

ADAM IN THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

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Some years ago Professor C.K. Barrett of Durham University wrote a little book with the provocative title *From First Adam to Last*.¹ Like all Barrett's contributions, this book is highly suggestive and very thoughtful. If in the course of this paper I find myself taking issue with him on one or two fundamental points, I must first applaud the insight he manifested even in the title he selected; for a major strand of Pauline theology traces the relationships between first Adam and second Adam — between that Adam who, at the head of humanity, introduced sin and death into the race, and that Adam who, at the head of a new humanity, introduced life, righteousness, and resurrection power to the race.

Adam is explicitly mentioned in only four passages of the Pauline *corpus*; but he lurks behind several major themes, even when his name fails to appear. This paper cannot hope to explore these passages and themes in detail, still less to trace out with rigour their place both in Pauline theology and in contemporary debate. Its scope is much more modest: *viz.*, to sketch in some basic things about Adam which Paul must believe to be true if his own theology is to be judged coherent.

II

I come, first, to the passages where Adam is explicitly named; and I shall treat them in the order in which they were written.

A. I Cor. 15:20f.:

(20) But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (27) For he 'has put everything under his feet' (NIV — as are all the biblical quotations in this paper).

The thrust of these verses is clear enough. Paul has been arguing for the reality of the resurrection at the end of the age. His first point, occupying 15:1–11, is that the denial of the reality of any resurrection entails the denial of Jesus' resurrection. But Jesus' resurrection, Paul says, stands so much at the heart of the gospel that without it there is no gospel. To deny Jesus has risen from the dead is to affirm that Christian faith is futile, and therefore that we continue in our sins, without forgiveness and without hope. The Corinthians, Paul believes, will not go that far. He therefore attempts to lead them to the truth of the resurrection at the end of the age by pointing them afresh to the reality of Christ's resurrection in history.

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead (15:20): the evidence, Paul holds, is incontrovertible. But what is entailed by the resurrection of Jesus? The answer, Paul says, is that the resurrection of Christ's people must take place too, as surely as the full harvest follows hard after the ingathering of the firstfruits. Christ himself, in his resurrection, is the firstfruits of the full harvest; and that full harvest is the resurrection of all who have fallen asleep (an expression by which Paul here refers to those who have died in Christ, as is made clear by the closing words of v.23, 'those who belong to him').

Christ's place as the beginning point of resurrection life is made still clearer by comparing him with Adam. Death came through a man; the

resurrection of the dead comes through a man (15:21). As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (15:22).² In both cases, there is progression from firstfruits to full harvest: 'each in his own turn' (15:23). What this means is that Christ's resurrection is the harbinger of the resurrection of those who belong to him, to occur when Jesus himself comes again (15:23). This is a necessary part of Christ's triumph; for death itself, the last enemy, must be forever destroyed (15:26). It is by this means that man, as the renewed humanity in Jesus Christ, will rise to the exalted place in the created order that would have remained his heritage had there been no fall (15:29).³

The outline of Paul's argument, then, is clear enough; and there is little doubt that Paul treats Adam 'as a historical character', as one commentator puts it.⁴ Yet at this juncture most commentators balk. One tells us, 'The sentence, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22, cf. Rom. 5:14ff.) means that mankind which has lost its real life through sin is *typified by Adam*'. (emphasis mine)⁵ On the basis of the parallels between this passage and Romans 5, Barrett argues:

Such is the solidarity of the human race that the sin of its first father constituted the mass of mankind as sinners (Rom.v.19), not in that it made them, independently of their own will, morally bad men, but in that it introduced them into a society which was as a whole alienated from God. The present passage is less explicit, but can be — and in the absence of evidence to the contrary should be — understood along similar lines. *By man* and *in Adam* (Adam is a Hebrew word that means *man*), that is, as members of the human race which has departed from its original vocation in God's intention, all men inherit death as their destiny. This statement (though Paul would not have been interested in the fact) involves no assumption about the historicity of Adam.⁶

This judgment could be multiplied many times in other writers.

There are several features in the text which militate against this de-historicizing (or perhaps a-historicizing) of Adam:

1. The ambiguity in v.21 — should we translate the Greek by 'death came through man' or by 'death came through a man'⁷ — is merely formal. All agree that Paul says that both death and resurrection of the dead come about by human means. I Corinthians does not stand alone in supporting this idea: the Epistle to the Hebrews equally insists that it is necessary and fitting that the power of death be broken by a man. The question, however, is whether the phrase 'by a man' or 'by man' must mean 'by some individual man' or simply 'by mankind'. Barrett comments, 'Sin and death, traced back by Paul to Adam, are a description of humanity as it empirically is. For this reason the historicity of Adam is unimportant. In other words, Barrett takes the first half of v.21 to read, in effect, 'death came through man (empirically)' rather than 'death came through a man'. This, however, creates a difficulty in the second half of the verse; for no Christian could complete the parallelism by saying, 'the

resurrection of the dead comes through man (i.e. empirically or generically)'. Rather, it comes through *a* man, *one* man, the man Christ Jesus. Barrett avoids the unfortunate conclusion by arguing the two parts of the verse are not strictly parallel:

It is impossible to draw the parallel conclusion that the historicity of Christ is equally unimportant (as he has just affirmed the historicity of Adam to be). The significance of Christ is that of impingement upon a historical sequence of sin and death. Sin and death (to change the metaphor) are in the possession of the field, and if they are to be driven from it this must be by the arrival of new forces which turn the scale of the battle, that is, by a new event.⁹

This really will not do; for the point of the argument is *not* simply that Christ has introduced a new historical factor into the *status quo* of universal sin, but that just as all death can trace its roots back to one man, so all resurrection from the dead can trace its roots back to one man. Contextually, Paul's argument for the resurrection of Christ's people depends on the resurrection of Christ; and the structure of this resurrection argument depends on the parallel structure, viz: that all participate in death because of the introduction by Adam of death as a kind of firstfruits. The ambiguity of the Greek, therefore, is merely formal; the argument of the context requires an individual at the head of both lines, the line of death and the line of the resurrection of the dead.

2. Similarly, explicit mention of Adam in v.22 argues for a historical person. It does not help to point out that *Adam* in Hebrew means *man*; for (a) even in the Hebrew Old Testament, one can *usually* distinguish in Gen. 1–3 between Adam *qua* man (generically) and Adam *qua* first individual man; (b) the New Testament was written in Greek, not Hebrew; and so if Paul had wanted to say *man* generically he would have been better off using Greek *anthrōpos*, rather than referring to the name of the first human being, a name which Greek-speaking Gentiles in Corinth would certainly recognize as belonging to the first human being; (c) the parallel between 'Adam' and 'Christ', two individuals, needs to be preserved as much in this verse as in the preceding one.

3. The reference to death as the last enemy to be destroyed (v.26) almost certainly casts a backward glance at the introduction of death into the race effected by the disobedience of our first parent (Gen. 3).

4. The first part of v.27 ('For he "has put everything under his feet."') is a direct quote from Ps. 8:6, which in turn reflects the creation narrative of Gen. 1:26–30. In both Gen. 1 and Ps. 8, it is man who is vested with authority over all things. But Paul, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:5ff), applies the language to Christ as the last Adam, who retrieves the situation lost by the first Adam.¹⁰ This backward glance is entirely lost if Paul is unconcerned about the historicity of Adam, and the historical reality of man's pre-fall condition.

B. I Cor. 15:44b–49:

(44b) *If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (45) So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (46) The spiritual did not come first, but the natural and after that the spiritual. (47) The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. (48) As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. (49) And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

In verses 35–44, Paul has been discussing the nature of the resurrection body. By analogy with the rich diversity with which God has endowed the natural order, Paul expects a different kind of body to result from the resurrection. Our present body is 'natural' (*psychikon*) — i.e., the reference is to our bodies as presently constituted and animated by soul (*psychē*). The body to which we look forward is categorized as 'spiritual' (*pneumatikon*): this is the new body with which we shall be clothed at the resurrection (assuming we die before Christ's return), a body which is animated by God's Spirit (*pneuma*).

In developing the argument further in the verses at hand (15:44b–49) — a development I cannot here trace in detail — Paul returns to his Adam/Christ contrast. The first Adam, Paul says, became a 'living being' (*psychēn zōsan* — the same word-group used for 'being' stands behind 'natural'). He is of the dust of the earth. The second man (15:47) or last Adam (15:45), as he is variously called, is of heaven; and he is a 'life-giving spirit' (*pneuma zōopoion*: again the word 'spirit' crops up). This last expression, life-giving spirit, is not meant to suggest that Jesus' resurrection form was not physical or that it could not be perceived by physical means. Quite the contrary: Paul has already insisted on the physical reality of Jesus' appearances (9:1; 15:1–11), and elsewhere speaks of Christ's 'glorious body' (Phil. 3:21 — not 'spirit'). The point is that Jesus' present glorified bodily existence is of another order than our bodily existence. His existence is so caught up with the Spirit that he shares the Spirit's life-giving power.¹¹

The question that concerns us at this juncture is whether Paul's argument entails a *historical* Adam, I do not ask simply if Paul *believed* in a historical Adam: there is little doubt about that. But someone might argue that Paul's belief regarding the historicity of Adam is irrelevant to his own argument. Adam might stand as a mythological construct which, to modern readers, finds its appropriate equivalent in some notion such as 'humanity bound by mortality' or the like. Will the text allow such a view? Several features argue a strong negative:

1. The Adam/Christ contrast found earlier in the chapter requires a historical Adam; and it is difficult to think that Paul has changed to some other perspective when in the same context he returns to this contrast

here. This does not prove that Paul's argument in 15:44–49 *requires* a historical Adam; but it ought to make us about jettisoning the idea too quickly.

2. When Paul in 15:45a cites Gen. 2:7, he inserts the words 'first' and 'Adam'. These additions make it clear that Paul does not intend to refer to man generally, but to one specific man, the first one, Adam by name.¹² It is on this basis that Paul can refer to a second man, a last Adam, as an individual figure. The argument is greatly weakened if the first Adam may be construed as a reference to all humanity; for the last Adam *must* be an individual and not a reference to the new humanity, since the last Adam has become a *life-giving* (not a *life-receiving*) spirit. Only about Jesus Christ, the individual Jesus Christ, could this be said. Moreover, Paul says that '*we have borne* the likeness of the earthly man' (15:49), not that *we are* the earthly man; and in the same way *we shall bear* the likeness of the man from heaven, which clearly cannot mean *we are* the man from heaven. The language is reminiscent of the 'in Adam'/'in Christ' contrast of 15:21.¹³ Clearly, neither Adam nor Christ is here presented in a purely private capacity. Both function as representative heads, the one of the earthly humanity, the other of the heavenly humanity; and it is difficult to perceive exactly what Paul could be saying if this parallelism is destroyed. The cogency of his argument for a resurrection body of a nature like Christ's resurrection body is destroyed if there is no representative entailment from Christ to us; and there is no reason to think such entailment must exist unless the historical representative entailment from Adam to us also exists.

3. We may put this in a slightly different fashion. As Ridderbos writes, 'The anthropological contrast is anchored in the redemptive-historical.'¹⁴ The 'natural' mode of existence which springs from participation in Adam is succeeded by the 'spiritual' mode of existence which springs from participation in Christ. But Christ in this passage appears *not* as an a-temporal parallel to Adam, but as the *later* figure, the *eschatological* figure, the *antitypical* figure, the figure who comes in fulfilment. Such categories are meaningful only if the first figure is a *figure in history*. One cannot fail to be reminded of the argument of II Peter 3:1–7. There we are told that those who scoff at the prospect of the second coming have two historical examples of God's cataclysmic intervention to stand as witnesses to what God can do — *viz.*, the creation and the flood. But to a generation which disbelieves heartily in both of these historical events, which God has designed at least in part to serve as pointers to the far great cataclysm of the second coming, what can we possibly offer by way of assurance that Christ's coming will not be forever delayed? In the same way, we may ask ourselves: To a generation which disbelieves in the historicity of the individual Adam who stands as representative of the race and who introduced both death and a certain kind of body into that race, a man designed by God to serve, at least in part, as a pointer to the second Adam who brings a new, 'spiritual' body and escape from death, what can we possibly offer by way of assurance that there is reality to these promises and not just pious talk?¹⁵

C. Romans 5:12–21 (only vv.12–19 cited):

(12) *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned – (13) for before the law was given sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.*

(15) *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (16) Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. (17) For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

(18) *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. (19) For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

These verses are among the most disputed passages in the Pauline *corpus*. Unfortunately, even a cursory exposition is beyond the scope of this paper. On a number of debatable points, I must simply indicate where I believe the truth of the matter lies; and then I shall draw attention, rather briefly, to a number of features which demonstrate the seriousness with which Paul treats the historicity of Adam.

Rom. 5:12–21 is concerned to draw out comparisons and contrasts between Adam and Christ. These comparisons and contrasts do not have so much to do with the *natures* of Christ and Adam, as with their representative *acts*.¹⁶ Adam's one *act* of trespass resulted in condemnation for all; Christ's one *act* of righteousness resulted in the many being made righteous (5:19). The *comparison* lies primarily in the fact that *one* act in each case affected *many*; the *contrast* lies primarily in the twin facts that (a) the two acts are polar extremes (one is an act of disobedience, the other of obedience) and that (b) by contrast with the squalid result of universal death resulting from Adam's sin, there is a superfluity of life and righteousness resulting from God's abundant provision in Christ's act of obedience.

If we ask in what way Adam's one act of disobedience resulted in the further statement, that 'all sinned', we may note five commonly held positions.¹⁷

(1) Some deny any causal connection, logical or natural, between Adam's sin and the sin of the race. The connection belongs exclusively to the divine decree: God decided that if Adam sinned, all men would sin. Perhaps the greatest weakness of this view is that it cannot explain vv.18–19, which insist Adam's one act of disobedience *constituted* all men sinners.

(2) A second theory, associated with the name of Pelagius, holds that Adam introduced sin into the world, into the environment as it were; and, once present, it is inevitable that men who breathe this environment will sin on their own. Only their own sin, not Adam's, brings them to death; Adam's sin serves as no more than the means of sin's entry.¹⁸ This theory runs against the insistence of vv.15–19 that one sin and one sin only is the cause of the death of everyone in the race. Moreover, one might ask if v.14 is easily patient of this interpretation, since Paul there seems to say that people died from Adam to Moses *not* on the basis of their own trespass but on the basis of their participation in Adam's sin.¹⁹

(3) A third theory argues that what is passed on from Adam is a hereditary depravity. It is not one particular sin's guilt which is transmitted, but a fallen nature, passed on seminally. This means we are not guilty of Adam's sin,²⁰ but we have inherited Adam's fallen nature. The greatest obstacle to this view is the stubborn fact that vv.15–19 speak of the condemnation effected by one *trespass*, not by the results of hereditary depravity. Moreover, none of these first three views adequately handles the parallel between the one act of Adam and the one act of Christ.

(4) Another major theory (usually labelled the 'realist' view) argues that, because all human beings were at one time quite literally 'in' Adam (inasmuch as he is the progenitor of all), therefore in a very real sense they all did in fact that first sin in him, and share in the condemnation which came upon him.²¹ This position does justice to the language of Rom. 5:12–21 and coheres with at least one interpretation of two other crucial passages;²² but in my view it does not adequately explain the fact that no individual is responsible for *all* the sins of his forebears up to the point of procreation of the next link in the organic line which ultimately produced him. In some sense, therefore, even those who hold the realist position must limit what is passed on to the first sin of the first parent; and in so doing they implicitly adopt 'federalist' notions (to which I am about to turn) at some level. Moreover, the parallel between Adam and Christ is again threatened, inasmuch as believers would not be in Christ in any way analogous to the manner in which they are in Adam; for whatever *en Christo* ('in Christ') means in the New Testament, it does not mean that we are *seminally* in Christ.

(5) The final theory, labelled 'federal', boasts two different stances, one which argues for mediate imputation and the other for immediate imputation.²³ Of the two, the latter is far stronger; but the distinction need not detain us here. I may summarize the federal view in the words of S. Lewis Johnson:

(The) Scriptures set forth Adam as the natural and representative head of his posterity. The promises of dominion were given not only to Adam, but to the race, as the unfolding of the Word of God indicates. The threats given to Adam were threats for the race, and the consequences of his sin fully support that. These threats have been realised in *penal* evils that affect the whole race. So, just as the act of the Last Adam is a representative act, becoming a judicial ground of the justification of the believers, it follows that the act of the first Adam is a representative act, becoming the judicial ground of those united to him.²⁴ Among the many reasons for adopting this view is the fact that it is the only one which adequately explains the connection between verses 12 and 13–14.²⁵

With this rather sketchy background in mind, the following observations bear directly on Paul's understanding of Adam:

1. The first and second of these five interpretations are little affected if Adam is not a figure of history; the last three are utterly dependent on Adam's historicity. But in my view, only the last three have any hope of being exegetically defended, with rigour and with care. For various reasons, I opt for the final one as the least difficult explanation of Paul's meaning; but I see little possibility of satisfactorily defending either of the first two. If that is so, then not only must we conclude that Paul himself believed in the historicity of Adam,²⁶ but that the structure of his argument *requires* the historicity of Adam. In other words, for Paul Adam is more than an optional extra, a mythological accretion which may be excised without loss. Far from it: Paul so tightly relates the saving cross-work of Christ to the significance of historical Adam that it is difficult to see how one can preserve the former if the latter is jettisoned.
2. Paul's reference to the time period from Adam to Moses (5:13–14) certainly presupposes a historical figure (i.e. Adam) at the beginning of the period, corresponding to a historical figure at the end of the period (Moses).²⁷ Moreover, this period in world history is not simply an abstract, bounded, temporal entity — we are not dealing with a 'time' in the abstract; rather, this period is portrayed as a time during which (a) the 'law' (of Moses) had not yet been given; (b) sin was in the world; and (c) death reigned. This threefold description can only refer to the Old Testament period stretching from the fall of Adam to the giving of the law to Moses; and it treats the period as real history inasmuch as *all die* within it.
3. Not only does Rom. 5:12–14 lay considerable emphasis on the one sin, one trespass or one act of disobedience which brought ruin to the race; but implicitly the argument depends on the notion that before that one act of disobedience there was no sin in the race. This accords very well with Gen. 1–3; it cannot be made to cohere with any evolutionary perspective which denies the centrality of a fall in space-time history.
4. Adam is portrayed as the 'type' (*tupos*, NIV 'pattern', 5:14) of one to come. The relationship between type and antitype in the Scriptures is complex; but Ellis correctly insists that New Testament typology cannot be thought of apart from God's saving activity in *redemptive history*, as determined by God's definite *plan of redemption* which is moving toward

a predetermined goal from a specific point of beginning.²⁸ As Versteeg comments, 'Thus a type always stands at a particular moment in the history of redemption and points away to another (later) moment in the same history. . . . To speak about a type is to speak about the fulfilment of the old dispensation through the new.'²⁹

5. Adam is not portrayed as the *first* sinner, of which other sinners are later copies; but as the *representative* sinner, whose first sin affected the race. This distinction is crucial if the parallel between Adam and Jesus is to be maintained; for Jesus is certainly not portrayed as the *first* man to perform some definitive righteous act, but as the *representative* man whose definitive righteous act affects those who are in him. Preserve this parallel between Adam and Christ, and the historicity of Adam cannot simply be *pro forma*, as far as Paul is concerned. This observation is related to the typology question:

In Christ God maintains in sovereign faithfulness the structure of 'all through one' which he put into effect with Adam. In Christ God also causes this structure to reach its richest fulfilment. Just in this way Adam is a type of Christ.³⁰

D. 1 Timothy 2:11 – 14

(11) A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. (12) I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent. (13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (14) And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

With the rise of the modern phase of the woman's liberation movement, these verses have become the focus of considerable controversy. I have neither the space nor the desire to enter the lists on this subject at the moment; but perhaps I should say that, out of a very large bibliography, the most satisfying treatments, from an exegetical point of view, are those of Douglas J. Moo³¹ and James B. Hurley.³²

Whatever the precise nature of the role restriction imposed on women in this passage, and however it is to be applied today, the text establishes it on two bases: (1) Adam was formed before Eve; and (2) the woman was deceived and became a sinner.

The first, that Adam was formed before Eve, is not simply an appeal to temporal priority in the abstract — after all, pigs were formed before either of them — but is a clear reference to the second creation account (Gen. 2). If Gen. 1 speaks of the creation of man generically, Gen. 2 speaks of the creation of man and woman separately; and in the latter context, it is made clear that woman was created second, to be a help suitable for the man, or a help corresponding to him. Paul's point, then, is that 'the role of women in the worship service should be in accord with the subordinate, helping role envisaged for them in creation.'³³ The second basis, that the woman was deceived and became a sinner, is patient of two or three explanations; but all of them depend on Gen. 3.

What must be pointed out is that Paul's argument has no force if it is taken to be a mere illustration drawn from mythological sources. Even in the highest sense of 'myth', in which the 'myth' somehow pictures general truths, it is not obvious what general truths are being expounded. Is it an obvious general truth that males were created before females? Or that females are intrinsically more susceptible to deception? Some might wish to argue along such lines, I suppose; but such argument is becoming increasingly difficult (to say the least) in the contemporary climate. In fact, Paul can be so unbending on the restrictions he lays down in this passage ('I do not permit,' v.12) precisely because his appeal is to history made known through revelation. If there were no Adam and Eve at the head of the race, no fall, no creation narratives as recorded in Gen. 1–3, Paul's argument would simply not hold up: its basis would have been destroyed. The same must be said for an approach to Gen. 1–3 which understands the creation narratives as 'true', but in the genre of purely non-historical myth. Whatever metaphors and figures Gen. 1–3 employs, Paul's argument has no force if there is no space-time Adam and Eve at the head of the race, and no space-time fall. Moreover, those who dislike the Apostle's restrictions must come to grips with the fact that he makes direct appeal not only to the fall (at least some of the effects of which have been done away by Christ, even if not all of them at this point in history) but to the ordering of creation itself.

III

These are the passages where Paul makes explicit reference to Adam. But there are other passages in the New Testament, outside the Pauline *corpus*, where explicit reference is made to Adam (notably Luke 3:38; Jude 14); and still others in which a historical Adam is presupposed, even if not named (e.g. Matt. 19:4–5; Acts 17:26). In the Pauline *corpus*, too, there are thematic structures which presuppose a historical Adam; and I propose now to enumerate a handful of them.

First, Adam lurks behind several Pauline passages which deal with the fall. Morna Hooker is right when she points out that in Rom. 1:25 Paul does not say

that by a process of deduction men have come to a knowledge of God; what he *does* say is that from the very beginning God has clearly manifested the truth to them. In other words, he is speaking of a definite divine revelation which men have rejected, not a knowledge of God to which men have by their reasoning attained.³⁴

In other words, 'Paul's account of man's wickedness has been deliberately stated in terms of the Biblical narrative of Adam's fall.'³⁵ The loss of glory by Adam's rebellion, and the restoration of that glory by Jesus Christ, who is the image of God in a deeper sense than even Adam himself, lies behind II Cor. 4:4–6.³⁶ If the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and if nature itself is in bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:20–21), what can be behind this except Gen. 3?³⁷

Second, Adam does not stand far behind the 'old man'/'new man' language used by Paul. If such passages as Gal. 6:15; II Cor. 3:18; 5:17; Rom. 6:6; Col. 3:9–11, *etc.*, look in part to Old Testament promises like Isa. 65:17–25, they look farther back yet to the first creation. This is a commonplace among those who study Pauline theology.³⁸

Third, there are brief allusions of various sorts in which the historicity of Adam is not entailed, yet in which there is at least some glance at the Genesis accounts of creation and fall. To give but one example: Barrett rightly points out that the man of lawlessness in II Thess. 2, who regards himself as God, is patterned upon the oracle regarding the Prince of Tyre in Ezek. 28; but the next step back, Barrett rightly says, is Adam in Gen. 3:

Adam, led on by his wife and through her seduced by Satan, succumbs to the temptation, 'You shall be like God' (Gen.iii.5). In other words, as he takes the forbidden fruit he is in effect saying, like the Prince of Tyre, I am God — or, at least, I am as God, I am equal to God; whereas in fact he is man.³⁹

These are but three of the ways in which Paul picks up the account of Adam provided by the book of Genesis, and uses it to develop his own themes, without explicitly mentioning our first parent by name.

IV

It is time to draw some of these strands together, and suggest a few lessons to be learned from this rather sketchy survey of Paul's treatment of Adam. I suggest that only four major approaches to the question of the historicity of Adam in the epistles of Paul are possible; and they are not entirely mutually exclusive:

1. The first denies the possibility of establishing any sort of systematic theology which uses the Bible as the given data base. The person who holds this position is therefore forced to pick and choose what biblical material he will incorporate into his system. He utilizes *extra*-biblical criteria, acknowledged or not, to filter out the biblical bits he does not want, and ends up with a truncated canon. I have dealt with this problem elsewhere,⁴⁰ and prefer not to return to it again. It is perhaps enough to marvel at the diversity of canons produced by this means.

2. The second approach accepts the Bible as the canon, but interprets it in such a way that certain parts of it must be understood mythologically, even though there is little evidence that the biblical writers themselves understood the parts in question the same way. A very wide spectrum of views can exist under this category; and one must be very careful about being too harsh or rigid toward those positions one may feel compelled to judge essentially unbiblical or at least sub-biblical. It should at least be clear that one's view of Adam's historicity is necessarily related to one's understanding of several other things: Paul's treatment of creation and its pre-fall goodness; salvation history and its sweep under God's

sovereignty; the plan of redemption and the unique place of Christ within it; and much more. The implications of Paul's treatment of Adam have been briefly drawn out by Versteeg,⁴¹ and need not be repeated here; but it must be strongly insisted that the more Gen. 1–3 is relegated to the vague category of 'myth', the more difficult it becomes to preserve the robust teaching of the Apostle himself. To her credit, Morna D. Hooker⁴² recognizes this problem and addresses it directly:

Adam and Christ may represent two contrasting humanities, two modes of life, but the two figures who represent them are an ill-balanced pair – the one mythical, the other historical. And here I come to my . . . problem – which is that the whole scheme of redemption, as Paul understands it, is set against an eschatological backcloth, which made sense to him but no longer makes sense to me.⁴³

Hooker similarly finds problems at the other end, with Pauline eschatology; and this prompts her to ask, 'And if we demythologize each end of Paul's understanding of salvation history, the Fall and the Restoration – what happens to the turning-point in the middle, which is focussed on the figure of Christ?'⁴⁴ What, indeed? Her not entirely unambiguous answer seems to be that she is prepared to adopt the *realized* part of Pauline eschatology, but neither the beginning nor the end of Paul's construction of salvation history. I marvel at her ability, under these circumstances, to maintain the middle of the salvation-historical line. But it must be stated, as forcefully as possible, that there are millions and millions of modern Christians, of every continent, race and intellectual stature, who do *not* think there are sufficient reasons for no longer holding to a historical Adam and an apocalyptic *parousia*. The problem, I contend, belongs neither to the age, nor to science, nor to theology, but to certain scientists, to certain spirits of the age, and to certain theologians. A more radical thinker, such as Rudolf Bultmann, would jettison as incredible to the modern mind not a few notions which Hooker, I suspect, would still retain. It might prove helpful if theologians would stop appealing to modernity as the basis for their particular brand of scepticism, and tell us, without using any form of the word 'modern', exactly why they cannot believe this or that notion. The discussion might then proceed with more profit.

3. The third approach is to demythologize everything that smacks of the supernatural, and thereby to collapse all of theology into some kind of anthropology. There would be nothing wrong with this approach if it had already been established beyond reasonable cavil that the infinite-personal God of the Scriptures does not in fact exist, or that if he does exist, he either does not or cannot affect matters in the space-time continuum, still less reveal himself to me. Without agreed certainty regarding God's non-existence and/or personal irrelevance, critics of the radical demythologizers may perhaps be excused if they suspect that their demythologizing colleagues are adopting a grid which filters out any evidence, no matter how cogent, which challenges their commitments on this very point.

4. The most biblical approach is the one which lets Paul be Paul. This approach does not say we have to like what he says; and some who hold few convictions regarding the nature of Scripture may actively disagree with the Apostle. But agree or disagree, it is surely a matter of first importance to let Paul speak for himself. Pauline theology, arguably, is coherent only if his letters are taken seriously to mean what they say. What they say may sometimes be difficult to trace out; but the delineation of Pauline theology is not helped if we discount Paul's arguments whenever they offend modern sensibilities.

So far may the student of the Scriptures go with confidence. I am inclined to go one small step farther. Pauline theology has always occupied a prominent place in Christian theology as a whole, not least because the great mind of Paul was one of the Spirit's principal means of completing the revelation of Jesus Christ after the ascension. I suggest therefore that if Paul's insistence on the historicity of Adam, on his individuality and representative status, on the nature and consequences of the fall, on the links between these things and the person and work of Christ, and on their typological place with respect to the new creation, — if this all be allowed to tumble into disarray, the foundations of *Christian* theology (not just *Pauline* theology) are threatened. The church is left only with disparate but scarcely related truths, diversely interpreted; or with systems of theology which are Christian in name only, but not deeply and essentially biblical. For it has pleased God to reveal himself along the historical line from the first Adam to the last; and we can know little of God apart from that revelation.

Notes

1. C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (London: Black, 1962).
2. I do not intend to address the question of how far the two occurrences of 'all' properly extend. The first unambiguously reaches to all without exception; the second does not, judging by the careful limiting clause in v.23, 'those who belong to (Christ)'. It may be doubted whether, in this context, either 'all' is designed to address such questions. Rather, these uses of the word constitute a powerful way of describing two humanities, two solidarities — one in Adam, the other in Christ.
3. The eschatological questions interwoven throughout these verses may be ignored without loss in this paper.
4. C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1968), p.351.
5. H. Seebass, 'Adam'. *NIDNTT* 1, p.86.
6. Barrett, *First Epistle*. p.352.
7. Greek *di'anthropou thanatos*. Because there is no indefinite article in Greek, any distinction between the two translations must be made on other grounds.

8. Barrett, *First Epistle*, p.353.
9. *Ibid.*, p.353.
10. Cf., esp., F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974), pp.147–8.
11. Cf. discussion in Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, pp.151–3; Barrett, *First Epistle*, pp.373–9; *idem*, *From First Adam to Last*, pp.73–6; W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1955), pp.43–57; James D.G. Dunn, '1 Corinthians 15:45 – last Adam, life-giving spirit,' *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (Fs. C.F.D. Moule; ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.127–141; H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp.282–8.
12. Cf. J.P. Versteeg, *Is Adam a 'Teaching Model' in the New Testament?* (tr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), pp.34–5.
13. *Ibid.*, pp.35–7; J.A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body: A Study of the Biblical Data* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p.176.
14. H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (tr. John R. de Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 541–3, esp. p.542.
15. It is true that the life-giving power of the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is elsewhere seen to be already operating in the lives of believers (Rom. 8:11). But it will not do to collapse the future manifestation of the Spirit's life-giving power into the manifestation of that power in our lives at present. Indeed, Paul could not speak of the gift of the Spirit as the 'downpayment' (*arrabon*) of our ultimate inheritance if that were the case.
16. Versteeg, *Adam*, pp.17–20. This stands over against the interpretation of Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (tr. T.A. Smail; Scottish Journal of Theology Papers No. 5; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956).
17. I am here slightly modifying the outline provided by S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., in his excellent essay, 'Romans 5:12 – An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology,' *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), pp. 298–316. Cf. also the discussion, at a more popular level, by D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 5: Assurance* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971), esp. pp.169–370).
18. This view is very common today: cf., *inter alia*, Barrett, *From First Adam to Last*, pp.15–16,69,72,114; Frank Stagg, 'Adam, Christ and Us,' *New Testament Studies* (Fs. R. Summers; Waco: Baylor Univ. Press, 1975), pp.115–136.
19. On this entire view cf. H. Ridderbos, *Paul*, pp.96–9. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1953 of 1886 ed'n), p.149, points out that this view also fails to explain why infants die. If Paul is made to say that people die only because of personal sins, then in the case of infants who die, he is made to say something untrue.
20. So, for instance, Calvin, *Inst.*, II.i.8; cf. II.i.5–7. Cf. similarly C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975) I, pp.269–95.
21. Cf. esp. William G.T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, repr. 1978) II, pp.49–94,181–92.
22. *Viz.*, Ezek. 18:1–32 and Heb. 7:9–10. Cf. the excellent discussion of these points by Johnson, 'Romans 5:12,' esp. pp.314–15.
23. *Ibid.*, pp.310–13.
24. *Ibid.*, p.312.
25. *Ibid.*, p.313. The *gar* seems to suggest that vv. 13–14 function as substantiation of v.12. But if

v.12 means only that all men have become corrupt, or that all men have sinned personally, it is difficult to imagine how vv.13–14 substantiate the point.

26. This is called in question by C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), pp.80–81, who claims that 'subtler minds' of the age (he cites Philo and the anonymous author of *Poimandres*) treated the fall (and, implicitly, Adam) as a symbolic allegory; and obviously, 'we cannot accept such speculation as an account of the origin of death, which is a natural process inseparable from organic existence in the world we know, and devoid of any moral significance.' This may or may not be a true assessment about what some modern men can accept; but Paul is not a modern man. Moreover, the reference to Philo (for instance) is a shade glib. Philo often protests that he accepts the historicity of Old Testament narratives, but then goes on to allegorize them to bring out what he takes to be their meaning. He does this by self-consciously imposing on the texts an alien philosophical perspective which, because it cannot accept what the texts say, yet cannot break loose from the texts because they are still perceived as in some sense canonical and binding, therefore re-interprets the accounts to accord with his already adopted position. Small wonder Dodd finds Philo and the Hermetica so congenial. John A.T. Robinson, *Wrestling with Romans* (London: SCM, 1979), p.61, dependent as he is on Dodd, draws a similar connection between Paul and Philo.

27. Cf. Versteeg, *Adam*, p.21.

28. E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), esp. pp.127–8.

29. Versteeg, *Adam*, pp.9,13.

30. *Ibid.*, p.25.

31. Douglas J. Moo, '1 Timothy 2:11–15: Meaning and Significance,' *Trinity Journal* 1 NS (1980), pp.62–83.

32. James B. Hurley, in a forthcoming publication with (apparently) the title *Man and Woman in the New Testament* (Leicester: IVP/Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).

33. Moo, '1 Timothy 2:11–15', p.68.

34. Morna D. Hooker, 'Adam in Romans i', *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959–60), pp.297–306, esp. p.299.

35. *Ibid.*, p.301. Cf. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last*, pp.17–19; D.J.W. Milne, 'Genesis 3 in the Letter to the Romans', *Reformed Theological Review* 39 (1980), pp.10–18.

36. Cf. Matthew Black, 'The Pauline Doctrine of the Second Adam,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954), pp.174–5.

37. Cf. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last*, p.9.

38. E.g. Ridderbos, *Paul*, pp.63–4; Barrett, *From First Adam to Last*, pp.98–9.

39. *Ibid.*, pp.11–12, esp. p.12.

40. D.A. Carson, 'Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology,' *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming (1981)).

41. Versteeg, *Adam*, pp.60–67. Cf. also the discussion in Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972).

42. Morna D. Hooker, *Pauline Pieces* (London: Epworth Press, 1979), pp.50–52,86–95.

43. *Ibid.*, p.50.

44. *Ibid.*, pp.50–51.