

**Section Two.**  
**Passover and Community**

## **Chapter five.** **The Paschal Community and the Body of Sin.**

### **Introduction.**

The Exodus was not of an individual Jew, but of the Jewish people as a community. Obviously it was individual Jews who benefited, but it was essentially a corporate event. Likewise, although each individual Christian has shared individually in the redemptive benefits of Christ's death, it is not historically an individual experience. The description of salvation that Paul, and I would argue the rest of the NT writers give, is about the salvation of God's people, corporately.<sup>1</sup> It is this corporate salvation, which must be personally received, that I want to explore in the next 2 chapters.

The focus of Romans chapter six is not individualistic, as is so often claimed, but corporate. I will argue elsewhere that baptism in this context does not refer to individual initiation, but rather to the creation of the believing community as the body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> If this interpretation is accepted then it will lead to the need to reappraise the meaning of what Paul meant when he said 'that the body of Sin might be destroyed' (6:6). The Jews died to the reign of Pharaoh through their deliverance during the night of the Passover. Is there any dependence on this model when Paul speaks of Christians having died to Sin?<sup>3</sup>

### **Recent debate**

In his *New Testament Theology*, Rudolf Bultmann argued against the then prevailing consensus that Paul's view of man was Greek, and claimed that it was in fact Hebraic. A result of this reappraisal he claimed that when Paul spoke of 'the body', in the majority of cases the reference to the term should be extended to include the whole personality of man. This was a distinct advance in understanding, for Bultmann argued that Greek thinking limited the term *sōma* (body) to the corpse of man. Bultmann had argued that Jewish thinking was not analytical, and examination of the use of *sōma* in Jewish literature showed that it was used in speaking of the whole of man, including his personality or self. Bultmann's argument was presented to the wider English-speaking world by Robinson in his work, "*The Body, a Study in Pauline Anthropology*." Bultmann's argument was convincing enough to enable Best to say: "it is now generally recognised that in his anthropology Paul is a Jew rather than a Greek."<sup>4</sup>

### **Detailed discussion.**

The following section will probably only interest those who are acquainted

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<sup>1</sup> "Paul's background in early Christianity, no less than in Judaism, demands that we cease to interpret his relation to the law solely in individualistic or moral terms and recognise that Pauline Christianity is not primarily an antithesis to law" Davies, *People*, 6. Note also Grogan, "Solidarity", *passim*, who though writing about the author of Hebrews still speaks of the NT Jewish mind when he says "Christians are shown to have not simply an individual relationship with God, but also membership in community with as much sense of common interest as was the case in the OT".

<sup>2</sup> See my forthcoming volume, *Paul and the Spirit*.

<sup>3</sup> As indicated earlier, I use upper case to signify that Sin represents Satan. See Murphy O'Connor, *Paul*, 345, "One of the most distinctive features of Romans is its use of *hamartia* in an unusual sense. It first appears in Rom. 3:9, 'all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin'. Clearly Paul is not thinking in terms of the personal sins of individuals, and in order to underline the difference 'Sin' should be capitalized." O'Connor goes on to say that the same usage can be found in a whole series of texts and cites virtually all of Paul's usage's of the term *hamartia* in Romans 5-8. See also Kay, *Structure*, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Best, *Body, passim* see also Ellis, *Recent*, 42.

with the literature covering the topic. It is provided for those who want to follow this discussion and have a response to the prevailing position. For those not interested in following this argument you may reasonably leave the text at this point and rejoin it at the heading 'corporate solidarities'.

Robinson was able to make use of Bultmann's work to support a sacramental concept of the body of Christ. Robinson pursued what seemed to be the inevitable logic of the principle of Semitic completeness in the expression 'body'. He argued that the ecclesiastical body of Christ *is* the whole Christ. Indeed, for Robinson the body of Christ (the church) *is* Christ. However Gundry<sup>5</sup> discounted the evidence presented by Robinson as being both inadequate and badly evaluated. He claimed that there was no holistic meaning behind the Biblical usage of *sōma* in either the OT or the NT. By his counter argument Gundry attempted to block Robinson's road to a sacramental ecclesiology.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to make a detailed comparison between the two positions outlined above, other than where they have a bearing on the theme being considered. The aspect to which we shall therefore pay attention is the use of 'body' in a corporate context.

Robinson argued that when Paul wrote of the body of Christ, as in Eph. 5:30, he was not intending that 'body' should be understood as a mere simile.<sup>6</sup> It speaks, Robinson claims, of organic unity, not only of the body, but of the body with its head. Robinson claimed that the concept is fundamental to the understanding of Paul's theology of the Church. The Church is not merely a body of people in subjection to Christ, but is actually *the* body of Christ. Robinson claimed that this is shown to be Paul's thinking in the accounts of his conversion.<sup>7</sup> The question of Jesus 'why do you persecute me?' demonstrates for Robinson the existence of an organic unity. In persecuting Christ's people Paul was literary persecuting Christ himself.

Gundry discounted this argument. He identified Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8 and 26:14-15 as the fountain head of Robinson's argument and said, ".....it is a long step from persecuting Christ in Christians to a sacramental literalism in which Christians are the physical body of Christ..... If the dominical saying 'He who receives you receives me' (Matt. 10:40; cf.18:5; Mark. 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16; John 13:20) does not imply fusion with Christ's physical body - and who would dare to say that the parallel clause 'He who receives me receives him who sent me' (cf. also John 5:23; 12:44-5; 14:9-11) implies a physical fusion between Christ and the Father? - then neither do the words to Paul on the Damascus road need to imply the kind of sacramental literalism which is drawn out of them."<sup>8</sup>

Gundry noted how Robinson's sacramental view had forced him to equate physical resurrection to baptism, something which Gundry described as un-Pauline. It led, he claimed, to the contradiction of the same physical body both dying and rising concurrently. Gundry saw Robinson as trying to escape the scandal of the physical resurrection, but: "by a tour de force of literalizing the corporate body of Christ and limiting the resurrection to the formation, growth, and final revelation of the body."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*.

<sup>6</sup> Robinson, *Body*, 66-7.

<sup>7</sup> op cit 58.

<sup>8</sup> Gundry, *Soma*, 240

<sup>9</sup> op cit, 241

The main weakness of Robinson's argument, which Gundry does not explore, is that to achieve his sacramental literalism, which he then used as a basis to establish his universalism, he has to do a complete reversal on the very foundation upon which he had built. Robinson says: "The fundamental idea for which Paul is arguing may be viewed as a reversal of the principle familiar to the Old Testament, that the remnant, or ultimately the one, can represent many. This principle Paul sees was central to the divine operation under the old covenant, according to which a vicarious minority, progressively reduced by sin, carried God's purpose for the whole world.....Rather, it is the many who represent the one. 'For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ...Ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise' (Gal. 3:27-29). The many, to whom no limit can be put either to race or class (Gal. 3:28), now constitute the one (Gal. 3:16); but it is a unity which is inclusive rather than exclusive, representative, not simply vicarious."<sup>10</sup>

### **A universal gospel?**

In claiming that universalism was a part of Paul's thinking Robinson was following Dodd in his reasoning.<sup>11</sup> By claiming that the emphasis is now inclusive rather than selective, as was the Old Testament principle, these two scholars were being unfaithful to Paul. They were claiming that Paul was able to make fundamental changes to the outlook he had been nurtured and trained in. Such a change will have to be demonstrated for many recognise Paul's debt to the OT.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Paul so clearly follows the Old Testament concept of representation in Rom. 5, which speaks not only of the old order, but also of the new, ought to suggest caution in accepting Robinson's interpretation. The point of the passages that he quotes from Galatians is not that there is no distinction within mankind between regenerate and unregenerate, but that within the family of God, no distinction can be drawn between man or woman, Jew or Greek, *they* are all one in Christ Jesus.

The tears Paul shed for those he saw as lost<sup>13</sup> and the belief he had that Christ at his appearing would take vengeance upon those who did not repent<sup>14</sup> suggest that Paul continued to see a deep division through the human race. There is no reversal of the Old Testament principle as Robinson argues, but a visible expansion of it. The remnant are collected from beyond Israel and these make up that true people of God who become one new man.<sup>15</sup> Paul taught that both unbelieving Jew, as well as unbelieving Gentile, stand under judgement together, as believing Jew and believing Gentile stand in grace together.<sup>16</sup> If Robinson wanted to hold to a complete reversal of Hebraic concepts, how could he so fervently assert that Paul can only be understood from the viewpoint of those concepts he himself later rejects to make way for universalism? This same criticism is supported from another perspective by Gundry who says: "However much we might wish for universalism, it is

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<sup>10</sup> Robinson, *Body*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Dodd, *Studies*, 83-128.

<sup>12</sup> "Paul was a profound thinker and the Old Testament was one subject on which his thought was in orderly array. His was no grasping for texts or wavering of a talisman; and conclusions to that effect probably indicate a misunderstanding of his meaning." Ellis, *Use*, 114.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 20:19; Col.1:28-29.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Thess. 1:8,9.

<sup>15</sup> Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 3:9-10- not 'new self' as in NIV but 'new man' as AV.

<sup>16</sup> Gal. 3:22-29.

another weight too heavy for *Sōma* to bear. *Sōma* does not necessarily represent the physical oneness of all men and the entire creation in a salvific destiny. It may rather represent an individuation which at the judgement will separate between those who have done good and those who have done evil (II Cor. 5:10). The corporate use is limited to believers. Whether or not all will become members of that body through faith depends on factors other than the use of *Sōma*.<sup>17</sup>

Also, it must be pointed out that Robinson's suggestion that Paul left the OT pattern of the one representing the many so that the many represented the one is not accurate, for both concepts are inherent in the OT and live comfortably side by side. The concept of corporate solidarity allowed the Jews to see Abraham as representing Israel while at the same time Israel represents Abraham. This is true of other representative figures such as Moses, David and the Servant. Thus there is no departure or development in Paul's theological thinking, as suggested by Robinson, but the clear consistent use of his OT theological background using concepts which are naturally at home in Jewish thought.

### **Corporate solidarities.**

Despite these reservations expressed about Robinson's work, there has been a development which has been neither adequately appreciated nor discussed. The work of Bultmann and Robinson have caused many scholars to reinterpret Paul's statement in Romans 6:6 where he says: "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to Sin." Traditionally the term 'body of Sin' has been understood as sin that indwells man. Robinson argued that the Semitic use of 'body' points to an important principle of human existence which directs us back to man's interdependence. He claimed that many of the problems of Western Society were caused by ignoring this principle of solidarity and interdependence. Neglecting the concept of solidarity has resulted in the break up of traditional social structures, leaving twentieth-century Western man severed from his roots. Robinson argued that the biblical concept of the solidarity of man as expressed in the understanding of 'body' helps man to identify his significance and role in society. He reasoned that the multi-national corporations which impersonally determine the existence of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world are an expression of this all embracing solidarity: "This is the 'body of sin and death', in which he is involved at every level of his being, physical, political and even cosmic. The great corporations of modern society are expressions of this all embracing solidarity."<sup>18</sup>

Robinson warned that Western man was tempted to seek salvation by exalting the individual against the collective or by attempting to withdraw from the body of socio-historical structures. Paul's answer to this dilemma, says Robinson, was to argue that solidarity is the divinely ordained structure in which personal life is to be lived. This God appointed corporate structure is the church which is the product of the redemptive work of Christ.

Robinson was not consistent in his understanding of the term 'body of Sin' because he later abandoned equating it with the solidarity of fallen man, and

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<sup>17</sup> *Soma*, 243.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, *Body*, 8-9.

returned to the traditional individual interpretation when he said: “The body of sin and humiliation must be done away (Rom. 6:6).”<sup>19</sup> The context of the statement leaves no doubt that Robinson was speaking of the individual’s body.

### Later developments.

The earlier corporate interpretations of Bultmann and Robinson has been followed (not necessarily in its sacramental application) by a number of scholars. I give their references in their appropriate contexts to assist in a fuller understanding of how they have arrived at their interpretation. First, we note the exposition of Herman Ridderbos: “the concrete mode of existence of sinful man, can sometimes be identified with sin as the ‘body of sin’ (Rom. 6:6.), the ‘body of flesh’ (Col. 2:11), the ‘body of death’ (Rom. 7:24). Accordingly, the life from Christ by the Holy Spirit can be typified as a ‘doing away with the body of sin’, ‘putting off of the body of the flesh’, ‘putting to death the earthly members’, ‘deliverance from the body of this death’ (Rom. 6:6; Col. 2:11; 3:5; Rom. 7:24)....All these expressions are obviously not intended of the body itself, but of the sinful mode of existence of man.”<sup>20</sup>.....”What is intended by this body of sin is, as we have already been able to determine in another context, the present human mode of existence ruled by sin. Of this bondage to sin the cross and the death of Christ have made an end.”<sup>21</sup>.....That sin, as it were, lays hold of the body “from without” and thus subjects the entire man to itself as a slave....All sorts of expressions and pronouncements in Paul’s epistles give evidence of this “direct” connection: “Sin-body” that must be done away with, so that “we” no longer serve sin. Here the body, in its being ruled by sin.”<sup>22</sup>

Torrance is even more explicit in his understanding of ‘the body of Sin’. He says: “in his death, the many who inhered in him died too, and indeed the whole body of sin, the whole company of sinners into which he incorporated himself to make their guilt and their judgement his own, that through his death he might destroy the body of sin, redeem them from the power of guilt and death, and through his resurrection raise them up as the new Israel.”<sup>23</sup>

This corporate view of *the body of Sin* is also shared by Bruce who said: “This ‘body of sin’ is more than an individual affair, it is rather that old solidarity of sin and death which all share “in Adam”, but which has been broken by the death of Christ with a view to the creation of the new solidarity of righteousness and life of which believers are made part “in Christ”.”<sup>24</sup>

It is perhaps T.W. Manson who came closest to the thesis being worked out here. He questioned the traditional assumption that in the phrase ‘body of Sin’ the term ‘of Sin’ is a genitive of quality; he argued that it: “does not yield a very good sense.” He took it to be a possessive genitive, and said: It is

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<sup>19</sup> op cit 32. However, Robinson may have intended us to see the individual, expressed as *soma*, to be a microcosm of the body of sin. If this is what he intended, he has confused the matter by appealing to Rom 6:6 which he has already stated to be corporate. Phil. 3:21 would have served his argument better.

<sup>20</sup> Ridderbos, *Outline*, 229f.

<sup>21</sup> op cit, 208.

<sup>22</sup> op cit, 194.

<sup>23</sup> Torrance, *Reconstruction*, 203 see also 198. However, Torrance contradicts this statement elsewhere saying that it is the church that is the body of sin. He says: “After baptism we see the church as the Body of sin or sinners, into which Jesus Christ incorporated Himself to be the Saviour of the Body. After the Lord’s Supper where that union is confirmed, He immersed Himself in sacrificial death for Sin, that the Body of sin being destroyed He might raise it again, a glorious Body in His resurrection.” “Atonement”, 249.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce, *Romans*, 38.

perhaps better to regard 'the body of sin' as the opposite of 'the body of Christ'. It is the mass of unredeemed humanity in bondage to the evil power. Every conversion means that the body of sin loses a member and the body of Christ gains one."<sup>25</sup>

Manson is supported by Nygren who, because he saw the earlier part of Rom 6 to refer to water baptism, was not able to go beyond the conclusions of others. He says of Rom 6:6: "There is another body that must die. Paul speaks of it expressively as the "body of sin".... it is this body to which man formerly belonged when he was under the dominion of sin and death."<sup>26</sup>

Nygren, commenting on Romans chapter five says: "If we begin with such sociological alternatives as "individual or collectivity", we shall not arrive at what Paul has in mind. The only way to understand him is to take him seriously, on the one hand, the idea of the body of sin and of death of which we are by nature ("in Adam") members, and on the other hand, the body of Christ into which we are incorporated by faith and baptism."<sup>27</sup>

Although not emphasising the corporate, Keck's remarks fit the picture that we are noting. He says: "The Adamic situation is deeper than being wrongly related to God and so needs more than a rectified relationship. Sin entails also participation in a domain marked by Sin's enslaving power, whose consequence is death. Thus, the exposition of Adam in 5:12-21 prepares for 6:1-7:6, where Paul argues that freedom from this yoked tyranny of sin and death is through participation in an alternative domain - Christ's death and resurrection."<sup>28</sup>

### Dissenting voices.

Gundry dissents from the consensus indicated above regarding the corporate meaning of 'body' in Rom 6.6. He said: "The body of sin is not equivalent to 'flesh', it is the body which sin, or the flesh, dominates, as in Romans 8:12-13."<sup>29</sup> He then went on to compare it with Rom. 7:24 where he said: "The body of death is not 'flesh' in the sense of sin itself; it is the physical body destined to die because within its members dwells the law of sin and death."<sup>30</sup>

And again, he said: "Just as Christ's mortal body had to give way to an immortal one, so also the believer's 'body of sin'. *to sōma tēs hamartias* therefore does not refer to an abstract mass of sin, to the system of sinful desires, to sin personified as a sphere of power in the old Aeon, or to the sinful personality, but concretely to the physical body which has been dominated by sin, is doomed to destruction, and will receive resurrection."<sup>31</sup>

Gundry is somewhat reluctantly supported by Moo, who, commenting on the proposal of others that the term body of Sin should be seen as corporate, said: "This view should not be dismissed as quickly as it sometimes is because it

<sup>25</sup> Manson, "Romans", 945.

<sup>26</sup> Nygren, *Romans*, 234.

<sup>27</sup> op cit, 306.

<sup>28</sup> Keck, "Romans", 25. Schrange, *Korinthes*, 2:22 rejects the solely physical meaning of *soma* pointing out that the physical is nevertheless important because it is the place where man experiences life and death. *Soma* means man himself as a person. So also Leenhardt, *Romains*, 92 and Maillot, *Romains*, 224. The corporate exposition that has been given so far is supported by Lagrange *Romains*, 146. He says: "Le but à atteindre, ce qui fait l'objet de toute la péripécopie, c'est que nous ne servions plus le péché, considère comme une personne. Lui vit donc toujours; ce n'est donc pas lui qui a été détruit en personne ou crucifié, c'est notre corps à nous..." "The goal to which we attain - and that which is the whole point of the pericope - is that we should no longer serve sin as a person. He then still lives, but it is not he who has been personally destroyed or crucified, it is our body." Emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> *Soma*, 39. See also Mauro, *Wretched*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> op cit, 39.

<sup>31</sup> op cit 58.

does explain several things. The lack of the possessive pronoun in the clause (“our old man was crucified ... so that the body of sin...with the purpose that we should not serve sin”), the singular soma and the fact that this soma is the subject of the passive verb “be destroyed” or “rendered impotent”. Nevertheless, this view suffers from the fatal defect of insufficient lexical support. The text would have to offer more reasons than these to substantiate so rare (for the NT) a use of the word.”<sup>32</sup>

In reality Moo’s concerns are not well founded. There is no lexical support for the popular view of ‘the body of Sin’ either, so that also would have to be rejected. Furthermore, the context, if my exegesis is accepted, is corporate, flowing from the clearly corporate imagery in chapter five. The corporate interpretation does have far more to offer than the individual understanding which is in fact the understanding that needs to be demonstrated, for the traditional understanding depends on the meaning *given* to this one verse and it has no support from the overall argument that Paul is making.

### **Confused methods.**

Gundry, in fact rejected the corporate meaning of ‘body of Sin’ as the result of an error in his methodology. Having argued that *soma* is not holistic, he used the evidence he collated to show that ‘body of Sin’ is not corporate. The two meanings are however quite unrelated. Evidence for rejecting the holistic interpretation cannot be transferred to a corporate meaning. The two domains and meanings are quite distinct. In fact Gundry acknowledged this when he considered the use of *sōma* in 1 Cor. 6:19-20. There he dismissed a corporate understanding for *sōma* because he claimed that the Corinthians would not have understood Paul as he does not introduce the topic of the church being the body of Christ until chapter 12. He did, however, acknowledge that if it could be shown that *sōma* was corporate, that is, refers to the church rather than the individual body, then his argument for rejecting a holistic interpretation for *sōma* would no longer be relevant. Gundry said: “An ecclesiastical use of soma in these verses would of course eliminate them from the debate over the anthropological meaning of *sōma*.”<sup>33</sup>

In rejecting the holistic anthropological meaning of *sōma* Gundry thought that he had given sufficient evidence for rejecting a sacramental meaning for ‘the body of Christ’. This mistake arose because he failed to appreciate that he was confusing the corporate usage, which has a federal origin in that Christ is the head/lord of his body, the church, and the holistic understanding, which has nothing to do with federalism. Gundry also confused the imagery of 1 Cor. 6, which we shall shortly see is also corporate.<sup>34</sup> This error was not introduced by Gundry, but by Bultmann himself, and not identified by succeeding scholars. Bultmann confused the holistic meaning which he wanted to establish in the use of the language of ‘body’ and assumed that the same holistic meaning occurred when the term was used to describe the church as the body of Christ. Failure to recognise that the terms had distinctively different usages meant that when the holistic meaning was rejected it was thought that the issue of the sacramental use, and therefore of its corporate meaning in such passages as Rom. 6:6, was settled. In fact, no

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<sup>32</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 1: 392.

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, *Soma*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter 6.

such case had been made, for it would have required a totally different argument to achieve this.

Gundry confused definitions; Robinson, however, overlooked the consequences of his own sacramental interpretation of the body of Christ. If his claim that the body of Christ *is* Christ; then, it follows that the body of Sin *is* Sin - not just its realm of rule and power, but one with Satan, and to be identified as Sin, or Satan incarnate in unredeemed human life. It may be this that Gundry sees when he says: "...does not refer.....to sin personified as a sphere of power in the old Aeon."<sup>35</sup>

It is crucially important to realise that it is one thing to reject a holistic/sacramental interpretation, either of the body of Sin or of the body of Christ, and quite another thing to reject concepts of solidarity that are widely accepted as a part of Semitic thought. Such a position, of fully understanding the concept of solidarity, will leave us with all the benefits of both extremes. In this concept there is no confusion of identity, but neither is there any loss of unity.

In fact, Gundry's study has been challenged by Ziesler.<sup>36</sup> He has shown that there are clear cases in the LXX of *soma* being used to describe the total person rather than merely the corpse. This adds weight to the case I am making but it does not depend on it.

### **The body of sin and our old man.**

Robinson, Ridderbos, Bruce and Manson and Nygren came to accept various degrees of solidarity inherent in the term *the body of Sin*. These conclusions came from their reading of Bultmann's work, and their own independent studies of the Pauline letters. Unfortunately, the corporate meaning of 'body of Sin' has become entangled in a debate over the claim that 'body' was used holistically, while the two issues are quite separate. But even if the corporate meaning of 'body of Sin' is accepted as valid, it is still questionable if the concept can be transferred from one section of the Pauline corpus to another, for, some argue, Paul's concepts developed and even changed. The important question therefore is whether it can be shown from the context of Romans 6 that Paul himself had this corporate concept in mind.

A corporate perspective makes better sense of the ongoing argument that Paul is advancing in his letter to the Romans. It is the inevitable consequence of an argument that begins in chapter five in which the central theme is the solidarity of man with his head, whether Adam or Christ. This corporate thinking is evident in the corporate baptism into Christ in 6:1ff. The corporate understanding of 'the body of Sin' is the necessary link preparing for the corporate understanding of chapter 7, which has in recent years become a widely accepted principle for interpreting the chapter.<sup>37</sup>

There is other evidence that is relevant beside the exegesis that has been offered. The reference in Romans 6:19 to the members being yielded to unrighteousness makes better sense when it is seen as a reference to corporate membership, i.e. relating to the discipline of those who are failing to make a break with the service of Sin. It is therefore not about the individual controlling his members but an appeal to the church to discipline its members.

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<sup>35</sup> op cit 58.

<sup>36</sup> Ziesler, "Septuagint", 133-145.

<sup>37</sup> See Wright, *Messiah*, 146: Moo, "Israel", 122-135: Westerholm, *Law*, 181-189 and Trudinger, "Autobiographical", 173ff.

### **Wider support.**

Also, in 6:6 Paul refers to ‘putting off the old man’. Once again this has traditionally been seen as a reference to the sinful self that dominated the life of the believer in the pre-converted state.<sup>38</sup> However, the same terminology is used in Eph 2:15 where Paul says ‘to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace’. He then goes on to say in 4:22-3 ‘put off your old self (*anthropos* - man), which is corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and put on the new self (*anthropos* - man), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’

The exhortation is parallel to that in Romans 6:6ff.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the new man, which Paul exhorts the Romans to put on, is corporate, for ‘the new man’ in Ephesians is the Church, and the two who have been united to form this new man are the believing Jews and the believing Gentiles.

This corporate understanding is further supported by Col. 3:9-15 where Paul writes, ‘Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self (*anthropos* - man) with its practices and have put on the new self (*ton neon* - the new), which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.’

### **The realm of equality.**

The realm where distinctions are abolished (here there is no Greek or Jew v11) is clearly corporate. This is indicated by two considerations. First, ‘here’ is clearly the realm where all distinctions are abolished, and this is the new man. Second, the meaning of the one body into which they were called (v15) is obviously corporate. These descriptions of corporateness are in the context of the description of the old and new self (man vs. 9 &10). The rendering of *anthropos* as *self* by the NIV and *sarx* as flesh in the AV has inevitably promoted the individualistic understanding and confused the mind of the English reader.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, that Paul’s exhortation is corporate is shown in that he appeals to them: “as God’s chosen people clothe yourselves” (v 6).

Thus, identifying the imagery of the old and new man as being corporate, and appreciating that it is part of the description of the ‘body of Sin’ in Rom. 6:6, along with the other considerations we have presented, establish a corporate meaning for the term the ‘body of Sin’.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 1:319 notes that ‘old man’ is singular and says that it is to emphasise ideas of common humanness worn out by its bondage to sin and death- he makes no suggestion that it is corporate. So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 134 note 1; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 436; Murray, *Romans*, 219; Turner, *Spiritual* 122; Hui, *Ephesians*, 108-9 and Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:308-9.

<sup>39</sup> Lincoln, “Summary”, 625.

<sup>40</sup> Schreiner “Corporate” P147 says: “The implications for the Hebrew mind of the word body, *soma*, was, like that of flesh, *sarx*, one of solidarity rather than one of individuality - Paul can speak either of flesh or body of man that is mortal and dies, but only of the body that is raised.”

<sup>41</sup> Dockery, “Nature”, 628-9 acknowledges the corporate use in Col. 3:10-11 and Eph. 2:15, but interprets Rom. 6:6 individualistically, so also Edwards, *Romans* 162. Note Schlatter’s, *Romans*, 142 logic concerning individualism: “What renders the body worthy of death and makes its crucifixion God’s gracious act, is expressed by

### **The ultimate rescue.**

The correctness of this corporate interpretation is borne out in the seventh chapter of Romans. Traditionally the passage about Paul's struggle with sin has been interpreted in an understandably individualistic way.<sup>42</sup> However, in recent years there has been a growing awareness that Paul is either acting out the role of mankind in its bondage to Sin, or representing the Jewish nation as it grapples with the consequences of the giving of the law (Rom. 5:20).<sup>43</sup> Either way, the perspective moves away from an individualistic understanding to that of a corporate one. Paul, if our argument so far is valid, is showing that the Exodus Israel experienced under Moses never brought her into the freedom from Sin that she professed to have received. The law was given to make this clear. All the expectations of the redemption from Egypt turned to horror as the sincere Jew realised that the deliverance had been nothing more than political. The covenant people still share in the existence of Sin and Death, as do all other people. That Paul is playing out the experience of Israel is suggested by the reference that "I was alive without the law". Few would dispute that Paul was brought up under the law as a devout Jew, so it would not fit in with his own experience. It does however fit the experience of Israel, released from slavery in Egypt, coming to Sinai and receiving not the crowning experience of her freedom, but the sentence of a condemning law.<sup>44</sup> However it is also true the Adam once lived without the law and when it was given experienced death as a result of disobedience. The fact that the argument is rooted in chapter 5 with its Adamic basis ought to warn us of the danger of restricting the story to Israel.

### **The husband identified.**

This corporate dimension is encountered in the illustration found in 7:1-6. The passage has perplexed most commentators. The main problem has been to discover what the law of the husband referred to. The fact is that the context of the illustration has not been appreciated. If Paul is using the Exodus as the model for explaining Christian salvation, then we can begin to break into what the illustration is saying. In the original Exodus the Husband was Yahweh who redeemed Israel from Egypt to be his bride. In the New Exodus setting, the new husband is Christ,<sup>45</sup> In the Exodus from Egypt the deliverance was from the power of Pharaoh, in the New Exodus it is from the

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the geneitive that characterises the body: 'the body of sin'. Its characteristic is that it produces sin. But whoever has a body that forces him to sin, is an old being." Note also Turners confusion, *Spiritual*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> Understandable because of the Western mind set, so Stendahl, "Introspective", 199-215.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce, "Classical", 241 says that Paul's anthropology cannot be understood in terms of Platonic thought and language. Bligh, *Galatians* 339 says "Paul recapitulates the history of mankind in his own life", so also Dunn, *Making*, 103. Bultmann, "History", 12 says that chapter 7 is the history of Adam by way of an autobiography, so also Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, 86; Witherington, *Quest*, 240; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:344; Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 399-403 and Ziesler, *Romans*, 182. However, Wright, *Messiah*, 146 says ch. 7 refers to the theological history of Israel, so also Moo, "Israel" 129 who says, "In Romans 7 ego has been used because Paul identified himself, in a corporate sense, with his own people." Wright *Messiah*, 150, says that Paul begins in 7:8 to elaborate on 5:20a. Such a conclusion ought perhaps to have led him away from his claim that in Rom. 7 Paul is personifying the experience of Israel as the scope of Rom. 5 is clearly the human race in Adam. Thielman, "Story", 193 says that some elements of 7:1-13 fit Adam while others fit Israel because he says Israel's sin caused the sin of Adam to increase. Betz calls Rom. 7-8 a pre-Pauline anthropology, cited by Bruce, *Galatians*, 245. The two previously mentioned views may be reconcilable by the observation of Caird, "Jesus", 63 that "Paul's history of human kind turns out to be a Jewish history". See Black, "Problem", 314 for the way Enoch uses the figures Israel and the Son of Man to represent the righteous, the nation and mankind.

<sup>44</sup> So Trudinger, "Autobiographical", 173ff; Westerholm, *Law*, 181-189 and Moo, *Israel*, 122-135

<sup>45</sup> Contra Earnshaw, "Analogy", 87 who says: it is Christ crucified under the law that corresponds to the first husband; and it is Christ as risen that corresponds to the second husband.

power of a former husband. Clearly the former husband is symbolised by what Pharaoh and Egypt represent, which clearly has to be Sin, as made clear in 6:14. The old husband is Sin, i.e. Satan.<sup>46</sup> Thus the law of Sin and Death is the law of the old husband<sup>47</sup> whose power, i.e., that of the covenant, has been broken through Christ's representative death. When it is appreciated that there is a New Exodus motif, we can see that Paul is working out how Yahweh can take the church as his bride, as he had taken Israel. It can happen only if man's covenant with Sin can be broken, and this can only be done by death.<sup>48</sup> Of course the illustration is not about the experience of the individual Christian but about the Christian community. The OT salvation from Egypt was not about individuals but about a community which of course was made up of individuals. The corporate view is further upheld in that the individual is never spoken of as being the bride of Christ: it is always the church.<sup>49</sup> To try to fit the argument into an individual perspective is to take it out of its original context, a procedure that is bound to produce exegetical problems. The deliverance from Egypt had not been a deliverance from Sin. Paul is insisting that the Jews are but "a subclass of man in Adam."<sup>50</sup> The old relationship established in Adam's disobedience had not been cancelled by the Exodus. Their privileged status had not brought them out of the kingdom of darkness. A greater Exodus must take place to bring about freedom from the tyranny of Sin.

Thus in the illustration the old husband is Sin (Satan) and the new husband is of course Christ.

This interpretation also gains support from the text. Paul's statement that he is sold under Sin (7:14), is not referring to the purchase of a slave, but to wife purchase, so commonly practised in the ancient world.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sin has been used throughout Rom. 6 as a pseudonym for Satan. For synonyms of Satan see Martin, *Colossians*, 51; Dunn, *Romans*, 1:360; MacGregor, "Principalities" 342; Fee, *Empowering*, 526 and Sanday, *Romans* passim. Ford, "Euphemism", 189ff shows how euphemisms were used to avoid the use of an offensive or sacred original. Sin is personified in the OT and Paul, so Wedderburn, "Structure", 342. Sroggs, Rom VI.7 says that "sometimes amartia is understood as a personified power" p104.

<sup>47</sup> The perspective that Sin (Satan) is the former husband, as argued in 6.7, is supported by Gibling, "Monotheistic" 544 who says that the law of the husband "is the husband himself as the living, determining factor of the bond under consideration... law is somebody's law. Thus he can speak of the law of the husband (Rom. 7.2)." Yahweh said that he would betroth Israel in righteousness, Hos. 2: 19&20. As we have seen, righteousness is a major theme of Romans and is clearly part of the eschatological perspective of Paul, which culminates in the eschatological marriage, thus linking back with Isaiah's New Exodus theme. Derrett, *Law*, 461ff says that Israel thought Law bound her to God in marriage covenant. Wright, *Messiah*, 148 also says that the former husband is Adam and says "We believe that the majority have taken the whole argument out of specific covenantal context in which alone it could be understood". Espy, "Robust", 161-188 suggests that knowing in Rom. 7:7 has a possible hint of knowledge within a marriage relationship. Moo, "Law", 78 says that the law of sin is better understood as the authority or power exercised by sin. Allison, "Jesus", 57 acknowledges that there are elements of covenantal nomism in Paul's theology, which is denied by Sanders *Palestinian* passim but claimed by Hooker, "Nomism". However Sanders says that it is not the key to his thought. Our study reaches the very opposite conclusion

<sup>48</sup> See chapter 9.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7.

<sup>50</sup> So Wright, *Messiah*, 141 who also says, "History", 65 that Israel was intended to be the second Adam ruling the world. This observation combines the imagery of Paul representing both humanity and Israel in their fallen condition. Dunn, *Making*, 103 sees Gen. 2-3 to be behind Rom. 7: 7-11, so also Stuhlmacker, *Reconciliation*, 86.

<sup>51</sup> For bride purchase in the ancient world see Balsdon, *Women*, 179-180, also Millnar, "Social" 134 and Wright, *ABD* 2:761-769, who claims that the *Môher*, bride price, was paid to the father but was not as a purchase price. Wright says that it was to bind the two families together (p766). Kosmala, "Husband", 16 has pointed out the close connection between circumcision and marriage based on Ex. 4:22 and ancient marriage rites. We have already had Paul arguing that the only circumcision that matters is that of the heart, Rom. 2. In Col. 2:11 there is reference to the circumcision of Christ which took place in his death whilst Eph. 5:24f clearly shows the presence of marital imagery was associated with the death (i.e., the circumcision) of Christ. We have seen that this was a strong imagery employed by the OT writers in connection with the Exodus. The same imagery is clearly found in the NT to describe the purpose of Christ's death, i.e. the purchasing of a people to be his bride and the preparation for the union, so Eph. 5:25ff; Rev. 19:7-9. See chapter 6.

### **Members equals membership.**

It might be argued that the reference to “a law at work within my the members” in 7:23 overturns the argument previously made until it is appreciated that the reference members has a corporate dimension.<sup>52</sup> It is not denoting a highly dualistic understanding in Paul’s thinking, but a corporate one, so basic to Semitic thinking. Paul speaks not only as the representative of the Jewish people, but also as of mankind. He knows that they, as individuals, are members of the body of Sin, and are bound under the covenant of Sin. He speaks as one who reviews the history of Adam whose sin has brought all of his offspring into membership of the kingdom of darkness, the body of Sin. It is similar to the use of members in 6:12. There the appeal is not to the individual not to use parts of his body for the service of sin, even though it would be a natural further application, but to the congregation not to allow any member to serve Sin. It is therefore corporate and about the purity of the community.

There is no way out of this bondage to Satan which the law of Sin secures unless death cancels the relationship. Paul cries in desperation, acting out the despair of Adam and his descendants, as well as his own, for a deliverer who will break this solidarity with Sin and Death (7:24). It is a cry that all seekers, both Jews and Gentiles, will make. It comes as the result of seeing that they are in need of the same mercy as the rest of humanity who are also under judgement because of their oneness with Adam.

This exegesis is supported by the conclusions of a range of scholars. Smith<sup>53</sup> links Rom. 7:25a with Col. 1:12. If these passages are associated, they establish that Paul is not primarily talking of his own *soma*, but the *soma* of Sin as identified in Rom. 6:6. He is reasoning in terms of the Second Exodus from the kingdom of darkness which he calls ‘the body of Sin’ or ‘the body of this death’. Stendahl<sup>54</sup> makes the following comment on the trend of Western commentators to individualise the teaching of Paul: “This Western interpretation reaches its climax when it appears that even, or especially, the will of man is the centre of depravation. And yet, in Rom. 7 Paul had said of that will: ‘This will (to do what is good) is there...v18’. What we have called the Western interpretation has left its mark even in the field of textual reconstruction in this chapter in Romans. In Moffat’s translation of the New Testament the climax of the whole argument about the Law (v.25b see above) is placed before the words “wretched man that I am...”. Such a rearrangement - without even any basis in the manuscript - wants to make this exclamation the dramatic climax of the whole chapter, so that it is quite clear to the reader that Paul here gives the answer to the great problem of human existence. But by such arrangements the structure of Paul’s argument also is destroyed.” Stendahl went on to say that if Paul had meant this individual perspective in which he is so often placed, then he would have spoken of the ‘body of sin’, but he says, ‘body of death’. This statement betrays the limited progress of Stendahl’s understanding,<sup>55</sup> for the term ‘the body of sin’ is in fact corporate

<sup>52</sup> Contra Witherington, *Quest*, 213 despite his earlier recognition of corporate concepts in Paul. See chapter 6 for a suggested possible corporate dimension in 1 Cor. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, “Background”, 135

<sup>54</sup> Stendahl, “*Introspective*”, 205

<sup>55</sup> For a critical assessment of Stendahl see Espy, “Robust”, 161-188. Donaldson, “Curse”, 104 says that , “For Paul, all human existence apart from Christ, Jewish or Gentile- is characterised by bondage to the elemental spirits of the universe”.

in keeping with the corporate focus of the letter.<sup>56</sup>

### **A corporate reading of Romans 8.**

It is the relief of acquittal<sup>57</sup> that marks the opening of the eighth chapter. Paul states that the longed for salvation has been realised, and this is not on the grounds of what man must do but what God has done.

This deliverance is not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (8:1). This freedom is not through the keeping of the law, but is based on a perfect sacrifice for sin (8:3).<sup>58</sup> This statement clearly picks up all the other cultic statements made earlier in the letter, and emphasises that the sacrifice was the Son of God,<sup>59</sup> given freely by the Father. It is Christ's death that liberates and brings the children of God out of their bondage. Thus, by entering the very realm of Sin's domain the Son challenged Sin at the point where its (his) power was strongest. Subjecting himself to the full force of Sin's attack, in the realm of human likeness and weakness, but without sin in his own person, he entered into conflict to deliver his own (8:3). This fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law, for it was to this event that the law and the prophets had pointed (1:2; 3:21). The Exodus under Moses had not been deliverance of the spirit, but of the flesh, of human existence apart from God. No eschatologically profound deliverance had been secured in the Exodus. It pointed to the greater reality that Christ would establish.

When Paul speaks about walking after the flesh, could mean living in flagrant opposition to the law,<sup>60</sup> but it could equally involve seeking righteousness by a meticulous performance of the law's demands.<sup>61</sup> Such legal righteousness rejected the divinely appointed way (10:1-4). The unbelieving Jew put his confidence in Moses and the sacrifices of the temple, not in God (who had set the temple sacrifices aside) and the sacrifice of His Son. Now the true salvation, from Sin and Death, has been achieved, and it is through Christ our Passover. Paul insists that there can be no neutral zone in man's relationship with God (8:6). To be at enmity with God is to reject his purposes. This does not necessarily mean a deliberate rejection of the law's requirements, but of the law's purposes, the goal to which it pointed. This is

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<sup>56</sup> See my forthcoming commentary on Romans.

<sup>57</sup> Passover/ Exodus was Israel's historical watershed. The Jewish people understand their vocation and destiny in the light of this event which made them a people and became their undying memory, so Anderson, *Understanding* 9. Dunn, *Romans*, 1:181 suggests that Rom. 8:3 reflects a: "coherent rationale that was familiar so needed no further explanation." He also noted (p500) that the confidence reflected in the opening passage of chapter eight is that of Isa. 40 ff. i.e. New Exodus.

<sup>58</sup> Dunn, *Romans* 1:437 says that the translation should be sin offering so following the LXX of Lev. 5:6-7, 11; 16:3,5,9; Num. 6:16; 7:16; 2 Chron. 29:23-24; Neh. 10:33; 2 Esd. 20:34 and Ezek. 42:13; 43:19. Sin offering is supported by Wilckens, Denny and Michel cited by Dunn op cit 1:437, also Moule *Romans*, 139. Wedderburn, *Adam*, 70 says that: "the OT saw a new creation in the Messianic Age, Exodus often thought of as a new creation." cf 2 Cor 5:17. Wright, *Messiah* 155 and Gager, "Functional" 327 sees Rom. 8:3 to be a covenant sacrifice looking back to 5:12-21, which Whiteley, "Atonement", 250 has identified as Paschal. Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation*, 175 also sees Rom. 8:3 and 2 Cor. 5:21 as referring to the sin offering on the Day of Atonement. However, Hooker, "Interchange", 350 says that becoming sin is not cultic but refers to the incarnation and obedience which Christ rendered to the will of God, which included obedience unto death. She also sees the chapter reflecting a second Adam theme (pp 355 & 358). Whiteley, "Atonement", 244 says that Rom. 8:3-4, 2 Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:13 are foundational to the substitutionary theory but that none of these verses: "either necessitates or excludes a substitutionary explanation." This is not so if the New Exodus is the model, for the event concentrates on the principle of substitution and via the substitution of the Levites for the firstborn so that they would avert the wrath of God from the people, and the merger that Ezek. has made between Passover and Day of Atonement in 45:25, See chapter 8. Thus the texts cannot be removed from the realm of substitutionary theology.

<sup>59</sup> If the Paschal setting is correct, then Kramer, *Son*, 121 is clearly wrong in saying that the title Son of God was of minor importance for Paul. It is the corner stone for his doctrine of redemption

<sup>60</sup> Gal. 5:19ff

<sup>61</sup> Phil. 3:3ff

where Paul and his fellow countrymen stumbled so often.<sup>62</sup> Rather than being guided by the law, they had made it the goal in itself. It had actually become the barrier to doing the will of God, for they made its keeping, which they gloried in, the grounds of their hope of participating in the eschatological salvation.

### **The covenant with death.**

The logical conclusion of accepting the above argument is that Paul sees a parallel relationship existing between Christ and his people and with Satan and the members of his community, the body of Sin. This ought not to be too difficult to accept in that the NT is constantly making comparisons between the members of these two communities that show corresponding relationships. Believers are citizens of the kingdom of light, unbelievers of the kingdom of darkness. Believers are the children of God, unbelievers are the children of the devil. Believers are the servants of God, unbelievers are the servants of the devil. These parallels ought to suggest that Paul would not find any difficulty in taking these comparisons to their ultimate conclusion. Believers are members of the body of Christ, unbelievers are members of the body of Sin.

But how did Paul, or possibly more accurately, the early church, since Paul received his gospel, come to such an understanding? To answer this we must again remind ourselves of the extent of the influence of the prophet Isaiah on the early church exemplified in his being the major propounder of the New Exodus motif.

### **Apostolic use of the OT.**

Dodd has identified how the early church made use of blocks of testimonia.<sup>63</sup> Two references we can easily identify as forming such a block are Isa. 28:11 and 16. Clearly as part of a block the verses circumscribed by these two verses would have been well known by the early church. Indeed, these ‘stones passages’ are used more than any other OT passages by the NT writers to speak about the covenant Yahweh would establish through His Servant.<sup>64</sup> The verses between these texts tell of the very opposite, the covenant Israel bound herself in as she ran from the claims of Yahweh, a covenant that was made with death. Isaiah said: “You boast ‘we have entered into a covenant with death, with the graves we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made lies our refuge and falsehood our hiding place’. So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious corner stone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring-line and righteousness the plumb-line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand.’”

Whitehouse<sup>65</sup> says: “The expressions ‘covenant with death’ and ‘agreement with Hades’ are obscure, and various explanations have been offered. On the

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<sup>62</sup> So Rom. 2 and 11.

<sup>63</sup> Dodd, *According*, 28-60. See also the review of scholarly opinion on the use of the OT in the NT in the excursus at the end of chapter 2.

<sup>64</sup> Mtt.21:42-44; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:32; 1 Pt. 2:4-6.

<sup>65</sup> Whitehouse, *Isaiah*, 297.

whole it seems most probable that those are references to the arts of sorcery and necromancy which were largely practised at this time.”

Snodgrass supports this understanding when he says: “It is likely that Isa xxvii.16 was not always connected with the correction of temple malpractice. In the original context the priests, and the prophets (v7) and the rulers of the people of Jerusalem who had made a covenant with sheol (v 14-15) were the ones to whom the oracles were given.”<sup>66</sup>

Bright<sup>67</sup> is even more specific and sees the passage as addressed to the nobles of Judah who have scorned Isaiah’s advice and made a treaty with Egypt, invoking the names of the pagan gods and looking to them for protection. Bright points out that death-*sheol* (*moth*) in verse 15 is also the name of the Canaanite god of the underworld and fertility. He thinks that since the pact was with Egypt then the reference is probably to Egyptian deities of similar character such as Osiris or Seth in whose names the pact was sealed. If Bright is right, and this is the background of Paul’s thinking in interpreting the passage, i.e. it refers originally to returning to ‘Egyptian’ bondage, it is easy to see how natural it would be for it to be utilised to describe the condition unbelievers are in when they have rejected the mercy of Yahweh.

This concept of a covenant with other gods is not unique to Isaiah. Ex. 23:32 warned the Jews not to make covenants with other gods. In this one verse there is enough evidence to establish that the OT saw the possibility of a covenant with other gods than Yahweh. Again this injunction, just like the Isaiah passage, is in an exodus context.

Further more, Snodgrass<sup>68</sup> claims that Isaiah’s covenant with death would have been widely understood in Rome. This position is further supported by the observation of Grech that: “Paul’s world-picture was not so different from that of Isaiah as to render a hermeneutical translation necessary”.<sup>69</sup>

The covenant referred to by Isaiah is manifestly the very opposite of the covenant of Yahweh. At the time of Isaiah no developed doctrine of Satan existed. Death was the great enemy. It cut man off from the covenant community and from his God. It was therefore natural for Paul to see that he can legitimately expand its reference point to Satan, for he is in reality the enemy man has bound himself to in a covenant relationship. If Rowley is right in his interpretation of the Isaiah 28 passage, then the step from seeing death as the great enemy to a personal, evil opponent, of Yahweh, had already been taken by Isaiah himself. The unbelieving Jews had placed themselves in covenant with this sworn enemy of Yahweh, and Paul is merely adapting the theology of this passage, taking it beyond the unbelieving Jews of Isaiah’s day and applying it to the whole of mankind. This link, of equating death with Sin, both being personified as Satan, is further supported in that when Paul speaks of the law of the husband in Rom. 7:2-3, he then goes on to apply it in Rom. 8:3 with the words: “Therefore, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death.” This expression ‘the law of

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<sup>66</sup> Snodgrass, “1 Peter”, 104.

<sup>67</sup> Bright, *PBC*, 509. Day, *Molech*, 63 thinks the covenant with death refers to a covenant with Molech, he says: “Although there is no explicit statement that the Molech cult was thought of in covenant terms (cf Is 28.15, 18), the *do ut des* concept underlying the offering of children to Molech might easily have lent itself to expression in such terms”.

<sup>68</sup> Snodgrass, “1 Peter”, 104.

<sup>69</sup> Grech, “Testimonia”, 322.

Sin and death', parallels sin and death in the manner used in Isaiah's warning. Strictly speaking death should be given a capital, Death.

### **The personification of Sin.**

Can it be shown that Death, like Sin, is a personification of Satan? The Targum certainly makes the equation, identifying the angel of death in Exodus 12 with Satan. Also, there are passages such as 1 Cor. 15:55-45 and Rev. 20:14 (both arguably New Exodus passages!), in which Death is personified as the last enemy and is destroyed by Christ. Kennedy in presenting the OT picture of Death says: "They that go down to Sheol cannot praise God. All bonds of intercourse with the most high are snapped. Sometimes the dead are described as if existing in the under-world almost beneath the sway of another tyrannical power. There is a kind of personification of Death, resembling that of the Greek Hades, when it is said in Ps. 40:14 "Like sheep they are laid in Sheol; death shepherds them.""<sup>70</sup>

In a note on the above quote Kennedy further says: "In ancient literature it is hard to distinguish between a person and a personification. Animistic ideas lie deep in the naive, popular consciousness. Bousset, grouping together such passages as Isa. xxv:7f; 4 Ezra viii:53; Apoc. Bar. xxi:23; Test. Levi 18; 1 Cor. xv:26, 55, all of which treat of the destruction of death at the end, would relate the figures of thanatos, Hades (*cf.* Rev. xx:13) and the angel of Hades closely to that of the devil, finding in them personal opponents of God. (*Religion d. Judenthums*) p.241 note 3). So also Kibisch on 1 Cor. xv:20 (Esch d.p., p.162) and Titus p.200 (on sin and death in Paul). We need hardly refer to the frequency of such personifications in Greek literature"<sup>71</sup>

Thus there is justification in linking *Sin and death* in Rom. 7-8 with the law of the husband, Satan. The law of the husband is the law of Sin and is the law of Sin and Death. These are all expressions that cover Satan's covenantal authority over man who is his bride.

### **Further scholarly support.**

This perspective finds support from Sanders. Commenting on Paul's view of sin he says: "We should pay special attention to the degree to which Sin is treated by Paul as an enemy power. This is most clearly the case when the noun *hamartia*, sin, is the subject of a verb other than 'to be' as in Romans 5-7. According to Romans 5:12 Sin 'entered the world'; thereafter one reads that 'Sin may 'reign' in one's body (6:12) or 'have dominion' over one (6:14); that Sin found 'opportunity in the commandment and wrought in me all kinds of covetousness' (7:8); that it 'revived' (7:9); and that it found 'opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me' (7:11); and that it 'worked death in me through what is good' (7:13). Sin as a power may be served (6:16-18), and thus it enslaves (6:20). Put another way, Sin is a 'law' which lurks in one's members and prevents the fulfilling of the law of God (7:17-23). The only escape is to leave 'the Flesh' (8:8), the domain of Sin, by sharing Christ's death."<sup>72</sup> The only adjustment that needs to be made

<sup>70</sup> Kennedy, *Conception* 108, note 2. However Marshall, "Sins", 15 misses the significance of the personification of Sin shown when he says: "One gains the impression that Satan is just one of the causes of human sinfulness, but Paul preferred to think of sin itself as the enslaving power."

<sup>71</sup> *op cit* 108, see also Moore, *Judaism*, 2:341 and Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 292.

<sup>72</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, 35.

to this statement is that it needs to be focused on the corporate relationship rather than emphasising the individual and to emphasise that the power that Sin has is because man abandoned the true lover of his soul and entered into this adulterous relationship with Sin. In this relationship Sin exerts all the control that the covenant bestowed on the husband, Sin exploited the law of the husband to its vilest conclusion.<sup>73</sup>

### **Wider support.**

Is there any more evidence to show that there was a similar concept or experience of solidarity and covenant in pagan religious thought paralleling that which existed between Israel and Yahweh? If this understanding can be established, then it would be a natural transition for Paul to make from seeing the New Israel in eternal covenant with Yahweh and the unbelieving community to be in a similar covenant with 'the god of this age.'<sup>74</sup> It would merely be a refocusing of OT theology where Israel was in covenant with Yahweh and the nations were in covenant with their gods.

It is this concept that has been established by Smith. Writing of the condition of solidarity in the non-Jewish world he says: "The circle into which a man was born was not simply a group of kinsfolk and fellow citizens, but embraced also certain divine beings, the gods of the family and of the state, which in the ancient mind stood connected as the human members of the social circle. The relations between the gods of antiquity and their worshippers were expressed in the language of human relationship and this language was not taken in a figurative sense but with strict literality. If a god was spoken of as a father and his worshippers as his offspring the meaning was that the worshippers were literally of his stock, that he and they made up one natural family with reciprocal family duties to one another."<sup>75</sup>

This relationship between the pagans and their gods differed from Israel's relationship with Yahweh. Israel's relationship rested on Yahweh's free choice of them as His people, whereas the pagan relationship was by birth. As Oesterley and Robinson have written: "The early Israelite may have thought of Yahweh much as the Moabite thought of Chemosh but the relationship rested on a different basis. Chemosh always had been a Moabite and never could be anything else; Yahweh had existed as a God independently of Israel, and, if need be, could so exist again, or could, on the other hand, extend His interests and His influence to others than to the original Israel. The connection between God and people was not 'natural' but.....artificial."<sup>76</sup>

This solidarity, of the heathen, naturally, with their gods, and that of Israel by election with her God is paralleled in the New Testament. John emphasises the necessity of personal salvation to become a member of the covenant community.<sup>77</sup> This is because even the Jews, on account of their unbelief, are not children of God but of the devil.<sup>78</sup> This exclusion from the New Covenant, because of unbelief, can only be reversed by faith in the grace of

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<sup>73</sup> For discussion on the significance of Jesus being called the firstborn among many brothers see chapter 10 and on the language of tribulation at the end of Romans 8 see my forthcoming *Paul and the Spirit*.

<sup>74</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Religion*, 29f. Offutt, "Kinsman", 14 says that heathen women were seen to be the daughters of strange gods and goes on to discuss (p 11) the solidarity between the heathen gods and their worshippers.

<sup>76</sup> Oesterley and Robinson, *Religion*, 140

<sup>77</sup> Jn. 1:12,13

<sup>78</sup> Jn. 8:42-47

God displayed in the giving of His Son as the Paschal victim of the New Exodus.<sup>79</sup> This Johannine picture is also confirmed by Paul. The Ephesian Christians had been: “Like the rest - by nature children of wrath,”<sup>80</sup> and this was not only true of Gentiles but also of unbelieving Jews.<sup>81</sup> The early Church would find no difficulty in transferring these concepts to herself and unbelieving mankind once they had realised that they were the true Israel and inheritors of the promises of the covenant.

### **The body of Adam.**

There is one further problem that needs to be resolved to complete the argument for a corporate interpretation of the term ‘the body of Sin’. It is to explain why it is, if the evidence so far presented is correct, that Paul speaks of ‘the body of Sin’. It should be obvious that if Adam and Christ are the respective representatives, then the counterpart of ‘the body of Christ’ ought to be ‘the body of Adam’.

Scroggs<sup>82</sup> has shown that the Jews of Paul’s day were familiar with a concept known as ‘the body of Adam’, which was part of Philo’s philosophy. Scroggs argues that to avoid confusing his own ideas with those of Philo, who had already claimed the expression and used it in quite another way, Paul uses the term ‘body of Sin’ as a synonym for a term that had become adulterated. Scroggs is supported by Davies who says: “Paul accepts the traditional Rabbinic doctrine of the unity of mankind in Adam. The doctrine implied that the very constitution of the physical body of Adam and the method of formation was symbolic of the real oneness of mankind. In that one body of Adam east and west, north and south, were brought together, male and female, as we have seen. The ‘body’ of Adam included all mankind. Was it not natural, then, that Paul, when he thought of the new humanity being incorporated ‘in Christ’ should have conceived of it as the ‘body’ of the second Adam, where there was neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free.”<sup>83</sup>

Best, however, rejected Davies’ conclusions saying: “We have no direct evidence that the phrase ‘The body of Adam’ was ever used to designate mankind. Paul does not use it, nor is it to be found among the Rabbis. Paul does speak of mankind as ‘in Adam’, and with that he contrasts redeemed humanity as ‘in Christ’, but that is hardly relevant here. Indeed the very fact of this comparison in 1 Cor. 15:22 might suggest that Paul has no idea of the phrase ‘the body of Adam’, for that phrase would have suited the argument of the passage just as well, if not better. The vital connecting phrase, ‘the body of Christ’ is nowhere directly related to speculation about the First and Second Adam, and that it occurs much more widely in the Pauline Epistles than that speculation. In view of this we cannot accept the suggestion of Davies.”<sup>84</sup>

### **Further considerations.**

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<sup>79</sup> Jn. 2:25-3:16.

<sup>80</sup> Eph. 2:3.

<sup>81</sup> 1 Thess. 2:14-16.

<sup>82</sup> Scroggs, *Adam*, 15.

<sup>83</sup> Davies, *Rabbinic*, 57.

<sup>84</sup> Best, *Body*, 92.

In addition to Best's argument I would add two further points. First, there is absolutely no suggestion that Paul is avoiding the use of 'the body of Adam'. Elsewhere, when Paul sees vocabulary and concepts being misused he strips it of its pretence and then puts forward the truth, as he sees it in Christ. This is so whether it is the Colossian heresy he is exposing or the misuse of the law that is leading the Galatians back into bondage. There is no hint whatever in his argument that Paul means anything other than 'the body of Sin'. Secondly, the insistence Paul lays upon the significance of death to Sin<sup>85</sup> makes it difficult to substitute 'Adam' for 'Sin'. It becomes even more difficult to maintain this hypothesis when 6:10 is reinterpreted from 'the death he died he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives unto God' to 'the death he died he died to Adam once for all.' Clearly such a reinterpretation suggests concepts that will be difficult to accommodate consistently in any system of interpretation. Furthermore, Paul never attempts to introduce Adam into his argument once his representative role in the fall is dealt with in chapter 5. He is thoroughly consistent in speaking of Sin as the enemy, personifying Sin<sup>86</sup> in chapter 6 so that it opposes not Christ, but God Himself.<sup>87</sup>

### **Pauline inconsistency?**

How, then, can the relationship be with Sin? Can Paul's rationale be discovered, or is there no overall system of theology that Paul draws on? Munck<sup>88</sup> argues that Paul never had a systematised theology, but says that he developed his theology in an *ad hoc* manner in the context of his evangelistic and pastoral work, writing both for advice and for teaching as the need arose. For Munck it is foolish to systematise Paul's reasoning. It can only be understood in the context of the situation in which it was written and as an example of the further development of Paul's thought.

In response to Munck I would suggest that it is only reasonable to assume that Paul is inconsistent in his theology if clear examples can be given to substantiate such a position. I am aware of those who have made such claims and must limit myself briefly to replying to this position. I believe such conclusions are questionable because they have almost invariably begun from the perspective of Paul adapting his message to the Gentiles. They are also the product of highly individualistic interpretations. I consider that it has been demonstrated that such a reconstruction never took place and that the corporate perspectives have at least to be considered. Finally, I have sought to show that the New Exodus model existed and that it was from this OT type that the theology of Paul, and indeed of Jesus and the whole church' came.

Also, it seems quite inconceivable that a man of Paul's intellectual calibre should be so haphazard as to be indifferent to these alleged inconsistencies. At Paul's instruction, his letters were being passed around the churches.<sup>89</sup> Was he not concerned for consistency? Surely he would know that self-

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<sup>85</sup> Rom. 6:2, 6, 10.

<sup>86</sup> For synonyms of Satan see note 46.

<sup>87</sup> Rom. 6:11,13,14, 23.

<sup>88</sup> "His theology arises from his work as an apostle and directly serves that work- the solution is no coherent theory." Munck, *Paul*, 67. For others who hold similar views of development see Dodd, *Studies*, 83-128; Raven., *St Paul*, 49f; Kennedy, *Conception*, 21; Hooker, "Use", 305; Bassler, "theology", passim; Roetzel, "Election", 233 and Moule, "Dualism", 119.

<sup>89</sup> Col. 4:16. Note also how Paul sent circular letters such as Ephesians.

contradictory statements would damage his message and authority. The readers of the first century were no less intelligent than those of the twenty first century and would have had no less concern for self-evident contradictions. The arguments of his letter to the Romans show Paul to be a man of extremely disciplined thought. His insight into the dangers of introducing alien philosophies, his insistence upon the principles of the Gospel being maintained, even against cherished Jewish ideas,<sup>90</sup> all serve to show that we are dealing with the writings of a man both of outstanding intellect and also with a burning zeal for the Gospel he preached. Is it reasonable to suggest that Paul was cavalier about the message he preached and how it held together?

To return to our investigation - why does Paul speak of 'the body of Sin', and how does he understand this concept?

### **The limits to Christ's rule.**

What has been lacking from the discussion on this topic so far is a realisation that Jesus Christ is only the mediator of the New Covenant, and not the benefactor Himself.<sup>91</sup> In other words, the Church's ultimate relationship is not with Christ, but with God Himself through Christ. Paul expresses this fact clearly when he says: "The end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he 'has put everything under his feet'. Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."<sup>92</sup>

The Son here is clearly spoken of as the Messianic figure who was promised to Israel and who would rule creation, as is shown by the quotation from Ps. 8. As the representative of God amongst men, Christ has secured for his brethren all the Redeemer<sup>93</sup> of the Old Testament was responsible for. Christ has emancipated his people from Sin and its power, and having fulfilled all his various roles as the Redeemer, he completes his work, yielding the kingdom up to God the Father. From now on, Christ's position will no longer be Messiah/Mediator, but he resumes his eternal position with the Father, and the mystery of the Godhead is then complete.

Dodd<sup>94</sup> noted that both Matthew and Paul distinguish between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of God. He said: "Both assign a special place in the eschatological scheme to the Kingdom of Christ, as in some sense distinct from the kingdom of God." He went on to say: "When this final conquest is completed, then the Son will be subject to Him, who subjected all else to Him, that God may be all in all. Such, we may take it, is the Kingdom of God in its final consummation. The Kingdom of Christ is some sort of stage towards that consummation."

Bruce came to a similar conclusion, when commenting on 1 Cor. 15:24-28 he

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<sup>90</sup> Gal. 6:15.

<sup>91</sup> 1Tim. 2:5.

<sup>92</sup> 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

<sup>93</sup> See chapter 10 for a discussion of why Jesus is never called the redeemer in the NT.

<sup>94</sup> Dodd, *Studies*, 54, see also Hamilton, *Eschatology*, 21-2.

said: “The Kingdom of Christ comes to an end in its present phase, but only to merge in the eternal Kingdom of God, so there is no failure of the prophetic promise that the Messiah’s Kingdom will know no end (Isa. 9:7; Lk. 1:35). His mediatorial Kingship is the means for the consummation of the Kingdom of God, which is inaugurated by his work on earth.”<sup>95</sup> Beyond the statement of Paul we cannot go, for it would be speculation.

### **Ultimate relationships.**

What bearing does this have on the concept of ‘the body of Sin’? It is surely this: Just as the ultimate relationship of the redeemed is not with Christ, but is with the Father Himself, so the ultimate relationship of unredeemed humanity is not with Adam, the mediator, but with Sin. The reason Paul contrasts ‘the body of Christ’ with ‘the body of Sin’ is because Adam’s work is completed and Sin has all things subjected to himself. Thus Satan could tempt Christ offering him the kingdoms of this world. Christ’s work is not yet completed. He has yet to subject all things to the Father. ‘The body of Christ’ will cease when the Kingdom of Christ is incorporated into the Kingdom of God. The body of Adam has ceased; indeed it did so even before the human family began to multiply, because that kingdom was already the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13) under Satan’s rule. It is ‘the body of Sin’

### **Conclusion**

I have sought to understand what Paul meant by the term ‘the body of Sin’. The research has led me to conclude that the concept is not individualistic, as is so often held, but is corporate, speaking of the state of unredeemed humanity in its relationship to Satan (Sin). This conclusion is supported by the context of the argument in Rom. 6 as it develops from the description of two communities described in the earlier chapter. It also finds support from those who have concluded that Pauline anthropology is Hebraic rather than Hellenistic as well as by a consideration of the way the accompanying expression ‘our old man’ is elsewhere used. This latter expression is always used with a corporate meaning as a contrast to the expression ‘the new man’ which is a description of the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Furthermore, the likely origin of this concept is Isa. 28. This was a chapter widely cited in the NT, a fact which suggests that its fuller significance for the doctrine of salvation was widely known.

Once again we have found that the model that Paul has been following is that of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. In that historical deliverance Israel was redeemed through the death of a representative, her firstborn. By their death, admittedly avoided by the substitution of a lamb, her covenant with Egypt and her gods was terminated and a new life under the headship of Moses began.

The covenantal bondage man is in through his union with Adam demonstrates the need for the death of one who can act on his behalf, for it is only through death that such relationships can be severed.<sup>96</sup> Thus, in Christ’s death, there is not only a dealing with the guilt of sin and its consequences, but also the severing of the relationship with Sin,<sup>97</sup> in which unregenerate mankind is

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<sup>95</sup> Bruce, *Corinthians*, 147

<sup>96</sup> Rom. 7:1-4. For a fuller discussion see chapter 9 and my forthcoming commentary on *Romans*.

<sup>97</sup> The severing does not deliver all from the Kingdom of darkness, only those who have Christ as their last

involved. It is an experience that encompasses the individual, but is much more than solitary salvation. It is the deliverance of the community by the covenantal annulling effect of death, the death of the last Adam.<sup>98</sup> Having been delivered from membership of 'the body of Sin' the Church has been brought into union with a new head and made to be the members of a new body, 'the body of Christ'.

Once again, we have seen Paul's thinking, in this case, on the subject of the Church, to be completely Semitic. He has not Hellenised his message but clearly expected the Gentile seekers after God to become acquainted with Biblical redemptive history. We have further demonstrated that the Hellenized Paul is not the Paul of the NT. Thus, the Paul of the NT continued to think and live in the theological expectations of Old Testament redemptive history and thinks in the same framework as did his Lord and Saviour.

### Consequences

The rediscovery of the corporate thinking of Paul has a number of important consequences for theological study. They are as follows:

1. It establishes the essentially Jewishness of Paul's thought and the error of interpreting him from a Hellenistic framework.
2. Out of 1. It follows that the body is not in some way the bearer of sin nor is sin a deformation that is biologically inherited as some have even suggested. Being in Sin is nothing less than being in Adam. It is relation rather than legal, even though ultimately it has to have some sort of legal framework when it is being described. It depends what community a man or a woman belongs to as to whether they are righteous or sinners in the Biblical pattern of thinking.
3. It demonstrates that Paul begins his theology with the community and not the individual. There has been a fundamental error in traditional methods of exegesis in which the NT text especially has been interpreted as though it spoke of the experience of the individual believer. We have found that this is a mistake of massive proportions which has left Christianity with an enormous emphasis on the individual with hardly any texts to support its doctrine of the church. In the reading of the text that I am proposing, we find that Paul began with the church and then provided a few texts to direct us as to how the teaching applied to the individual. This reverses the whole perspective and by this method we have a strong doctrine of the church which becomes the basis of understanding the doctrine of individual application.
4. Appreciating that the body is not the seat of sin as the traditional interpretation of the 'body of sin' suggests, it allows us to realise that our humanity is God given, even in its fallen condition. There ought not to be any shame in being human, nor in what such reality implies. It ought to help us to recognise that there are many natural emotions and desires that in themselves are not sinful and need no repentance, it is only their misuse

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Adam, so Rom. 5:17. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:297-8 acknowledged that in Christ's death there is the breaking of Sin's power. He said "Christ's death is not merely a sacrifice which cancels the guilt of sin (i.e. the punishment contracted by sinning) but is also the means of release from the powers of this age: Law, Sin and Death." Bultmann sees the deliverance bound up in the believers' involvement in Christ's death, but does not see that the power of law (the law of the Husband (Satan) Sin and Death, all synonymous with Satan) due to the covenant. Christ's death annuls for his people. Bultmann instead placed his exegesis in the context of the mystery religions. See also Wiles, *Remaking*, 66.

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For problems concerning Yahweh committing adultery see Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:672 note 259.

that requires such action.

5. It helps us to realise the solidarity man has with God's creation and that the remnant community is not to reject the world as being somehow evil. Rather, this world is still God's world, and he continues to value it and care for it. Christ died not only for man but for the whole cosmic order, to redeem it and restore it to its former glory.
6. It demonstrates the nature of Paul's doctrine of Sin. Paul sees that behind the conflict and alienation that man experiences is a whole universal order of rebellion. Man is at the centre of this struggle as a result of being made in God's image. Satan, the one who has sought the establishment of a different kingdom from that which God rules, has taken man, and all that which he was made responsible for through creation, into bondage in the kingdom of darkness. The redemption of Christ is about the deliverance of man and 'nature' from this alienation and death.