s subjection to sin, suffering, and death (Rom 1.24, 6.1-23, 7.7-25, and 8.1-17)—i.e., the contrast with the Spirit (8.1-17) and with the coming “freedom of the splendor of the children of God” (8.21), namely, the “splendor of God” (5.2; cf. Phil 3.21), in comparison to which all “flesh” has fallen short (3.23). Cf. BDAG (*s_ma* 1b). Paul describes this body as “Spiritual” in 1 Cor 15.44 (cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 510, who refers to 1 Cor 15.54). Compare Rom 8.23 and 2 Cor 5.2 and 4 (“ . . . in this tent we groan [*stenazomen*], longing [*epipothountes*, present, active, nominative, masculine, plural participle, from *epipothe_*] to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling For while we are still in this tent, we groan [*stenazomen*] under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”).

¹⁰⁰ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement in 8.23. These two verses elaborate in theme of hope introduced in 8.20 and 23 and continued in 8.26-39.

¹⁰¹ The dative *t_ . . . elpidi* could be a dative of place (the sphere within which salvation happened), instrument (the means by which salvation happened), or reference (the end to or for which salvation happened). Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 140. It could also be a dative of manner, parallel to 8.20 (see n. 69; cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 515). The English “in” encompasses all of these options.

¹⁰² The use of the aorist *es_th_men* here (a “divine passive”) indicates that “salvation” is thought of as having happened in the past. Elsewhere in *Romans* Paul always uses *s_z_* in the future tense (5.9, 10, 9.27, 10.9, 13, 11.14 and 26; cf. 13.11: “for now salvation is nearer to us than when we became believers” [the aorist *episteusamen* is inceptive]). The dative of manner (*t_ . . . elpidi*) adds the element of the “not yet” to the “already,” expressed by the aorist, and elsewhere in *Romans* expressed by the verbs *dikaio_* and *katallass_* (5.9-10). The aorist in this verse is a reference to the “salvation” that happened in Jesus’ death (3.21-26 and 5.6-21), in baptism (chapter 6), and with the Spirit (8.1-17). Wesley held, “We do not yet possess this full salvation” (*Explanatory Notes*).

¹⁰³ The present passive participle *blepomen_* is adjectival.

¹⁰⁴ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement.

¹⁰⁵ The word *tis* is an interrogative pronoun used “esp[ecially] in questions to which the answer ‘nobody’ is expected” (BDAG *tis* 1,a,*alpha,aleph*). See Metzger (*Textual Commentary*, 517) for the preference for the simple *tis* over the other readings.

¹⁰⁶ For the preponderance of support for *elpizei*, instead of the more difficult *hypomenei*, see Metzger (*Textual Commentary*, 517-18).

¹⁰⁷ Here “they” is used for the gender-neutral third person singular.

¹⁰⁸ The conditional particle *ei* is used with all tenses in the indicative to mark “a condition thought of as real or to denote assumptions relating to what has already happened” (BDAG *ei* 1,a,*alpha*).

¹⁰⁹ For the verb *apekdechometha*, see n. 57.

¹¹⁰ Here *dia* with the genitive is a marker “of attendant or prevailing circumstance” (BDAG *dia* A,3,c). For the adverbial translation of *di’ hypomon_s*, see BDAG (*hypomon_* 1 and *apekdechomai*). Compare Rom 8.24-25 and NRSV 2 Cor 4.18 (“ . . . we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal”) and 2 Cor 5.7 (“ . . . we walk by faith, not by sight”).

¹¹¹ The combination *de kai* is a “marker of heightened emphasis” (BDAG *de* 5,a) with an additive relation to the preceding section of the argument.

¹¹² The adverb *h_saut_s* introduces a comparison, not with “hoping” and “anxious longing” (8.25), but with the groaning of the whole creation and those who have “the first fruits of the Spirit” (8.19-23). So also Wesley (*Explanatory Notes*).

¹¹³ This “spirit” is the divine Spirit, as the final clause of this verse makes clear.

¹¹⁴ The verb *synantilambanetai* (present indicative, middle/passive deponent, 3rd person singular, from *synantilambanomai*) is usually translated “assists” or “helps,” with the following a dative of respect or reference (“in our weakness”). Its use in the Epistle of Aristeas (123), however, suggests the meaning “take part with,” which when used with reference to a person, would mean “collaborate” (Deissmann, as cited by BDAG *synantilambanomai*), but the *syn*-prefix could also refer to “with us.” The phrase “in our weakness” would remain a dative of respect or reference. For “share in something,” see LSJ (*antilamban_* II,4). See comments on the final clause in this verse (n. 124). Bryan (*Preface*, 153) also sees a connection between the groans of creation and of believers: namely, the “divine identification with the grief of the world,” for which he appeals to 2 Cor 5.21.

¹¹⁵ The phrase *t_ astheneia h_m_n* is a dative of respect; though we expect a genitive after *antilamban_*, the dative is governed by the *syn*-prefix (BDF §§170.3 and 202). The reference is not primarily to a “lack of spiritual insight” (BDAG *astheneia* 3; compare Rom 4.19, 14.1 and 2) but to a more general weakness of human existence “in the flesh” (compare Rom 6.19, 8.3, where the verb form is applied to the law “weakened by the flesh,” and 2 Cor 13.4, which applies the term to Christ), comparable to the futility and corruption of all creation (Rom 8.19-22).

¹¹⁶ The inferential conjunction *gar* marks an explanation or reason for the preceding statement.

¹¹⁷ A literal translation would be, “What should we pray for? We do not know.”

¹¹⁸ The interrogative pronoun *ti* (accusative, neuter, singular, from *tis*) refers to what to pray or the thing prayed for, not “how” to pray (BDAG *proseuchomai*; see also Bryan, *Preface*, 152, n. 91; and Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.422). The phrase “we do not know what we should pray for” is to be understood in the light of what Paul says about hope in 8.24-25: They do not yet “see” what awaits them as the final consummation of their “adoption as children of God”; therefore, they do not know what to pray for (see comments on *apokalypth_nai* in 8.18 in n. 54).

¹¹⁹ The adverb *katho* is a marker of similarity (BDAG *katho* 1). The infinitive *dei* here means, “to be someth[ing] that should happen because of being fitting” (BDAG *dei* 2).

¹²⁰ In Greek, this clause begins with a neuter definite article, which here “funct[ions] to define or limit an entity, event, or state . . . the neut[er] of the art[icle] stands . . . before whole sentences or clauses” (BDAG *o_2,h,alpha*). The clause “for what we should pray for” is the object of the verb “we do not know.” The deliberative subjunctive *proseux_metha* (aorist middle deponent, 1st person plural, from *proseuchomai*) is used here in an indirect question (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 465-68).

¹²¹ The strong adversative conjunction *alla* marks a contrast with the preceding statement.

¹²² Compare the verb *hyperentynchanei* (present active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *hyperentynchano*) with the verb *entynchano* in Rom 8.27 (with *hyper_hagi_n*, which is the likely source of some readings that add *hyper_h_m_n* to 8.26), 8.34 (with *hyper_h_m_n* and Christ as the subject), and 11.2 (with *t_the_kata_tou_Isra_1* and Elijah as the subject). See n. 131.

¹²³ The adjective *alal_tois* (masculine dative plural, from *alal_tos*) is derived from the negation of the verb *lale_*.

¹²⁴ Compare the noun *stenagmos* (masculine dative plural, from *stenagmos*) with the verb *stenazo* in 8.23 and *systemaz_* in 8.22, all of which refer to “an involuntary expression of great concern or stress” (BDAG *stenagmos* and *stenaz_* I; compare *systemaz_*). The dative here expresses manner (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 161-62). The idea is that the Spirit brings the believers’ groaning (compare Wesley who, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, writes about the Spirit’s groans, “the matter of which is from ourselves, but the Spirit forms them”), and the groaning of the whole creation, before God. For the connection with *to_pneuma_synantilambanetai_t_astheneia_h_m_n* in this verse, see n. 114.

¹²⁵ Here the conjunction *de* marks the next step in the argument.

¹²⁶ The substantive participle *erauno* (present active, nominative masculine singular, from *erauno*) refers to God, since all the verbal actions in vv. 27-30, with one exception (see n. 139 on *synergei* in v. 28), all have the same subject, expressed in v. 29 by the reference to God’s “son.” It cannot refer to the Spirit, because of the next phrase (“knows what is the mind of the Spirit”).

¹²⁷ The term *kardias* (accusative feminine plural, from *kardia*) refers to “the inner life of humans,” of which God a vigilant observer (cf. BDAG *kardia* I,b,alpha).

¹²⁸ The term *phron_*ma, which occurs in the NT only in Romans 8 (though the term *phronimos* and the verb *phrone_* occur throughout the Pauline corpus and the rest of the NT), refers to the “way of thinking” or “mindset” characteristic of someone or something (see BDAG). The application of this term to the Spirit personifies it, or at least treats it as an agent capable of mental activity.

¹²⁹ An object/content *hoti* makes little sense here, since the content of God’s knowledge is already stated in the first clause (“what is the mind of the Spirit”), and what follows the *hoti* is a general statement of the Spirit’s intercessory function, not the content of the Spirit’s intercession, nor “the mind of the Spirit.” This *hoti*, therefore,

must be a marker of causality, equivalent to *gar* (“for”), introducing the reason for the preceding statement (see BDAG *hoti* 4,b).

¹³⁰ Here the preposition *kata* introduces a norm: “it can also stand simply w[ith] the acc[usative] of the pers[on] according to whose will, pleasure, or manner someth[ing] occurs” (BDAG *kata* 5,a,*alpha*). The phrase *kata theon* (compare 2 Cor 7.9-11 and Eph 4.24), is adverbial, expressing the norm governing the Spirit’s intercessory activity—in the sense that the Spirit to performs this function at the will and command of God, and that the content of the Spirit’s intercession is consistent with God’s will (for rendering this phrase as “according to God’s will,” see BDAG *theos* 3,b). The addition of this phrase might seem unnecessary or surprising, given that Paul takes for granted that the Spirit is, after all, the Spirit of God (compare 1 Cor 2.10). The primary theme of Romans, however, is the trustworthiness and justice of God’s redemptive action, so that here the phrase *kata theon* emphasizes that the Spirit’s intercessory activity is consistent with God’s will, and not contrary to it, as if the Spirit had to convince or persuade God to do what God otherwise would not do, or as if the Spirit had to convert an angry and merciless God to the cause of impartial justice (see Rom 2.11, 3.22, and 10.12) with mercy toward all (Rom 11.32)—not just toward those whose trust in God comes through faith in Jesus Christ but, in due course, toward all in Israel who put their trust in God (compare Romans 4 and 9-11) and, finally toward the whole of creation (Rom 8.19-23).

¹³¹ The verb *entynchanei* (present active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *entynchano*), which can be rendered “intercede” or “pray,” refers to the act of bringing a request, appeal, or petition to someone on someone else’s behalf (BDAG *entynchano* 1,a). See the compound verb *hyperentynchanei* in 8.26. Compare Rom 8.34, where Christ is the agent of intercession, and 11.2, where Elijah makes an appeal to God against Israel. See n. 122.

¹³² The phrase *hyper hagi_n* identifies those on whose behalf the Spirit intercedes (compare *entynchanei hyper h_m_n* in Rom 8.34). Paul uses the term *hagioi* for those who have accepted the gospel’s call to be “holy” (see, e.g., Rom 1.7, 12.13, 15.25-26, 31, 16.2, 15, 1 Cor 6.2, 2 Cor 13.12, and Phil 4.22). This phrase, which parallels the identification of the inclusive first person plural as those who have received the Spirit of “adoption” (Rom 8.15), who are to be made full-fledged “children of God” (8.21), receive full “adoption” (8.23), “love God” and are called “according to God’s purpose” (8.28), leaves out of consideration the vast majority of humanity, who cannot be said to be “holy” in this sense.

¹³³ Here the conjunction *de* marks a new step in the argument.

¹³⁴ For the phrase *tois agap_sin ton theon*, see the comments on the phrase *hyper hagi_n* in Rom 8.27 in n. 132. The substantive participle *tois agap_sin* (present active, dative masculine plural, from *agapa*) is a dative of advantage (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 142-44). Here we might expect a reference to “faith in Jesus Christ,” or having “the faith of Jesus Christ.” This reference to “loving God,” which is common knowledge (as is indicated by the phrase, “we know that”; compare the earlier reference to common knowledge in 8.22 [see n. 80]), could be an aspect of the content of that faith—both Jesus’ faith and that of believers. In any case, the phrase parallels the reference to Abraham’s faith in Romans 4 as a parallel to Jesus’ faith, which in turn is the faith that believers are to have. In other words, to have faith/believe in Jesus must be identical to having faith/believing in God’s will and power to “give life to the dead and call into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4.17, NRSV) and to loving God. It is interesting that Jesus Christ is not mentioned in 8.18-28, though this section is bracketed by references to Christ in 8.17 and God’s “son” in 8.29. The whole chapter, if not 1.18-8.39 is stamped by the affirmation “nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8.39). Here, then, is a clue to the salvation of Israel in Romans 9-11, where it is unclear whether Israel’s salvation hangs on faith/belief in Jesus as the messiah, or on putting their faith/trust/love in God, and not in the law.

¹³⁵ For the subject of the action of the verbal adjective *kl_tois* (dative masculine plural, from *kl_tos*), see n. 137.

¹³⁶ The preposition *kata* introduces a norm, which here “is at the same time the reason, so that *in accordance with* and *because of* are merged” (BDAG *kata* 5,a,*delta*).

¹³⁷ The phrase “those who are called according to God’s purpose” is appositional, offering a descriptive complement to the earlier phrase, “those who love God.” Compare the comments on the phrase *hyper hagi_n* in Rom 8.27 in n. 132. The implied subject of the action of the verbal noun *prothesis* (accusative feminine singular, from *prothesis*) is the same as the subject of the action of the verbal adjective *kl_tois* in 8.28 and the verbs *proegn_* and *pro_risen* in 8.29: namely, God (see n. 143). The point here is that God’s purpose—to bring all on whom God impartially chooses to show mercy (2.11, 3.22, and 11.12), and with them the whole creation, into the presence of God’s splendor (8.17-23)—alone governs who are called (compare Romans 9-11). Compare Wesley’s comment in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* on “God’s purpose,” which Wesley regards as “eternal”: God’s “gracious design of saving a lost world by the death of his [sic] Son. This is a new proposition. St. Paul, being about to recapitulate the whole blessing contained in justification, termed ‘glorification’ (Romans 8:30), first goes back to the purpose or decree of God, which is frequently mentioned in holy writ.”

¹³⁸ The neuter plural pronoun *panta* is either an accusative (so the RSV and NIV; also Johnson, *Reading*, 132)—the direct object, adverbial, or of “specification” (BDAG *pas* 1,d,*beta*)—in which case the subject of the verb *synergei* is God, or a nominative (so the KJV, NRSV, and NAB), making it the subject of the verb *synergei* (neuter plural subjects commonly take singular verb forms, especially when they are regarded as an aggregate, rather than in their individuality). For a resolution of this issue, see n. 139. On the one hand, the pronoun *panta* refers inclusively to everything, good and bad without exception, that happens to “those who love God,” so that what happens to all the rest of humanity is left out of consideration; on the other hand, the pronoun *panta* refers more specifically to the “sufferings” and “weakness” of “those who love God” (8.18 and 26) and the “futility” and “corruption” of the whole creation (8.20-21), including but not limited to the creation’s “longing” and “groaning” (8.19-21), and the believers “groaning,” “longing,” and “hope” (8.22-26).

¹³⁹ The usual translation of the verb *synergei* (present active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *synerge_*), “help, assist, work with,” refers the *syn*-prefix to the phrase *tois agap_ sin ton theon*, but it could also refer to the collective action of *panta*, if the latter is the subject of the verb (see the KJV, NRSV, and NAB; for the neuter plural subject with a singular verb, see n. 138). The syntactical ambiguity of *panta* (whether it is adverbial, the direct object, or the subject) and *synergei* (whether it is transitive or intransitive), and the textual variants, allow for equally compelling cases for both sets of decisions. No substantive difference in interpretation, however, hangs in the balance, strange as that might seem given the care and space given to the issues in, e.g., BDAG (*synerge_*), Cranfield (*Romans*, 1.425-29), Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 522-24), and Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 180-81). Fitzmyer’s apt conclusion, “any one of them [four possible interpretations that he outlines] would suit the context,” since the decision to read God as the subject, with or without *theos* in the text after *synergei* (see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 518, and NA²⁷), simply fills out the implied subject of the impersonal expression *panta synergei* with *panta* as the grammatical subject. That “appears to be the simplest and most natural way of translating the text,” since “it avoids the somewhat awkward adverbial treatment of “all things” (*ta panta*) that is required by . . . the other possibilities” (Bryan, *Preface*, 153, n. 93). The phrase, therefore, refers to God is the agent who “works” this process. See the comments in Cranfield (*Romans*, 1.427) and Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 181) on C. H. Dodd’s rejection of “evolutionary optimism” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932], 138-39). Once again, Johnson’s comments are apt: this is not a statement about the outcome of individual details (see the comment on *panta* as an aggregate in n. 138 above) but about the “big picture” (*Reading*, 132). The manner and content of this “work” is spelled out in Rom 8.18-30. The Spirit brings the groans of God’s adopted children (compare the idea of being “conformed to the image of God’s son” in 8.29), and with them the groaning of all creation, to God, who liberates their bodies and all creation, and brings them into their proper, divinely purposed “splendor.”

¹⁴⁰ The preposition *eis* is telic, marking the goal toward which the action of the verb moves (BDAG *synerge_*; though BDAG *eis* 5 identifies its use here as a “marker of a specific point of reference.”

¹⁴¹ The content of what is meant by the substantive *agathon* (accusative neuter singular, from *agathos*), which is opposite to *kakon* (BDAG *agathos* 1,b and 2,b), is not given here but is clear from the context. It consists of the completion of the process of adoption for believers already begun with “justification” (8.30) and the infusion of the Spirit, the redemption of their bodies, their liberation from weakness to glory, and the liberation of all creation from futility and decay to its proper “splendor.” Compare Phil 1.6; for the use of this term in the definition of the work of civic authorities, see Rom 13.4. The idea that whatever happens works out in the end for “the good,” by some so-called “natural” process, is not Pauline. Is it anywhere in the Bible or ancient world? Far from Paul’s mind is the notion that all suffering is for the good in and of themselves, or that some “good” quality inheres in everything, even bad things. If they are really “good,” why is all creation “groaning,” and why do even those who have the “first fruits of the Spirit” also “groan”? Besides, God has to “work” to make them “good”! Besides, the common knowledge to which Paul refers here is grounded in “theology,” knowledge of and confidence/trust in God’s providence (see the causal conjunction *hoti* at the beginning of 8.29). Compare this note and the apt comments by Bryan (*Preface*, 153) and Johnson (*Reading*, 132).

¹⁴² The conjunction *hoti* is causal, marking the reason for the preceding statement.

¹⁴³ The subject of the verbs *proegn_* (aorist active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *progin_sk_*) and *pro_risen* (see n. 144) is God, as the reference to God’s “son” makes clear. The *pro*-prefix of the first verb expresses the priority of the action of the verb to the action of the second verb: knowledge of someone precedes a decision about that person (cf. BDAG *progin_sk_* 1: “Closely connected is the idea of choice that suggests foreknowledge”).

¹⁴⁴ For the subject of the verb *pro_risen* (aorist active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *prooriz_*), see n. 143. The *pro*-prefix of this verb expresses the priority of God’s action to any action of the person(s) “destined” (see the lexical meanings the root verb *oriz_* in BDAG and LSJ; also compare Rom 9.11, which affirms that God’s “calling”

is prior to any person's birth, let alone anyone's deed, whether good or bad). The term "predestined" is too loaded with the history of western Christian theology to be useful. The primary point here is God's goodness and sovereignty as the ground of hope. I cannot agree with the classical theist understanding of divine omnipotence, which entails God's foreknowledge of the future, not just as possibilities or probabilities, but as actualities, and its correlative doctrine that God foreordains future events; I can affirm, however, that God's "purpose" to transform all that has gone wrong in all creation, and not just in human affairs, is nothing new—it has always been God's "purpose." Johnson (*Reading*, 131), whose translation "set apart beforehand" is based on the same root verb (*oriz_*) with a different prepositional prefix (*aphoriz_*) used in Rom 1.4 and 1.1 respectively, aptly sets this discussion in the context of "the defense of providence (*pronoia*)" in Paul's pagan and Jewish intellectual culture—a defense required by skeptics' claims that the gods, if they exist, have nothing to do with events in this world, or that they are unwilling or unable to "bring good results out of patently bad circumstances." In other words, the question is whether the gods are willing and able to "save" humans and the world they inhabit from all forms of "futility" and "decay." If the primary question to which Paul's letter to the Romans is an answer is whether God "saves" Jews and gentiles on the same basis, then the answer—the only basis, for the Jew first and then the gentiles, is the faith of Abraham and the faith of/in Jesus Christ, not the law—is put in terms of a tour de force defense of God's impartial and sovereign justice, a theme established in 1.16-17 and carried through to the end of the letter, with added emphasis in 1.18-3.20, 3.21-5.21, 7.7-8.39, and chapters 9-11.

¹⁴⁵ The adjective *symmorphous* (accusative masculine plural, from *symmorphos*) is in apposition to the direct object (*hous*) and equivalent to a clause with an equative verb, either with a participle or an infinitive (as in the next clause). Being "conformed to the image of God's son" is God's foreordained destiny for "those whom God knew beforehand"; the question is whether it is also a status or condition prior to being "called, justified, and clothed in splendor." For Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, being "conformed to the image of God's son" is "the mark of those who are foreknown and will be glorified." Stowers (*Rereading*, 283) writes, "The gentile communities that are thus 'conformed to the image of his [God's] son' (8:29) have been destined, called, and justified as part of God's plan to reconcile the world."

¹⁴⁶ The genitive *t_s eikonos* (genitive feminine singular, from *eik_n*) is due to *symmorphos*, which takes the genitive. The term *eik_n* refers to that which represents something "in terms of [its] basic form and features" (BDAG *eik_n* 3).

¹⁴⁷ The phrase *tou huiou autou* makes it clear that God is the subject of the verbs *proegn_* and *pro_risen*. A variety of terms bring out different aspects of the same thing: being "heirs together with Christ" (*synkl_ronomoi de Christou*) and being "being glorified" with Christ (*syndoxasth_men*) in Rom 8.17; "the freedom of the splendor of the children of God" (*t_n eleutherian t_s dox_s t_n tekn_n tou theou*) in 8.21; and "adoption" (*huiiothesian*), interpreted as "the redemption of our bodies" (*t_n apolytr_sin tou s_matos h_m_n*) in 8.23. Rom 8.9-11 brings out other aspects of the same thing: "making your mortal bodies alive" (8.10-11), which echoes "being raised like Christ" in 6.4-5. Compare the transformation of "the body of our humiliation conformed to the body of his glory" (*metasch_matissei to s_ma t_s tapein_se_s h_m_n symmorphon t_s mati t_s dox_s autou*) in Phil 3.21. Also compare the phrase *t_s eikonos tou huiou autou* in Rom 8.29 with 1 Cor 15.42-49, according to which "the resurrection of the dead" will entail the transformation of the perishable, dishonorable, weak, living, en-souled ("physical") "image of the person of dust," which is a reference to "Adam," into the imperishable, splendid, powerful, life-giving, spiritual "image of person of heaven" which is a reference to Christ. On the basis of 2 Cor 4.4 and Col 1.15, Johnson (*Reading*, 133) connects the phrase *t_s eikonos tou huiou autou* in Rom 8.29 with the restoration of the divine image, "damaged" "as a result of idolatry and sin" (Rom 1.23). The latter text, however, refers to the exchange of God's "glory" of "images" resembling human beings and other creatures as objects of worship, as 1.21 and 25 make clear; though 1.24-32 might play on traditions about the "damaging" of the divine "image" in human beings, it is worth noting that Paul does not continue the use of "image" language in that section. Besides, as Johnson notes, in 1.23 Paul is "depicting *Gentile* sin" (*Reading*, 133, emphasis added), which makes it difficult to get from the ethnically specific gentile sin of idolatry in 1.23 to the ethnically inclusive phrase *t_s eikonos tou huiou autou* in 8.29. Moreover, in Rom 5.12-21 Paul contrasts the "Adamic" form of human existence, plagued by sin and death, and "Christic" existence, marked by grace, the dominion of righteousness in life, "leading to eternal life," but nowhere refers to "the image of God," damaged or restored—instead of an "image of God/loss/restoration" scenario, Paul describes one based on an "Adam/Christ" typology. See also n. 53.

¹⁴⁸ Here the preposition *eis* is a marker of result or purpose (BDAG *eis* 4,e and f).

¹⁴⁹ The substantive infinitive (*to einai*) following the preposition *eis* denotes result or purpose (BDAG *eis* 4,e and f).

¹⁵⁰ The accusative *pr_totokon* (accusative masculine singular, from *pr_totokos*) is the complement to the accusative pronoun *auton*, which is the subject of the infinitive *to einai*. The term *pr_totokos* pertains to birth order

and is used figuratively of Christ “as the firstborn of a new humanity which is to be glorified, as its exalted Lord is glorified” (BDAG *pr_totokos* 2,a). In early Christian literature, *tokos* is used only of “interest on money loaned,” though its root is *tikt_*, “give birth,” from which we get the idea of “offspring” (BDAG *tokos*). That aspect of this compound term is what makes its use here figurative (compare “eldest son” in Johnson, *Reading*, 133).

¹⁵¹ The preposition *en* is used here as a marker of location (BDAG *en* 1,d; so also the KJV, followed by the RSV, NIV, NAB, and the NRSV marginal note; see also Johnson, *Reading*, 133). Col 1.15 extends the thought of this verse by claiming God’s “son” is the “firstborn of all creation,” whether the genitive *pas_s ktise_s* as partitive, implying that God’s “son” (1.13) is part of creation; or, as Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 104) suggests, the idea is of separation from and superiority over creation, as indicated by the element of status implied by the term *pr_totokos* (BDAG *pr_totokos* 2), and the causal *hoti*-clause, “for by [or in] him was created all things in heaven and on earth” (1.16); but against Wallace, see the partitive genitive in 1.18 (*pr_totokos ek t_n nekr_n*).

¹⁵² Paul uses the term *adelphois* (dative masculine plural, from *adelphos*) to refer to female as well as male members of the community of believers, understood as a family or household.

¹⁵³ Here the conjunction *de* is used to mark a move to the next step in the argument.

¹⁵⁴ For *pro_risen*, see n. 144.

¹⁵⁵ We cannot go into the debate that has surrounded the verb *edikai_sen* (aorist active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *dikaio_*) and the *dik-* word-group, whether it refers to imputed justice or imparted righteousness, and we don’t need to: “Since Paul views God’s justifying action in close connection with the power of Christ’s resurrection, there is sometimes no clear distinction between the justifying action of acquittal and the gift of new life through the Holy Spirit as God’s activity in promoting uprightness in believers” (BDAG *dikaio_2,b,beta*).

¹⁵⁶ If the aorist *edoxasen* (active indicative, 3rd person singular, from *doxaz_*) is proleptic, as Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 563-64) proposes, then are the other two aorists also proleptic, and if not what clues the reader in on this proleptic aorist? The first aorist clearly refers to an event in the past, relative to Paul and the addressees of his letter (see Rom 1.7, 9.24). Elsewhere in Romans, Paul can speak of the action of the second aorist (*edikai_sen*) as an event that happened in the past (see 4.2 [compare vv. 3, 9, and 22], 5.1 and 9, 6.7 [compare 6.18 and 9.30]), though the future tense is more common. In Romans, the action of the third aorist (*edoxasen*) always refers to an event in the future (see n. 54 and the use of the *dox-* word-group in 1.21, 23, 2.7, 10, 3.7, 23, 4.20, 5.2, 6.4, 8.17, 18, 21, 9.4, 23, 11.36, 15.6f, 9, 16.27), though the content of the “freedom” that is characteristic of, or produced by, “being clothed in splendor”—namely, freedom from sin and death—also refers to an event in the believer’s past (see n. 74). In an apparent comment on this aorist, Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, writes, “He speaks as one looking back from the goal”—a comment that could apply to all three aorists, since they all refer to actions encompassed within God’s eternal “purpose” (see n. 137), expressed by the verbs in 8.29 (see nn. 143 and 144), and from that vantage point the actions of all the aorists are conceived of as having happened in the past. Concerning “the splendor about to be revealed in us” (8.18, my translation), Stowers (*Rereading*, 283) writes, “God planned this boost for the whole world since the beginning of his [sic] creation.” On the whole verse, Wesley writes, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, “St. Paul does not affirm, either here or in any other part of his writings, that precisely the same number of men [sic] are called, justified, and glorified. He does not deny that a believer may fall away and be cut off between his [sic] special calling and his [sic] glorification [with a reference to Rom 11.22]. Neither does he deny that many are called who never are justified. He only affirms that this is the method whereby God leads us step by step toward heaven.” This verse expresses the reversal of, or solution to, the situation expressed in Rom 3.23.