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A NEW IDENTITY OF OBLIGATION:
PAUL'S METAPHORICAL RESPONSE TO THE
INDICATIVE-IMPERATIVE TENSION IN ROMANS 6:1–14

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A NEW IDENTITY OF OBLIGATION:
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For Courtney,
who first inspired this project
and marathoned with me until it was finished.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>On the Life of Abraham</i>
<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>An. post.</i>	Aristotle. <i>Posterior Analytics. Topica</i> . Translated by Hugh Tredennick, E. S. Forster. LCL 391. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
<i>Bib. hist.</i>	Diodorus Siculus. <i>Library of History</i> , vol. 8: <i>Books 16:66–17</i> . Translated by C. Bradford Welles. LCL 422. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963
BINS	Biblical Interpretation Series

<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CCSS	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
<i>Chaer.</i>	Chariton. <i>Callirhoe</i> . Translated by G. P. Goold. LCL 481. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995
CILT	Current Issues in Linguistic Theory
CLA	Consciousness, Literature and the Arts
CLR	Cognitive Linguistics Research
<i>CLS</i>	<i>Chicago Linguistic Society</i>
<i>Crit. Inq.</i>	<i>Critical Inquiry</i>
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>DPL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i>
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
ECNRS	Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
<i>EISS</i>	<i>Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics</i>
EKK	Evangelisch Katholischer Kommentar
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>Eth. eud.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Athenian Constitution. Eudemian Ethics. Virtues and Vices</i> . Translated by H. Rackham. LCL 285. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> . Translated by Harris Rackham. LCL 73. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FoSub	Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes
FTL	Figurative Thought and Language

HCP	Human Cognitive Processing
HTA	Historisch Theologische Auslegung
<i>Hum. Dev.</i>	<i>Human Development</i>
HUTh	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>Hervormde teologiese studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Instit. Or.</i>	Quintilian. <i>Institutio Oratoria</i> . Translated by Donald A. Russell. LCL 126. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBTS</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>J.W.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Wars</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
L&N	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. 2d ed. New York, 1989
LBS	Linguistic Biblical Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	<i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Edited by H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
MTS	Marburger theologische Studien
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version (2011)

NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTL	New Testament Library
NTM	New Testament Monographs
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>Poet.</i>	Aristotle. <i>Poetics</i> . Translated by Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, D. A. Russell, and Doreen. Innes. LCL 199. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995
<i>RBL</i>	Review of Biblical Literature
<i>Rhet.</i>	Aristotle. <i>Rhetoric</i> . Translated by John H. Freese. LCL 193. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBM	Stuttgarter biblische Monographien
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SLCS	Studies in Language Companion Series
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
<i>Sobr.</i>	Philo, <i>De sobrietate</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>Stud. Relig.</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
<i>Symp.</i>	Plato. <i>Lysis. Symposium. Phaedrus</i> . Translated by Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Freddy. LCL 166. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022.
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
<i>Tim.</i>	Lucian. <i>The Downward Journey or The Tyrant. Zeus Catechized. Zeus</i>

Rants. The Dream or The Cock. Prometheus. Icaromenippus or The Skyman. Timon or The Misanthrope. Charon or The Inspectors. Philosophies for Sale. Translated by A. M. Harmon. LCL 54. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915.

<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe.</i> Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883–2009.
WBC	Word Bible Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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PREFACE

I never imagined I would cross the finish line of this dissertation only after being carried, encouraged, motivated, and helped by so many individuals. From start to finish, this has been a big team effort. The seeds of this project were sown by Ryan Fullerton and Jeff King, my pastors at Immanuel Baptist Church who first impressed on me the radical nature of the new birth. I am also indebted to two books that shook my world and instilled a fascination with metaphors and cognitive linguistics. Dr. Erin Heim's discussion on metaphors in *Adoption in Galatians and Romans* enthralled me and made me want to learn and read more. Dr. George Lakoff and Dr. Mark Johnson's classic *Metaphors We Live By* sealed the deal, and I resolved to learn as much as possible about conceptual metaphors before tackling this project in full.

I was also blessed to be part of a terrific cohort of PhD students at Southern Seminary. It was a joy to run along with Richard Blaylock, Coye Still, Jarrett Ford, Paul Lamicela, Roberto Carrera, Trey Moss, and many others who, besides being brilliant scholars, were the friends without whom this dissertation would not be complete. Thank you, Dr. Jarvis Williams and Dr. Jonathan Pennington for your willingness to be in my committee and for embodying the joy of teaching and writing. Finally, I must convey my deepest gratitude to Dr. Tom Schreiner. Staying at Southern to do my PhD under your supervision was one of my best decisions. You and Diane are dear friends, and it is no exaggeration to say that our life now would be dramatically different without you two. I am so glad you were part of my academic journey right to the end.

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However, besides my wife and supervisor, nobody encouraged me and prayed for me more than Dr. Oscar Jiménez. Oscar, thank you for modeling for me the kind of scholarship I want to do. I also can't thank you enough for the many hours you spent talking with me, teaching me, answering my questions, and giving me feedback on my chapters. Although we have yet to meet in person, I love and appreciate you more than you know. The friendship and constant support of Dr. Dominick Hernandez, Dr. Chris Morgan, Dr. Tony Chute, Mark and Stephanie Rogers, Tim and Marian Jacobs, Chase Porter, Bryan Lupo, and Jeff Marshman, have also meant a great deal to me.

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Finally, I praise the Lord for my wife. Court, aside from being a tremendous cheerleader, friend, and encourager, you have served our family generously and sacrificially to make sure this project got finished. Thank you for your endurance, faithfulness, patience, and unconditional love. I do not have the words to express my gratitude for your devotion to our daughters and me. Dedicating this dissertation to you is just another way of saying, "Thank you, and I love you!" And to my daughters, Elyce, Lily and Lucy, you sacrificed a lot without even knowing it. I love being your dad.

Andrés D. Vera

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul’s complex theology is often presented as a series of critical paradoxes that his readers must carefully analyze, understand, and apply.¹ It is, therefore, no surprise that Pauline scholarship has always struggled to balance the tensions that arise from the apostle’s soteriology. Many of these theological puzzles converge and have perplexed scholars in the arena of Paul’s ethics. Notions of belief, obedience, transformation, righteousness, agency, and the Spirit are intricately interwoven into the various sections of Paul’s instruction which, broadly speaking, informs *Christian living* (a term that connotes both theology and conduct). As a result, projects on Paul’s ethics are always projects positioned at the intersection of many of these seemingly incongruous elements and must account for the full weight of each component. In contemporary discussions, these various paradoxes often aggregate around one of two poles that are foundational in Paul’s theology—faith/gift and works/duty.

Balancing these two components of Paul’s soteriology has proven to be a challenge both for the academy and for the church. Wolfgang Schrage, pointing back to Martin Luther, reminds us that “with varying emphases, the church has always had to

¹ Some of these paradoxes include sovereignty and freedom, law and grace, living through dying, strength through weakness, foolishness and wisdom. The importance of Paul’s theological paradoxes is reflected in many important works produced in last few decades. See for example Edmund B. Keller, *Some Paradoxes of Paul* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1974); Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St Paul*, JSNTSup 17 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); Gerhard Hotze, *Paradoxien bei Paulus: Untersuchungen zu einer elementaren Denkform in seiner Theologie* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1997); James Anderson, *Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of Its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007); Larry J. Waters, “Paradoxes in the Pauline Epistles,” *BSac* 167, no. 668 (October 2010): 423–41. The title of a recent work responding to the New Perspective on Paul confirms that many of the issues surrounding the debate have to do with how to understand some of Paul’s paradoxes, D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *The Paradoxes of Paul*, vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

fight on two fronts, lest ‘those without faith devote themselves to vain works, or those without works take refuge in faith.’”² Not surprisingly, these two fronts of Paul’s soteriological seesaw have consistently been highlighted as the two most significant components of the apostle’s ethics. The most common nomenclature for this phenomenon is the “indicative-imperative.”

The “indicative-imperative” is a schema that tries to capture the soteriological tension in much of Paul’s ethical teaching. Though many view the schema as the essential structure of Paul’s ethics,³ recent scholarship has challenged the benefits of this framework for understanding Paul’s ethical instruction on two grounds. First, some have argued that the categories “indicative” and “imperative” are misleading and often create artificial distinctions in the apostle’s ethical teaching. Second, many have pointed out that Paul’s “indicative” does not always intuitively lead to his “imperative” as the schema implies—the logical connection between the “is” and the “ought” is not clear in Paul’s own teaching. Furthermore, scholars have offered many differing proposals for how the “indicative” and “imperative” are logically connected in Paul’s thought, demonstrating a lack of consensus on this central issue.⁴ This dissertation will examine Romans 6:1–14 (an important text exhibiting the “indicative-imperative” tension) and seek to answer important questions about the Paul’s ethical framework and his ethical argument.

² Wolfgang Schrage citing Luther’s sermon on John 15:10ff (WA 45.689), *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 1.

³ See William D. Dennison, “Indicative and Imperative: The Basic Structure of Pauline Ethics,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 14, no. 1 (April 1979): 56–68; Volker Rabens, “‘Indicative and Imperative’ as the Substructure of Paul’s Theology-and-Ethics in Galatians,” in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliott et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 285–305.

⁴ I will present some of these challenges to the “indicative-imperative” in detail later in this chapter.

Defining the Question

This project will seek to answer the question, “How does Paul respond to the “indicative-imperative” tension in Romans 6:1–14?”⁵ As I will show in the next section, defining the “indicative-imperative” schema itself and delineating its individual components (especially the “indicative”) has proven difficult. While many might have a sense of what the “indicative-imperative” tension is, because of its role in my research question, it seems profitable to spend some time carefully defining what I mean by that. It seems to me that there are at least three separate facets of the “indicative-imperative” tension, which often blend into one, but we would do well to distinguish.

The first facet of the “indicative-imperative” tension involves the potential license for immorality that some might deduce from Paul’s teaching. In Romans, Paul’s gospel centers on Christ and the free gift of the grace he offers, by which sinners are justified and can enjoy peace with God. Paul’s gospel is a proclamation of the superabundance of this gift that far surpasses the abundance of sin (Rom 5:20–21). However, Paul is aware that, even when rightly understood, the exuberance of this gracious gift can lead to an erroneous conclusion: “let us do evil things in order that good things might come” (Rom 3:8). This first facet of the “tension” arises simply from the shocking nature of the “indicative.” I will refer to this first facet as the “ethical tension” of the “indicative-imperative.”⁶ This facet of the tension is the one most immediately apparent in Romans 6, which begins with the question, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?”⁷

⁵ I will, at times, also refer to this phenomenon as the “indicative-imperative” problem.

⁶ As I understand it, the “ethical tension” is not a tension limited to or defined by the “indicative-imperative” schema itself. Any analysis of Paul’s ethical thought needs to address and explain the ethical tension that arises out of Paul’s radical presentation of the gospel—a gospel centered on a God so gracious, who might appear to be made all the more gracious the more we sin.

⁷ In Romans 6, Paul seems to be interested in responding to the charge some seem to have already leveled against him that his gospel (the “indicative” we might say) leads to an immoral life where the need for any moral imperatives is dissolved.

The second feature of the “indicative-imperative” tension has to do not so much with the superabundance of the “indicative” but with the inconsistency, and apparent contradiction between Paul’s statements. Rudolf Bultmann notes that “next to statements according to which the justified person is free from sin, no longer in the flesh but living in the Spirit, and has died to sin, are those statements which admonish the justified person to fight against sin.”⁸ This tension, then, is not merely a theological tension about two seemingly incongruous phenomena. Instead, it is a tension that arises from Paul’s statements which in themselves seem to be inconsistent on a linguistic level. I will refer to this feature of the “indicative-imperative” as the “consistency tension.” We will see an example of this apparent inconsistency in Romans 6:1–14 where Paul adamantly affirms that believers are no longer enslaved to sin (6:6), and yet later calls them later to not let sin reign in their mortal bodies (6:12).

The third and final facet of the “indicative-imperative” tension is what I will call the “logical tension.” This feature of the problem pertains to the logical relationship between the “indicative” and “imperative.” Whereas many see ample evidence that for Paul the “indicative” grounds the “imperative,” exactly how it does so is less clear. We might say that because of God’s gracious gift to believers, they should respond in obedience. This might in fact be the case. But the *logical* grounds for the “should” are not clear. What is it about the “indicative” that so obviously and logically leads to the “imperative?” Much of my discussion will be focused on this facet of the “indicative-imperative” tension where I will argue that Paul’s metaphorical narrative gives us clear conceptual grounds for the moral expectations of believers. This project will seek to explain how Paul responds to the “indicative-imperative” problem by explaining how he responds to the individual facets of the tension.

⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” in *Understanding Paul’s Ethics: Twentieth-Century Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner, trans. Christoph W. Stenschke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 195.

Thesis and Contribution

This project will focus on Paul’s argument in Romans 6:1–14. There, Paul directly addresses the ethical tension that arises from his presentation of the gospel—the tension that many have referred to as the problem of Paul’s “indicative-imperative.” I will argue that Paul’s response to this tension comes to us in the form of a metaphorical narrative that constructs the believer’s new *identity*. This identity is presented conceptually in terms of existence in a new *location*, which inherently results in a believer’s new *obligation*. I will show that in Romans 6:1–14, this new identity is the core element of Paul’s ethical logic and that because this new identity is defined by a new obligation, it cannot be understood apart from the demands placed upon it. This conception of who believers *are* anticipates the metaphor BELIEVERS ARE SLAVES OF GOD in Romans 6:15–23, as a way of embodying this new identity of obligation.⁹

Through this project, I hope to offer two primary contributions to the field of Pauline theology. First, though scholarly contributions explaining, defending, and challenging the “indicative-imperative” are abundant, only two monographs focus on the relationship between Paul’s theology and his moral instruction in Romans.¹⁰ This project’s focus on Romans 6 thus helps fill an important gap in the field. Second, in this project I offer a fresh lens through which to read Paul’s ethical language. Instead of rushing to theological conclusions on the relationship between what God has done and what believers ought to do, my project will consist of an interdisciplinary examination of the biblical text utilizing tools and insights from the field of cognitive linguistics (CL).¹¹

⁹ I am not approaching “identity” from the perspective of social anthropology. Terrific work has been done focused on the development of a social identity in Judaism and early Christianity. Instead, I am using “identity” merely as a conceptual category that aims to capture what it is Paul focuses on in this first half of Romans 6.

¹⁰ I have only come across the dissertation by Sang Chang Park, “The Relation of the Imperative to the Indicative in Paul’s Thought: An Exegetical Study of Romans 6” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1977), and the monograph by Samuli Siikavirta, *Baptism and Cognition in Romans 6–8: Paul’s Ethics beyond “Indicative” and “Imperative”*, WUNT 407 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

¹¹ I will introduce cognitive linguistics and some of the tools from the field I will employ in this project more fully in chapter 2.

My desire is that this enriched study of Romans 6 will yield a profitable set of observations about Paul's ethical framework and his overall conception of who believers are. My goal in this project is not necessarily to *solve* the problem of the "indicative-imperative" nor to refute the schema itself. Instead, I will seek to understand *Paul's own response* to the "indicative-imperative" tension by being attentive to his figurative language and to synthesize his response.

To this end, the present chapter attempts to do three things. First, I will present a brief survey of scholarship focused on the tension of Paul's ethics, and more specifically on the "indicative-imperative." Second, I will briefly introduce the interdisciplinary approach I will employ in this study. Third, I will offer a preview of this project's argument by summarizing the content and contribution of each chapter and how each contributes to my overall thesis.

A Survey of the "Indicative-Imperative": Tracing the Ethical Tension in Paul's Ethics

It is impossible to adequately discuss Paul's ethics without acknowledging the theological tension his ethical demands evoke in light of the gospel of grace he preaches. Moreover, it is impossible to delve into this tension without considering the "indicative-imperative" schema by which this tension has been largely conceptualized. In this brief survey of scholarship, I will trace how New Testament scholars have approached, named, and responded to this tension. I will limit this survey to individuals who have contributed to the development or critique of the "indicative-imperative" schema (especially as it pertains to Romans 6) and to those whose solutions to the theological tension have gained traction in broader scholarship.

In many ways, the study of biblical ethics, and thus that of Pauline ethics, can be traced back to the inception of biblical theology. As such, it owes much to J. P. Gabler's famous 1787 Altdorf address, *De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*. Gabler's urge for scholars to consider

the historical nature of theology, “what the holy writers felt about divine matters,” propelled the study of New Testament theology, Pauline theology, and eventually Pauline ethics.¹² Of course that is not to say that the ethics of the Bible were not a topic of study prior to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.¹³ Rather, what it means is that critical studies of the ethical teachings of Jesus or Paul’s ethics, for example, only surfaced once the tools for the critical study of the theology of Scripture were developed.

**Pioneering the Study of Paul’s Ethics:
F. C. Baur and H. Fr. Th. L. Ernesti**

One of the earliest treatments of Paul’s ethics is perhaps Immanuel Berger’s *Versuch einer moralischen Einleitung ins Neue Testament für Religionslehrer und denkende Christen* (1798). But even this early work is “little more than a collation of the various Pauline statements and exhortations relevant to the moral life” according to Victor Furnish.¹⁴ Thus the first proper studies on Paul’s ethics did not emerge until the nineteenth century, beginning perhaps with one of the century’s most important theologians and the founder of the so-called Tübingen school. In this section, I will note the contributions of two individuals who first wrestled with the tension found in Paul’s writings between what God has done in believers and what Paul calls them to do.

¹² This quote is taken from an English translation of Gabler’s oration. John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33, no. 2 (1980): 137.

¹³ Christoph E. Luthardt provides a detailed survey of Christian ethics up to the Reformation in his 19th century work *Before the Reformation*, vol. 1 of *History of Christian Ethics: History of Christian Ethics before the Reformation*, trans. William Hastie, Clark’s Foreign Theological Library 40 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1889). For a good survey of Christian ethics from the New Testament to Augustine, see George W. Forell, *From the New Testament to Augustine*, vol. 1 of *History of Christian Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979). For a sketch of Christian ethics from Augustine to Barth see Michael C. Banner, *Christian Ethics: A Brief History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). Harry John Huebner, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics: History, Movements, People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012) also includes a helpful section on the history of the field.

¹⁴ Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 243.

F. C. Baur. Although Ferdinand C. Baur is perhaps best remembered as a church historian and theologian, he nevertheless contributed significantly to the further development of biblical theology as a discipline and to Pauline studies through a major work on Paul's life and theology.¹⁵ Nevertheless, even Baur's two-volume work, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre* (1845), does not really address the apostle's ethical concerns or exhortations for the churches very carefully. Baur's preoccupation with the division of the Jewish-Christian faction under Peter and James and a pro-Gentile faction under Paul severely colors his readings of many of the ethical portions of Paul's letters. In Romans, for example, Baur sees as the fundamental question "whether the difference between Gentiles and Jews was completely abolished by the universalism of Pauline Christianity."¹⁶

Nevertheless, Baur still had something to say about the relationship between sin and the Christian. In his reading of Romans 6, Baur understands Paul's "scheme of salvation" to result in "the actual and radical annihilation of sin."¹⁷ Perhaps equally "radical" is his commentary on Romans 6:8–23 in which he explains the implications of union with Christ: "The union with Christ, in which the Christian is already so dead to sin that in reality it no longer exists for him, makes it actually and morally impossible for him to commit sin."¹⁸

¹⁵ Ferdinand C. Baur's emphasis on the historical dimension of theology is recognized widely. Peter Hodgson writes, "Baur's greatness consisted in his unequivocal recognition of the radically historical nature of the Christian Church and Christian faith." Peter C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 1. Similarly, William Baird notes, "With Baur, theology is absorbed into history; theology is *historical* theology." William Baird, *From Deism to Tübingen*, vol. 1 of *History of New Testament Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 259.

¹⁶ Ferdinand C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, trans. Eduard Zeller and Allan Menzies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 331. For Baur, the whole epistle has a decidedly anti-Judaistic tendency, which significantly affects his reading of the letter. He goes on to say, "the whole dogmatic treatment of the Epistle can be considered as nothing but the most radical and thorough-going refutation of Judaism and Jewish Christianity." Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 349.

¹⁷ Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 353.

¹⁸ Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 353.

Baur's conclusion on the (non-existent) relationship between the Christian and sin is derived from his understanding of Christ's death and the consequence it had on the flesh. In his lectures on this very subject he considers Romans 6:6–8 and 8:3–4, which highlight the destruction of *σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, and concludes that “the flesh and *ἁμαρτία*, or sin, are thought of as mutually related, such that what applies to the one must also apply to the other. Therefore, if Jesus's death nullifies the flesh, so too sin is cut off from the root of its existence in the flesh: the basis for its presence is taken from it.”¹⁹ Although Baur does not expand on the significance of this anthropological transformation as it relates to temptation, sin, or Paul's exhortations on ethical matters, his radical understanding of the elimination of sin in the believer's life would be taken to its full logical conclusion just a few decades later by Paul Wernle.

H. Fr. Th. L. Ernesti. Furnish credits H. Fr. Th. L. Ernesti with “the first critical study of Paul's ethic handled as a topic worthy of full-scale, independent treatment.”²⁰ For Ernesti, what is distinctive about Paul's ethic is its fundamental idea of *freedom* which comes with the gift of the Spirit. The freedom Ernesti refers to is the freedom from the “external authority of the law” (*der Freiheit vom Gesetz als äußerlicher Satzung*).²¹ Through the Spirit, the Christian can come to know God's will and thus can pursue the task of the Christian life—to achieve holiness in freedom.²² The outpouring of the Spirit on the individual creates a true “being in one another” (*Ineinandersein*), an interpenetration of divine and human activity. This resulting activity

¹⁹ Ferdinand C. Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 179.

²⁰ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 243.

²¹ H. Fr. Th. L. Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen: ein Versuch* (Leibrock: Braunschweig, 1868), 65.

²² Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 79.

is a “necessary” and “spontaneous” expression of the new life which is nevertheless only produced through the impulse (*Antrieb*) and power (*Kraft*) of the Spirit.²³

For Ernesti, then, the “indicative” in Paul (though he never uses that term) seems to be the gift of the Spirit, which is the necessary result of communion with Christ (*Lebensgemeinschaft*).²⁴ Contrary to Baur, however, Ernesti does not understand the liberation brought by the Spirit in Romans 6 to result in the Christian being “actually and morally” unable to sin. Rather, the Spirit renders the believer free from the *necessity* of sin.²⁵ On this point, Ernesti brings up Paul’s ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ metaphor in Romans 6:18 but only notes that the Spirit has freed the believer from the power of sin and death with no further explanation of what that means.²⁶ Though the Spirit’s action and power appears to be primary for Ernesti, the transformation that characterizes the new life cannot take place without the individual’s own action (*so kann sie doch nicht ohne eigene Bewegung des Menschen erfolgen*).²⁷ In other words, despite the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, the believer is nevertheless called to pursue a life of holiness through obedience—what we might call Paul’s “imperative.”

Ernesti seems to be somewhat aware of the tension that arises between the supposed “spontaneous” and inevitable obedience to God’s will through the work of the Spirit (“indicative”) and Paul’s frequent admonitions and exhortations to the churches (“imperative”), though he never points it out explicitly. His explanation of the complex

²³ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 25.

²⁴ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 40.

²⁵ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 22. In fact, he goes on later to note explicitly that the believer’s righteousness is neither sinlessness, nor perfection, nor a pleasure in the good of God based on external works, but basic and vigorous holiness: “δικαιοσύνη . . . ist weder Sündlosigkeit, noch Vollkommenheit noch eine auf äußerem Werk beruhende Gottwohlgefälligkeit, sondern grundhafte und wachsthümliche ἀγιωσύνη, Heiligkeit].” He points to Galatians 5:13 and 1 Corinthians 10:12 show that sin is not at once and immediately destroyed in the believer in such a way that it would not be possible for him to commit any sin. Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 41–42.

²⁶ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 43.

²⁷ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1868, 24.

dynamic between these two realities is most clear in the third edition of his work (1880). Here, Ernesti differentiates between the “center” (*Centrum*) and the “periphery” (*Peripherie*) of the Christian’s life.²⁸ Though the victory over sin has already been accomplished at the *center* of the Christian’s life, this is only the beginning of the “internal progressive process” (*inneren fortschreitenden Proceß*). The Christian’s task is to prevent the sin that remains in the *periphery* from entering into the *center* and to extend the victory in the *center* out to the *periphery*. This, for Ernesti, is the process of sanctification.²⁹

Ernesti’s work is indeed a thoughtful and systematic treatment of the most important ethical issues in Paul’s letters. Nevertheless, many have recognized that his exegetical discussions, although abundant, are not always thorough.³⁰ Even in the later editions of his work, where he further develops ideas he posited earlier, some of the most important issues remain unaddressed. Among these lacuna is the tension he creates in his construal of Paul’s soteriology as it pertains to the inevitable work of the Spirit in the believer and Paul’s exhortations for believers to obey and walk in holiness. This tension between Paul’s “indicative” and “imperative” would not remain dormant for long.

Introducing the (Non)Problem: Paul Wernle’s Framework and Proposal

In 1897, Paul Wernle published *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*. In it, he addressed what he perceived to be a neglected issue in New Testament theology—the

²⁸ H. Fr. Th. L. Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1880), 73.

²⁹ Ernesti, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus in ihren Grundzügen*, 1880, 73.

³⁰ For example, although Alfred Juncker commends Ernesti’s “quest for objectivity and completeness, [deserving of] unqualified recognition” (my translation), he nevertheless notes that “the exegetical raw material is attended to in large quantities, but is not sufficiently processed; one problem or another is addressed but the issue is not settled by thorough investigation” (my translation). Alfred Juncker, *Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus*, vol. 1 (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1904), 11. All subsequent German, French, Hebrew, and Greek translations will be my own unless otherwise stated.

“problem” of sin in the Christian life.³¹ Ironically, the argument in the book is that in Paul’s mind, sin was not a problem at all for believers. For Wernle, the problem of sin is limited to “this world,” and since those who have been justified have been taken into the community of the *αἰὼν μέλλων*, the sin problem does not and cannot affect Paul (or any believer) since he has already begun the life of the coming age.³² As far as Paul is concerned, the sins of the believer have passed away; the Christian no longer has sin precisely because he is a Christian and has entered the *νῦν καιρός*.³³

Wernle refutes the idea that takes Romans 7:15–25 refers to the Christian experience. Instead, he argues that Paul sees himself as having been freed from the law of sin and death (8:2) and thus cannot possibly be entangled in the “will vs. action” conflict described just a few verses prior. Contra the Reformers, he argues that it is incorrect to attribute to the apostle an inner conflict between grace and sin.³⁴ Instead, Wernle understands Paul to teach an “enthusiast” Christian life—a life of piety that is, above all, characterized by a change of spirit which leads to a kind of restlessness and enthusiasm (*Enthusiasmus*). The believer lives where the future and the present intermingle (*Ineinandermengung*). The Spirit has ushered the believer into the new age such that the Christian is entirely freed from sin.³⁵ Therefore, if Paul ever felt like a sinner or was

³¹ See for example his introduction: “In Paul, the Christian and sin are a problem that has thus far remained almost unnoticed. Considering the importance of the question of how the first great theologian of our church judged and dealt with sin in the Christian life, one cannot help but marvel at the neglect of this problem on the part of New Testament theology.” Paul Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Mohr, 1897), 1.

³² Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 23. He later concludes, “we can no longer sin because we are future people” (*Wir können nicht mehr sündigen, weil wir Zukunfts*), 103.

³³ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 95.

³⁴ Wernle’s exegesis of Romans 7 leads him to conclude, “Based on this exegesis, over against the Reformers, it is not permissible to cite Romans 7:15–25 to support the dichotomy of grace and sin in the mind of the apostle.” Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 6.

³⁵ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 88.

praying for forgiveness, he left no trace of it in his letters.³⁶ In fact, Paul never expresses any hint of an ongoing struggle with sin or any need for comfort or forgiveness.³⁷

The key to understanding the Christian life for Wernle, then, is the indicative (*Indikativ*) of the pneumatological gift that has carried the believer to a new age into which sin cannot enter. He understands the Spirit to be presented sometimes as a “supernatural and overpowering force” that takes possession of the man and drives him from within (and apart from his will and reason) to all his actions, what he calls the “ethics of miracle.” It is not the man who has the Spirit but the Spirit that has the man.³⁸ The direct result of this phenomenon is that the Christian is a “sinless pneumatist” (*sünden-freien Pneumatiker*).³⁹

Wernle notes, however, that at other times the *πνεῦμα* is described as “the higher divine faculty in man” akin to the *νοῦς* in Romans 7. This second facet of the Spirit’s relationship to the Christian leads Wernle to discuss Paul’s imperatives and the individual’s responsibility—“dann tritt der Imperative auf und stellt Wohl und Weh dem Willen des Menschen anheim.”⁴⁰ In these charges to the churches, Wernle sees a second ethic; what he calls the “ethic of the will.” What then is the purpose of this second ethic and what does it consist of? For Wernle, the imperatives must be understood in light of the indicative of the believer’s new status as already belonging to the age to come. In texts like Galatians 5:25 and Romans 6:11–15, 19, he sees the two ethics coming together

³⁶ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 15.

³⁷ Wernle writes, “Nowhere does he write a word of personal, ongoing struggle with sin; nowhere does he express the need for consolation, for new forgiveness. Sin is no longer a present problem for him.” Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 15.

³⁸ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 87, 89.

³⁹ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 89.

⁴⁰ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 89.

as the apostle exhorts the churches to “be who they were.”⁴¹ Nevertheless, the power of the Spirit’s action in the life of the believer (what he calls the “ethic of miracle”) renders these belonging to the “ethic of the will” needless. In short, the indicative of “sinless” renders the imperative of “do not sin” superfluous, necessary and important though the latter might appear to be.⁴²

In summary, according to Wernle’s 1897 work, there is no room for sin in Paul (and by extension, in any believer) because he, through the Spirit, has begun life in the beyond. Because there is no room for sin beyond death, and death coincides with baptism, sin is impossible for the Christian—indeed, “Christian life is sinless because it is eternal life.”⁴³ The indicative of the new life, characterized by the unleashing of the Spirit on all believers, is so other-worldly that it renders sin-struggle absurd, impossible in fact. This sinless status is appropriated by the believer at baptism and substantiated by the nearness of the parousia. Thus, he understood the “indicative”⁴⁴ to refer to the realized sinlessness of the believer and the “imperative” as a superfluous and unnecessary charge for the individual if the “indicative of sinlessness” holds true for him.⁴⁵ Wernle concludes his work with the following: “It can be said that Paul thought worse of man and better of the Christian than Jesus. Both are alien to Jesus—the theory of inherited sin and of the flesh, as well as the teaching that the Christian sins no more.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ He notes that Paul “did not fail to include in his descriptions of the Christian life the demand that Christians should be what they have become (*vas sie wurden*).” Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 104.

⁴² For Wernle, the exhortations in texts like Romans 6 cannot be explained as calls urging believers to abstain from sin. Rather, the impossibility of sinning remains at the forefront and is thus presented in the indicative statements prior to the charges. Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 103–5.

⁴³ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 23.

⁴⁴ In this project, I will place “indicative” and “imperative” in quotation marks when referring to the individual components of the “indicative-imperative” schema.

⁴⁵ It is clear that Wernle opposed the Lutheran idea of *simul iustus et peccator*.

⁴⁶ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 127.

For most readers today, the problems with Wernle's proposal will be immediately apparent. Wernle simply does not account for Paul's numerous moral exhortations, most of which deal with explicit sin or the threat of sin, in the churches. For example, he dismisses Paul's nuanced discussion of the believer's relationship with sin and righteousness in Romans 6 by suggesting that Paul's *μὴ γένοιτο* in verse 2 shows that the sin issue raised in 6:1 is artificial.⁴⁷ Though Wernle withdrew some of his radical assertions about the Christian's sinlessness and somewhat modified his other views in his subsequent work, *Die Anfänge unserer Religion* (1901), he still refuted the notion that Paul's theology had any room for any practical ethical concerns.⁴⁸ Even when the apostle addressed the issue of the flesh and the sin that remained in the Christian in what appear to be direct and practical ways (i.e., the "ethical theory of the imperative"), this is nothing more than a contradictory alternative to the metaphysical theory which the apostle truly accepts—that "flesh and sin have been overcome in the tragedy of Jesus' death."⁴⁹

Even in his later work, Wernle could not accept the tension of the "indicative-imperative" in Paul. Even though he admits that Paul presents the imperative, the "should" of the Christian, "everywhere clearly and impressively," for Wernle, this ethic must ultimately and necessarily be understood to be eclipsed and discounted by virtue of the metaphysical indicative of the Spirit.⁵⁰ In other words, Wernle's work introduced the nomenclature of "indicative-imperative" to a tension widely acknowledged in Paul's theology today. His solution to this "problem" is that it was not a problem at all, that there is no tension whatsoever.

⁴⁷ Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 103.

⁴⁸ However, in this volume, Wernle presents a very different view of Paul's self-perception with regards to sin. From Philippians 3:12–14 he concludes that "it is unthinkable that he [Paul] considered himself sinless." Paul Wernle, *Die Anfänge unserer Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901), 168.

⁴⁹ Wernle, *Die Anfänge unserer Religion*, 145.

⁵⁰ Wernle, *Die Anfänge unserer Religion*, 148.

Early Solutions to the Problem

Though Wernle's goal was to alleviate any tension readers might perceive between what Paul asserted about the Christian and what he required of him, his work likely had the opposite effect. Though some, like Heinrich Weinel, sought to build on Wernle's proposal, most found his solution unsatisfactory.⁵¹ But the "problem" in Paul's theology had been made clear. Efforts to correct and supplant Wernle's proposals began almost immediately. Here I will briefly survey some of the proposed "solutions" to the tension and "antinomy" of the "indicative-imperative."

Rudolf Bultmann: "Faith" as the solution to the antinomy. Among Wernle's strongest critics was none other than Rudolf Bultmann.⁵² Much of the fruitful conversation of recent years on the "indicative-imperative" was fertilized back in 1924 by Bultmann's important essay "Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus" where he laid out the fundamental tension, or "problem" as he saw it, between "theology" and "behavior" in the letters of Paul.⁵³ As such, Bultmann was among the first to see a dichotomy between Paul's two modes of speech about the Christian life—what he refers to as an "antinomy" (*Antinomie*).⁵⁴ For him, the problem that emerges from Paul's "indicative" statements and his "imperative" statements is not one that is only found across various letters but is sometimes observed even within one verse as is the case with Galatians 5:25: εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, he argues that the "indicative-

⁵¹ See for example Heinrich Weinel, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Die Religion Jesu und des Urchristentums*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1921).

⁵² Although there were a number of important contributions to the field of Pauline ethics between Wernle's book and Bultmann's essay, I have chosen to focus here on Bultmann because of his explicit discussion and focus on the "indicative-imperative" tension in Paul's theology.

⁵³ Rudolf Karl Bultmann, "Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus," *ZNW* 23, no. 1 (1924): 123–40. This seminal essay has recently been translated into English: Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," 195–216.

⁵⁴ Bultmann, "Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus," 123.

⁵⁵ Although the terms "indicative" and "imperative" were not original to Bultmann, he was perhaps the first to present the two in explicit tension. As Ader Klostergaard Petersen notes, "[the] dichotomy seems to be Bultmann's original idea." Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Paraenesis in Pauline

imperative” antinomy is a “group of assertions which nevertheless belong together.”⁵⁶ He therefore posits that the paradox can be resolved by understanding the role of πίστις in the believer.

Bultmann’s essay is, in part, a response to the proposals set forth by Wernle and Weinel.⁵⁷ For Bultmann, both previous proposals of the sinlessness of the Christian are incorrect. Instead, sin is less about perceptible moral shortcomings (though Bultmann admits that sin might manifest itself as these) and more about the human condition as seen from God’s perspective.⁵⁸ He understands Romans 7:7–25, for example, to describe the condition of unredeemed man as it is subsequently explained by a redeemed man. In this way, sin is only perceptible by the redeemed person and only through the eyes of faith—it is something that is *believed*.

For Bultmann, an important parallel exists between sin and righteousness. Sin describes the human condition when man is examined through the eyes of faith; it is not a descriptor of immoral behavior but of man’s existential predicament. Righteousness similarly is not a general ethical norm towards which progress is made nor is it a transformation of man’s moral character. Instead, it is “the realized mode of existence” of the justified. Because it can neither be perceived nor experienced, righteousness is something that can only be believed.⁵⁹ Thus, for Bultmann, both sin and righteousness are

Scholarship and Paul - An Intricate Relationship,” in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, BZNT 125 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 274n11.

⁵⁶ Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 196.

⁵⁷ Bultmann is specifically responding to Weinel’s, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*.

⁵⁸ Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 212. Furthermore, from Romans 4:5, he concludes that the believer “never ceases to be ἀσεβής.” Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 215.

⁵⁹ Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 200, 211–12.

intricately tied to the apostle's teaching of πίστις.⁶⁰ It is here that Bultmann's solution to the "indicative-imperative" problem begins to take shape.

The justified individual's status as δικαιωθείς constitutes one of the components of Paul's "indicative," since the term refers to those statements that "can be used when speaking of the possession of salvation."⁶¹ But as Bultmann makes clear, "justified" is only intelligible from the side of faith such that faith belongs to the "indicative." How, then, does the "imperative" fit in with the justified reality of the Christian? First, Bultmann rejects the idea that the "imperative" is given to urge the realization of that which is good as if the "indicative" needed to be realized by means of the "imperative." Instead, Paul's "imperative" is not a call to works (which establish one's right relationship with God), nor a call to righteousness (for that has already been accomplished) but is simply a call to *obedience*.

One might at first conclude that for Bultmann the "indicative" has to do with faith (through which one understands sin and thus can subsequently understand oneself as justified) where as the "imperative" has to do with obedience. For Bultmann, however, such a presentation of the two phenomena implies too big a separation since πίστις is itself "man's obedience to God's act of salvation, renouncing any pretension to being capable of establishing the relationship with God on his own."⁶² Faith, therefore, incorporates both the "indicative" and the "imperative." Nevertheless, the logical relationship between the "indicative" and the "imperative" is both clear and important for Bultmann: "Paul bases the imperative on the very *fact* of justification and *derives* the

⁶⁰ Speaking about the justified individual, Bultmann explains that "the deciding factor, the δικαιοσύνη (righteousness) accomplished only in God's verdict, cannot be perceived—except by the eyes of faith (just as also the existence of the unbeliever—as determined by sin—is only perceived by faith)." Bultmann, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," 214.

⁶¹ Bultmann, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," 210.

⁶² Bultmann, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," 211.

imperative from the indicative. *Because* the Christian is free from sin through justification, he is now to fight against sin.”⁶³

In short, Bultmann’s eschatological-existentialist solution to the “problem” of Paul’s ethics is indeed complex and perplexing.⁶⁴ He argues that the “indicative” is God’s gracious gift and *applies* to the justified person’s mode of existence, but not so as to *realize* it.⁶⁵ Bultmann more clearly articulates how this dynamic plays out in his *Theology of the New Testament*. The freedom from sin that faith brings to the individual is “not a magical guarantee against the *possibility* of sin . . . but release from the *compulsion* of sin” and “consists in the possibility, once flung away, of realizing the commandment’s intent to bestow life.”⁶⁶ Bultmann continues:

That which to man is good—“life”—both before and after his emancipation is also that which is required of him (§19,1; §21,1; §27,1). Therefore, freedom from death means possessing genuine future, whereas man under the power of death, as he formerly was, had no future (§24, 2). Therefore, the *imperative*, “walk according to the Spirit,” not only does not contradict the *indicative* of justification (the believer is rightwised) but results from it In a certain sense, then, “Become what thou art!” is valid—but not in the sense of idealism, according to which the “idea” of the perfect man is more and more closely realized in endless progress The way the believer becomes what he already is consists therefore in the constant appropriation of grace by faith, which also means, in the concrete, “obedience.”⁶⁷

Bultmann’s argument that righteousness does not equal sinlessness and that the “imperative” does not imply moral perfection was an important development in discussions of Paul’s “indicative-imperative.” Furthermore, Bultmann’s allegation that the “imperative” is derived from the “indicative” (and thus is ultimately dependent on it)

⁶³ Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 198–99.

⁶⁴ I have found Klostergaard Petersen’s summary and evaluation of this aspect of Bultmann’s theology particularly clear and helpful, “Paraenesis in Pauline Scholarship and Paul - An Intricate Relationship,” 278–80.

⁶⁵ See Siikavirta’s helpful analysis of Bultmann’s theology in *Baptism and Cognition in Romans 6–8*, 15–17.

⁶⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 332.

⁶⁷ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 332.

has become almost definitive in recent conversations.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Bultmann's ultimate proposal was not without problems. His fusion of the "indicative" and "imperative" would be adopted and modified by some but rejected by others. As Parsons notes, "For [Bultmann], then, the indicative and imperative have become one in the moment of decision."⁶⁹ This fusion, apparently motivated by Bultmann's existentialist presuppositions and his subsequent fear of legalism, not surprisingly, was not accepted by all. Klostergaard Petersen remarks that "to allege that the Pauline statements on sinlessness have no ethical connotations at all is only meaningful if one assumes a Lutheran frame of reference."⁷⁰ Therefore, though Bultmann's attempts at resolving the tension of Paul's "indicative-imperative" were influential, his emphasis on the *χάρις* of the "imperative" softens the commands in a way does not seem to fit with the apostle's own ethical concerns.

Maurice Goguel: Paul's nomistic principle as the basis for morality.

Maurice Goguel accepted Bultmann's nomenclature of "antimony" when speaking of the "indicative-imperative," though he did not reject the category of "antithesis."⁷¹ Though he appreciates Bultmann's contribution in calling attention to the metaphysical aspect of the problem, in his mind, Bultmann goes too far by placing the metaphysical explanation in direct contradiction to what might be regarded as the psychological dynamic of the

⁶⁸ Klostergaard Petersen makes an important observation when he notes that "if the imperative is not directly absorbed into the indicative, it is placed in a situation that makes it extremely difficult to distinguish between the indicative and the imperative. The effort to tone down the independent existence of the imperative is motivated by a Protestant anxiety about justification through good acts of human beings." "Paraenesis in Pauline Scholarship and Paul," 280.

⁶⁹ Michael Parsons, "Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth-Century Approaches*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 222.

⁷⁰ Klostergaard Petersen, "Paraenesis in Pauline Scholarship and Paul," 280.

⁷¹ Maurice Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, trans. H. C. Snape (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 440. Goguel even refers to the problem as a "contradiction between holiness as the Christian's ideal, and as the mark of his new being implied in his calling to faith and justification, on the one hand, and the imperfection of which he is still conscious, on the other" (441). In his mind, "Paul placed two ethics side by side which are not in perfect harmony with each other" (446).

problem. In the end, rather than solving the problem, in Goguel's mind, Bultmann simply evades it. Instead of viewing Paul's ethics entirely through an existentialist-eschatological and metaphysical lens, Goguel understands the problem of the "indicative-imperative" to be bound up on the one hand with the apostle's soteriology and on the other with his religious life.

Goguel, thus, sees two ethics to be present in the Pauline writings. The first can be categorized under the "indicative," which is "theoretical, and expresses how a holy life originates in justification."⁷² This theoretical ethic is grounded on deliverance from sin resulting in holiness and the reality of a new creature. The second ethic is characterized by Paul's imperative statements which present holiness not as a current reality but as the goal of Christian effort on which, in turn, depends his salvation. This second ethic, the "imperative," is exemplified by Paul's charges to reject sin, to labor for sanctification, to live by the Spirit, and to put to death the deeds of the flesh. Goguel identifies the transition between the "indicative" and the "imperative" to be the "fundamental problem of the Pauline ethic."⁷³

On one hand, Paul's ethic is explicitly Christian since it is based on the act of justification and forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, his ethic "is an ethic of the same type as the traditional Jewish ethic."⁷⁴ The apostle's ethic, therefore, must be understood as an ethic of both indicatives and imperatives where holiness is the Christian's reality as well as an ideal. How, then, does Goguel interpret the complex, seemingly contradictory nature of Paul's "ethic of law and judgment" (on the grounds of which his eternal destiny depends) and the ethic that is "directly related to Paul's Christian experience, which

⁷² Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 426.

⁷³ This "transition" from the "indicative" to the "imperative" is another way of noting that the logical connection from the "is" and the "ought" is not (always) immediately apparent in Paul's writings. Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 426.

⁷⁴ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 440.

convinced him that he had by faith in Christ received forgiveness of sins, and possessed in the earnest of the Spirit the guarantee of his future redemption”⁷⁵ The key, he argues, might be found in the way the apostle weaves νόμος into both ethics.

Part of the confusion on this important term, argues Goguel, is due to the imprecision of the term itself. Paul uses νόμος to refer to both (1) the ritual law which Christ abolished after he fulfilled it in his redemptive work, and to (2) the moral law which is of permanent validity.⁷⁶ He further argues that the idea that God’s law “coincides with that of the inner man”; that there is harmony between it and the inner believer “shows that Paul’s conception of the law is not entirely formal.”⁷⁷ In other words, though we might be tempted to think that the “ethic of law” only applies to the man who has not been justified, it in fact applies also to the man who has been justified.⁷⁸ For the believer, then, it is “justification, possession of the Spirit, the call to salvation and the promise of salvation [that] play in the life of the Christian the part of a law . . . the law of the inner man.”⁷⁹

When combined with Paul’s eschatology, this understanding of the law means that the justified believer, for whom salvation has been promised and who has received the Spirit, is “in principle no longer subject to the ethic of the law. But he is still subject to it, so far as he does not possess the fullness of the Spirit, and, if he violates the law of Christ, he is liable to lose salvation, although it has been not only promised to him but already given.”⁸⁰ The ethic associated with the “imperative” penetrates the “indicative”

⁷⁵ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 446.

⁷⁶ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 443. For him, the ethical element of the Old Testament law is what Paul calls “the law of God” and “the law of Christ” (516).

⁷⁷ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 447.

⁷⁸ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 448.

⁷⁹ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 453; In other words, the “indicative” brings a transformation in the inner man that places the “inner man” in harmony with God’s law (447).

⁸⁰ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 453.

and recasts moral obligation not as obedience to an external set of standards, but as fulfillment of a law that resides and coheres with the renewed person. In other words, Paul's thought can be summarized by the phrase, "be in fact what you are by right."⁸¹

Goguel's proposal takes seriously the already-and-not-yet dynamic of the Christian's experience, especially as it pertains to the full possession of his salvation. Much of the tension he feels with Paul's ethic is based on his understanding that the object of the Christian's faith is not only a hope to be fulfilled but a reality which is already here: "Possession of salvation is a fact, although still provisional and incomplete."⁸² Goguel is also right to highlight the transformative nature of the "indicative" whereby the Christian "ceased to be a servant of sin, has become capable of bearing the fruits of the Spirit . . . ceased to be a being of flesh subject to the law of sin. He serves God and brings forth the fruits of the Spirit. He is holy."⁸³ Certain aspects of his solution, however, still require further examination. Does Paul present us with an understanding of νόμος that is as much about an inner reality of the justified believer as it is about the set of commandments in the traditional Jewish sense? Furthermore, does Paul really delineate as clearly as Goguel suggests between the ceremonial and the moral aspects of the law? Finally, Goguel's conception of the Christian as "a double being, half flesh and half spirit" is not the most accurate way to understand Paul's presentation of the believer (as I will argue in subsequent chapters).⁸⁴

Goguel's proposal was well-received by C. H. Dodd and Wolfgang Schrage, who follow a similar nomistic understanding of Paul's ethics. Dodd, famous for dichotomizing Paul's preaching (κήρυγμα) and his teaching (διδασχί) by drawing a strict

⁸¹ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 449.

⁸² Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 453.

⁸³ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 448.

⁸⁴ Goguel, *The Primitive Church*, 453. It is his language of "half" and "half" that I find problematic. However, I agree that believers are "divided" insofar as they live in the present world awaiting their future heavenly reality.

distinction between theology and ethics, argued that since Paul's letters expound *implications* of the gospel, they should be considered didactic rather than kerygmatic.⁸⁵ Dodd in fact sees Paul as promulgating a new law which he presents "in the form of a code of precepts to which a Christian man is obliged to conform."⁸⁶ For Dodd, this ethical scheme was in some way analogous to Torah.⁸⁷ W. D. Davies, Dodd's student would continue to press this point. He suggested that Paul "regarded Jesus in the light of a new Moses" and "recognized in the words of Christ a νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ which formed for him the basis for a kind of Christian Halakah."⁸⁸ Moreover, Davies argues that for Paul, the actual words of Jesus were for him a "New Torah."⁸⁹ Davies would later explain that the moral life of the Christian "bears constant reference to, or is moulded by, the actual life of Jesus of Nazareth."⁹⁰ In this way, those who are in Christ, "appropriate and share in Jesus' death and resurrection, so that their moral life is rooted in what they are, new creations in Christ. The moral imperative rests on the indicative."⁹¹

Eric H. Wahlstrom: The believer's sufficient new will and volition. If

Goguel, Dodd, and Davies saw in Paul's use of νόμος a crucial component for making sense of his ethics (specifically, for understanding the relationship between the

⁸⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: Three Lectures with an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 9.

⁸⁶ C. H. Dodd, "ENNOMOS XPISTOY," in *Studia Paulina in Honorem Johannis de Zwaan Septuagenarii*, ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1953), 100. See also *Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 72.

⁸⁷ Dodd, "ENNOMOS XPISTOY," 103.

⁸⁸ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 144.

⁸⁹ Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 144.

⁹⁰ W. D. Davies, "Paul and the Law: Reflections on Pitfalls in Interpretation," in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. Morna D. Hooker and Stephen G. Wilson (Oxford: Alden, 1982), 10.

⁹¹ Davies, "Paul and the Law: Reflections on Pitfalls in Interpretation," 10. Although he does not expand on the issue, in the following section Davies does highlight imitating Jesus as an important element of Christian morality.

“indicative” and the “imperative”), Eric Wahlstrom argued just the opposite. He was adamant that, according to Paul, “the gospel was not ‘a new law,’ and Jesus was not a new Moses.”⁹² What Wahlstrom suggests instead as the dynamic at work between the new life in the Spirit and proper ethical conduct is the reality that the believer is “pneuma-autonomous” and “Christ-autonomous.”

First, Paul’s teaching on the dwelling Spirit, through which God works in the believer to will and to do his good pleasure (Phil 2:13), is key for Wahlstrom. It is not, however, as though the Spirit is an inward monitor who informs the Christian of the solutions of ethical problems and “decides for him what course of action follow.”⁹³ If this were the case, argues Wahlstrom, the Spirit would simply be a substitute for the law.⁹⁴ Instead, for Paul the relationship between the Spirit and the Christian is more intimate and personal: “Between the Spirit and the new man there is an identity of purpose and direction.”⁹⁵ Second, Wahlstrom reminds us that the Christian is also “in Christ,” such that he enjoys benefits that guide him in his conduct such as the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). For Wahlstrom, then, the final and absolute authority for Christian conduct is the “light within,” by which he means the new life in Christ and in the Spirit created by God’s redemptive act.

In summary, for Wahlstrom, the Christian is just, holy, righteous, a saint, a son of God and there is no “not yet” in these statements.⁹⁶ The Christian is a fundamentally new creation that benefits from being “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” Life in Christ and in the Spirit, however, is the individual’s own life which he lives in the world, not a

⁹² Eric H. Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1950), 166.

⁹³ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 149.

⁹⁴ Wahlstrom is careful not to reduce the Spirit merely to an inner standard in the believer pertaining to moral conduct, for doing so, “would obscure and endanger the freedom of the Christian as a man in Christ.” Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 150.

⁹⁵ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 149.

⁹⁶ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 87.

heavenly, mystical, or divine life apart from the realities of the present evil age. It is a life closely connected with faith in Christ's redemptive work such that "the Christian life remains forever predicated on grace, never on the Christian's own achievements."⁹⁷ The structure of Paul's letters confirms the "dependence of the new life upon the redemptive activity of God."⁹⁸ The exhortations to moral life ("imperative") follow upon the exposition of the spiritual transformation ("indicative"). For Wahlstrom, the exhortation that begins with Romans 12 is "really an exposition of [the] new spiritual life in the world, but it is cast in the form of an exhortation" such that it is adequate to summarize Paul's exhortation with the phrase, "Be what you are."⁹⁹

Wahlstrom strives to maintain Paul's tension of dual agency in moral conduct, where the individual is the one working but God is also affirmed as the one working in the believer "both to will and to work." He also refutes the idea of Christian sinlessness while maintaining a generally optimistic Christian anthropology.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Wahlstrom's proposal for how to understand the complex dynamic between the redemptive work of God in the believer and how he ought to live his life falls short in a few areas. First, Wahlstrom presents the believer far too optimistically: "Since the will of each individual Christian is God's will, and God works in each one both to will and to do,

⁹⁷ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 100.

⁹⁸ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 101.

⁹⁹ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ Wahlstrom is clear: Paul did not believe that the Christian was sinless, Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 116–21. When speaking about "Christian perfection," however, he was more nuanced. Following closely on the work of R. Newton Flew, Wahlstrom differentiates between two ways of expressing the doctrine of perfectionism. On the one hand, "if the Christian life is completely dependent upon the grace of God, then this life is perfect in itself and the moral life does not need to be taken into consideration." On the other hand, he sought to present "a contrast between Paul's high conception of the Christian life and our easy acceptance of the presence of sin in the Christian life" (as evidenced by the prominence of confession of sin and constant exhortations to confess sin in his contemporary context). In other words, he seems to be pushing back against Wernle's understanding of Christian sinlessness while at the same time correcting what he perceived to be a wrong understanding of Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* which many have taken "as an excuse for continuing in sin" (116, 122).

only harmony and peace can result.”¹⁰¹ Certainly, to say that the Christian’s will is God’s will is overstating the case. Unlike God, the Christian is influenced by the flesh and life in the present evil age. Overall, Wahlstrom’s failure is in not taking Paul’s “imperative” seriously. He seldom discusses the explicit exhortations of the apostle, and even when he does, he suggests that, though the Christian has in himself (through the Spirit) the knowledge of what is right and wrong, the apostle finds it helpful, “very sparingly,” to “resort to external standards and examples in order to instruct his people in the way of Christian living.”¹⁰² Wahlstrom also suggests that Paul “seldom used the idea of the imitation of God” as motivation for living the new life.¹⁰³ In the end, he seems to present a false dichotomy when he says that “[Paul’s] words are not commands to an unwilling and obstreperous group of followers, but descriptions of the nature of the Christian life expressing itself in conduct.”¹⁰⁴ Regardless of whether believers are “unwilling and obstreperous,” the imperatival force of God’s commands (ἐντολή, 1 Cor 7:19) and Paul’s commands (παραγγέλλω, 1 Cor 7:10; 1 Thess 4:11; 1 Tim 6:13) remains.

Wolfgang Schrage: Christ as the “indicative” foundation of Paul’s ethics.

In his 1961 dissertation, Schrage launched a not-so-subtle rebuttal against Wahlstrom’s suggestion that concrete norms played a negligible role in Paul’s vision of the Christian’s moral life.¹⁰⁵ In his project, Schrage examined the specific admonitions put forth by the

¹⁰¹ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 158.

¹⁰² Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 159. It is here that Wahlstrom leaves important questions unanswered. If the believer is so fully equipped internally with the knowledge and ability to carry out the moral life, what purpose does Paul find in the “imperative”? Furthermore, to say that Paul’s exhortations appear “very sparingly” is surely to undermine the apostle’s own involvement in and concern with the moral life of the recipients of his letters and ignore his countless exhortations.

¹⁰³ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 160. For him, the new man is not an independent being who can stand, as it were, “to one side contemplating God and imitating him.” Rather, it is God who works in the new man, and what the new man does is not an imitation of God but God’s own will and work.

¹⁰⁴ Wahlstrom, *The New Life in Christ*, 173.

¹⁰⁵ Wolfgang Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese: ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Ethik* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1961).

apostle and argued that these admonitions cannot be explained as the result of weakening eschatological hope,¹⁰⁶ as the compromise between the ideal and the actual,¹⁰⁷ as being of temporary value but ultimately superfluous,¹⁰⁸ or as being valid only in their contemporary context.¹⁰⁹ One of Schrage's important contributions was to bring back to the forefront the place of concrete commandments within Paul's basic theological perspective—most significantly, to the forefront of his doctrine of justification. We might say that one of Schrage's goals was to put the “imperative” back into the conversation of Paul's ethics, which had been largely consumed with discussions of the “indicative” of the Spirit and the new life in Christ.

In a later work, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, Schrage presents his own understanding of the “indicative” and “imperative” in Paul. He begins his section with an important qualification for how to understand this way of conceiving of Paul's ethics: “The scheme [“indicative” and “imperative”] is not without its problems, but is justifiable so long as it is not taken as suggesting interchangeable motivations and purely formal ethical statements, but as a shorthand way of referring to substantial assurances of salvation and substantiated injunctions for action.”¹¹⁰ In other words, both sides must be legitimately grappled with on their own terms and should not be interchanged. Nevertheless, for Schrage, the two do not stand on equal ground: “The priority of the

¹⁰⁶ He writes, “Sind die Einzelgebote das Ergebnis eines Enteschatologisierungprozesses?” Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ He states, “Sind die Einzelgebote ein Kompromiß zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit?” Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ The question he asks is, “Sind die Einzelgebote nur vorläufig notwendig und gültig, auf die Dauer aber überflüssig?” Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ He puts it this way: “Sind die Einzelgebote ausschließlich konkret und situationsbezogen?” Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*, 37.

¹¹⁰ Though Schrage does not expand on what the “problems” of the schema are, he does hint at the fact that the grammatical terminology might be misleading, since the “imperative” might in fact include such things as the “optative.” Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 168.

indicative assurance of salvation lets us treat it as fundamental: in other words, the indicative, whatever its substance, implies and justifies the imperative.”¹¹¹

For Schrage, the saving eschatological event of Jesus’s death and resurrection, “in which God acted, eschatologically and finally, to save the world,” is the starting point and basis for Paul’s ethics.¹¹² The saving work of Christ, however, is not only the Christological *basis* of ethics but also its guiding principle.¹¹³ Furthermore, Paul also sees Christ as the motivation for right living (cf. 2 Cor 10:1; Rom 15:30). Schrage expands on the Christological basis of Paul’s ethics by considering the sacrament of baptism in Romans 6.

For Schrage, then, the “indicative-imperative” schema is an acceptable way of conceiving the apostle’s ethics so long as both realities are preserved in their full substance. Furthermore, it is not just that the “indicative” is the foundation for the schema, but that Christ is at the core of the “indicative,” (though Schrage does not in any way minimize the role of the Spirit, for example). Indeed, “christology is for Paul the fundamental ethical principle” and functions alongside the eschatological expectation of the parousia without minimizing the “imperative.”¹¹⁴

As we have seen thus far, while the “imperative” clearly refers to the exhortations, commands, or pleas of the apostle, the substance of the “indicative,” even for Schrage, remains difficult to delineate. Does it refer to what Christ has done, or does it also encompass who the believer is a result of Jesus’s redemptive work? Is it limited to past soteriological realities (i.e., justification, adoption, forgiveness) or does it refer to salvation as a whole and thus includes its future and eschatological aspects? Does it refer

¹¹¹ Interestingly, Schrage does not fill the content of the “indicative” very clearly; he just speaks of the indicative, “whatever its substance.” Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 171.

¹¹² Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 172.

¹¹³ Luther’s words that Christ is not primarily *exemplum* but *sacramentum* resonate with Schrage here (cf. Martin Luther, WA 57.III.222., 12–14), *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 173.

¹¹⁴ Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 181.

to something that is invariable and static or is to something that is moldable and flexible depending on the specific situation? In short, while Schrage seemed to find a good balance between the two terms, some questions remain unanswered.

Victor Furnish: Paul's eschatology connecting his theology and ethics.

Undoubtedly, one of the most influential books on the ethics of the apostle Paul published in the twentieth century is Victor Furnish's work, originally published in 1968, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Furnish famously concludes his work with the following statement: "it has become apparent that no interpretation of the Pauline ethic can be judged successful which does not grapple with the problem of indicative and imperative in Paul's thought."¹¹⁵ In the preface, Richard Hays notes four trends in Pauline ethics that Furnish critiques. The first pertains to the nineteenth century tendency to present Paul's ethics from an experiential-expressive perspective that sought to fuse the divine work of the Spirit with the human personality. This approach, notes Hays, "tended to speak in various ways of a disjunction between the 'ideal' claimed by Paul's own experience and the 'reality' of his converts' lives."¹¹⁶ For Furnish, this approach drove too big a wedge between the "indicative" and the "imperative," suggesting that the two referred to two different modes of existence that belonged to two different spheres of reality.¹¹⁷

Furnish also critiques those who, like Martin Dibelius, argue that the early Christians had no concrete ethic because of their expectation of the imminent return of Jesus. They argue that it was only after their hopes faded that they saw the need for

¹¹⁵ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 279.

¹¹⁶ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 10. This approach sometimes distinguished between what was true "in principle" (ideal) of the Christian life and what was true "in fact" (experiential).

¹¹⁷ This approach is perhaps best captured by the argument of Albert Schweitzer, who, according to Furnish, "rejects [justification] entirely, regarding it as a subsidiary theme in Paul" which "allows no room for the development of an ethic." Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1931), 293ff.

ethical directives, which they borrowed from Hellenistic world.¹¹⁸ From Furnish’s perspective, this understanding of the “imperative” as a set of instructions that came as an afterthought and are completely disconnected from the apostle’s teaching is entirely mistaken. Third, Furnish pushes back against C. H. Dodd and W. D. Davies who distinguish sharply between *kerygma* (proclamation) and *didache* (moral teaching) in a way that alienates the one too much from the other. In this way, this critique is similar to the first critique (in that here also the problem is dissociating the “indicative” from the “imperative”). In this case, however, the issue is not the pitting of ideal vs. reality, but of theology vs. ethics.¹¹⁹ Fourth, Furnish critiques the approach of Morton Enslin who “presupposes distinctions between ‘practical morality’ and ‘theoretic ethics’ on the one hand . . . and ‘religion’ and theological ‘doctrine’ on the other.”¹²⁰ Although Enslin did emphasize the unity of “morals and religion” in Paul, he did not see this a cogent unity, but rather an unexpected one.¹²¹ In fact, considering Paul’s emphasis on salvation by faith, Enslin expects a neglect of morals; that moral teaching is not neglected shows, in his mind, how “moral integrity oftentimes surpasses logic.”¹²²

These critiques set up the major thrust of Furnish’s constructive contribution—the organic connection between Paul’s theological convictions and his ethical teachings (i.e., the relationship between the “indicative” and the “imperative”). Furnish’s project is

¹¹⁸ Cf. Martin Dibelius, *Urchristentum und Kultur* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1928), 18; Martin Dibelius, *A Fresh Approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (New York: Scribner, 1936), 224. For Furnish’s critique here, see especially *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 259ff.

¹¹⁹ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 60ff.

¹²⁰ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 266. Cf. Morton Scott Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), 134.

¹²¹ Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul*, xiii, 53.

¹²² Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul*, 50. Similarly, he points to the logical inconsistency pertaining to Paul’s teaching on baptism. On one hand, Paul claims that baptism makes the believer holy. On the other hand, the apostle still finds it necessary to point out the necessity for the Christian to refrain from sin. This, says, Enslin, “was a flaw in logic, but a glorious one.” He suggests that although Paul believed and taught freedom from the Mosaic law and the sufficiency of faith and baptism, these “never caused him to lose his heritage of moral standards.” *The Ethics of Paul*, 58.

founded on his understanding of the apostle's underlying theological convictions, which he argues thoroughly shape his ethics. He summarizes his position in the following words:

The study of the Pauline ethic, therefore, is not the study of his ethical theory, for he had none, nor of his code for Christian living, for he gave none. It is the study, first of all, of the theological convictions which underlie Paul's concrete exhortations and instructions and, secondly, of the way those convictions shape his responses to practical questions of conduct.¹²³

Furnish's contribution, then, is to present a thoroughly theological solution to the complex phenomenon of the "indicative-imperative." For him, the path that leads to the proper understanding of Paul's ethics is the full package of his theological convictions. More specifically, he concludes that of all the components of his theology, his *eschatology* is the key element: "The heuristic key to Paul's theology as a whole, the point in which his major themes are rooted and to which they are ultimately oriented, is the apostle's eschatological perspective. Eschatology, therefore, is properly the first, not the last, section in an exposition of Paul's theology."¹²⁴

Furnish's commitment to a theological cohesion between Paul's "indicative" and his "imperative" leads him to an engaging discussion under the subheading, "Faith, Love and Obedience."¹²⁵ Here, he surveys the apostle's epistles and shows that Paul's conception of faith is a crucial component of his ethic "for it is faith which characterizes the mode of man's life in the world."¹²⁶ Following Bultmann, Furnish notes that Paul sometimes presents faith as obedience.¹²⁷ In this fusion of faith and obedience, which

¹²³ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 211–12.

¹²⁴ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 116. He nevertheless recognizes that no motif or central theme of the apostle's theology "can be understood in isolation from the remaining ones" (e.g., justification by faith, love, the Spirit, the church, the law).

¹²⁵ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 181–206.

¹²⁶ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 181.

¹²⁷ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 184. Here, Furnish both relies on Bultmann's work and distances himself from what he believes to be an overstatement on Bultmann's part: that "Paul understands faith primarily as obedience," by which he means that faith is an act of obedience. Bultmann

relate to the “indicative” and “imperative,” Furnish finds the means by which the believer participates in Christ’s death and resurrection.

Two other important works on Paul’s ethics were published the same year as that Furnish published his seminal work; both shared a similar concern for maintaining a close relationship between Paul’s theology and his moral instruction. Anton Grabner-Haider’s short monograph *Paraklese und Eschatologie bei Paulus* explores the importance of Paul’s eschatology for his ethical teaching.¹²⁸ Otto Merk’s *Handeln aus Glauben* is concerned with the question of motivation for ethics and in Paul and thus seeks to show the close relationship between Paul’s theological conviction and his congruent ethical admonitions. Nevertheless, Merk maintained the traditional division between Paul’s “theology” and “ethics” within the individual epistles, even though his own study seems to suggest that the latter are more integrated into the apostle’s theology than this division would suggest.¹²⁹

Recent Reformulations of the Problem

One of the distinctive remarks Furnish makes in his 1968 volume is in the preface where he notes that his book addresses “a neglected area of biblical research.”¹³⁰ In many ways, Furnish’s work functioned as a catalyst for a deeper and broader study of

suggests that “For Paul the acceptance of the message in faith takes the form of an act of obedience because of the fact that the message which demands acknowledgment of the crucified Jesus as Lord demands of man the surrender of his previous understanding of himself, the reversal of the direction his will has previously had.” Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 314, 315ff.

¹²⁸ Anton Grabner-Haider summarizes his thesis when he writes, “In the Pauline era, Christians are not only admonished to their eschatological horizon of existence, but they are also called upon to carry out this horizon as their own existence, to catch up with it and to live in the future of God.” Anton Grabner-Haider, *Paraklese und Eschatologie bei Paulus: Mensch und Welt im Anspruch der Zukunft Gottes* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1968), 150.

¹²⁹ For example, Otto Merk introduces his treatment of Romans with the following words: “The study of Romans must be preceded by a brief explanation of the distribution of the substance to be treated. That the practical-parenetic part of the letter begins in 12:1 is widely recognized today. But it is just as clear that fundamental explanations on ethics are already given in 6:12–23; 8:2–10, 11.” Otto Merk, *Handeln aus Glauben: die Motivierungen der paulinischen Ethik* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1968), 157.

¹³⁰ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, xiii.

Paul's ethics, particularly among the English-speaking world. The past few decades have seen an explosion of sorts of interdisciplinary approaches to Pauline ethics from a historical, theological, and social perspective. One important trend among many of the recent treatments of Paul's ethics is a reevaluation of the traditional schema by which to study the subject. As I mentioned earlier, with Wernle's work, the "indicative-imperative" quickly became the conventional nomenclature and approach by which to discuss and wrestle with the most important aspects of Paul's ethics.¹³¹ Though many still find the schema useful including Michael Wolter (1997)¹³² and Volker Rabens (2022),¹³³ many have recently reexamined, challenged, and even outright rejected the system. Important voices in this recent push-back include Stan Porter (1993),¹³⁴ Christof Landmesser (1997),¹³⁵ Knut Backhaus (2000),¹³⁶ Troels Engberg-Pedersen (2000),¹³⁷

¹³¹ Siikavirta's review of scholarship gives a very helpful overview of the recent works that have sought to reconfigure this schema, *Baptism and Cognition in Romans 6–8*, 33ff.

¹³² Michael Wolter, "Ethos und Identität in paulinischen Gemeinden," *NTS* 43, no. 3 (1997): 430–44; *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. Robert L. Brawley (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

¹³³ Rabens is careful to note that for him, the "indicative-imperative" can and should "only be one of many different angles on an ethical text. This (one) angle of inquiry into the potential (implicit) ethics of a text may prove to be fruitful or not, depending on the data in the text." Volker Rabens, "Inspiring Ethics: A Hermeneutical Model for the Dialogue between Biblical Texts and Contemporary Ethics," in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. Volker Rabens, Jacqueline Grey, and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, *BINS* 189 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 85n8.

¹³⁴ Stanley E. Porter, "Holiness, Sanctification," in *DPL*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993).

¹³⁵ Christof Landmesser, "Der paulinische Imperativ als christologisches Performativ: eine begründete These zur Einheit von Glaube und Leben im Anschluss an Phil 1,27–2,18," in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums*, ed. Christof Landmesser, Hans-Joachim Eckstein, and Hermann Lichtenberger, *BZNW* 86 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 543–77; "Begründungsstrukturen paulinischer Ethik," in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ: Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and Ruben Zimmermann, *WUNT* 238 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 177–96.

¹³⁶ Knut Backhaus, "Evangelium als Lebensraum: Christologie und Ethik bei Paulus," in *Paulinische Christologieexegetische Beiträge: Hans Hübner zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Udo Schnelle and Thomas Söding (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 9–31.

¹³⁷ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

Udo Schnelle (2001),¹³⁸ David Horrell (2005),¹³⁹ Hermuth Löhr (2005),¹⁴⁰ Folker Blischke (2007),¹⁴¹ and Friedrich W. Horn (2009),¹⁴² and Ruben Zimmermann (2018).¹⁴³ In this section I will highlight the contribution of two individuals who have not only pushed back against the “indicative-imperative” but have provided a helpful alternative.

David G. Horrell: Social-identity categories for Paul’s ethics. The first edition of Horrell’s *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* appeared in 2005. The book was warmly received by theologians, New Testament scholars, and ethicists and in 2016, a second edition of the work was published.¹⁴⁴ Horrell’s project is aimed at bringing the “liberal” project of searching for a universal ethic (solidarity) in conversation with the “communitarian” project of seeking to think from within a specific community (difference) by exploring pertinent texts in the Pauline

¹³⁸ Udo Schnelle, “Transformation und Partizipation als Grundgedanken paulinischer Theologie,” *NTS* 47, no. 1 (January 2001): 58–75; “Die Begründung und die Gestaltung der Ethik bei Paulus,” in *Die bleibende Gegenwart des Evangeliums: Festschrift für Otto Merk zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Roland Gebauer and Martin Meiser, *MTS* 76 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2003), 109–31; “Paulus und Epiktet – Zwei Ethische Modelle,” in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ: Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik*, 2009, 137–58.

¹³⁹ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005).

¹⁴⁰ Hermuth Löhr, “Ethik und Tugendlehre,” in *Weltauffassung, Kult, Ethos*, vol. 3 of *Neues Testament und antike Kultur*, ed. Kurt Erlemann et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), 151–80.

¹⁴¹ Folker Blischke, *Die Begründung und die Durchsetzung der Ethik bei Paulus*, *ABG* 25 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007); “Die Entsprechung von Gottesverhältnis und ethischer Neubestimmung als Begründung der Ethik im Römerbrief,” in *Letter to the Romans*, ed. Udo Schnelle (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 403–23.

¹⁴² Friedrich W. Horn, “Die Darstellung und Begründung der Ethik des Apostels Paulus in der new perspective,” in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ: Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik*, ed. Friedrich W. Horn and Ruben Zimmermann, *WUNT* 238 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 213–31.

¹⁴³ Ruben Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love: Discovering Paul’s “Implicit Ethics” through 1 Corinthians*, trans. Dieter T. Roth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018).

¹⁴⁴ One of the most detailed reviews of Horrell’s book was by Victor Furnish himself who said, “[Horrell’s] fresh interpretation of the apostle’s moral argumentation significantly advances the discussion of his ethics . . . there is far more to praise than to query about this book. It is an engaging and important contribution to Pauline studies,” Victor Paul Furnish, “Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics,” *RBL* 9 (January 2007): 434.

corpus.¹⁴⁵ He does so by engaging in dialogue with two primary conversation partners: Jürgen Habermas¹⁴⁶ and Stanley Hauerwas. Horrell intentionally focuses on texts like 1 Corinthians 8–10 and Romans 14–15 where Paul is both laboring to maintain the church’s unity (solidarity) while at the same time allowing and even defending the legitimacy of differing opinions within it (difference). These two ideas form the two primary conceptual pillars of his work and also correspond to two “metanorms” Horrell identifies in the Pauline texts: “solidarity in Christ” and “Christ-like other-regard”; both anchored in the apostle’s Christology.

The central task of Horrell’s book is to engage Pauline thought with contemporary ethical theory. What distinguishes Horrell’s work is not an entirely different set of presuppositions about Paul, his ethics, or the early Christian communities; what is most innovative is that by asking different questions (using social-scientific categories), Horrell’s work provides new answers and thus new ways of thinking of Paul’s ethical instruction.¹⁴⁷ He shows the benefits of using social-scientific methods and categories to approach the New Testament without ruling out or neglecting the theological conviction and the worldview of the early Christian communities.

At first glance, including Horrell and his work in a survey of recent scholarship on the “indicative-imperative” might appear to be inadequate since he is intentionally approaching the issues in Paul’s ethics from an entirely different perspective. Yet it is

¹⁴⁵ Here, Horrell is specifically thinking about forms of philosophically grounded liberalism which stand in the Kantian heritage (which, as he notes, “can be located at various points on the left-right spectrum, politically”) and not about economic or theological liberalism. David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), xxi.

¹⁴⁶ Horrell characterizes the liberal position of Habermas as *deontological* and as that which seeks to articulate “a moral basis for the public sphere, for society, with a rational, universally justifiable grounding which transcends the specific values and goods of particular traditions.” Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 54.

¹⁴⁷ Horrell is careful to clarify that his approach should in no way communicate a disregard for the relationship between Paul’s theology and his ethical instruction: “The widespread acknowledgement of the integration of theology and ethics in Paul is affirmed here, though understood and expressed in terms of a different theoretical and conceptual framework.” Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 48.

precisely his departure from a traditional approach that makes his contributions important for the present study since his work is representative of much recent scholarship that has ventured to study the apostle's ethical instruction without using the traditional grid popularized by Bultmann. In one sense, Horrell's desire to go beyond the "indicative-imperative" is what is most significant.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the benefits of such a novel approach would not be nearly as profitable for this study had Horrell not brought the two methodologies into conversation. Horrell offers a preliminary proposal for engaging with Paul's ethics when he writes,

A social-scientific approach therefore provides ways to conceptualise the Pauline material that takes us beyond describing it as either theology or ethics, and challenges the sharp distinction between the two. From the perspective outlined here, we should view the Pauline material as a development of a body of tradition, based on a specific narrative myth, which gave meaning and order to the lives of those who "inhabited" it. This mythology is enacted in ritual performance and shapes the lives of its adherents.¹⁴⁹

Horrell's interpretive framework introduces a number of helpful categories. The first is that of *identity*, specifically *social* (as opposed to personal) identity.¹⁵⁰ For Horrell, who follows anthropologist Clifford Geertz, (social) identity encompasses both belief and behavior, or more technically, "world-view" and "ethos."¹⁵¹ As Horrell notes, these terms roughly correlate with the categories of "indicative" and "imperative," though perhaps by moving outside of grammatical nomenclature the terms more clearly denote

¹⁴⁸ In this way, it is not surprising to find him as one of the contributors in an edited work that seeks to go precisely, "beyond the indicative and imperative." See David G. Horrell, "Particular Identity and Common Ethics: Reflections on the Foundations and Content of Pauline Ethics in 1 Corinthians 5," in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ: Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik*, ed. Friedrich W. Horn and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 238 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 100. Here, Horrell uses the term "myth" in a positive way that simply refers to a means by which (a) "truth" is conveyed. He rightly notes that "its application to the New Testament's theology may be regarded with some suspicion, and its positive retrieval requires an emergence from the shadow cast by Bultmann's hermeneutical programme of demythologisation." Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 94.

¹⁵⁰ He adopts Henri Tajfel's definition of social identity. See Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 255.

¹⁵¹ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 101. See especially Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

the social (and theological) realities of the apostle's context. It is here that Horrell's study clearly intersects with the "indicative-imperative." He suggests that focusing on "world-view" and "ethos" provides "new ways of conceptualizing, and resolving, the famous antinomy between indicative and imperative in Paul, which, we recall, was seen by Furnish as a fundamental crux in the interpretation of Paul's ethics."¹⁵²

What then is Horrell's proposed solution? He suggests that the apparently paradoxical character between the "is" and the "ought" in Paul begins to fade when considered from his proposed social-scientific perspective. In his view, social identity theory provides categories that comfortably encompass "worldview," (the structure of reality, the "indicative") and "ethos," (the approved style of life, the "imperative"). He goes on to delineate exactly how these social-scientific categories can be used to analyze Paul's ethics, and especially, the "indicative-imperative" tension:

The more specifically paradoxical form of the Pauline indicative-imperative expressions—you are X, so be X—can be well understood in relation to social identity theory. They appear 'self-contradictory' when they are regarded as comparable with treatments of actual fact . . . or biological identity, when to urge someone to 'be what they are' is nonsensical. However, as expressions related to a mythologically-undergirded, socially-constructed identity – an identity which is always, at least potentially, vulnerable, fragile and malleable – they are not paradoxical but rather indications (tacit and implicit to be sure) that this identity is constructed not given, produced and reproduced not fixed.¹⁵³

The tension between the "indicative" and "indicative," says Horrell, can thus be resolved when the "indicative" is seen "not as statements which can be held to be either 'true' or not but as identity-descriptors and group norms which need to be constantly affirmed."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 102.

¹⁵³ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 103.

¹⁵⁴ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 2016, 103. He illustrates this by considering Paul's statement in Galatians 5:25. Bultmann, by taking the passage as merely saying that we ought to live by the Spirit because we are in actual fact people who live by the spirit, saw here a serious Pauline antinomy. If instead we saw the text as expressing that we are defined or identified as the people who live by the spirit (as one of our positive identity-descriptors) and thus ought to continually affirm and reinforce this facet of our group identity, the "tension" within the text begins to dissolve.

Horrell's work is stimulating and insightful. His contribution from social-identity theory to the field of Pauline ethics is helpful and clearly applicable. Nevertheless, a number of questions remain. Certainly the "indicative" in Paul, though ill-defined and vague throughout Pauline scholarship, cannot be reduced to statements of social identity. Paul certainly did not conceive of justification, forgiveness, and adoption as "vulnerable, fragile and malleable" components of who Christians are. In other words, though Horrell's contribution provides possible categories for how to articulate the relationship between "indicative" and "imperative" (especially as it pertains to how the identity of Christians ["indicative"] is affirmed or negated by their conduct ["imperative"]), his proposal does not fully account for the way Paul presents a Christian's identity. Nevertheless, as this project will show, the category of *identity* turns out to be an important feature of Paul's own argument in Romans 6:1–14.

Ruben Zimmermann: "Implicit ethics" as an alternative methodology.

One of the most prominent figures in the movement seeking to do away with the "indicative-imperative" as the system by which to understand and study Paul's ethics is Ruben Zimmermann. His recent co-edited work with Friedrich W. Horn, *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ: Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik* is a compilation of essays that propose a new schema, as the title suggests, beyond the old nomenclature in pursuit of a system—and more than a system, an approach to ethics—that is broad enough to account for all the ways Paul presents his ethical teachings. Nevertheless, his contributions are not limited to his critical engagement and challenges to traditional methods; his project is largely constructive. In his recent book *The Logic of Love: Discovering Paul's 'Implicit Ethics' Through 1 Corinthians*, Zimmermann tackles the important question of Paul's rationale for behavior and examines these rationales, justifications, as well as the apostle's presuppositions and forms. He introduces his work as contributing to the consideration of "'ethical theory' in Paul's letters or of a 'meta-

ethics' of the ethical content of the Pauline writings."¹⁵⁵ For Zimmermann, understanding Paul's "ethics" (different from ethos or morals) involves understanding his *attribution of value*, which only occasionally explicitly states what is "good" and "evil." What is important for Zimmermann is that these value judgments are not simply dogmatic statements. In other words, the "logic" of Paul's ethical instruction is not always explicit, not always justified by an argument that is "constructed with recourse to certain ethical maxims and principles."¹⁵⁶ For this reason, studying his ethics simply through traditional argumentation or logical conclusions inherently overlooks the bigger picture of his ethical instruction. It is not surprising, then, that Zimmermann so resolutely rejects the "indicative-imperative" schema.

The "indicative-imperative" is not simply a model for studying the ethics of Paul that seeks to hold the apostle's descriptive statements about salvation and the prescriptive instructions together. Rather, it is a system that claims to have also found the *ground* of ethics in Paul. As Bultmann suggests, "upon [the] indicative, the imperative is founded."¹⁵⁷ With this in view, Zimmermann presents a seven-fold critique of the schema: (1) the terminology is imprecise and largely undefined as evidenced by the various ways that "indicative" and "imperative" are used and explained; (2) the distinction between "indicative" and "imperative," which is often used to validate the division between the "dogmatic" and "paraenetic" sections of Paul's letters, is too general and does not apply to letters like 1 Corinthians; (3) though the use of a term can be heuristically justified even if the term does not appear in the sources, scholars use the "indicative-imperative" model in differing and even contradictory ways (e.g., Bultmann and Wolter), thus betraying the usefulness of the system; (4) the bipolarity of the system

¹⁵⁵ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, xi.

¹⁵⁶ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 176.

requires that passages be assigned to one of the two poles, which leads to crass oversimplifications; 5) since the model was developed out of a Lutheran understanding of Paul's soteriology (*sola gratia, sola fide*) and ethics ("works of the law"), and since newer approaches (e.g., the New Perspective on Paul) suggest different ways to understand law and works, the *a priori* of the schema might legitimately be challenged; 6) perhaps the salvation or redemptive grounds for ethics has been overplayed and overvalued such that the "indicative-imperative" formula actually restricts the relevance of Paul's ethics rather than allowing them to unfold; 7) the "indicative-imperative" model contradicts the logic of philosophical ethics by suggesting that an "ought" statement can be derived from an "is" statement.¹⁵⁸

Overall, Zimmermann's approach to reading Pauline texts ethically involves more than simply identifying the normative, ultimate justification of proper Christian conduct. Instead, his implicit-ethics approach presents a "*pluralistic and pragmatic rationale*."¹⁵⁹ He employs established categories and terms from philosophical ethics and develops an organon, a series of eight "points of view" or perspectives through which "implicit ethics" can be studied.¹⁶⁰ This multi-faceted, multi-perspectival model, Zimmermann argues, functions as a grid that better captures the full scope of Paul's ethical and the logic and implicitness of his ethical instruction.

¹⁵⁸ These seven points are largely taken directly from Zimmerman's own presentation *The Logic of Love*, 19–21.

¹⁵⁹ Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 29. It is important, once again, to note that Zimmermann does not reject any notion of "imperative" texts appealing to ultimate grounds or justification for an action. Instead, he recognizes that "even a cursory glance at the texts reveals that the rationale behind early Christian ethics is not persistently presented in this manner. There are numerous ethical discourses content to offer a pragmatic justification for conduct through appeals to custom and convention, to reflect upon short- and mid-term solutions, as well as to consider compromises and trade-offs."

¹⁶⁰ Zimmermann develops these eight perspectives in the first major section of his book, *The Logic of Love*, 31–94.

Summary

As we have seen, since the eighteenth century, Pauline scholarship has grappled with how to understand certain texts where the apostle's theology and his ethics appear in tension. Though Baur did not explore Paul's ethics explicitly, he did comment on the implications of salvation for sin in the believer's life: the death of Christ has triumphed over the flesh and thus sin is no longer a problem or a reality for the Christian. Ernesti disagreed with Baur and argued instead that though the presence of the Spirit in the believer does not make him unable to sin, it makes it possible for the believer not to sin. Though the Spirit brings liberation from the necessity to sin, the believer still needs to pursue life in accordance to God's will. Wernle was the first to frame Paul's theology—specifically the Spirit's miraculous eradication of sin in the individual after conversion—under the rubric of the “indicative.” How could Paul so adamantly proclaim that those who are justified and have received the Spirit are free from sin (having themselves died to sin) and later urge these same individuals to combat sin? For Wernle, the “indicative” was primary and, because it asserted the believer's sinlessness (or in his later work, a complete defeat of sin), the “imperative” only played a superfluous and unneeded role.

Bultmann was unconvinced by Wernle's proposal. Rather than merely juxtaposing Paul's “indicative” and “imperative,” Bultmann popularized their dichotomous and paradoxical nature while still maintaining their logical relationship. For Bultmann, “righteousness” was an eschatological idea declared to be true by God's act of grace; it was not a moral or ethical norm to be achieved. The “indicative” and “imperative” are closely intertwined and held together by Paul's teaching on *πίστις*. In fact, for Bultmann, the “indicative-imperative” paradox “is fully understandable through faith.”¹⁶¹ In the end, Bultmann understands the “imperative” as subsumed within the

¹⁶¹ Bultmann, “The Problem of Ethics in Paul,” 216.

logical prior reality of the “indicative.” Not even the “imperative” pertains to ethical demands or requirements. Instead, the “imperative” is merely obedience to the good life—that which the redeemed person has always desired to experience but which he could not do so previously in his bondage to sin.

Goguel suggested that two distinct ethics were present in Paul’s writings. The first is the ethic of the “indicative” which is theoretical and tied to justification. The second is the ethic related to the “imperative,” which calls for obedience not to an external set of standards, but to a law that already resides within the renewed person. Though distinct, the two pertained to obedience to some form of law. Nevertheless, both can be understood as ethics of law, if “law” is rightly understood. Both pertain to obedience to some form of νόμος. Wahlstrom responded and argued the opposite. The new spiritual life of the believer is its own moral standard. The Christian is free from the Law and ultimately only accountable to the internal standard of God’s own will, which God himself is working in the believer; not only “to will,” but also “to do” (Phil 2:13). For Schrage, the “indicative” both implies and justifies the “imperative,” and at the core of the former was Paul’s Christology. Nevertheless, the two are important and must be carefully preserved. Furnish agreed with Schrage that the apostle’s theology convictions thoroughly shaped his ethics. He maintained that Paul’s Christology was central to his ethical instruction, but he argued that so too was his eschatology.

Horrell’s approach to Paul’s ethics from a socio-scientific perspective introduces helpful categories for analyzing and synthesizing the apostle’s instruction. Most importantly, the category of social identity, as that which pertains to one’s worldview as well as one’s ethos might help create a helpful alternative grid through which to examine Paul’s ethics. Zimmermann joins with Horrell, Schnelle, Horn, and others, and argues that the “indicative-imperative” way of approaching Pauline ethics is too vague, too narrow, and in the end, is unable to take into account the full breadth of the apostle’s ethical instructions. He argues that Paul “does not adhere to a strict form for

justifying and reflecting upon his perspective on conduct. Instead, his “‘implicit ethics’ distinguish themselves through the numerous ways through which he makes his ethics plausible.”¹⁶² This includes deontological deductions, teleological considerations, and even a “weighing of goods.”

Approach to This Study

This study is intended to be a contribution to the field of Pauline ethics. By using the term “ethics” or “ethical,” I am not implying that the NT as a whole, or Romans specifically, presents a systematic ethical theory of norms detailing the various customs and habits that are appropriate for community life in the Aristotelian sense.¹⁶³ Instead, I use the term more generically to refer to the moral guidance given by Paul (in my case) to his audience on how they were to conduct themselves.¹⁶⁴ Even if the term “ethics” is employed in the broad sense I mentioned above, not everyone has approached the study of Paul’s ethics in the same way.¹⁶⁵ Schrage’s standard work, for example, is a prime example of a *historical-descriptive reconstruction of ideas* approach to NT ethics.¹⁶⁶ As a

¹⁶² Zimmermann, *The Logic of Love*, 236.

¹⁶³ Both of Aristotle’s undisputed ethical writings (*Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*) expound “ethical theory” (ἠθικὴ θεωρία; Aristotle, *An. post.* 89b 9 [Tredennick, LCL])—his carefully constructed systematic analysis of the relationship between happiness, virtue, and a rational life. His systematic approach to ethics thus distinguishes itself significantly from Paul’s ethical teaching and even Plato’s own Republic. For a further discussion on Aristotle’s ethics see the short introduction in Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), vii–xiv.

¹⁶⁴ By employing this broader definition, I am not granting that Paul’s ethics are devoid of any logic or theological foundation. Rather, following Schrage, my definition of ethics includes anything that pertains to “the foundations, the support for, and the criteria and principles for this way of acting and living.” Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Richard Hays helpfully presents and explains six distinguishable approaches to New Testament ethics in Richard B. Hays, “Mapping the Field: Approaches to New Testament Ethics,” in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. Van der Watt and François S. Malan, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 3–19. Different criteria and nomenclature are used to map out the various approaches to New Testament ethics. For a sample of these overviews see Lorenzo Alvarez Verdes, *Caminar En El Espíritu: El Pensamiento Ético de s. Pablo* (Roma: Editiones Academiae Alphonsonianae, 2000), 29–60.

¹⁶⁶ Schrage’s work unfolds chronologically beginning with a lengthy historical reconstruction of the ethical teachings of Jesus. He then moves to sections on the “Ethical Beginnings in the Earliest Congregations” and “Ethical Accents in the Synoptic Gospels” before moving to the epistles. His goal is to present a historical development of the ethics of the NT. For Schrage, the proper methodology for this kind

social historian interested in how the early Christians actually lived, Wayne Meeks is adopts a second methodology, approaching the NT primarily as a *socio-historical description of ethos*.¹⁶⁷ A third approach presents NT ethics as a *theological-structural synthesis of systems* focused on the author's logical presentation of ethical instruction.

As I have shown, the “indicative-imperative” has become the dominant lens through which to analyze the tension pertaining to Christian moral responsibility in light of God's saving action. We need to recognize, however, that this lens is in fact a heuristic artifact through which Paul's writings are read and thus through which many attempt to harmonize them. While the schema reflects many of the realities in Paul's teaching, it has also distracted scholars from seeing how Paul himself responds to the tension. We might call this first way of reading the *traditional* or *schematic* approach. The second way we can approach the tension in Paul's teaching is to embrace the manner in which he himself presents it and resolves it. As we will see, Paul's “indicative” is presented as a

of study is “to see that each individual voice is heard, so that the various early Christian models are not forced into a single mold or submerged into an imaginary New Testament ethics.” In the end, Schrage's work, focusing on the ethical *ideas* and *teachings* of the New Testament approaches the subject as a subfield under New Testament theology though with a heavy emphasis on the historical development of the ideas. Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 3. Matera's work likewise falls within this model, though he is less concerned with presenting the historical development of ethics and more concerned with the distinctive voice of each individual book. Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). Other works that generally follow this model include Hermann Jacoby, *Neutestamentliche Ethik* (Königsberg: Thomas & Oppermann, 1899); Heinz D. Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

¹⁶⁷ For Wayne Meeks and others who follow this approach, the NT is important because it provides a window into the social (ethical) reality of the early Christians. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Michael Wolter's work often follows this method. Michael Wolter, “Die ethische Identität christlicher Gemeinden in neutestamentlicher Zeit,” in *Woran orientiert sich Ethik?*, ed. Wilfried Härle and Reiner Preul, MTS 67 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2001); Michael Wolter, “Christliches ethos nach der offenbarung des johannes,” in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and Michael Wolter (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005); Michael Wolter, “The Letter to Philemon as Ethical Counterpart of Paul's Doctrine of Justification,” in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. Francois D. Tolmie, BZNW 169 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 169–79. This approach often relies heavily on the work of anthropologists. Because this approach is interested in socio-historical dynamics, it happily considers any non-canonical evidence that might shed light into the historical context. Not surprisingly, Meeks's and Wolter's works are purely *wissenschaftlich* projects, not interested in propagating any normative ethical ideas. Those who follow this approach stand within the well-established *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and, in many ways, follow the method laid out by William Wrede, “The Task and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology,’” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter*, ed. Robert Morgan, SBT 25 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

metaphorical narrative of God's personal involvement in the story of humanity's desperate condition. Metaphors and narratives, unlike Greek moods, do not fit nicely into binary categories of "indicative" and "imperative." Instead, because metaphors are cognitive and stories speak to our emotions and motives, they both transcend the categories of mere fact or mere duty.

My approach to the study of this particular point of tension in Paul's theology will thus be somewhat different from the traditional one. My hope is that coming to the tension as it surfaces in Romans 6 by submitting to Paul's own metaphorical utterances and considering the cognitive implications of his language (by employing insights from cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory) will provide a fresh analysis of what many primarily view as the problem of the "indicative-imperative."

Preview of the Argument

So far, I have stated my thesis and have proposed ways this project will contribute to the field of Pauline ethics and the broader conversation of Paul's theology. Because my approach to the text will seek to be attentive to Paul's own conceptualization of the theological tension, I will avoid discussing the text with the categories of "indicative" and "imperative" unless I am relating my observations to previous scholarship that uses those terms.

My focus in chapter 2 will be to lay out my methodology for this study. I will begin that chapter by discussing recent interdisciplinary approaches to Paul's ethics and will argue that, rightly employed, a narrative reading of Paul is beneficial for understanding Romans 6:1–14. Since much of Paul's language in Romans 6 is metaphorical, a second aim of the chapter will be to introduce my approach to reading and interpreting Paul's metaphors as well as several of the tools and insights from cognitive linguistics (CL) I will employ in this project.

My exegetical work will begin in chapter 3 where I analyze Romans 6:1–2. The chapter will begin by demonstrating that Paul’s opening comments in Romans 6 focus on a particular theological tension pertaining to the believer’s relationship with sin (what many refer to as the “indicative-imperative” tension). I will then show that Paul’s diatribal response comes to us in the form of a metaphorical narrative which seeks to complement the metaphorical narrative from Romans 5. My main argument in this chapter is that Paul conceives of believers’ relationship with sin not with the language of agents and their actions, but with the metaphorical language of individuals in a specific locus of existence. In other words, in Romans 6, believers’ relationship with sin is primarily a function of *where* they are rather than a matter of what they do. The spatial binaries of being *in* or *out* (of sin) frame Paul’s ethical argument for the remainder of that section in Romans.

In chapter 4 I focus on Romans 6:3–4 and Paul’s baptismal language. Here, I show that Paul’s metaphorical narrative develops with a focus on believers’ identity. My main argument in this chapter is two-fold. First, I argue that Paul’s baptismal language is both metaphorical (BAPTISM IS DEATH) and metonymical. Second, I argue that via the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE, Paul explains that believers have experienced spatial motion out of the container of sin and into Christ (CHRIST IS A CONTAINER). By introducing a second “container” that functions as an alternative locus of existence, Paul continues his moral argument through a metaphorical narrative focused on a believer’s *location*. I will thus show that already by Romans 6:4, the categories of morality, identity, and location are thoroughly intertwined.

Chapter 5 continues the examination of Paul’s metaphorical narrative by considering Paul’s language in Romans 6:5–10. I begin this chapter by evaluating various proposals for the meaning of *σύμφυτοι γεγονάμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ* and its possible connection with the believer’s “union with Christ.” I then show that through his use of “old man” (*ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος*) in verse 6, Paul employs the Subject-Self

metaphor and conveys the complex dynamic of his self-understanding. My main argument in this chapter is that Paul's understanding of the believer's new identity is complex and involves multiple "Selves" that can inhabit different spaces. Finally, in this chapter I show that the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER is developed into SIN IS A KYPIOS, such that for Paul, sin is also a powerful, controlling agent. This metaphorical development is crucial for Paul's argument because it allows him to connect the believer's conceptual *location* (either in sin or in Christ) with an *obligation* to a master/lord.

The last exegetical section of this project comes in chapter 6, where I analyze Romans 6:11–14. My goal here is to carefully consider Paul's imperatives and to discern the logical connection to his language in 6:1–10. I will begin by reminding readers of the "indicative-imperative" tension that is often raised at this juncture in Romans but will proceed by seeking a "solution" using Paul's own language and conceptual logic. I will show that Paul employs the Essential Self metaphor to speak about the identity of believers in the context of a spatially-defined obligation. I will conclude the chapter by tracing Paul's conceptual logic in Romans 6 as he conceptualizes the believer's new identity as one defined by a particular *obligation* by virtue of the believer's new *location*.

Chapter 7 will conclude this project by summarizing my findings and presenting them more pointedly in conversation with the "indicative-imperative." I will offer several possible avenues for further research and will briefly propose how Romans 6:15–23 further develops the *identity of obligation* motif in the context of the theological tension in the apostle's gospel proclamation.

CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVE AND METAPHOR: A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO PAUL

In the last chapter, I surveyed the history of scholarship on what is perhaps the most prominent framework by which scholars discuss Paul’s ethics—the “indicative-imperative” schema. As I mentioned previously, rather than adding to the systematic treatments of the apostle’s ethical thought, this study will focus on a relatively short but crucial ethical section of his most influential epistle—Romans 6:1–14. Instead of rushing to theological conclusions on the relationship between the Christian’s regenerate status and his moral obligation, my project will consist of an interdisciplinary examination of the biblical text and will utilize tools and insights from the field of cognitive linguistics (CL). I hope that this enriched study of Romans 6 will yield a profitable set of observations about Paul’s ethical framework and his overall conception of who the Christian is in relationship to God. Hopefully, these conclusions will contribute to the broader field of Pauline ethics as I evaluate the place and appropriateness of “indicative-imperative” language in speaking of Paul’s ethics.

In this chapter, I will introduce this project’s interdisciplinary approach and outline the main tools for my analysis of the biblical text. Because my project will argue for a particular metaphorical *narrative* that defines the believer’s identity in Romans 6, I will begin by introducing the benefits of a narratological reading of certain portions of Romans. I will then describe the important connections between narrative, metaphor, and ethics. In the remaining bulk of the chapter, I will trace the emergence of what is sometimes referred to as the “cognitive turn” in metaphor theory and will introduce some of the major facets of conceptual metaphor theory.

Language, Narrative, and Ethics in Paul: Recent Interdisciplinary Approaches

Admittedly, mine is not the first interdisciplinary study of the book of Romans. Many scholars have already completed substantial work on the most influential of Paul's epistles, employing various tools from fields outside of biblical studies. In this section, I will introduce some of these integrative approaches to Paul, focusing on those that involve advances and breakthroughs in the fields of narratology and the cognitive sciences. Though I will highlight these studies' essential contributions, I will ultimately suggest that a gap remains in this interdisciplinary network of projects.

Story and Narrative

Stephen Denning is credited with quipping, "Dogs sniff each other. Human beings tell stories. This is our native language."¹ Indeed, narratives, stories, and storytelling play a crucial role in the discourse of every known culture.² The cultural significance of storytelling within a community goes beyond its entertainment value. As David Ritchie has noted, stories are essential for individuals and communities as they are the primary means of "sustaining and transmitting cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values."³ Stories do more than transmit information, however. Roger Schank and Robert Abelson have shown that stories play an important role in memory and reasoning.⁴

¹ Though every instance of this quote I could find attributes it to Stephen Denning, the quote is actually from a chapter written by Laurence Prusak. See Laurence Prusak et al., *Storytelling in Organizations: Why Storytelling Is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 39.

² Neal R. Norrick and Alice Spitz, "The Interplay of Humor and Conflict in Conversation and Scripted Humorous Performance," *Humor* 23, no. 1 (February 2010): 83–111.

³ L. David Ritchie, *Metaphorical Stories in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 235. I am indebted to Oscar Jimenez for introducing me to Ritchie's important work on metaphorical stories.

⁴ They argue that virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences and that new experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories. Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, "Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story," in *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story*, ed. Robert S. Wyer, Jr., *Advances in Social Cognition* 8 (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995), 1–86.

Richard Gerrig, Melanie Green, and Timothy Brock have also demonstrated that the persuasive power of stories is enhanced by “*transportation* into the story world.”⁵

Though we generally have an intuitive idea of what a story is, articulating it has proven difficult. Even scholarship on story and narrative has struggled to give a consensus definition of either term. There is even debate on whether we should understand the two terms synonymously⁶ or whether they should be distinguished.⁷ For H. Porter Abbott, the bare minimum of a narrative consists of “the representation of an event or a series of events” where the *event* is critical. Without it, we may have a description, argument, exposition, or lyric—but not a narrative.⁸ Roger Shank and Tamara Berman suggest that the event(s) will usually include “themes, goals, plans, expectations, expectation failures (or obstacles), and perhaps, explanations or solutions.”⁹ For Ritchie, there must be a *causal* or thematic relationship among the events for them to

⁵ This is the terminology used by various scholars, including Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 2–3; Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, “The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives,” *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 79, no. 5 (November 2000): 701–21; Melanie C. Green, “Transportation into Narrative Worlds: The Role of Prior Knowledge and Perceived Realism,” *Discourse Processes* 38, no. 2 (September 2004): 247–66. By “transportation,” the authors here are employing one of the metaphors often used to conceptualize the experience of a reader or listener with narratives. This kind of “transportation,” as we will see, is the kind of phenomenon Paul seeks to achieve for his readers throughout the narrative in Romans 6.

⁶ Jerome Bruner seems to use the two terms interchangeably in *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 1. See also Roger C. Schank and Tamara R. Berman, “The Pervasive Role of Stories in Knowledge and Action,” in *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations*, ed. Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange, and Timothy C. Brock (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2002), 287–314.

⁷ See especially Stefán Snævarr, *Metaphors, Narratives, Emotions: Their Interplay and Impact*, CLA 24 (Amsterdam: Brill, 2010), 168. William Labov interestingly distinguishes narrative, “a very particular kind of speech event” from a story, which “may be allowed to float freely for any talk about a sequence of events,” and yet he chooses to use *story* as an alternative to *narrative* in *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18.

⁸ H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 12.

⁹ Schank and Berman, “The Pervasive Role of Stories in Knowledge and Action,” 287.

constitute a narrative properly.¹⁰ What, then, are stories? In this study, I will distinguish between narrative and story and follow Stefán Snævarr, who suggests that “story is *what* is being recounted, independent of the medium used. Narrative is the *way* the story is told” since one can present the same story by various means (e.g., words, a ballet, cinematic images).¹¹

A Narrative Approach to Paul

Over the past four decades, New Testament scholarship has demonstrated an increased recognition of narratives and stories in Paul’s letters. This recognition has led to what has been termed a “narrative approach to Paul.”¹² The fruit of this relatively new approach to Paul has been numerous interdisciplinary studies that seek to explore and explain the significance of these narrative features in the epistles.¹³ Recent treatments of Paul’s letters have elaborated, clarified, and developed new ways that these narrative elements are crucial for rightly reading them. To be sure, some narrative readings of Paul have been criticized for the instability of their methodology and for supposedly

¹⁰ See also David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985), 35; Brian Richardson, *Unlikely Stories: Causality and the Nature of Modern Narrative* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 37.

¹¹ Put another way, “a story is something potentially narrated; a narrative is an actualisation of that potentiality.” Snævarr, *Metaphors, Narratives, Emotions*, 168.

¹² Bruce Longenecker’s article, “The Narrative Approach to Paul: An Early Retrospective,” *CurBR* 1, no. 1 (October 2002): 88–111, from which I draw many of the following contributions, gives a helpful overview of the emergence of this approach to studying Paul.

¹³ Richard Hays was among the first to provide a methodological foundation and example of this narrative approach to the apostle in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*, SBLDS 56 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). A few years later, N. T. Wright argued for the foundational role of “worldviews,” which operate at a “presuppositional, pre-cognitive stage” in an author’s conscience behind his writing in N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 122. He also suggested that “worldviews provide the stories through which human beings view reality. Narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview, going deeper than the isolated observation or fragmented remark,” 6n7. Ben Witherington similarly proposed that the best way to understand Paul’s theology was within the parameters of “Paul’s narrative thought world,” *Paul’s Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994). In his 1999 volume, Frank Matera suggested that “it is not unreasonable to assume that there is a narrative that undergirds [Paul’s] writings and that we can know something of it,” *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 87. David Horrell’s introduction to Paul also makes a case for the narrative basis of Paul’s theology, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 55–56.

prioritizing narrative over argument.¹⁴ Many of these critiques are addressed in what is perhaps the most exhaustive recent exploration of Paul as narrator: Chris Heilig’s recent *Paulus als Erzähler? Eine narratologische Perspektive auf die Paulusbriefe*.¹⁵ Heilig refutes Lukas Borman and others who argue that Paul *could not* have been involved in storytelling *because* he was writing epistles. Instead, Heilig argues for a nuanced understanding of narrative and the presence of proto-narrative (*mentale Protoerzählungen*) in Paul.¹⁶

Various New Testament scholars, including Frank Thielman, N. T. Wright, Edward Adams, and Katherine Grieb, have argued that Romans, especially Romans 5–8, should be read in light of the narrative framework the apostle presents.¹⁷ However, to my knowledge, these scholars have not considered the crucial *cognitive* dimension of these

¹⁴ See for example some of the critiques by Jae Hyun Lee in *Paul’s Gospel in Romans: A Discourse Analysis of Rom. 1:16–8:39* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 12–17. Douglas Moo also voices four reservations about the way narrative approaches are being used to interpret Paul in *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 11–14.

¹⁵ Christoph Heilig, *Paulus als Erzähler? Eine narratologische Perspektive auf die Paulusbriefe, Paulus als Erzähler?* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

¹⁶ Heilig states, “From a text-linguistic point of view [this statement, which implies] that one cannot speak of narration in the case of Paul, because he wrote letters, is untenable” (my translation). *Paulus als Erzähler?*, Heilig, *Paulus als Erzähler?*, 36. Compare to this statement by Lukas Borman: “The Pauline letters themselves offer no narratives; at best smaller biographies broken up again by metaphorical formulations in such a way that what is ‘actually’ told becomes uncertain again The Pauline letters do not provide narratives, but rather theologically reflected notes on events” (my translation). Lukas Borman, *Bibelkunde: Altes und Neues Testament*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 248.

¹⁷ Frank Thielman, “The Story of Israel and the Theology of Paul,” in *Romans*, vol. 3 of *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth E. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 169–95; N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Romans*, vol. 3 of *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth E. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 30–67; N. T. Wright, “New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Substructure of Romans 3–8,” in *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Sven K. Soderland and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 26–35; Edward Adams, “Paul’s Story of God and Creation: The Story of How God Fulfills His Purposes in Creation,” in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 19–43. A. Katherine Grieb seeks to show that “paying attention to the narrative substructure of Paul’s argument results in a new and distinctive reading of Romans that could be significant for the contemporary church.” A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God’s Righteousness* (Westminster John Knox, 2002), xi. The fact that she devotes only 2 pages of her book to Romans 6, however, highlights the difficulty scholars have had to understand that chapter in its narratological context and to see the story it itself constructs.

narrative features,¹⁸ nor have they explored the role of the narrative(s) in the letter's ethical framework.¹⁹ Outside of Romans, though, the narrative approach to Paul *has* influenced the broader field of Pauline ethics.²⁰ Although some of the works on Paul's ethical instruction give due attention to the implicit, non-literal, and non-volitive features of his language (particularly important here is the recent work of Ruben Zimmermann), none of them presents a focused treatment of Romans 6, and few offer a careful treatment of the apostle's figurative language.

Though I will employ a narrative approach to reading Romans in this project, I must clarify what I mean by that since the "narrative approach to Paul" is not *one* thing. Indeed, one of the challenges scholars have faced when debating the legitimacy of this approach to studying the epistles is that the same terminology can be (and has been) used to describe differing analytical approaches. David Horrell points out one such example of methodological inconsistency residing under the banner of "narrative approach" in his response to John Barclay's contribution in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul*. Barclay's essay

¹⁸ Even Heilig, who briefly discusses simulation and conceptualization in narrative theory (especially in his discussion of mental proto-narrative) does not consider the important role that figurative language (especially metaphor and metonymy) plays in the cognitive dimension of narrative. Heilig, *Paulus als Erzähler?* David Southall, in *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans: Personified Dikaiosynē within Metaphoric and Narratorial Settings*, WUNT 240 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) is very attentive to the narrational context of Paul's language as well as to his figurative language, but he does not explore the cognitive grounding and significance of the apostle's figurative language.

¹⁹ Wright's essay perhaps comes closest. Wright gives due attention to the role that Romans 6 plays within its narrative context and summarizes the narrative sequence as follows: "those who were enslaved in the 'Egypt' of sin, an enslavement the law only exacerbated, have been set free by the 'Red Sea' event of baptism, since in baptism they are joined to the Messiah, whose death and resurrection are accounted as theirs," "New Exodus, New Inheritance: The Narrative Substructure of Romans 3–8," 29 Wright's short study, however, naturally cannot do justice to the various metaphors and frames of Romans 6 nor does it seek to make a theological ethical contribution.

²⁰ See for example Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Function of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus* (Sheffield: JSOTSup, 1990); James Thompson, *Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Theology and Ethics*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016); Ruben Zimmermann, "The 'Implicit Ethics' of New Testament Writings: A Draft on a New Methodology for Analysing New Testament Ethics," *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 2 (2009): 399–423. For works incorporating narrative more broadly in NT and theological ethics, see Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985); Paul Nelson, *Narrative and Morality: A Theological Inquiry* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1996).

acknowledges that though narrative analysis is more applicable to the Gospels than to Paul's letters, it can be applied to Paul since he "sometimes tells stories, or parts of stories."²¹ Barclay's essay repeatedly refers to "the stories Paul tells" and ultimately to the story he tells about himself in Galatians 1–2. It is here that Horrell spots the methodological discrepancy:

The significance of this way of setting the agenda is more far-reaching than might at first appear. For we need to note that this is precisely *not* the approach proposed by Richard Hays in the work that to a considerable extent established the recent interest in narrative contours in Pauline thought. Hays is not interested in looking at Pauline texts as narratives, nor even at the narratives within them; that is why he looks at Gal. 3:1–4:11 and not at Galatians 1–2. His claim, exemplified in his study of Galatians 3–4, is that Paul's letters, as "reflective discourse", are based on a story, a story that provides the "narrative substructure" for Paul's theology and that is alluded to in Paul's discourse.²²

Horrell points out that the "narrative approach" as set out by Hays refers to a reading of Paul that acknowledges and is sensitive to a narrative *beneath* the text that undergirds the apostle's discourse and theological reflection. On the other hand, Barclay's "narrative approach" seems to focus not on the narrative *behind* the text or *beneath* the text but simply on the narrative presented *in* the biblical text itself (e.g., Gal 1–2).

Though I am generally sympathetic to the "narrative approach" in its extra-textual and more contested sense as pioneered by Hays (where Paul's letters are read in light of the narrative that *undergirds* them), in this project, I will use the term in its more textual sense as modeled by Barclay in his essay. In other words, though I will approach the book of Romans as an epistolary work and read it as such, I will be attentive to the stories and narratives Paul presents within the epistle and will seek to read and understand those narratives as such.²³ Readers who remain skeptical about this narrative

²¹ John M. G. Barclay, "Paul's Story: Theology as Testimony," in Longenecker *Narrative Dynamics in Paul*, 133.

²² David G. Horrell, "Paul's Narratives or Narrative Substructure?," in Longenecker, *Narrative Dynamics in Paul*, 158. Horrell here references Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 23, 28–30.

²³ In my reading of Romans, I want to respect and maintain the letter's distinct epistolary genre. In this way, my approach is very different from that of Michael Gorman, for example, who writes,

reading of certain sections in Romans can evaluate my proposal by considering whether Paul presents a series of connected events in Romans 6. If he does, most definitions of narrative would legitimately apply to that section of text, even if it appears in an epistle.

Paul's Ethics and Metaphorical Narratives

A community's ethical framework is much broader and more complex than its code of laws or legal records. Ethics and morality traffic in the spheres of personal and interpersonal emotions, values, and persuasion and thus cannot be restricted to a list of "dos and don'ts." For this project, it is essential to realize that there is a complex logical and epistemological interplay between the concepts of metaphor, narrative, and emotions.²⁴ Because narratives themselves are perhaps the primary epistemic vehicles by which we receive and circulate cultural and community values, including ethical frameworks, we must be careful not to sideline or ignore the narrative elements in Paul when seeking to understand the apostle's ethical system.²⁵ Since Paul often builds these narratives on a series of complex yet subtle metaphorical foundations, focusing on these metaphors and metaphorical stories is a promising path to take on our way to understanding more about the underlying ethical thought of the apostle.

"Referring to a letter as 'narrative' in character may at first seem odd. But a close inspection of Paul's letters reveals that he is always telling stories, no matter how brief they may be." Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 93.

²⁴ Metaphor and narrative have at times been pitted against each other like two contestants vying for the title of "most foundational element for human understanding." See for example, Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); John C. Hoffman, "Metaphorical or Narrative Theology," *Stud. Relig.* 16, no. 2 (June 1987): 173–85. The two, of course, often work together and arguing for the primacy of one over the other is not necessary. On this, see Ritchie, *Metaphorical Stories in Discourse*, 120–32. Snævarr further argues that metaphor, narrative, and emotion form a kind of epistemological trinity whereby each component is understood by means of the others. Snævarr, *Metaphors, Narratives, Emotions*, 1.

²⁵ For a psychological approach to the role of narratives in moral formation, see James M. Day and Mark B. Tappan, "The Narrative Approach to Moral Development: From the Epistemic Subject to Dialogical Selves," *Hum. Dev.* 39, no. 2 (1996): 67–82; Daniel K. Lapsley, "Moral Agency, Identity and Narrative in Moral Development," *Hum. Dev.* 53, no. 2 (April 2010): 87–97.

The lack of interest in—or, perhaps more accurately, the lack of appreciation of—Paul’s figurative language reveals more than a mere lack of concern for Paul’s fanciful rhetoric. As we will see, rightly understood, metaphor and metonymy are not decorative ornamental features in language. On the contrary, I will argue that recent findings in the cognitive sciences have firmly established that metaphors play a foundational role in how human beings conceive of the world—especially how we relate to abstract concepts. Because religious language is, for the most part, abstract, metaphors in religious language often carry more weight and significance than we often give them credit for.²⁶ In this way, correctly understanding metaphors is crucial for understanding the essential elements of the metaphorical narratives they comprise—narratives such as the ones we find in Romans 5–8. Therefore, this project will seek to explore not only the metaphors but the metaphorical narrative present in Romans 6.

On the one hand, the various niche and interdisciplinary approaches to Paul (e.g., theological ethics, the “narrative approach to Paul,” and cognitive linguistics) have resulted in a fascinating yield of studies over the past few decades. Nevertheless, as we have seen, not all possible interdisciplinary and focused combinations have been explored, including the one at the intersection of Romans, Paul’s ethical thought, narrative, and cognition. It is this gap that I seek to fill by conducting a study focused on Romans 6 (due to the chapter’s crucial function in Paul’s ethical teaching) that approaches the text with an awareness of the epistle’s carefully structured argument while also paying close attention to the author’s figurative language and the metaphorical story he constructs through it.

²⁶ Janet Martin Soskice, following Ian Ramsey, shows that religious language relies heavily on models to give form to its reflections. Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 97ff. See also L. Boeve and Kurt Feysaerts, eds., *Metaphor and God-Talk, Religions and Discourse 2* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Jan Muis, “The Truth of Metaphorical God-Talk,” *SJT* 63, no. 2 (2010): 146–62.

Metaphorical Language in Romans 6

There is one last group of studies related to this project that I have not yet mentioned. As we saw in chapter 1, many have turned to Romans 6 to better understand the apostle's moral framework. These studies approach the text theologically and systematically and seek to synthesize Paul's thinking about the relationship between believers' redeemed status and their subsequent moral obligation, though without much attention to the full breadth of Paul's figurative language. Nevertheless, others have sought to fill this gap in scholarship and produced important work focusing specifically on some of the apostle's metaphors in Romans 6:1–14. These studies generally focus on one of three main groups of metaphors: (1) Paul's language of sin/death, (2) his language of slavery/dominion, and (3) his military language.

Sin and death. Sorin Sabou, Joseph R. Dodson, and Michel Quesnel have written some of the most thorough and recent treatments analyzing Paul's language of death in Romans 6.²⁷ Sabou's work engages with some more recent philosophical theories of metaphor, but he does not interact with conceptual metaphor theorists or employ any insights from cognitive linguistics in his methodology. Dodson's chapter considers Paul's personification of sin and death in Romans 5–7 and proposes that Paul gives us a “progression of Sin in Romans 5–7 from an external figure in partnership with humanity to an internal one in control over them.”²⁸ Quesnel's chapter focuses on Paul's death language is not limited to its metaphorical uses. Nevertheless, Quesnel identifies two “metaphorical connotations” in Romans 6 in addition to the personification of death that carries over from the previous chapter in the epistle: one that involves a punctiliar

²⁷ Sorin Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope: Paul's Metaphorical Language of Death in Romans 6:1–11* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005); Joseph R. Dodson, *The “Powers” of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans*, BZNW 161 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Michel Quesnel, “La figure de la mort dans l'Épître aux Romains: fonction rhétorique et argumentative,” in *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Udo Schnelle, BETL 226 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 55–73.

²⁸ Dodson, *The “Powers” of Personification*, 139.

joining of the believer with the death of Christ (*ἀποθνήσκω* + “with”) and one that involves a complete and definitive separation (*ἀποθνήσκω* + dative object).²⁹ While these studies are insightful, their length and scope limit them from elaborating on the broader narrative and the argument the apostle constructs through these and other metaphors.

Similarly, much work has been done on Paul’s hamartiological language that seeks to contribute to the discussion of how exactly the apostle conceives of sin: (1) as a personified power, (2) as a demonic entity, and (3) as a concrete action.³⁰ Timo Laato has challenged the consensus position of sin as a personified power, suggesting instead that it is a personal superhuman being “exerting a transubjective reign of terror over the whole cosmos.”³¹ On the other hand, Bruce Kaye has argued for a view that understands sin as a concrete sinful action.³² Others like David Southall and Eun-Geol Lyu have suggested more nuanced alternatives.³³ Perhaps the best and most thorough work on Paul’s language of sin, informed by the critical developments in the cognitive sciences and recent insights in metaphor theory, is Steffi Fabricius’s recent volume *Pauline*

²⁹ Quesnel refers to them as the “conjonction ponctuelle du croyant avec la mort de Christ” and the “séparation définitive et consommée.” Quesnel, “La figure de la mort dans l’Épître aux Romains,” 64. Though helpful categories, Quesnel’s language demonstrates his lack of familiarity with metaphor theory and standard nomenclature for naming and identifying metaphors.

³⁰ These positions were first presented in Gustav Stählin, “*ἀμαρτάνω, ἀμάρτημα, ἀμαρτία*,” in *TDNT* 1:293–96, 1985. See especially “D. The Linguistic Usage and History of *ἀμάρτημα* and *ἀμαρτία* before and in the NT,” 1:293–96.

³¹ Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach*, trans. T. McElwain (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). The classical form of this position is seen in Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), 122.

³² Bruce N. Kaye, *The Thought Structure of Romans: With Special Reference to Chapter 6* (Austin, TX: Schola, 1979).

³³ Southall proposes that Paul personifies sin as a means of introducing the antagonist character in the drama that plays out in Romans. Southall, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans*, 111–12. Lyu’s study seeks to understand Paul’s language by first examining the reason for his employment of the personification. In the end, Lyu refutes the notion of sin as a concrete action arguing instead for a personified understanding of sin that undergirds Paul’s teaching on liberation from sin. Eun-Geol Lyu, *Sünde und Rechtfertigung bei Paulus: eine exegetische Untersuchung zum paulinischen Sündenverständnis aus soteriologischer Sicht*, WUNT 318 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences.³⁴ Fabricius proposes that sin, for Paul, is a powerful existential state.³⁵ Her work, however, does more than provide an alternative conception of sin; it stands out due to its sensitivity to the nature of metaphorical language from a cognitive perspective as well as its detailed exploration of Paul's metaphors aside from his language of enslavement.

Slavery and freedom. Many scholars have written on Paul's metaphorical language of slavery,³⁶ but due to space constraints, I will only mention two of the most recent works that interact with older scholarship. Though not focused on Romans specifically, David Williams explores many of Paul's metaphors and considers them in light of Paul's Greco-Roman context. Williams devotes an entire chapter to Paul's metaphorical language of slavery and freedom, where Paul first describes different facets of slavery (e.g., jobs performed by slaves, the legal condition of slavery, the purchase of slaves by new masters) and then interprets slavery language in light of these historical, legal, and social realities. Williams notes that though "slavery may not be the most appropriate figure for the Christian life, as Paul acknowledges in 6:19 . . . , he employs it, he says, because it expresses an important truth that his readers were inclined to forget, namely, that they owe their total commitment to God."³⁷ Though Williams's background work is helpful, his explanation of the metaphors suffers from an undeveloped

³⁴ Steffi Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences: Positioning Cognitive Semantic Theory and Method within Theology*, HUT 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

³⁵ See especially Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 170–178.

³⁶ Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*, NSBT 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); John K Goodrich, "From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God: Reconsidering the Origin of Paul's Slavery Metaphor in Romans 6," *BBR* 23, no. 4 (2013): 509–30.

³⁷ It is not clear, in my opinion, that Paul is as explicit in his reason for employing the metaphor as David Williams suggests nor that the apostle ever points to the "truth" that the metaphor expresses. See David J. Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 116.

methodology for interpreting metaphors (for him, there does not seem to be a difference between metaphor, analogy, image, or figure).³⁸ In the end, Williams concludes that in Romans 6 and elsewhere, Paul uses slavery language (merely) for dramatic effect.³⁹

Without a doubt, some of the most thorough work on Paul's metaphors using slavery language is that of John Byron. His book *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* traces the language of enslavement from the Israelite tradition through early Jewish writings, including Josephus and Philo. Byron then considers the "slave of God" language throughout various Pauline epistles and argues that the apostle's metaphorical language of slavery should be located within the "slave of God" traditions of early Judaism.⁴⁰ Byron's work, however, focuses on a very specific metaphor in Romans 6, and much of his work is devoted only to discerning the background (either Jewish or Greco-Roman) for Paul's slavery language.⁴¹ While Byron's work has been tremendously helpful in understanding the apostle's slavery language in his Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, Byron does not consider the cognitive dimensions of Paul's slavery language, the development of that metaphor in Romans 6:1–14, or any other metaphors in Romans 6.⁴²

³⁸ Williams implies this much in Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 2. Furthermore, he follows Aristotle's definition of metaphor, which, as we will see, is not without its problems (4n1).

³⁹ Williams states, "The human race is, by nature, in service to sin (which in Romans [Paul] personifies for dramatic effect)." Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 112.

⁴⁰ John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity: A Tradition-Historical and Exegetical Examination*, WUNT 162 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁴¹ See for example John Byron, "Paul and the Background of Slavery: The *Status Quaestionis* in New Testament Scholarship," *CurBR* 1, no. 3 (October 2004): 116–39; John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).

⁴² In her study of Paul's metaphorical language of adoption, Erin Heim notes a similar fascination with determining the supposed background behind the apostle's *υιοθεσια* metaphors. She rightly notes that a metaphor's model (her language for what we will later refer to as the source domain of a metaphor) "cannot be reduced to a single background text, that possible backgrounds and texts cannot be neatly separated from one another, and that it is likely that each possible background both interprets and is interpreted by the others." Erin M. Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans: Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiiothesia Metaphors*, BINS 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 115. I believe the same can be said of Paul's metaphorical language of slavery.

Military and warfare. One last group of often underappreciated metaphors in Romans 6 are those involving military language. Christine Gerber notes the significance of Paul’s figurative military language in 6:12–14. She argues that the apostle implicitly argues for the baptized to live a sinless life through the “filter of a soldier’s life” (Im Filter des Soldatenlebens).⁴³ Donghyun Jeong follows Richard Horsley’s proposal that Paul’s slavery language in Romans 6 must be understood within the context of war and conquest and argues for a reframing of the slavery metaphors that accounts for the inseparability of their military connotations.⁴⁴ Jeong explains the metaphorical and metonymical significance of Paul’s use of ὄπλα ἀδικίας and ὄπλα δικαιοσύνης in 6:13, concluding that in Romans 6:12–13, Paul has in mind slaves who engage in warfare.

Toward a Theory of Metaphor

The previously mentioned works on Paul’s metaphors have at least two limitations as far as this study is concerned. First, these studies focus almost entirely on one of the three main groups of metaphors in Romans 6. Though each metaphor group is essential within the chapter, even if all three groups are taken together, they still do not comprise the entirety of the apostle’s metaphorical language. As such, these individual studies can only contribute to *part* of the overall argument in the letter. Second, many of these studies lack a robust methodology for analyzing metaphors. Rarely do these studies exhibit an awareness of the important discussions on metaphor theory and the other advances—particularly those in the cognitive sciences—that should inform biblical studies focused on metaphor.

⁴³ Christine Gerber, “Vom Waffendienst des Christenmenschen und vom Sold der Sünde: metaphorische Argumentation am Beispiel von Röm 6,12–14.23,” in “. . . was ihr auf dem Weg verhandelt habt”: Beiträge zur Exegese und Theologie des Neuen Testaments - Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 75. Geburtstag, ed. Herausgegeben von Peter Müller, Christine Gerber, and Thomas Knöppler (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 139.

⁴⁴ Donghyun Jeong, “God’s Hoplitēs: Slaves and Warfare in Romans 6:12–23,” 한국기독교신학논총 105 (July 2017): 48–49.

As Erin Heim notes in her excellent monograph, “the abundance of research on metaphor in other fields demonstrates that if biblical scholars are to appreciate the complexities of biblical metaphors, then their exegesis must also be founded upon a theory of metaphor that is scientifically and philosophically sound and also exegetically useful.”⁴⁵ My goal in this section is to introduce Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) based on insights from cognitive linguistics, which I will later employ in my analysis of biblical metaphors. Though this study will echo some of the previous conclusions about Paul’s argument in Romans 6, I believe it will also contribute to the ongoing conversation, partly because of the interdisciplinary insights that undergird my methodology.

Classical Accounts of Metaphor

The approaches employed by David Williams, Murray Harris, Michel Quesnel, and Dale Martin (just to name a few) follow what we might call the traditional Western approach to metaphor, which can be traced back to the writings of Aristotle and Quintilian.⁴⁶ In his *Poetics*, Aristotle presents one of the earliest and most influential descriptions of metaphor when he writes, “A metaphor is the application [ἐπιφορά] of a word [ὄνομα] that belongs to another thing: either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy.”⁴⁷ Though intriguing as a description, Aristotle’s oft-quoted definition is full of perplexities. Despite the ambiguities, discussions of metaphor

⁴⁵ Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*, 25.

⁴⁶ To be sure, I am not claiming here that there is such a thing as a traditional view of metaphor (even in the West) or that Aristotle set out to build a standard theory of metaphor. I am speaking of Aristotle’s view as the traditional approach not because he intended it to be so, but because his approach persists in Western view of language and philosophy. For a detailed history of the understanding of metaphor from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas through contemporary philosophical, ethical, and theological discourse, see Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter*, BINS 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 11–58. John Kirby also gives a good summary of the use of metaphor in Homer, Isocrates, and Plato; see John T. Kirby, “Aristotle on Metaphor,” *AJP* 118, no. 4 (1997): 521–31.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Poet.* 1457b 6–9 (Halliwell, LCL).

have continued to rely on the idea that metaphor involves the “application,” “transference,” or “imposition” (ἐπιφορά) of one word or term (ὄνομα) to another.⁴⁸ This notion of transference has important implications for Aristotle.⁴⁹ For one, metaphors work at the level of individual ὄνομα. In a phrase like “your lips are silk,” Aristotle would say that the word “silk” was *transferred* to “your lips.” He further observes that a similar phenomenon occurs when a simile is used, which leads him to conclude that “the simile is also a metaphor; for there is very little difference Similes must be used like metaphors, which only differ in the manner stated.”⁵⁰ Similarly, Quintilian’s famous adage “In totum autem metaphora brevior est similitudo” (“On the whole, metaphor is a shorter form of simile”) in his *Institutio oratoria* continued to resonate with scholars many centuries later.⁵¹

We must recognize that neither Aristotle nor Quintilian intended to present a proper theory of metaphor or to defend it philosophically. In other words, the burden and questions of contemporary linguists and philosophers were not those of Aristotle and Quintilian, whose goal was to describe metaphor for the benefit of the poet and to instruct in oratory. Furthermore, recent scholarship has critiqued the generally negative appraisal of Aristotle’s contribution by arguing that he has been largely misinterpreted and is often only shallowly read.⁵² And yet, regardless of their original intentions, Aristotle and

⁴⁸ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 3–6, provides a helpful analysis of Aristotle’s definition, highlighting the ambiguity of his language and raising the question of what it means for a word (or meaning?) to be transferred to another.

⁴⁹ Howe highlights and discusses six features from Aristotle’s statement: (1) transfer of names, (2) based on similarities, (3) involving deviance from ordinary usage, (4) in which “fittingness” or appropriateness is at issue, (5) a matter of intuition and perception, and (6) connection between metaphor and analogy. Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 21–27.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1406b.1–3 (Freese, LCL).

⁵¹ Quintilian, *Instit. Or.* 8.6.8 (Russell, LCL).

⁵² See for example James E. Mahon, “Getting Your Sources Right: What Aristotle *Didn’t* Say,” in *Researching and Applying Metaphor*, ed. Lynn Cameron and Graham Low, Cambridge Applied Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69–80 and more recently, Matthew S. Wood, “Aristotle’s Theory of Metaphor Revisited,” *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 14, no. 1 (July 2017): 63–90.

Quintilian significantly charted the course for conversations on the definition and nature of metaphor and influenced theories of metaphor that emerged subsequently.

Metaphor through the Enlightenment

Though Aristotle and Quintilian drew up the contours of modern philosophical, rhetorical, and theological views of metaphor, the Enlightenment brush has colored them in several significant ways. Thomas Hobbes's (1588–1697) commitment to reason being the “pace,” scientific knowledge being “the way,” and the benefit of humanity being “the end” led him to argue that metaphor is, at its core, deceptive: “Metaphors, and senseless [sic] and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt.”⁵³ In other words, because metaphors do not communicate literal truth (and thus are by nature unclear and confusing), they ought not to be admitted in “reckoning [reasoning], and seeking of truth.”⁵⁴ John Locke (1632–1704) expressed a similar sentiment when he wrote that metaphors serve no other function “but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment.”⁵⁵

Traditional Theories of Metaphor

Despite the contributions of Aristotle and Quintilian, studies and discussions on metaphor did not pick up significantly until the middle of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Zoltán Kövecses notes that until recently, the study of metaphor was reserved for philosophers, rhetoricians, and linguists like Hume, Locke, Hobbes, Vico,

⁵³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: A Critical Edition*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and Karl Schuhmann (New York: Continuum International, 2005), 40.

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 39.

⁵⁵ This quote comes from John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: Abridged and Edited, with an Introduction and Notes*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 219.

⁵⁶ Writing in 1978, Wayne Booth humorously (but accurately) remarks that “there were no conferences on metaphor, ever, in any culture, until our own century was already middle-aged.” Wayne C. Booth, “Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation,” *Crit. Inq.* 5, no. 1 (1978): 49.

Herder, Cassirer, Buhler, I. A. Richards, Goodman, and Max Black.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, a significant shift away from the Aristotelian understanding of metaphor began to occur in the twentieth century such that by the 1980s, Janet Martin Soskice could conclude that “it is by now almost a commonplace that Aristotle is the originator and Quintilian the exponent of the clearly unsatisfactory view that metaphor is simply the substitution of a decorative word or phrase for an ordinary one.”⁵⁸

Max Black was essential in advancing the conversation on precisely what metaphors are and how they should (and should not) be understood. He found the suggestion that a metaphor involves mere word-transference unhelpful and sharply critiqued the idea that a metaphor is nothing more than a decorated simile. More specifically, he argued that the influence of Aristotle and Quintilian misguided the analysis of metaphor for centuries, and he and became an outspoken proponent of the need to redefine and reconceive metaphors. He identified at least two theories of metaphor that had further developed from the “classical” Aristotelian account.

Substitution theory. For one, Black suggests that Aristotle’s comments about “transference” from one term to another have likely led to what he calls a “substitution view of metaphor.”⁵⁹ He applies this terminology to “any view which holds that a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent *literal* expression.”⁶⁰ This view suggests that metaphors communicate *something* (let us call it *M*) that could have just as easily been communicated literally (let us call *M*’s supposed literal equivalent *L*).

⁵⁷ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xii.

⁵⁸ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 8.

⁵⁹ Soskice points out that Black does not directly attribute the substitution view to Aristotle, “though his comments do imply this.” Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 8n27.

⁶⁰ Max Black states, “Until recently, one or another form of a substitution view has been accepted by most writers (usually literary critics or writers of books on rhetoric) who have had anything to say about metaphor.” Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy*, Studies in Language and Philosophy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 31.

For example, the substitution view would suggest that the metaphor “Mr. Smith storms into class every morning” is simply the metaphorical equivalent (*M*) of communicating a literal idea (*L*), perhaps something like “Mr. Smith enters the class hurriedly every morning.” This particular understanding of metaphor, Black points out, is evident in the definition of Richard Whately, who defines metaphor as “a word substituted for another on account of resemblance or analogy between their significations.”⁶¹ A similar understanding of metaphor underlies the definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: “A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in *drowning in money*).”⁶²

There are at least three obvious problems with this view that sees the reader as trying to crack the metaphorical code (*M*) presented by the writer in order to find *L* based on a supposed resemblance or analogy. Ironically, the first of these issues becomes evident when we use the theory to analyze the example given in the Merriam-Webster definition: “drowning in money.” The substitution view would rightly recognize that the phrase should not be understood literally and correctly identifies the phrase as an example of metaphor. But is it really the case that a word is substituted for another *on account of a resemblance or analogy* (as Whately suggests) or that the word or phrase used to denote another *suggests likeness or analogy* between the two? If so, then we would have to conclude that there is an obvious or apparent resemblance between water (the literal object in which one drowns) and money. Is, however, such an analogy so ubiquitously recognized? Or, to follow the nuance in the Merriam-Webster definition, does the metaphor “drowning in money” in some form *suggest* an inherent likeness between money and water? If so, then what is that similarity?

⁶¹ Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (Nashville: Southern Methodist, 1861), 253.

⁶² Merriam-Webster, “Metaphor,” accessed July 28, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor>.

Second, if we return to our example of “Mr. Smith storms into class every morning,” can we really say that it contains a word or phrase that has been substituted for another *literal* phrase or word? If so, then is the literal equivalent something like “Mr. Smith enters the class hurriedly every morning”? Presumably, different readers would give different proposals for *L*. Is there only one correct *L*? Is it possible that the literal parallel to the previous metaphor has nothing to do with Mr. Smith’s *pace* (“hurriedly”) but simply with his *mood* (perhaps “grumpily”)? In other words, if a metaphor is merely the substitution of a non-literal utterance for a literal utterance, then how could we ever confidently say what the exact literal substitution is? This problem of identifying the precise supposed literal equivalent is even more evident with more complex metaphors. For example, what would *L* be in Albert Camus’s line “In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer”?⁶³

The third issue with the substitution view emerges from our own experience reading metaphors. While we might deliberate on what exactly Tom Cochrane meant when he wrote “Life is a highway,” very few (if any of us) stop when we come across the metaphor, decipher the code to yield *L*, and carry on listening (or singing). Instead, as we will see, metaphors, like all language, are phenomena that draw from our embodied experiences, general background knowledge, and mental structures to infer meaning.

Comparison theory. Black also argues that Aristotle’s comments led to what he calls a “comparison view” of metaphor.⁶⁴ For Black, this view takes a metaphor merely as the ornate presentation of an underlying analogy or similarity between two

⁶³ This line is from Albert Camus, “Return to Tipasa,” in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, ed. Philip Thody, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy (New York: Knopf, 1968), 169.

⁶⁴ Black states, “Comparison views probably derive from Aristotle’s brief statement in the *Poetics*: ‘Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy’ (1457b).” Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 36n15.

concepts.⁶⁵ Both Aristotle and Quintilian spoke this way when they suggested that a metaphor was simply an expanded or decorated simile. In this sense, Black explains, the comparison view of metaphor is nothing more than a particular case of the substitution view. However, is it right to view metaphor simply as a subtle or indirect simile?

Let us consider the line “Well, you keep away from her, cause she’s a rat-trap if I ever seen one” from John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*.⁶⁶ An analysis of this metaphor from a comparison theory perspective would explain that Steinbeck is simply saying that Curley’s wife (the “she” in the metaphor) is *like* a rat trap in that they both present themselves as attractive, offering a delightful reward, but in the end only really offer pain and regret. In other words, the metaphor is really functioning as a subtle simile.⁶⁷ While this theory seems compelling, it fails to explain what actually occurs when metaphors are employed and interpreted. If a metaphor is simply another way of pointing out similarities between the subjects, then theoretically, a metaphor can be reversed and still make sense. However, although it makes sense to say, “That professor is an ogre,” it does not make sense to say, “That ogre is a professor.” The comparison theory, Soskice notes, also “fails to mark the fact that the good metaphor does not merely compare two antecedently similar entities, but enables one to see similarities in what previously had been regarded as dissimilar[sic].”⁶⁸ Furthermore, the comparison theory’s shortcoming is most easily observed when we consider more complex metaphors such as this invitation from a writing workshop: “Do you want to bring your ideas to life, to make them take up residence in the mind of the reader, lurking in the background, tugging, pulling, and cajoling their emotions until they think and feel exactly as you

⁶⁵ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 35.

⁶⁶ John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 32.

⁶⁷ Whately suggests that “the simile or comparison may be considered as differing in form only from a Metaphor; the resemblance being in that case *stated*, which in the metaphor is implied.” Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 253.

⁶⁸ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 26.

want?” In this case, an equivalent simile does not seem possible, but neither is it essential for understanding (and, as we will see later, *experiencing*) the metaphor.

In summary, the substitution view regards “the entire sentence that is the locus of the metaphor as replacing some set of literal sentences,”⁶⁹ and the comparison view “takes every metaphor to be a condensed or elliptic simile”⁷⁰ and thus a statement of similarity or analogy. Both views see metaphors as expendable and therefore unnecessary for communicating ideas or truth since they are merely “incidental pleasures of stating figuratively what might just as well have been said literally.”⁷¹

Contemporary Theories of Metaphor

Now that I have examined the traditional understanding of metaphor, it becomes evident that the Aristotelian definition has dominated many studies dealing with Paul’s metaphorical language of slavery. It bears repeating here that Williams explicitly adopts Aristotle’s definition and proposes that “in general, metaphor is a way of presenting a truth that is wholly or partly unknown by likening it to something that is known to the person or persons under instruction.”⁷² As I mentioned previously, while these studies have indeed been profitable, my goal in this study is to draw from recent advances in cognitive linguistics and employ a more robust methodology in studying Paul’s metaphors in his letter to the Romans.

I. A. Richards’s interanimation theory. The aforementioned approaches to metaphor led I. A. Richards to note that “throughout the history of Rhetoric, metaphor

⁶⁹ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 31.

⁷⁰ Max Black, “More about Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 27.

⁷¹ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 27.

⁷² Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 1. In a footnote, he explicitly notes he is following Aristotle: “I have chosen to work with Aristotle’s classic definition of a metaphor (which has its own problems of ambiguity) as ‘the application of an alien name by transfer’ . . . and to allow ‘metaphor’ to cover any comparison that appears to have been deliberately drawn” (1n1).

has been treated as a sort of happy extra trick with words, an opportunity to exploit the accidents of their versatility . . . in brief, a grace or ornament or *added* power of language, not its constitutive form.”⁷³ In response to this observation that he initially made in lectures he delivered in 1936, Richards proposes what he calls a “context theorem of meaning,” which disputes the idea that takes “the senses of an author’s words to be things we know before we read him, fixed factors with which he has to build up the meaning of his sentences as a mosaic is put together of discrete, independent tesserae.”⁷⁴ On the contrary, Richards suggests that “the meaning of words are derived from the meanings of sentences in which they occur.”⁷⁵ For Richards, the implications for understanding metaphor are clear: “In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.”⁷⁶

Two conclusions are worth highlighting at this point. First, Richards challenged the traditional notion that saw metaphor as “a verbal matter, a shifting and displacement of words.”⁷⁷ On the contrary, metaphor is fundamentally “a borrowing between and intercourse of *thoughts*, a transaction between contexts.”⁷⁸ For Richards, then, *thought* was primary, and the dynamic interaction in thought led to the linguistic expression—the written (or verbal) metaphor. Second, metaphor, instead of being a unique form of language that deviates from “proper discourse,” is “the constituent form”

90. ⁷³ Ivor A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965),

⁷⁴ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 55.

⁷⁵ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 66.

⁷⁶ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 93.

⁷⁷ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 94.

⁷⁸ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 94.

of language, “the omnipresent principle of all its free action.”⁷⁹ As Gregory Dawes summarizes, for Richards, “the interanimation of words, which characterizes all language use and establishes all ‘meaning[,]’ is simply particularly clear in the case of metaphor.”⁸⁰

In addition to reconceptualizing the very essence of metaphor, Richards also contributed to the terminology of the components of metaphor (the two “thoughts” that are active together). The underlying subject he called the “tenor,” and the mode in which it is expressed he called the “vehicle” such that “we can describe or qualify the tenor by describing the vehicle.”⁸¹ We should note here that the tenor need not be explicit in the metaphor and that more than one vehicle might be present, as can be observed from Richards’s own example:

A stubborn and unconquerable flame
Creeps in his veins and drinks the streams of life.⁸²

In this example, the metaphor’s tenor is a fever, though it is not explicitly mentioned. Instead, it is implied from the utterance itself. Furthermore, multiple vehicles are at play, which “shed light” on the tenor. The first is a flame, personified as a stubborn and unconquerable agent. In the second line, however, the flame is further developed and is described in terms that suggest a creepy hunter. This second vehicle, like the tenor, is not explicit but is presented through the predicative description.⁸³

⁷⁹ Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 90.

⁸⁰ Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33*, BINS 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 27.

⁸¹ It seems to me that the distinction between the two is blurred by Richards’s duplicate use of “describe” and “describing.” Thus, Dawes’s clarification is helpful: “The tenor would therefore seem to be the subject upon which it is hoped light will be shed, whereas the vehicle is the subject to which allusion is made in order to shed that light.” Dawes, *The Body in Question*, 27.

⁸² Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 102.

⁸³ Heim draws from this same example and makes the same observations; see Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*, 42.

Max Black's interaction theory. Although Richards broke away from the traditional understanding of metaphor and forged the beginning of a new path, it was Max Black who successfully advanced Richards's ideas and developed them into a fuller discussion of the function of metaphor.⁸⁴ While Richards introduced the terminology of tenor and vehicle to distinguish between the two elements of a metaphor, Black sought to be more precise. He originally introduced the categories of the "principal" subject (referring to the tenor) and the "subsidiary" subject (referring to the vehicle) to distinguish between the two realities.⁸⁵ In Black's example—"Man is a wolf"—the principal subject is "man" (or "men"), and the subsidiary subject is "wolf" (or "wolves").⁸⁶ In a later article, Black changed the terminology and wrote instead of a "primary" and a "secondary" subject.⁸⁷ He notes that one key feature of the secondary subject (in contrast to the primary subject) is that it should be thought of as a "system rather than as an individual thing." Thus, for example, in the metaphor "Society is a sea," "sea" is not to be conceived of primarily as a *thing* but as a "system of relationships" (what Black refers to as the "implicative complex").⁸⁸

Thus, in the metaphor "Man is a wolf," which consists of a primary subject ("man") and a secondary subject ("wolf"), the wolf-system is applied to "man." The hearer/reader will draw from the commonplace wolf-system and construct a suitable corresponding system for the primary subject. However, the newly formed implications will be limited both by the primary and by the secondary subject such that "any human traits that can without undue strain be talked about in 'wolf-language' will be rendered

⁸⁴ It is not surprising that Soskice suggests that "in many ways, the most satisfactory contemporary philosophical account of metaphor, and certainly the most often cited, is that of Max Black." Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 38.

⁸⁵ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 44.

⁸⁶ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 39.

⁸⁷ Black, "More about Metaphor," 28.

⁸⁸ Black, "More about Metaphor," 27.

prominent, and any that cannot will be pushed into the background.”⁸⁹ The result is that the metaphor “suppresses some details, emphasizes others—in short, [it] *organizes* our view of man.”⁹⁰ In this way, metaphors function as a kind of filter or screen through which we view the subject, much like “looking at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear.”⁹¹ The glass eclipses some stars while highlighting, organizing, and perhaps connecting others. The result is a new way of seeing the night sky.

Black also articulated the critical distinction between the *focus* of a metaphorical statement and its *frame*. This distinction stems from Black’s idea that a metaphor is an “expression in which some words are used metaphorically while the remainder are used nonmetaphorically.”⁹² Words that are used non-literally form the metaphorical “focus.” These, in turn, exist within a literal “frame” made up of the rest of the phrase—the non-metaphorical words.⁹³ The frame then functions as the context for the focus; within this new context, the focus obtains new meaning. Black summarizes his own interaction view with the following claims:

1. A metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects, to be identified as the “primary” subject and the “secondary” one. . . .
2. The secondary subject is to be regarded as a system rather than an individual thing. . . .
3. The metaphorical utterance works by “projecting upon” the primary subject a set of “associated implications,” comprised in the implicative complex, that are predicable of the secondary subject. . . .

⁸⁹ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41.

⁹⁰ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41.

⁹¹ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 41.

⁹² Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 27.

⁹³ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 28.

4. The maker of a metaphorical statement selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex. . . .
5. In the context of a particular metaphorical statement, the two subjects "interact" in the following ways: (a) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and (b) invites him to construct a parallel implication-complex that can fit the primary subject; and (c) reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.⁹⁴

Black uses the example "Marriage is a zero-sum game" to illustrate how these dynamics play out. The metaphor contains two distinct subjects: (1) "marriage" (primary subject) and "zero-sum game" (secondary subject). A zero-sum game is then regarded as a system, an "implication-complex" that might be summarized as "(G1) A 'game' is a *contest*; (G2) between two opponents; (G3) in which one player can win only at the expense of the other."⁹⁵ These "associated implications" are then "projected" unto the primary subject through a process of selection, emphasis, suppression, and organization such that marriage is seen as "(M1) . . . a sustained struggle; (M2) between two opponents; (M3) in which the rewards (power? money? satisfaction?) of one contestant are gained only at the other's expense."⁹⁶

Black's interaction theory, then, makes several important arguments. First, he argues that it is the *combination* (i.e., the interaction) between focus and frame that constitutes a metaphor. This "interaction," in turn, has several implications for how metaphors function. First, the presence of the interaction means that the very *notion* of metaphor cannot be reduced to a single word functioning non-literally but must instead be conceived of at the level of the whole utterance. Second, it means that the *meaning* of a metaphor cannot be diluted to be a mere comparison or analogy since it involves the *interaction* between two "subjects" rather than a previously conceived simile or literal

⁹⁴ Black, "More about Metaphor," 27–28.

⁹⁵ Black, "More about Metaphor," 29.

⁹⁶ Black, "More about Metaphor," 29.

expression. Third, the semantic tension (which undergirds the interaction and thus the core dynamic of the metaphor) between the focus and the frame is unique to the metaphor itself such that the same focus placed in different frames results in an entirely different metaphor. According to Black's theory, then, "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus" (Rom 1:1) and "you who were once slaves of sin" (6:17) are not two examples of Paul's "slave metaphor" but are instead two distinct metaphors.

The second argument inherent in Black's theory is that "every metaphor may be said to mediate an analogy or structural correspondence."⁹⁷ However, he carefully distinguishes this notion of metaphors being *grounded* in similarity from Whatley's previously noted assertion that a simile is merely a different form of metaphor. As Black explains, "Implication is not the same as covert identity: Looking at a scene through blue spectacles is different from comparing that scene with something else."⁹⁸ In short, Black recognizes that metaphor operates at the level of analogy and similarity without reducing metaphor to a decorative form of either phenomenon.

The third argument in Black's theory has to do with a remark he made in his earlier work, which he later referred to as his "creativity thesis"⁹⁹: "It would be more illuminating in some of these cases to say that a metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing."¹⁰⁰ Black later acknowledged the vast criticism he received on this very point. Haig Khatchadourian, for example, thinks the thesis is untenable: "How can one, anyway, literally create a feature or a similarity by means of a metaphor?"¹⁰¹ Although Khatchadourian grants that a user of

⁹⁷ Black, "More about Metaphor," 30. He makes this argument despite his critique of the comparison view, which sees metaphor merely as a figurative way of expressing a comparison in literal terms.

⁹⁸ Black, "More about Metaphor," 30.

⁹⁹ Black, "More about Metaphor," 35.

¹⁰⁰ Black, *Models and Metaphors*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Haig Khatchadourian, "Metaphor," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 8, no. 3 (1968): 235.

metaphor “can bring into prominence known features . . . which he thinks deserve special attention” and thereby “give us a new vision or a new insight,” nevertheless, “the creation of some effect in the hearer or reader [does not involve] *the creation of a similarity* between the principal and the subsidiary subject.”¹⁰² In response to critiques like this, Black clarifies but does not retract his thesis. He explains that a metaphor brings into existence a similarity in much the same way as the invention of cinematography brought into existence the slow-motion appearance of a galloping horse. Much like modern cinematography, metaphors, Black suggests, are (cognitive) “instruments” that are “indispensable for perceiving connections that, once perceived, are *then* truly present.”¹⁰³

Soskice, Dawes, and Heim all recognize the significant contributions of Black’s theory. At the same time, however, they point out some of its shortcomings, difficulties, and possible inconsistencies. Soskice critiques Black’s notion of “filtering” by suggesting that it is inconsistent with Black’s claim that metaphors not only present existing similarities but sometimes create them: “A filter, at best, brings out what was already there.”¹⁰⁴ Soskice also points out that Black’s theory of interaction seems to be weakened by his contention that it is only the secondary subject that should be understood as a complex. How can we say both subjects are illuminated by their interaction while at the same time suggesting that it is the secondary subject’s complex that filters our view of the first? In other words, “it is hard to see how a smoked glass filter is in any way affected by its interaction with the night sky.”¹⁰⁵

Following Soskice, Dawes’s primary critique of Black’s theory is that it fails to account for the creation of new meaning by means of metaphor. Although Black wants to

¹⁰² Khatchadourian, “Metaphor,” 235–36.

¹⁰³ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 37.

¹⁰⁴ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 42.

maintain that metaphors may sometimes *create* similarities (and not merely *formulate* them) and that “metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor’s production helps to constitute,”¹⁰⁶ Dawes finds Black’s theory unable to account for what Black proposes metaphors do:

It is still unclear how Black’s theory of the functioning of metaphor is able to account for the creation of new meaning. Surely to say that the maker of a metaphor “selects, emphasizes, suppresses and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject’s implicative complex” is still to think of metaphor after the manner of a “filter”. The difficulty for Black’s theory is that a filter can emphasize, select, suppress or even (perhaps) organize, but it cannot allow us to see what we were unable to see before.¹⁰⁷

Finally, Heim’s own focus on Paul’s metaphorical language of *υιοθεσία* raises another significant shortcoming of Black’s theory—his insistence that metaphors consist of two subjects. Picking up on some further critiques made by Soskice, Heim points out that Black’s theory only works for metaphors in the form “X is a Y” (e.g., “Man is a wolf” or “Marriage is a zero-sum game”) and thus would have difficulty explaining what occurs in metaphors such as “a writhing script” or “blossoms of smoke.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, as Heim points out, even phrases like *ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υιοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι* (“we ourselves groan inwardly, waiting eagerly for our adoption”) do not lend themselves easily to analysis under Black’s theory, “as *υιοθεσίαν* is the direct object of a transitive verb, rather than something predicated of the subject.”¹⁰⁹

Janet Martin Soskice’s interanimative theory. After a thorough presentation and evaluation of other proposals, Soskice lays out her own theory of metaphor in her book *Metaphor and Religious Language*. She also shows her dissatisfaction with standard

¹⁰⁶ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 38.

¹⁰⁷ Dawes, *The Body in Question*, 33–34.

¹⁰⁸ Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*, 39.

ways of defining metaphor, such as speaking about one thing and meaning another (as Owen Barfield has suggested),¹¹⁰ and instead proposes that metaphor should be understood as “speaking about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another.”¹¹¹ Soskice believes that Richards came closest to providing a satisfactory account; thus, her proposal largely builds on his work.¹¹² Like Richards and Black, Soskice rejects substitution and comparison theories of metaphor. She argues that metaphors should be treated as “fully cognitive and capable of saying that which may be said in no other way.”¹¹³

Contrary to Black, Soskice returns to Richards’s argument that metaphor does not consist of “some words being used metaphorically” but is “the consequence of the interanimation of words in the complete utterance.”¹¹⁴ She also returns to Richards’s emphasis that metaphor involves the interaction of thoughts and not simply the words or terms in the utterance, and she retrieves the terms “tenor” and “vehicle” (as opposed to Black’s primary and secondary subject) to explain the two foci of the interanimation. The advantage of returning to Richards’s nomenclature, Soskice suggests, is two-fold. First, it allows us to distinguish between the two foci without necessarily identifying two “subjects,” leaving room for what might be called “subsidiary vehicles.”¹¹⁵ The benefits are clear if we return to a previous example:

¹¹⁰ Owen Barfield, “The Nature of Meaning,” *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* 2 (March 1981): 33.

¹¹¹ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 49.

¹¹² Though Soskice’s theory is referred to by other names (e.g., “Interanimation Theory” by Heim), I will be using the term Soskice herself uses in her own proposal: “We shall call our account, employing a term used by Richards, an ‘interanimative’ theory of metaphor.” Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 44.

¹¹³ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 44.

¹¹⁴ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 45.

¹¹⁵ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 46.

A stubborn and unconquerable flame
Creeps in his veins and drinks the streams of life.¹¹⁶

Soskice's insistence on the use of "tenor" and "vehicle" pays off when we consider metaphors that escaped analysis using Black's categories (e.g., "giddy brink" or "writhing script"). While it would make no sense to say that each example contains two subjects (either in the utterance or even in the mind), we can speak of "brink" and "script" as tenors and "giddiness" and "writhing" as vehicles. Soskice further posits that while readers might at some point think of "writhing" in terms of a *thing* (or *things*; subject) that writhes (perhaps a snake, a man in pain, a piece of paper on the fire, or possibly all three), she is right to note that "none would be either an explicit or a necessary second subject of the metaphor."¹¹⁷ Thus Soskice concludes that "it is only by seeing that a metaphor has one true subject which tenor and vehicle conjointly depict and illumine that a full, interactive, or interanimative theory is possible."¹¹⁸

The significance of Soskice's comments on the singularity of the subject in the metaphor that is distinct from the tenor is most clearly seen by looking at another example. We can consider the interaction between tenor and vehicle in Virginia Woolf's description of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*:

Never did anybody look so sad. Bitter and black, half-way down, in the darkness, in the shaft which ran from the sunlight to the depths, perhaps a tear formed; a tear fell; the waters swayed this way and that, received it, and were at rest. Never did anybody look so sad.¹¹⁹

It would be wrong to conclude that Woolf is speaking about grief and a shaft here. Instead, the author is presenting a kind of personal, appalling grief. And yet to say that the subject here is Mrs. Ramsey's grief would be "to fall short of the genuine descriptive

¹¹⁶ Cited in Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 102.

¹¹⁷ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 47.

¹¹⁸ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 26. This is the same example used by Soskice in *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 47–48.

content of the metaphor.”¹²⁰ The subject, the full meaning of the metaphor, is the result of the complete utterance—the tenor and the vehicle. We would be wrong to say, suggests Soskice, that the vehicle of the shaft is a “metaphor” for grief or that the tenor of grief is itself the “meaning” of the metaphor. Instead, “the metaphor and its meaning . . . are the unique product of the whole and the excellence of a metaphor such as this one is not that it is a new description of a previously discerned human condition but that *this* subject, this particular mental state, is accessible only through the metaphor.”¹²¹

Soskice’s theory also posits that metaphors, though linguistic phenomena, involve cognitive processes. Following Richards, Soskice acknowledges that a metaphorical utterance leads to “an intercourse of thoughts, as opposed to a mere shifting of words or a substitution of term for term,” and that “these ‘thoughts’ can be extra-utterance without being extra-linguistic.”¹²² In other words, the “interanimation” Soskice conceives of is an interanimation at the cognitive level in the reader or hearer. This interanimation, however, is not just between the terms in the utterance. Rather, as Soskice notes,

the tension in this initial interanimation of terms is not enough to explain metaphorical construal We suggest, therefore, that at a secondary level metaphorical construal is characterized by its reliance on an underlying model, or even on a number of such models, and that metaphor and model are indeed, as Black has suggested, closely linked.¹²³

Soskice’s comments are, once again, better understood by looking at an actual metaphor. If we consider the phrase “a writhing script,” what Soskice is saying is that the interanimation is not simply between “writhing” (and other actions similar to writhing, such as twisting or squirming) and “script” but could also involve entities that we might

¹²⁰ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 48.

¹²¹ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 48.

¹²² Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 45.

¹²³ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 50.

associate with writhing such, as snakes or persons in pain. These models would form part of what she calls the associative network of the term “writhing.” In this way, the interanimation involves not just the term but the entire associative network of the term: “The associative network of a term [is] its placement in a semantic field where the ‘value’ of the term is fixed not simply by the terms for which it might be exchanged . . . but also by the entities of which the term would customarily be predicated.”¹²⁴ In this way, good metaphors suggest models that enable the reader to conceptualize through the interplay between the network of vehicle and tenor. Soskice’s conception of models and her proposal about how they function within metaphors is similar to what Black had suggested: “Every metaphor is the tip of a submerged model.”¹²⁵

It has been recently said that Soskice has developed “what is, perhaps, the most influential account of metaphor and religious language to appear to date.”¹²⁶ Her philosophical approach to metaphor, built upon and yet distinct from the work of Richards and Black, has provided a helpful angle from which to approach biblical metaphors.¹²⁷ Like Richards, Soskice wants to analyze metaphors at the cognitive and linguistic levels. She did not, however, have the tools to support her proposal. Those tools would be developed later and would emerge in a field now referred to as cognitive linguistics.

Cognitive Linguistics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Cognitive linguistics (CL) is a modern school of linguistic thought that emerged in the 1970s, though its roots can be traced back to the work of Noam Chomsky

¹²⁴ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 50.

¹²⁵ Black, “More about Metaphor,” 30.

¹²⁶ Victoria S. Harrison, “Metaphor, Religious Language, and Religious Experience,” *Sophia* 46, no. 2 (2007): 136.

¹²⁷ Most recently, Heim has adopted Soskice’s definition and employed her categories of tenor and vehicle to study *υιοθεσία* metaphors in Romans and Galatians; see Heim, *Adoption in Galatians and Romans*.

in the 1950s, especially his development of transformational-generative grammar (TGG).¹²⁸ CL was pioneered by individuals such as George Lakoff, Wallace Chafe, Charles Fillmore, and Leonard Talmy out of dissatisfaction with trends in linguistics advanced by generative grammar and formal semantics. However, the discipline itself was perhaps only catapulted into the forefront of the broader conversation with the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980. The next decade saw the emergence of new works that built upon this foundation and functioned as the edifice of what would become a major approach to language and meaning through the works of Charles Fillmore (frame semantics),¹²⁹ Gilles Fauconnier (mental spaces),¹³⁰ Lakoff (categorization),¹³¹ and Langacker (cognitive grammar).¹³² By the beginning of the 1990s, the proliferation of research and growing interest in this discipline led to the establishment of the International Cognitive Linguistics Society and

¹²⁸ Chomsky laid out his groundbreaking linguistic framework in Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957). Here, he argued not only for the independence of syntax and semantics but also for the necessity of a system of rules (transformations) that assign structural descriptions to sentences. For Chomsky, a "language" is "a set (finite or infinite) of sentences" and a "grammar" is "a device that generates all of the grammatical sequences of [that language] and none of the ungrammatical ones" (13). Chomsky's framework made big splashes into neighboring academic ponds, perhaps most importantly, those of psychology, psycholinguistics, and philosophy. The praise with which Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964) was received unquestionably solidified Chomsky's authoritative voice in the various disciplines. Not long after, however, a community of Chomsky's early colleagues and doctoral students began to challenge the very foundation of his framework. Paul Postal, "Háj" Ross, George Lakoff, and James McCawley sought to overturn Chomsky's theory of generative grammar by proposing that it was semantics (not grammar) that was the basis of what Chomsky referred to as "deep structure." This proposal perhaps first took shape in a paper by Lakoff which later appeared as "Toward Generative Semantics," in *Notes from the Linguistic Underground*, ed. James D. McCawley, *Syntax and Semantics 7* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 43–61. Contra generative grammarians, Lakoff and other generative semanticists argued that it was the meaning of words that gave rise to their order rather than the underlying order of words that generated meaning. What became known as the "linguistic wars" are chronicled in great detail in Randy Allen Harris, *The Linguistics Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹²⁹ Charles J. Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm: Selected Papers from SICOL-1981*, ed. Linguistic Society of Korea (Seoul: Hanshin, 1982), 111–37.

¹³⁰ Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

¹³¹ George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹³² Ronald W. Langacker, *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).

the launch of the journal *Cognitive Linguistics*. According to the respected cognitive linguist Langacker, the launch of the journal “marked the birth of cognitive linguistics as a broadly grounded, self-conscious intellectual movement.”¹³³

Though sometimes referred to as a single theory, cognitive linguistics more accurately refers to a group of theories and approaches from various fields (linguistics, neuroscience, embodied cognition) that share a few assumptions about the dynamic between language and thought structures.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, it was Lakoff and Johnson’s work, which applied findings in the cognitive sciences to the study of metaphor, that served as the definitive bridge connecting the two fields and thus created new avenues of investigation that trafficked in both.¹³⁵

Conceptual Metaphor

For Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is fundamentally conceptual. Metaphor, in other words, is not merely a rhetorical device or even a matter of words. Instead, it is essential to human thought, speech, and action—it is the main way we make sense of abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. We cannot avoid thinking—and thus speaking and writing—using metaphors. Consequently, metaphorical thought is

¹³³ Langacker, *Concept, Image, and Symbol*, ix.

¹³⁴ Langacker offers a helpful overview of the various ways in which cognitive linguistics, though quite diverse at the outset since it did not stem from any single theory, scholar, or object of description, has enjoyed a general sense of integration and unification as a movement. Moreover, this convergence can be observed not only within the movement, but also to a certain degree with other theoretical non-generative approaches. See Ronald W. Langacker, “Convergence in Cognitive Linguistics,” in *Cognitive Linguistics: Convergence and Expansion*, ed. Mario Brdar, Stefan T. Gries, and Milena Žic Fuchs, HCP 32 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011), 9–16.

¹³⁵ Though George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s impact on the application of cognitive sciences to metaphor cannot be overstated, I find it important to highlight also the work of Michael J. Reddy, “The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language,” in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 284–324. Mary DesCamp goes so far as to say that Reddy’s analysis, originally presented in 1977 at a multi-disciplinary conference on metaphor, “served as the launching pad for a generation of linguistic theorists, philosophers, and cognitive scientists, led by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,” Mary Therese Descamp, *Metaphor and Ideology: Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum and Literary Methods Through a Cognitive Lens*, BINS 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 20.

“unavoidable, ubiquitous, and mostly unconscious.”¹³⁶ Therefore, the metaphorical expressions we see and hear in language are simply “surface manifestations” of what Lakoff and Johnson call “conceptual metaphor.”

Imagine you are sitting in a coffee shop, and a young college student is sitting at the table in front of you. He has his laptop on the table and three or four open textbooks, and you perceive a frantic, decaffeinated demeanor about him as you overhear part of his phone conversation:

We’re completely stuck. I don’t see how we can defend the claim that gas prices will go up once he steps into office. And we’re running out of time! The assignment is due tomorrow! I had no idea this economics class would be my heaviest course this semester.

Most people who hear this conversation would have no trouble understanding that the student is having trouble completing an assignment for a class and is lamenting the class’s difficulty as a whole. The student’s comments are so unremarkable that it is easy to miss that this short remark is replete with metaphors. My goal in this section is to use this made-up student’s brief comment as a test case for the various features of metaphor that conceptual theorists have highlighted, which will be important when we consider the metaphors that Paul uses in Romans 6.

At the core of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is the idea that metaphors are not just expressions we use in communication but concepts we live by. In the example above, the student expressed difficulty as he sought to “defend the claim that gas prices will go up.” Is this a normal way of speaking about what we do with claims and ideas, or is this a metaphorical way of speaking? It is both. Consider, for example, some of the statements we might hear or read in the aftermath of a political debate: “His assertions were indefensible”; “She attacked every point of his response”; “He defended his position well; or “The winner of that debate was clear.” Each of these comments is a normal way

¹³⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 272.

of speaking about the event of a political debate. And yet this group of “normal” expressions reveals a particular way in which debates and arguments, in general, are *conceptualized*. We do not simply *speak* about winning or losing arguments (or, as with our student, about *defending* claims); we actually *think* in those terms.

When we argue, we defend our position and attack the other, view the person with whom we are arguing as an opponent, think of new lines of attack, and gain and lose ground—and there is often a winner and a loser. Though there is no physical battle, the way we speak reveals an underlying conceptual framework by which we understand and experience the various argumentation processes. As Lakoff and Johnson point out, “It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing.”¹³⁷ Our student was not part of a physical or literal fight where something needed to be literally defended; instead, his comments revealed that he conceptualized claims as “things” that are defended or attacked. His words showed the metaphorical way in which he *conceptualized* arguments and claims.

Cognitive theorists do not claim that all of our conceptual systems are metaphorical or that everything in thought and language is metaphor-based. However, they do suggest that metaphor facilitates communication by expressing and organizing abstract concepts in terms that are more concrete or at least more highly structured. Both with our student and with the political debate, it is not that arguments are merely being *compared* to a war. Rather, “ARGUMENT is partially structured, understood, performed, and talked about in terms of WAR. The *concept* is metaphorically structured, the *activity* is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the *language* is metaphorically structured.”¹³⁸ Metaphors, in other words, allow us to reason and think about—not just talk and write about—ideas.

¹³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4.

¹³⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5 (emphasis mine).

The implications of this way of thinking about metaphor are immense. If metaphors are conceptual before they are literary, then analyzing them as cognitive phenomena (and not merely as literary ones) is tremendously fruitful, if not outright necessary. Furthermore, the conceptual core of metaphors forces us to ask important questions about what metaphors *do* when employed.¹³⁹ Metaphors like “ARGUMENT IS WAR” are an integral part of the way we conceptually organize and structure the world around us. So, we might say that “*the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.*”¹⁴⁰

CMT, therefore, compels us to consider Paul’s metaphorical language of slavery in Romans in a way that much of the literature has ignored—as a literary feature grounded on Paul’s own conceptual structures. Careful exegesis of the text requires us to recognize that Paul’s metaphors are tied to a particular way of *thinking* about things like sin, death, slavery, baptism, and God.

Systematicity of metaphorical concepts. CMT argues that metaphors in language are grounded in an underlying system of thought and are part of a broader system of conceptual structure. Cognitive theorists have observed a highly structured pattern in the way metaphors join inferences from two different domains. Another comment our college student made on the phone (presumably to a fellow classmate) as he grumbled about his assignment was “And we’re running out of time! The assignment is due tomorrow!” Here, we see that a concept from the domain of TIME is brought together

¹³⁹ We will consider the conceptual-shaping effects of metaphors in a later section (“Mapping and Directionality”).

¹⁴⁰ This definition, proposed originally in Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5, has largely been adopted by cognitive theorists and will be the working definition of metaphor in this study. It is worth noting that although this definition is similar to Soskice’s definition (“speaking about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another”; Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 49), this definition highlights that metaphors are not merely a matter of “speaking” about things but about *understanding* and, as we will see, even *experiencing* one thing in terms of another.

with ideas from the domain of MONEY.¹⁴¹ Other expressions that do the same include “I hate wasting time”; “Don’t be stingy with your time”; “I lost a lot of time after I got injured”; “How have you spent your time this week?”; “Is that really worth your while?”; and “I need to budget my time more effectively.” It is not a coincidence that we regularly speak about wasting, spending, losing, investing, running out of, being generous with, and budgeting *time*. These are not isolated and unrelated expressions; instead, they all display the underlying conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY.

As we saw before, these metaphors are not merely ways we speak about time and money; they are evidence that we, in fact, act and *think* of time as money. What is important about these metaphorical expressions is that they show that our conception of time is not limited to one particular metaphor but is actually the result of a highly structured system of relationships between the two domains: “TIME IS MONEY entails that TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, which entails that TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY.”¹⁴² This underlying *system* of thought is the foundation for our understanding and experience of time in terms of money.

This highly structured system is grounded on a shared experiential basis that connects metaphorical concepts into a single system rather than on mere lexical similarities. For example, we might at first assume that the expressions “I have the project under control” and “I have that skill down” are both examples of a related metaphor—perhaps because they both have to do with perceived confidence pertaining to an activity expressed in terms of low verticality. However, a closer look at the expressions reveals that the first is an example of the metaphor SUBJUGATION IS DOWN

¹⁴¹ When describing a metaphor in terms of domains, it is standard to write the source domain and the target domain in all capital letters. In the next section (“Semantic frames and conceptual domains”), I will propose that it is better to speak about *frames* rather than *domains* when describing metaphors.

¹⁴² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 9.

(“He’s *under* my control”; “He *fell* from power”),¹⁴³ and the second expression is an example of the metaphor KNOWN IS DOWN (“The issue has been *settled*”; “Let me *dig* into it”).¹⁴⁴ The first metaphor is grounded on our experiential knowledge that small physical size (especially on the vertical axis) typically correlates with lesser physical strength (frailer, weaker).¹⁴⁵ The second metaphor is based on our experience that it is easier to study and examine something (and thus understand it and know it) if it is on the ground or low in a fixed location than if it is floating in the air or high somewhere.¹⁴⁶ We see, then, that though we might have even expected “control” and “known” to be paired with “up” (and “subjugation” and “unknown” to be paired with “down”), the conceptual systems between the two metaphors are grounded on two different kinds of experience and thus produce two different pairings. In a later section (“Experiential grounding and primary metaphor”), we will revisit the important relationship between our embodied experiences and our metaphorical conceptual systems.

Any study of biblical metaphor must consider this embodied and experiential grounding of our conceptual metaphorical system to guard against two different types of error. On the one hand, we must not study individual metaphors in isolation and assume they have no connection with other related yet different metaphors. For example, we must consider the possibility that “so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6b) and “and when you were set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (6:18) are two metaphors that stem from a broad conceptual system by which Paul understands the believer’s new life in Christ and must therefore be interpreted together.

¹⁴³ The complement to this metaphor is CONTROL IS UP (e.g., “He’s in a *superior* position”; “I am *on top* of the situation”).

¹⁴⁴ The complement to this metaphor is UNKNOWN IS UP (e.g., “It’s a *toss-up*”; “I’m on the fence, don’t leave me *hanging*”).

¹⁴⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 20.

On the other hand, we must not simply assume that two metaphors that exhibit lexical or semantic similarities are, therefore, part of the same underlying system. In other words, taking the same two examples, it is possible that although Paul speaks about being enslaved to sin (6:6) and about being enslaved to righteousness (6:18), the two metaphors stem from different underlying conceptual systems such that their meanings must be discerned independently of each other.¹⁴⁷

Semantic frames and conceptual domains. By definition, CMT (and other subfields of CL) operate at the intersection of language and cognition (or, we might say, at the intersection of form and meaning). For this reason, one of the essential elements of CMT is what is referred to as “semantic frames,” a concept pioneered by Charles Fillmore.¹⁴⁸ Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser define frames as “structured understandings of the way aspects of the world function.”¹⁴⁹ They are the mental structures that allow us to understand and make sense of new words and experiences and help us anticipate the kinds of “things” we might encounter next when reading or

¹⁴⁷ As we will see, Paul’s conception of slavery to sin is related to his conception of sin as power, which is, in turn, employed using the binary metaphors CONTROL IS UP and SUBJUGATION IS DOWN (e.g., “being *under* sin”).

¹⁴⁸ “Semantic frames” are one of the terms used to refer to categories of encyclopedic knowledge involved in determining meaning. For more details on encyclopedic knowledge, see István Kecskés, “Encyclopedic Knowledge, Cultural Models, and Interculturality,” in *Intercultural Pragmatics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 81–104. The term “frames” was also used by Marvin Minsky, “A Framework for Representing Knowledge,” in *The Psychology of Computer Vision*, ed. Patrick Henry Winston and Berthold Horn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 111–42. Other terms used to refer to these conceptual structures include “schemata” or “schema” (David E. Rumelhart, “Notes on a Schema for Stories,” in *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*, ed. Daniel G. Bobrow and Allan Collins [New York: Academic Press, 1975], 211–37), “scripts” (Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* [Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977]), “gestalts” (George Lakoff, “Linguistic Gestalts,” *CLS* 13 [1977]: 236–87), “scenarios” (Anthony J. Sanford and Simon C. Garrod, *Understanding Written Language: Explorations of Comprehension beyond the Sentence* [New York: Wiley, 1981]), and “idealized cognitive models” (George Lakoff, “Cognitive Models and Prototype Theory,” in *Concepts and Conceptual Development: Ecological and Intellectual Factors in Categorization*, ed. Ulric Neisser [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 63–100).

¹⁴⁹ Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser, “Cognitive Links and Domains: Basic Aspects of Mental Space Theory,” in *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar*, ed. Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser, *Cognitive Theory of Language and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

listening to a conversation.¹⁵⁰ For example, it is impossible to explain (or understand) the meaning of “second cousin once removed” without using the Family¹⁵¹ frame—a specific conceptual structure of general background knowledge we possess, which we in turn use to infer meaning related to terms such as “second cousin once removed.” The elements and relationships in a frame are abstracted from real-world experiences and allow us to make “maximal use of the data we are given in crucial respects.”¹⁵² Moreover, Charles Fillmore and Beryl Atkins argue that a word’s meaning “can be understood only with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs, or practices, constituting a kind of conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning.”¹⁵³ This explanation is an elaboration of an earlier statement Fillmore had made: “Meanings are relativized to scenes.”¹⁵⁴ Therefore, according to the semantic theory proposed by Fillmore, words derive meaning from the relationships they have with other elements in the same conceptual frame.¹⁵⁵

The meaning of terms like “father,” “mother,” “son,” “daughter,” “sister,” and “grandmother” (just to name a few) can only be discerned based on the relationships they have with the conceptual “scene” that we might call the Family or Household frame. It is

¹⁵⁰ Vyvyan Evans defines a frame as “a schematisation of experience (a knowledge structure), which is represented at the conceptual level and held in long-term memory and which relates elements and entities associated with a particular culturally embedded scene, situation or even from human experience. Frames include different sorts of knowledge including attributes, and relations between attributes.” Vyvyan Evans, *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 85–86.

¹⁵¹ It is standard notation to capitalize the name of the frame.

¹⁵² Fauconnier and Sweetser give the following example: “If someone talking about a house mentions *the front door*, *the bathroom*, or *the driveway*, we don’t ask *What front door?* We know that there is probably a front door, simply from a complex understanding of the kind of object in question.” Fauconnier and Sweetser, “Cognitive Links and Domains,” 5.

¹⁵³ Charles J. Fillmore and Beryl T. Atkins, “Toward a Frame-Based Lexicon: The Semantics of RISK and Its Neighbors,” in *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts: New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organization*, ed. Adrienne Lehrer and Eva Feder Kittay (New York: Routledge, 1992), 76–77.

¹⁵⁴ Charles J. Fillmore, “The Case for Case Reopened,” in *Grammatical Relations*, ed. Peter Cole and Jerrold M. Sadock, *Syntax and Semantics* 8 (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 59–81.

¹⁵⁵ Fillmore and Atkins go on to say that “Speakers can be said to know the meaning of the word only by first understanding the background frames that motivate the concepts that the word encodes.” Fillmore and Atkins, “Toward a Frame-Based Lexicon,” 77.

the frame that gives a specific meaning to each of these terms precisely because of the relationships that exist between the elements in the frame. However, these terms can mean something different in relation to other frames. In the statement “We will miss hearing Father Raymond’s sermons every Sunday,” it is the Church Service frame that is evoked, and thus “Father” means something different than it does in the statement “Father died when Mother was pregnant with Evelyn.” Individual utterances evoke a *frame*, and the words themselves are thus defined relative to that frame.

In our college student’s final sentence “I had no idea this economics class would be my heaviest course this semester,” the meaning of words like “class” and “course” (words whose meaning is indeterminate outside of a specific context) derive their meaning from the Academic Studies frame evoked by the totality of the words that make up the whole utterance (words such as “semester”). The Academic Studies frame, however, has to minimally include certain elements: someone has to be doing the studying (the STUDENT¹⁵⁶), someone has to be teaching in some form (the INSTRUCTOR), and there must be an academic establishment that connects the two (the INSTITUTION). These elements are called “roles” and are part of the semantic frame. The roles are part of the frame regardless of whether they have an explicit filler in the utterance. For example, the Academic Studies frame evoked by the college student tells us that there is someone teaching economics (INSTRUCTOR) even if we do not know who that person is based on the student’s comments.

Over the last few decades, interdisciplinary work involving frame semantics has proven fruitful in biblical studies.¹⁵⁷ The relationship between frames and meaning is

¹⁵⁶ The standard way of conveying the various frame roles is to write them in capital letters.

¹⁵⁷ See for example Willem Botha, “The Love Frame in the Bible. A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis,” in *Faith and Fiction: Interdisciplinary Studies on the Interplay Between Metaphor and Religion*, ed. Benjamin Biebuyck, René Dirven, and John Ries (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 55–82; Stephen Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew: Exploring Lexical Semantics, Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew*, BINS 108 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); William A. Andrews Jr., “Don’t Think of a Voice! Divine Silence, Metaphor, and Mental Spaces in Selected Psalms of Lament,” in *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies*, ed. Bonnie Howe and Joel B. Green (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014),

important for our study of Paul’s metaphors for several reasons. First, very subtle changes in an utterance can evoke very different frames (just consider the differences between the frames evoked by the phrases “economics class” and “economic class”). Furthermore, the frame evoked might not always be the one we first expect based on a cursory inspection of the words in the utterance. The statement “Father Abraham had many sons” does not evoke the Household frame the way that the statement “James’s father had many sons” does, even though both statements contain “father” and “sons.” It will be necessary, then, to consider the individual frames of utterances as we analyze Paul’s metaphors. This is yet another reason we cannot simply assume that Paul uses δοῦλος the same way in Romans 1:1 (Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), as he does later in the letter when he writes οὕτως νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῆ δικαιοσύνη (6:19). Two different frames may be at work in the two different phrases.

One critical point to note is that the frame a word triggers depends on one’s socio-cultural experience. The frame evoked by an American Mennonite when she hears the word “wedding” is somewhat different from the frame evoked when an Indian Hindu hears or reads the same word. Though there might be commonalities among the frames, there will also be significant differences in the elements. When we study Paul’s slavery language, for example, we must remember that the frame evoked by a twenty-first-century American who hears or reads the word “slave” bears some similarities to—but also significant differences from—the frame evoked by a first-century Jewish Christian who hears or reads the word δοῦλος. The latter frame would have also differed in some ways from the frame evoked by a Gentile non-Christian Roman citizen who did not share Paul’s Jewish background knowledge concerning the exodus and the entire panorama of the Jewish experience as δοῦλοι.

47–72; Godwin Mushayabasa, *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Ezekiel 1–24: A Frame Semantics Approach*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 63 (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Carsten Ziegert, “What Is $\tau\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$? A Frame-Semantic Approach,” *JSOT* 44, no. 4 (June 2020): 711–32.

Conceptual domains are another crucial feature of CMT and are closely related to semantic frames. However, the relationship between the two has been the topic of some disagreement. Some scholars suggest that the two refer to the same mental structures.¹⁵⁸ Others propose that domains are a kind of super-frame comprising multiple frames.¹⁵⁹ In this study, I will distinguish between the two and will speak of a conceptual domain as a broader structure often encompassing various frames. In a later section (“Mapping and Directionality”), I will examine the significance of semantic frames and conceptual domains as they pertain to the function of metaphors.

As we will see throughout this study, frame semantics have something essential to contribute to the current debates we have observed surrounding Paul’s metaphorical language. For example, though we have seen arguments for various “backgrounds” behind the apostle’s figurative use of slavery, perhaps the more fruitful question has to do with the *frames* evoked by each pertinent phrase. Frame semantics reminds us that although Paul’s Jewish upbringing, immersion in the Jewish Scriptures, and Greco-Roman social context shaped his understanding of slavery, individual utterances evoke specific frames, and not every element of our encyclopedic knowledge is always at play. On the contrary, individual utterances often evoke frames that intentionally “hide” certain elements in the broader conceptual domain.

Experiential grounding and primary metaphor. In our working example, the student’s last comment was “I had no idea this economics class would be my heaviest course this semester.” Once again, since a course cannot be literally weighed and found to be heavy, we can easily discern that the student’s comment involves a metaphor. Following our definition, we might say that the student is understanding and experiencing

¹⁵⁸ William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

¹⁵⁹ Jiří Materna, “Building FrameNet in Czech” (PhD diss., Masaryk University, 2010), 16.

one thing (his course load and possibly its implication on his time and energy) in terms of another (a heavy object). His statement is not a strange way of speaking of something that is proving strenuous or tiring. In fact, most English dictionary entries of the word “heavy” include this common metaphorical usage where a strenuous *activity* (rather than a heavy object) is in view.

Intriguingly, cognitive linguists have pointed out that English is not the only language whose word for “heavy” has pervasive metaphorical usage pertaining to a strenuous activity—so do the equivalent words in medieval Irish, Russian, ancient Greek, Armenian, Turkish, Japanese, Swahili, and Arabic.¹⁶⁰ The fact that it is the word “heavy” (and not “bright,” “dark,” or “tight,” for example) that can mean “difficult” not only in English but also in these other unrelated languages suggests that the pairings of meanings are not arbitrary. The question then is, what accounts for these linguistic patterns?

Several explanations have been given for this phenomenon.¹⁶¹ One such explanation relies on what we might call Aristotle’s “Similarity Hypothesis,” which suggests that “heavy” and “difficult” are related by virtue of similarity, analogy, or proportion. Albert Katz suggests that metaphor “achieves much of its power by highlighting a similarity in otherwise similar concepts.”¹⁶² In other words, there is a similarity between “heavy” and “difficult” that the metaphor merely exploits.¹⁶³ Even if

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Grady provides the specific terms for each of these languages and rightly concludes that “people in speech communities widely separated by time and geography all associate words from one particular semantic field (relating to physical weight) with meanings from another (relating to personal, emotional experience).” Joseph Grady, “Foundations of Meaning: Primary Metaphors and Primary Scenes” (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1997), 2.

¹⁶¹ I rely here on the Grady’s discussion of the various proposals presented in “Foundations of Meaning,” 3–5.

¹⁶² Albert N. Katz, “On Choosing the Vehicles of Metaphors: Referential Concreteness, Semantic Distances, and Individual Differences,” *Journal of Memory and Language* 28, no. 4 (1989): 487.

¹⁶³ Katz’s explanation relies in many ways on the comparison theory of metaphor discussed previously. As I already pointed out, however, this theory fails to account for why the supposed similarities in the pair “heavy” and “difficult” do not (and cannot) work the other way (e.g., we might talk about a “heavy responsibility” but not about “a difficult piece of furniture”).

what Katz suggests were true, what is the similarity observed by speakers of such diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds? This explanation simply fails to convince.

A more robust hypothesis is proposed by cognitive linguists that suggests that something about human experience gives rise to the mental association between the ideas of “heavy” and “difficult.” Regardless of language and culture, human beings have come to associate the lifting, carrying, and maneuvering of heavy objects with a difficult and arduous experience. It is an *experiential* association that is the foundation for a general conception of difficult situations as heavy.¹⁶⁴ This conceptualization is only then expressed in written metaphor. In this way, CMT proposes that the metaphor DIFFICULT IS HEAVY, like all metaphors, is a metaphor grounded in human embodied experience.

However, it would be an understatement to suggest that this relationship between human experience, cognition, and linguistics is merely a hypothesis. The past two decades have seen a flood of interdisciplinary studies that have confirmed Lakoff and Johnson’s theory. The term “embodied cognition” has emerged as groups of neuroscientists, linguists, theoretical psychologists, biologists, cognitive scientists, and philosophers have explored the interface of the body and the mind.¹⁶⁵ Lakoff and Johnson go so far as to suggest that “no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ This explanation for the seemingly universal metaphor DIFFICULT IS HEAVY seems more plausible than the argument that there is an objective similarity between the two ideas. Even if someone were to say that the two ideas are similar by virtue of the fact that they can both lead to weariness, this similarity would only underscore the fact that it is not an inherent feature of the concepts that brings them together but our interaction and experience with them.

¹⁶⁵ Some of the works published in the last few years that explore embodiment and cognition include Mark Rowlands, *The Body in Mind: Understanding Cognitive Processes*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Dirk Geeraerts, René Dirven, and John R. Taylor, eds., *Body, Language and Mind: Embodiment*, vol. 1, CLR 35 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007); Michael Schaefer, *Body in Mind: A New Look at the Somatosensory Cortices*, Neurology: Laboratory and Clinical Research Development Series (New York: Nova Science, 2010).

¹⁶⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19.

Another metaphor employed by our student might be worth considering at this point. His second statement was “I don’t see how we can defend the claim that” Again, this is such an unremarkable way of speaking that we might miss the metaphor. If metaphorical capacity really does spring from our embodied cognition, and since much of the way we gain knowledge and perceive the world is through our senses, then it should not surprise us that the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor is one of the most pervasive metaphors cross-culturally and cross-linguistically. Furthermore, this is an example of what CMT adherents refer to as a primary metaphor, that is, a metaphor that is directly grounded in sensorimotor experience.¹⁶⁷

Our student’s comment had to do with failing to understand (or at least being unsure how to articulate) a specific argument. Yet, this subjective experience was expressed with terms from the visual domain: “I don’t see how”¹⁶⁸ Christopher Johnson’s work on Conflation Theory, especially regarding the acquisition of the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor in children, is helpful in further understanding embodied cognition and the rise of primary metaphors.¹⁶⁹ Using a well-known collection of the utterances of a child named Shem,¹⁷⁰ Johnson discovered that prior to using the metaphor, the child went through a stage in which the KNOWING and SEEING domains were conflated. In such confluations where the “knowing” and the “seeing” are occurring

¹⁶⁷ For a thorough treatment on primary metaphor, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, “Primary Metaphor and Subjective Experience,” in *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 45–59; Joseph E. Grady and Giorgio A. Ascoli provide a review of relevant existing work on primary metaphors and suggest a new avenue for future research in “Sources and Targets in Primary Metaphor Theory: Looking Back and Thinking Ahead,” in *Metaphor: Embodied Cognition and Discourse*, ed. Beate Hampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 27–45.

¹⁶⁸ Other uses of this metaphor include statements like “I *see* what you mean now”; “I don’t *see* how this is relevant”; “I *view* things a little differently”; “That might be your *point of view*, but it’s not mine”; “Can’t you *see* this is a terrible idea?”

¹⁶⁹ Christopher Johnson, “Metaphor vs. Conflation in the Acquisition of Polysemy: The Case of SEE,” in *Cultural, Psychological, and Typological Issues in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Masako Hiraga, Chris Sinha, and Sherman Wilcox, CILT 152 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 155–69.

¹⁷⁰ Brian MacWhinney, *The CHILDES Project: Tools for Analyzing Talk* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1995).

together, the two domains are coactivated by utterances where the verb “see” is used in place of the verb “know”: “Let’s see if we can balance the ball on top of him.”¹⁷¹ Johnson suggests that this conflation of the two domains eventually leads to the conceptual metaphor expressed by our college student. In other words, the sensorimotor base of primary metaphors makes them great primary building blocks for more complex metaphors.¹⁷²

In short, conceptual metaphor is built upon primary metaphors, which arise from our embodied (sensorimotor) experiences of the world around us. Thus, the way we conceive of (and speak about) the world and our subjective experiences stems from our experience with the world. Furthermore, if CMT is correct in emphasizing the importance of an experiential basis for understanding metaphor, then biblical scholars must consider more than simply the words in the text as they seek to understand biblical metaphors. A careful study of Paul’s metaphorical expressions must consider how he *experienced* reality in his Greco-Roman context. We cannot rely on the ideas and feelings triggered for us when we encounter baptismal, hamartiological, or slavery language since our experiences differ from those of Paul and his audience.

The Structure of Metaphor

The method for speaking about metaphors in this study will follow the standard nomenclature that cognitive linguists have adopted. However, the way we speak about the different “parts” of a metaphor is based on a particular understanding of what it is that metaphors are *doing*. Thus, it will be helpful to elaborate on the more structural components of metaphors, which are inseparable from their function.

¹⁷¹ “See” here can refer to visually inspecting whether the balancing takes place, or it can refer to perceiving more generally whether or not the balancing can take place. Here, the seeing and knowing are occurring together, and the two domains are conflated.

¹⁷² For example, we might say “I found her lecture so illuminating,” whereby we are speaking of comprehension in terms of illumination. We might even use the word “insightful,” which itself harkens to the visual domain, to refer to a subjective experience of understanding.

Mapping and directionality. We have seen that Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another" postulates that metaphors are fundamentally cognitive since, in their essence, they pertain to the mental processes of relating two separate ideas. In cognitive linguistics, the terms "target" and "source" are used to refer to these two ideas. The statement "I regret how I spent my spring break this year" is an expression of the TIME IS MONEY metaphor. Here, "time" is being understood, experienced, and thus expressed in terms of "money." As we have noted previously, neither "time" nor "money" need to be explicitly mentioned for a hearer or reader to understand that both ideas are invoked. Some cognitive linguists would identify this metaphor as involving the *domain* of TIME and the *domain* of MONEY. However, as I discussed previously, it might be better to speak about metaphors in terms of *frames* rather than *domains*. When analyzing metaphors, we speak about the "target frame" (typically the more abstract or least structured) that is being "mapped" onto the "source frame." Therefore, we would say that in the metaphor TIME IS MONEY the frame of Time (as evoked by the phrase "spring break") is the target frame. This target frame is being understood and expressed in terms of the frame of Money (as referenced by the word "spent"), the "source frame" in this case.

Bonnie Howe is helpful in her explanation of the mapping in metaphors: "It is important to remember that the 'name' of a metaphor is a sort of mnemonic device standing for the mapping itself, which is the set of correspondences, the conceptual pattern being noticed."¹⁷³ An alternative notation for the mapping that occurs in metaphors (and thus an alternative nomenclature for the metaphor) is "Money → Time" or "Time ← Money," where the arrow always points from the source to the target.

¹⁷³ Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 70. When I referred to metaphors such as DIFFICULT IS HEAVY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, and KNOWN IS DOWN, I have been giving the name of the metaphorical mapping that occurs across the semantic frames. These are always written in the form [TARGET] IS [SOURCE] and always in small caps to distinguish them from non-technical parts of the sentence.

It is worth pointing out again that the name of the metaphor always includes both target and source since the mapping function of the metaphor necessarily involves both ideas. Consequently, it would be imprecise to read “you who were once slaves of sin” (Rom 6:17) and speak about Paul’s “slave metaphor.” Conceptual metaphor analysis highlights the importance of the dual-frame nature of metaphor as well as its directionality (from target to source). In other words, metaphors cannot be rightly understood apart from the mapping in which they exist.

The cross-frame mapping that is the essence of metaphors requires an important clarification about the relationship between frames and domains. Karen Sullivan helpfully notes that although a metaphor might map structures from numerous frames within a domain, “certain frames are more important than others in any given instance of metaphoric language. These frames will usually be those that are directly evoked by particular items in a metaphoric phrase or clause”¹⁷⁴ The simple phrase “mental exercise” is an expression of the metaphor THE MIND IS A BODY. We might say that the source domain (BODY) is mapped onto the target domain (MIND).¹⁷⁵ The BODY domain, however, is made up of various frames, and not every frame is evoked to the same extent. The word “exercise” in the phrase “mental exercise” evokes the Exercising frame, which is more significant for understanding the phrase than other frames in the BODY domain (such as Sleeping or Organs). According to Langacker, the frame structure evoked by certain items in the utterance is *profiled* relative to the other structure in the source and target domains of the metaphor.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Karen Sullivan, *Frames and Constructions in Metaphoric Language*, Constructional Approaches to Language 14 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013), 24.

¹⁷⁵ I am borrowing this example from Sullivan’s subsequent explanation. See also Karen Sullivan, “Conceptual Metaphor,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Barbara Dancygier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 385–406.

¹⁷⁶ See especially Langacker, *Concept, Image, and Symbol*, 5, 26, 123, 182.

Image metaphor. Conceptual Metaphor Theory generally divides metaphors into three categories based on the feature that most pointedly produces the mapping dynamic: (1) “conceptual metaphors,” (2) “image metaphors,” and (3) “image schema metaphors.” Conceptual metaphor mappings involve relatively detailed or elaborate entailments.¹⁷⁷ In a conceptual metaphor like ARGUMENT IS WAR, the source domain is rich with an interconnected web of concepts, movements, and properties (e.g., conflict, defending, attacking, weapons, defenses, battlefield, victory) that are available for structuring the target frame. The richness of these entailments allows for an equally rich structure in the target frame. Image metaphors, on the other hand, though still grounded on cognition, have less inferential structure available to transfer, and thus the entailments are more restricted.¹⁷⁸ Image metaphors are based on perceived physical resemblance, and they work by prompting us to “perform a conceptual mapping between conventional *images*.”¹⁷⁹ We might say, for example, “Those poor children are little twigs!” Here, the metaphor is not bringing detailed entailments from the Twig frame but is instead mapping the conventional *image* of a twig onto the target frame, thus creating an image in the Children frame. Image metaphors are one-shot metaphors, mapping only one image onto another image by virtue of their physical shape, color, or visual features.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Entailments refer to the “rich inferences” that are carried from source frame to target frame. Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 298–99.

¹⁷⁸ The terminology is admittedly confusing since the categories seem to imply that image metaphors and image schema metaphors are not conceptual. Howe provides a helpful clarification when she writes, “When it is said that image metaphors work with images, in distinction from conceptual metaphors, this does not mean that an image metaphor is not also ‘conceptual’ in the sense of being a cognitive function or product. That is, the metaphorical dynamic is located not in the words themselves, but in the mental image evoked by the word.” Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 74.

¹⁷⁹ George Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” in Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought*, 230 (emphasis mine). See also “image metaphor” in Evans, *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics*, 105–6.

¹⁸⁰ Ning Yu helpfully explains the difference between conceptual metaphors and image metaphors: “An image metaphor maps the knowledge of one image onto another image[,] whereas a conceptual metaphor maps the knowledge of a conceptual domain onto another conceptual domain.” Ning Yu, *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor: A Perspective from Chinese*, HCP 1 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998), 31.

Image schema metaphor. In 1987, Lakoff and Johnson coined the term “image schemas” to refer to preconceptual spatial structures that, as Beate Hampe summarizes, “arise from, or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects.”¹⁸¹ Joseph Grady has recently defined image schemas as “mental representations of fundamental units of sensory experience.”¹⁸² As such, in contrast to image metaphors, image schema metaphors evoke only skeletal structures such as containers, paths, and bounded regions.¹⁸³ Some basic image schemas include: PART-WHOLE, CENTER-PERIPHERY, CYCLES, ITERATION, CONTACT, ADJACENCY, MOTION, FORCED MOTION (e.g., pushing, pulling, propelling), SUPPORT, BALANCE, STRAIGHT-CURVED, NEAR-FAR, SCALE, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, IN-OUT, UP-DOWN, and FRONT-BACK.¹⁸⁴ It is within these “skeletal” categories that image schema metaphors traffic.¹⁸⁵ Todd Oakley concludes that image schemas “map . . . spatial structure onto conceptual structure.”¹⁸⁶

One important image schema is the CONTAINER schema. As with all image schemas, the CONTAINER schema is grounded on bodily experience—in this case, that of containment. We experience objects as containers: we bathe *in* tubs, walk *into* rooms, ride elevators, and exit vehicles. We also experience our bodies themselves as containers:

¹⁸¹ Beate Hampe, “Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics: Introduction,” in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Beate Hampe, CLR 29 (New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 1–14. See Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 459–61; Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 19–21.

¹⁸² Joseph Grady, “Image Schemas and Perception: Refining a Definition,” in Hampe, *From Perception to Meaning*, 44.

¹⁸³ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 24; George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 99.

¹⁸⁴ This list is taken from Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 35. For other examples, see “image schema” (table 9) in Evans, *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics*, 108.

¹⁸⁵ Howe explains that “skeletal” is an apt description “because the deep, basic structures image schemas evoke are often not readily visible (unless one learns what to look for) in a text, yet they lend necessary support.” Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 75.

¹⁸⁶ Todd Oakley, “Image Schemas,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 215.

food enters our bodies, and air goes in and out of our bodies. These various and repeated embodied experiences are responsible for the development of an experiential *gestalt* that we refer to as the CONTAINER image schema.¹⁸⁷ This image schema, in turn, grounds image schema metaphors. Our college student's comments provide us with an example: "once he steps into office . . ." Assuming the "he" here is a political figure or an individual with some kind of authority, the metaphor here is POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE CONTAINERS.¹⁸⁸ There is no literal space into which the individual steps. Instead, the responsibility inherent in the office is conceptualized as a bounded container such that one can step *into* it and be removed *from* it. Image schemas often work together with more detailed image metaphors or with conceptual metaphors and give rise to more complex metaphors.¹⁸⁹

Several scholars have studied metaphors in the Hebrew Bible by considering the significance of the CONTAINER image schema.¹⁹⁰ Though Paul also repeatedly employs the container image schema, much less work has been done on these crucial metaphorical concepts in the New Testament.¹⁹¹ Cognitive linguists have observed that

¹⁸⁷ See Raymond Gibbs's more detailed discussion on the development of the CONTAINER (he refers to it as CONTAINMENT) schema from embodied experience and the various metaphors that employ it, Raymond W. Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103–4.

¹⁸⁸ Other expressions might be statements like "Who's *in* control of this situation"; "She got *removed from* her post"; "Who will *fill in* for him in the meantime?"

¹⁸⁹ See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 37. One example that combines the CONTAINER schema with conceptual metaphor is the oft-discussed ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER. See for example, Raymond W. Gibbs, "Researching Metaphor," in Graham Low and Lynne Cameron, *Researching and Applying Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 44–45. Furthermore, Howe discusses an example from 1 Peter 2:21 where an image schema works in concert with a more detailed image metaphor; see Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 76–77.

¹⁹⁰ See for example Alec Basson, *Divine Metaphors in Selected Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Alec Basson, "Image Schemata of Containment and Path as Underlying Structures for Core Metaphors in Psalm 142," *Old Testament Essays* 21, no. 2 (2008): 261–72; Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis: Evidence from the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and 1QH XI, 1–18*, BZAW 382 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Johan de Joode, *Metaphorical Landscapes and the Theology of the Book of Job: An Analysis of Job's Spatial Metaphors*, VTSup 179 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

¹⁹¹ Although not a work focused on Paul, Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, is one notable exception, focusing on 1 Peter.

English prepositions like “in,” “into,” “with,” “on,” “over,” and “under,” as well as the Greek prepositions ἐν, εἰς, μετά, ἐπί, ὑπέρ, ὑπό, are used frequently to formulate image schemas.¹⁹² Paul speaks about living *in* sin (ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ [ἀμαρτία]; Rom 6:2), walking *in* newness of life (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν; 6:4), living to God *in* Christ Jesus (ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ; 6:11), and sin reigning *in* mortal bodies (ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι; 6:12). In each of these cases, the Greek preposition ἐν evokes the image schema of container (SIN IS A CONTAINER, NEWNESS OF LIFE IS A CONTAINER, CHRIST IS A CONTAINER, MORTAL BODIES ARE CONTAINERS). A similar phenomenon occurs when Paul uses the preposition εἰς (6:3, 4, 2, 16, 17, 19, 22). These image schemas are significant for our study because they are integral to Paul’s ethical instruction and moral reasoning in the epistle to the Romans.

The Invariance Principle. The first thing we overheard the college student say was “We’re completely stuck.” Without any context, it would be hard to know what is being communicated. Something like what we heard the student say might be uttered by the driver of a car who lost control of the vehicle and ended up in a ditch. However, because we know the context in which the college student made this statement, we can infer that he is referring to his sense of puzzlement and perplexity over his assignment. How, then, would we analyze this metaphor from a conceptual metaphor perspective? This statement is an expression related to the metaphor LONG-TERM PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS A JOURNEY.¹⁹³ The ambiguity of “long-term purposeful activity” allows for the development of more precise metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY, EDUCATION IS A

¹⁹² Lakoff and Johnson discuss the English “in” and its role with container schemas in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 31.

¹⁹³ For a more detailed discussion of this metaphor, see Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 193–94; Daniel R. Roush, *Event Structure Metaphors through the Body: Translation from English to American Sign Language*, FTL 4 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2018), 75–58.

JOURNEY, PROFESSIONAL CAREER IS A JOURNEY.¹⁹⁴ More specifically, our college student is employing the more complex (but related) metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO TRAVEL, where the source frame of Traveling Impediment (“stuck”) is mapped onto the target frame of Difficulty pertaining to the student’s academics.

Because metaphors are grounded on a well-structured system of conceptual realities, they obey what Lakoff calls the Invariance Principle (IP): “Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology (that is, the image schema structure) of the source domain, in a way consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain.”¹⁹⁵ The way this principle works itself out in practice means that there are both constraints on and room for novel correspondences between the two frames. Moreover, the IP is what accounts for ill-formed metaphors.

Let us imagine that we can somehow overhear how our college student’s friend responds on the phone: “Why don’t we call Maggie and see if she can tow us out?” Although this might not be a common phrase, a hearer would presumably understand what is meant. Here, cooperation and support amid frustration (from the target frame of Difficulty) are being understood in terms of professional service while on the road (from the source frame Impediments to Travel). The mapping taking place in the metaphor might be illustrated as follows:

Source: Impediments to Travel		Target: Difficulty
roadside assistance	→	cooperation and support

¹⁹⁴ The English word “career” comes from the Latin domain of “race” or “course” such that the word eventually came to refer to the “course” of one’s professional or public life.

¹⁹⁵ Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” 215.

The somewhat novel expression is intelligible because the cognitive topology of each domain is correspondingly logical: the idea of X towing Y out of a ditch can be mapped onto the idea of X helping Y overcome a difficulty.¹⁹⁶

Let us assume, however, that the friend’s response to our college student had instead been “Why don’t we call Maggie and see if we can hitch a ride with her?” We can illustrate the mapping in this example as follows:

Source: Impediments to Travel		Target: Difficulty
hitching a ride	→	cooperation and support

Is this response as intelligible as the first? Although the second expression is conceptually similar to the first, it creates cognitive dissonance in a hearer precisely because it violates the IP.¹⁹⁷ In this case, “hitching a ride” invokes an image schema whereby the two students on the phone are leaving their “vehicle” and entering Maggie’s “vehicle.” Although “hitching a ride” and “getting towed” are possible ways of solving a problem on the road, they do not map equally well onto the frame of the students’ academic trouble. The inadequate mapping results because a crucial element of “hitching a ride” is entering someone else’s vehicle. The problem is that this second “interior” in the Impediments to Travel frame cannot be matched to a corresponding “interior” in the

¹⁹⁶ Note that even the phrase “overcoming a difficulty” borrows from the Travel frame with respect to elevated terrain (i.e., by implication, strenuous to traverse) to express what takes place when we face a challenging situation, regardless of whether the difficulty is physical in any way.

¹⁹⁷ It might be helpful here to note that the IP should not be understood as something that *should* be present in metaphors. Rather, as Lakoff notes, “to understand the Invariance Principle properly, it is important not to think of mappings as algorithmic processes that start with source domain structure and wind up with target domain structure. Such a mistaken understanding of mappings would lead to a mistaken understanding of the Invariance Principle, namely, that one first picks all the image-schematic structure of the source domain, then one copies it onto the target domain unless the target domain interferes. One should instead think of the Invariance Principle in terms of constraints on fixed correspondences: If one looks at the existing correspondences, one will see that the Invariance Principle holds: source domain interiors correspond to target domain interiors; source domain exteriors correspond to target domain exteriors; etc.” Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” 215.

Difficulty frame.¹⁹⁸ As a result, the second response is an example of an ill-formed metaphor.

Kevin Chau has recently argued for the usefulness of the Invariance Principle for understanding metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, and we will see that the IP is equally helpful in analyzing metaphors in the New Testament. The IP reminds readers that well-formed metaphors must have proper structural correspondence between the source and target frames (as Chau notes, “Agents must correspond to agents, patients with patients, beginnings to beginnings, instrumentals to instrumentals, etc.”)¹⁹⁹ In other words, the IP indeed governs the development of metaphors by both restricting and providing avenues for novel metaphors. However, it is also true that the IP can help evaluate different proposals for how authors use metaphors by evaluating the topological coherence between the domains suggested by the various interpretations.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

I began this chapter by arguing for the benefits of being attentive to narratives in Paul’s writings. I presented (and sometimes critiqued) some of the “narrative approaches” to Paul that have surfaced over the past few decades, and I suggested that reading Paul with an eye toward the narratives he tells is a fruitful endeavor. While I have not yet demonstrated that any such narratives are present in Romans 6, I have briefly shown that narrative, metaphor, and persuasion often go together, especially to convey a

¹⁹⁸ The metaphor that involves Maggie’s towing the two college students does not involve a transfer from one interior to another interior (i.e., the students are not leaving their “vehicle”; they are simply being helped to continue on the journey). The “hitching a ride” example inherently requires the students to leave their vehicle and enter Maggie’s vehicle. The transfer from one interior to another does not map out well into the target frame of Difficulty with the assignment.

¹⁹⁹ Kevin Chau, “Interpreting Biblical Metaphors: Introducing the Invariance Principle,” *VT* 65, no. 3 (2015): 381n9.

²⁰⁰ George Lakoff, “The Invariance Hypothesis: Is Abstract Reason Based on Image-Schemas?,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (1990): 39–74; Mark Turner, “Aspects of the Invariance Hypothesis,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 1, no. 2 (1990): 247–55; Lionel Wee, “Divorce before Marriage in the Singapore-Malaysia Relationship: The Invariance Principle at Work,” *Discourse & Society* 12, no. 4 (July 2001): 535–49; Sullivan, *Frames and Constructions in Metaphoric Language*, 36–37.

community's social values, sense of identity, and morality. Romans 6 is replete with metaphors, and I in subsequent chapters will argue that they come together to form a metaphorical narrative.

I also briefly surveyed some of the studies of Romans 6 that focused on Paul's metaphorical language and highlighted their important contributions. At the same time, I pointed out that scholars have not examined Paul's ethical argument in Romans 6 in light of the metaphors he uses to make it. The second half of this chapter focused on approaches to metaphor. Metaphors have enjoyed the attention of philosophers, rhetoricians, linguists, and scientists for the last two millennia. However, only in the past few decades have advances in the cognitive sciences demonstrated the indisputable cognitive basis of what has almost always been considered merely a linguistic frill. Conceptual Metaphor Theory has reshaped the landscape of metaphor studies. In the following chapters, I will analyze Romans 6:1–14 using these two tools and will seek to understand Paul's moral argument through the metaphors he employs.

It is common when discussing Paul's theology and Paul's ethical thought to speak metaphorically. I have already argued that metaphorical language is not inferior to literal language and, in many cases, is unavoidable if one wants to communicate effectively. However, it is very easy for Pauline scholars, in our analysis of Paul's metaphorical language, to employ our own metaphorical language and metaphorical logic—even one that is alien to the text. For this reason, in my analysis, I will endeavor to discuss the text with the text's own metaphorical language. This will help us stay focused on the text's specific and explicit metaphorical story and will guard us from importing figurative and conceptual categories that appear elsewhere in Romans or in in other sections of Paul's letters.

CHAPTER 3

SIN IS A CONTAINER: THE BINARY CONCEPTUAL DYNAMIC OF HUMAN EXISTENCE (ROMANS 6:1–2)

So far, I have surveyed advances and current issues in the two main disciplines this dissertation is concerned with: Pauline ethics (chapter 1) and metaphor theory and narrative analysis (chapter 2). I will now begin my analysis of Romans 6:1–14 in its literary and narrational context to better understand the apostle’s way of resolving what we identified as the “indicative-imperative” tension. I will present my exegesis in conversation with the most recent and pertinent scholarship of Romans and of Paul’s ethics. However, I hope my exegesis will also contribute to New Testament scholarship by offering an analysis of the text that employs the tools and benefits from advances in cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory and by being particularly attentive to the narrative developed by Paul.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, I consider the context in which Paul raises the diatribe of Romans 6:1. I begin by showing that Romans 3–5, which many view as part of the “indicative,” is, in fact, a narrative. This narrative features *ἁμαρτία* within the Financial Transaction frame and centers on Christ’s gracious favor (*χάρισμα*) as repayment for the sin-debt incurred by Adam and his descendants. In the second part, my focus shifts to Romans 6:1–2. This short section is crucial because it reveals the conceptual framework by which Paul conceives of the theological tension that arises from his gospel proclamation. I will begin this second part by showing that the diatribe in 6:1–2 voices the ethical tension often characterized as the “indicative-imperative” tension. Finally, I will argue that Paul conceptualizes believers’ relationship

with sin spatially—believers have departed (died) from the container of sin and, conceptually, cannot live *in it* any longer.

“Indicative-Imperative”: A Narrative-Dependent Schema

As I noted in chapter 1, the “indicative” part of the “indicative-imperative” is the more vaguely defined component in the schema. However, no matter how it is presented, the “indicative” is always connected to a series of events, a story of how God has worked in redemptive history in his people’s individual and corporate lives.¹ Therefore, every reference to the “indicative” presupposes (if not demonstrates) the importance of an underlying *narrative* in the ethical thought of the apostle. This narrative culminates in the Christ event. Therefore, some refer to the “indicative” as the “indicative of the cross,” where the cross functions metonymically to denote the narrative as a whole or certain aspects of it. Though we have seen growing interest in employing a narrative approach to studying Paul, these studies have not examined the narrational features associated with the “indicative-imperative” with the goal of better understanding the apostle’s logic and ethical framework. For this reason, this study will seek to be sensitive not only to Paul’s metaphors but to all figurative elements through which he constructs the *narrative* that underlies the “indicative.”

The Metaphorical Narrative of Romans 5

As we will see, Paul tethers his discussion in Romans 6 to his previous comments in Romans 5, especially 5:12–21. For this reason, we must begin not with Romans 6 but with Romans 5. Because of the narrow scope of this project, I will largely avoid many of the interpretive issues associated with this previous section of the letter.

¹ Michael Parsons’s definition is illustrative: “By ‘indicative’ we have in mind the fact that the new life in Christ is a work of God; it finds its origin in the death and resurrection of the Lord and comes into being through the work of Holy Spirit. The believer is thus a new creation; a member of Christ; a temple of the Holy Spirit; he is regenerated, and so on.” Parsons, “Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul’s Writing,” 217.

Instead, I will focus on Paul’s metaphors and the narrative he presents since these two elements will carry over into and build in chapter 6. Here, I will argue that in Romans 5, sin is primarily conceived of as an immoral act that incurs a debt and that the gift of grace Christ offers is conceived as a financial gift credited to the sinner that cancels that debt.

A Narrative of Adam, Sin, and Death

Though Paul has spoken about sin primarily as an immoral act throughout Romans 1–4 (e.g., 2:12; 3:23; 5:18), he presents it in a new way beginning in Romans 5:12.² Here, Paul speaks of sin as something that entered the human realm on the shoulders of Adam (δι’ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου), bringing with it death. Paul’s language of sin in this section of the letter has been the subject of much debate. These discussions have given rise to three primary understandings of ἁμαρτία in the letter to the Romans: (1) ἁμαρτία as a personified power; (2) ἁμαρτία as a demonic entity; (3) ἁμαρτία exclusively as a sinful action.³

The consensus view, rightly identified by David Southall, in Romans 5–8 especially, Paul presents sin as a personified power. Those who argue for this position look back at Paul’s language in 3:9 (πάντας ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι) and see in chapter 5 a continuation of an “alien, tyrannical power which exerts dominance over humanity.”⁴

² Although 5:12 is the first instance in Romans where ἁμαρτία is the subject of a verb, hints of Paul’s conception of sin as a power can be traced back to his comments in 3:9 where both Jews and Gentiles are “under sin” (πάντας ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι). As we will see, however, not everyone agrees on this point.

³ I am relying here on David Southall’s excellent outline and documentation of the primary positions and their relation to one another, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans*, 97ff.

⁴ Some of the many scholars who take this position include C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC 42A (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 191; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, vol. 38A, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 146, 272, 287, 335–37, 378–81, 384; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: A & C Black, 1991), 128, 134, 142–44; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 331; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 175, 199–200; N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Acts–1 Corinthians*, vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 457, 525; Dodson, *The “Powers” of Personification*, 123; Southall, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans*, 98. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand

The second position argues that Paul does not merely *personify* sin but actually conceives of sin as a demonic entity. The language of personification employed by proponents of both positions often obscures the differences between the proposals. Jon Whitman explains that personification sometimes refers to “the practice of giving an *actual* personality to an abstraction,” and other times, it is used in line with “the historical sense of *prosopopeia*. This refers to the practice of giving a consciously *fictional* personality to an abstraction, ‘impersonating’ it.”⁵ The second position, therefore, is not content with saying that Paul merely speaks of *ἁμαρτία* figuratively or for rhetorical purposes. It instead argues for what biblical scholars often refer to as *hypostatization*, which involves an ontological commitment regarding the very reality of sin.⁶ Timo Laato and Walter Grundmann have argued for this view of *ἁμαρτία* as a personal, demonic entity.⁷ Again, because proponents of both positions use similar language, it is not always clear which they are defending.⁸ The third understanding of *ἁμαρτία* is put forth by those who challenge the first two positions and suggest instead that *ἁμαρτία* always refers to a sinful

Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 322, 347. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 307–8.

⁵ Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 271–72. I am thankful to Southall for pointing me to Whitman’s work.

⁶ See James Barr, “Hypostatization of Linguistic Phenomena in Modern Theological Interpretation,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7, no. 1 (1962): 85–94.

⁷ See Laato, *Paul and Judaism*, 75, 136–37 and Walter Grundmann, “ἁμαρτάνω, ἁμάρτημα, ἁμαρτία,” F. Sin in the NT. In *TDNT* 1:311. This reading can be traced back to Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus*, 122ff. This view is also argued by Andrea van Dülmen in *Die Theologie des Gesetzes bei Paulus*, SBM 5 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968), 158–68.

⁸ Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1967), 15. Ernst Käsemann suggests that “ἁμαρτία in the singular, which is characteristically Pauline, always means, in almost hypostatizing fashion, the power of sin,” in *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 86. See also J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 189–90, 214; Ulrich Wilckens, *Röm 6–11*, vol. 2 of *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 315. For Beverly Gaventa, Sin stands with the other anti-God cosmic powers of Satan and Death. She pushes back against the notion that Paul is merely “making his writing vivid by means of a standard literary device” and suggests that we take seriously the mythological element in Paul. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition,” *Interpretation* 58, no. 3 (July 2004): 238. Most recently, Matthew Croasmun has argued that both of these depictions of *ἁμαρτία* coexist in Romans 5–8 in his work *The Emergence of Sin: The Cosmic Tyrant in Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 52–54.

action, though sometimes it is a *personified* sinful action.⁹ My own understanding of *ἁμαρτία* will become clear in the subsequent section.

As important as it is to be sensitive to the specific portrayal of sin Paul gives in Romans 5–8, we must also be attentive to how the pieces of this portrayal fit together; we must be alert to the *narrative* the apostle constructs. After proclaiming the believers’ justification before God, the peace they have with him through Christ (5:1), the receipt of God’s love through the Holy Spirit (5:5), the assurance of salvation from God’s wrath (5:9), their reconciliation with God through the death of Christ (5:10), Paul then presents an important narrative involving sin, its effect on human beings, and Christ’s redemptive work in the world in 5:12–21. As Matthew Croasmun has suggested, Romans 5:12–17 is significant as it presents to us a kind of origins story—the origin of *ἁμαρτία*.¹⁰

Many have noted that Paul begins 5:12 by depicting sin as an entity with agency, as the subject of the verb *εἰσέρχομαι*. This presentation of sin as an agent is at the core of Beverly Gaventa’s argument in her seminal essay on Paul’s language of sin in Romans, where she presents what she calls the “résumé of Sin” and describes Sin’s achievements.¹¹ However, Paul is not interested in putting together a résumé per se, a

⁹ Bruce Kaye, for example, argues that when *ἁμαρτία* is always used to refer to either a sinful action or its consequence even when it is used figuratively. Kaye, *The Thought Structure of Romans*, 56. Heikki Räisänen follows Kaye and questions Martin Dibelius’s, Andrea van Dülmen’s, Hans Hübner’s, and Luise Schottroff’s interpretation of sin as a demonic power. He instead sees the sinful condition of man simply as the consequence of their own deliberate and informed sinful actions. He interprets Paul’s phrase of being “under sin” in 3:9 through the lens of his expression using the verbal form *ἁμαρτάνω* in 3:10, and thus rejects the idea that 3:9 hints at sin being a demonic power. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed., WUNT 29 (Wipf & Stock, 2010), 99n29. Cf. Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus*, 122; Dülmen, *Die Theologie des Gesetzes bei Paulus*, 158–68; Hans Hübner, *Das Gesetz in der synoptischen Tradition: Studien zur These einer progressiven Qumranisierung und Judaisierung innerhalb der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 63; Luise Schottroff, “Die Schreckensherrschaft der Sünde und die Befreiung durch Christus nach dem Römerbrief des Paulus,” *EvTh* 39, no. 1–6 (1979): 497.

¹⁰ Croasmun suggests that Rom 1:18–32 is a second story of the “origin of Sin,” Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*, 105.

¹¹ For Gaventa, sin in Romans is not really “a lower-case transgression, not even a human disposition or flaw in human nature, but an upper-case Power that enslaves humankind and stands over against God.” She proposes that Sin first establishes a base of operations in the world (Rom 5:12) through Adam’s transgression and then becomes an enslaving power Gaventa, “The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” 231.

compilation of bullet points recounting sin’s accomplishments. Instead, Romans 5:12–21 is a narrative—with characters, a crisis, a climax, and a resolution—within the epistle, and I will seek to analyze it as such. Croasmun has similarly sought to “narrate the origin of s/Sin in Romans” by paying particular attention to the *story* Paul presents.¹² For Gaventa, Croasmun, and most commentators, by the end of chapter 5, ἁμαρτία has achieved the position of a slave master, exercising dominion over those under its power, a position it supposedly holds for most of the next two chapters. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the narrative reveals that this is not quite the case.

Sin’s entrance into and expansion throughout the world. As I noted, in this narrative, we are told that ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν, “sin entered the world” (5:12b). Though sin here is given a kind of agency with the verb εἰσῆλθεν, I am not convinced that the verb by itself triggers personification of sin as a power. After all, the verb can be naturally applied to humans and animals and almost to any non-static object without eliciting a sense of personification.¹³ Instead, I will argue that, in the narrative of Romans 5, sin is conceived fundamentally as a debt that is incurred.

I recognize that mine is the minority position here since most scholars suspect that sin here is a personified power.¹⁴ Instead, the main debate between scholars is

¹² Croasmun, *The Emergence of Sin*, 104.

¹³ We can speak about objects entering a space even if that motion is not self-propelled. For example, upon hearing the phrase “the torch has entered the Olympic stadium,” nobody assumes the torch has relocated itself from outside the stadium to inside the stadium. We more naturally assume that a second agent (perhaps an Olympic athlete), has brought the torch into the stadium. Perhaps more importantly than the perception of personification in the phrase, as Steffi Fabricius notes, is the fact that for the first time, Paul here “attributes to ἁμαρτία itself motion-in-space, instead of its stationary character as an event, state, and power above men” (cf. 3:9). Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 161.

¹⁴ Some go as far as to argue that the construction εἰσέρχομαι εἰς carries a negative connotation. Annette Potgieter detects in the mere verb a “metaphor of dominion” in “Spatial Metaphors as a Means of Persuasion in Romans 5:12–21,” *Acta Theologica* 39, no. 2 (2019): 136. Matthew Black suggests that Paul portrays sin here as forcing its way into mankind through an open door. Matthew Black, *Romans*, 2nd ed., New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 81.

whether sin here is an intra-worldly or an *extra-worldly* power.¹⁵ Despite Paul’s use of *εἰσέρχομαι* and the *εἰς* preposition, he likely does not intend to convey sin’s entrance into the world from the outside as a kind of alien invasion but rather as an emergence from within. Steffi Fabricius and Michael Wolter have persuasively laid out the arguments for this intra-worldly conception of sin’s entrance into the cosmos. These arguments are supported by established definitions of *εἰσέρχομαι* as well as by lexico-semantic analysis and studies on categorization.¹⁶ However, for our purposes, whether sin entered from the outside or arose from within is not significant since our focus is more broadly on the narrative as a whole.

Paul further notes that sin entered the world δι’ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου, “through one man” (5:12a). Here, Paul presents Adam as the means by which sin entered the world—Adam opens the door into the *κόσμος* for sin to enter.¹⁷ The focus in verse 12 is not Adam’s transgression and guilt but rather his role as the doorway for sin’s entrance into the world.¹⁸ Fabricius points out Paul’s interesting word choice in 5:14 regarding Adam’s

¹⁵ Even if one does not see here personification of sin as a power, the issue of whether sin enters the world from the outside or the inside is still relevant. The debate hinges on what exactly Paul has in mind with the verb *εἰσέρχομαι* and thus the nature of sin’s “entrance” into the *κόσμος* space. The question is whether Paul is conceiving of sin as something that existed before Adam’s disobedience and simply entered the human realm through him (“entrance” from the outside), or whether sin’s entrance into the world conveys its very origin (“entrance” from within).

¹⁶ Fabricius’s argument in *Pauline Hamartiology*, 164–68 for why the common source-path-goal schema is not the best fit for what Paul is saying about sin is compelling. For her argument, she relies on Susan J. Lindner, *A Lexico-Semantic Analysis of English Verb Particle Constructions with “Out” and “Up”* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1983); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 431ff. Wolter argues that *εἰσέρχομαι* in 5:12a does not mean “to come from outside,” but “*unter den Menschen entstehen*.” In this way, Paul is speaking about sin as “entering the world” in the same way that Luke speaks about an argument “entering among the people” in Luke 9:46 (*εἰσῆλθεν δὲ διαλογισμὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς*). In other words, it is not sin entering from the outside but sin arising among or within. Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2014), 342.

¹⁷ Schematically, it probably makes for sense to see Adam as a door/opening *in* the *κόσμος* space rather than as the Path or vehicle sin takes to travel into the Goal of the *κόσμος* since Adam, as a man, is part of the *κόσμος*.

¹⁸ Potgieter nevertheless goes too far when she suggests that here, “Adam may be perceived as a victim” in “Spatial Metaphors as a Means of Persuasion in Romans 5,” 134. In the same way that Adam’s transgression and guilt are not in focus in v. 12, neither is the notion that sin is a power that has exerted its dominance over an innocent Adam. His culpability will be made explicit just a few verses later.

transgression and concludes that “logically speaking, Adam did not commit the action of sin, which is why Paul uses *παραβάσις* instead of *ἀμαρτάνω* when he speaks about Adam’s original deed.”¹⁹ While Paul likely chose *παραβάσις* (5:14) and *πράπτωμα* (5:15, 17, 18) and not *ἀμαρτία* intentionally to provide coherence to his sin narrative, it is unlikely that Paul conceives of Adam’s deed as something other than sin, especially since he speaks about Adam’s act explicitly as *ἀμαρτία* in 5:16.

What is important to note, however, is that despite the “agency” ascribed to *ἀμαρτία* in 5:12, a personified presentation of sin is not primary in this chapter. Instead, the two main conceptions of sin in 5:12–21 are *ἀμαρτία* as an *act* and *ἀμαρτία* as a *debt*. It seems to me that even by reading the chapter with an eye toward Paul’s figurative language, it is hard to deny that for Paul, even throughout Romans 5, sin continues to be associated primarily with an immoral act committed by human agents.²⁰ Paul contrasts Adam’s sinful act with Christ’s act of righteousness (5:18). The sin of Adam (5:16) is equated with human disobedience (*παρακοή*; 5:19), which is in turn contrasted with Christ’s obedience. However, Adam’s act of sin has devastating effects on humanity: “by the one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners” (5:19). Sin affects the very core of humanity by creating in us a new status; we are now *ἀμαρτωλοί*. It is here that seeing the second primary way Paul conceives of sin is helpful: *ἀμαρτία* is a debt.

In 5:13, Paul writes that sin is not counted where there is no law, *ἀμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογέεται μὴ ὄντος νόμου*. Here, sin is not an act. Instead, the verb *ἐλλογέω* opens a different frame for understanding *ἀμαρτία*—the frame of Financial Accounting. To better

¹⁹ Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 161.

²⁰ Although it would be false dichotomy to suggest that for Paul sin is *either* an immoral act or a power, he nevertheless rarely (if ever) conceives of it as both in the same utterance. A contemporary example might be helpful to illustrate the distinction. We conceive of death both as a kind of departure (“he’s gone to a better place”) and as a kind of rest (“may she rest in peace”). However, each example only portrays death in one specific way *and not* the other. My point here is simply that Paul, through his language, is conceiving of sin as a debt (and not as a power) in *Romans 5:1–20*. The explicit personification of *ἀμαρτία* as a ruling agent (5:21) will be discussed below. For now, it is enough to recognize both that the personification in the last verse of the chapter is unquestionable, that it is not developed any further for the time being, and that it is also not the main way sin is portrayed in this section.

understand the metaphor at play here, it will be helpful to understand a common metaphorical structure that undergirds many of our conceptions of morality, what George Lakoff and others have referred to as the Moral Accounting Metaphor.²¹

- (1) WELL-BEING IS WEALTH
- (2) MORAL INTERACTIONS ARE FINANCIAL INTERACTIONS
- (3) MORAL ACCOUNTING IS FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING

Cognitive Linguists have found that virtually all languages evidence a conception of morality structured in terms of well-being and that well-being is often conceptualized in terms of wealth.²² The metaphor (1) WELL-BEING IS WEALTH is grounded in our experiences where “access to food, shelter, clothing, etc., correlate with financial status or property holdings.”²³ Second, Lakoff notes that our language about morality often involves financial or monetary words.²⁴ For example, “he *owed* me an apology and finally *gave* it to me” implies that I have gained moral or social capital in the social interaction. This social interaction, however, is conceived of as a *transaction* (an exchange involving the “giving” and “taking” of things that are owed), leading to the metaphor (2) MORAL INTERACTIONS ARE FINANCIAL INTERACTIONS. Finally, our language demonstrates that we conceive of moral obligations and consequences in terms of financial accounting and financial transactions, leading to the metaphor (3) MORAL ACCOUNTING IS FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING. We see this metaphor in expressions like “she

²¹ See George Lakoff, “The Metaphor System for Morality,” in *Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language*, ed. Adele E. Goldberg (Stanford, CA: CSLI, 1996), 249–66; George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 44ff. I am here borrowing from Bonnie Howe’s helpful presentation of a branch of the Moral Accounting Metaphor in *Because You Bear This Name*, 191–93.

²² The various dimensions of well-being, such as strength, health, happiness, wealth, freedom, safety, protection, nurturance, empathy, cleanliness, beauty, uprightness, and light provide the basis for metaphors of morality (MORALITY IS WELL-BEING). These various aspects of well-being in turn serve as source frames for many of the metaphors with morality as a target frame (e.g., WELL-BEING IS WEALTH).

²³ Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 191.

²⁴ For example, in the statement “he *owed* me an apology and finally *gave* it to me,” implies that I have gained some kind of moral or social capital in the interaction.

owes me an apology” or “yes, he shouldn’t have done that, but *take into account* all the other things he’s done.”

This conception of sin as a debt within the Financial Transaction frame, though introduced in 5:13, is sustained throughout the chapter. John Barclay has shown that the language of debt was used both for the financial sphere of loan-and-debt and the gift sphere of gift-and-return.²⁵ Though the categories of payment and gift were distinct, they both nevertheless elicited a sense of obligation and indebtedness, and often trafficked in the Financial Transaction frame. Barclay’s own observations about Paul’s language in Romans 5:15–21 are instructive:

After establishing the Adam-Christ comparison (5:12–14), Paul characterizes the Christ-event with a variety of gift terms. What is initially described as τὸ χάρισμα (5:15) is spelled out as ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (5:15). Immediately thereafter, the same event is described as τὸ δῶρημα and (again) as τὸ χάρισμα (5:16), whose effect is the human receipt of the abundance of χάρις and δωρεὰ (οἱ τὴν περισσεῖαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες, 5:17). Where sin abounded, χάρις abounded still more (5:20) such that, in summary, the reign of sin is overpowered by the reign of χάρις (5:21) Divine gift is the focus of this paragraph like nowhere else in Paul’s letters.²⁶

Paul’s choice to present God’s surprising response to human sin (an immoral action that elicits divine accounting) as a χάρισμα (5:15, 16), χάρις (5:15, 17), δωρεὰ (5:15, 17), and δῶρημα (5:16) underscores the Financial Transaction frame in which the discussion about sin takes place. We will examine more carefully how exactly Paul presents God’s gracious gift below. My point for now is simply to underscore that sin, thus far, is presented only as an *action* and as a *debt*.²⁷

²⁵ John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 27. Barclay also points out that according to Aristotle, most people think of the return of a gift as akin to the repayment of a loan (*Eth. eud.* 1167b16–24 [Rackham, LCL]).

²⁶ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 494–95.

²⁷ In Romans 5, only in v. 21 is sin personified as a ruler or as a power. And even then, the personification is not developed and will not return until later in Romans 6.

Death as God’s judgment and co-regent in the world. Like sin, death too is said to enter the world in 5:12a, though it did so through sin, not Adam. As with sin, I am not convinced that we have personification here (yet). Paul speaks of death as spreading to all men because of the deadliness and universality of sinful action (5:12b). Technically, death is the subject of the verb διήλθεν. Again, rather than assuming personification of death, it seems like death is simply presented as a substance that takes up more and more space, presumably because of its own increase. The role of death in the narrative, however, is secondary to that of sin. Death exists because sin exists; thus, death depends on sin. The death consequence of sin is also equated with judgment (κρίμα, 5:16b; κατάκριμα, 5:18a), suggesting that death is not merely an organic or natural outworking of sin but the result of God’s judicial verdict in response to transgression. In this way, Paul’s narrative presents death at least partly within a legal framework as the divine judgment following the immoral act of sin and the debt that ensues.

In verse 14, death begins to develop true agency. The increasing spread of death is devastating, unrelenting, and unstoppable. Not surprisingly, then, Paul speaks of death as a kind of king who reigned (ἐβασίλευσεν) from Adam to Moses and established its reign among humankind (5:14, 17).²⁸ However, sin and death do not operate merely at the level of individuals since “many died through one man’s trespass” (5:15). The spread and reign of death are not primarily the result of the sins of individuals but the sin of Adam. In the last verse of the chapter, Paul personifies both sin and death as co-regents in the world. Paul explicitly mentions that sin’s jurisdiction is demarcated by death—“sin reigned in death” (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ; 5:21a). The invisible dominion of sin is made visible in and by the unmissable reign of death. Nevertheless, up to this point, it is difficult to see how the dominion of sin and death denotes anything beyond

²⁸ On one hand, Adam and Moses function as the temporal limits of the timeframe Paul focuses on. On the other hand, they also function as the boundaries of the kingdom of death.

their inescapability. Certainly, humanity is helpless against sin and death. But any notion that throughout Romans 5, sin exercises a kind of active force or “rule” over the individual is likely the result of reading Romans 6 (or at least 5:21) into 5:12–20.

A Narrative of Christ and Grace

Although Adam, sin, and death are crucial for Paul’s argument in Romans 5:12–21, they are not Paul’s main point. Instead, they serve as the narrational background for the main point: Christ and the free gift of grace he brings. We have already seen that Paul introduces the *χάρισμα* within a Financial Transaction frame in which the transgressive act of Adam (*παράβασις*, 5:14) has incurred a debt for which God must call all humanity into account (*ἐλλογέω*, 5:13). The good news of the gospel is that Christ has come into the world not to call sin into account but to bring a gracious favor (*χάρισμα*, 5:15) a free gift (*δωρεά* 5:16)—a demonstration of the grace of God (*ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ*, 5:15) that brings justification (*δικαίωμα*, 5:16).

Though gift and pay operated together in the realm of financial transactions, they were nevertheless distinct. Barclay explains that “pay was contractual, calculable, and generally impersonal; gift, by contrast, was surrounded by sentiment, not subject to law, and unpredictable in its quantity and timing.”²⁹ This subtle contrast between pay and gift only serves to further contrast Adam and Christ. Contrast, however, is not Paul’s ultimate point. Instead, the contrast only prepares Paul to highlight the superiority of Christ and his gift. Beginning in verse 15, Paul starts to employ the language of abundance: (*περισσεύω*, 5:15), (*περισεΐα*, 5:17), (*ὑπερπερισεύω*, 5:20). Paul is emphasizing a particular perfection of grace here, the perfection of superabundance.³⁰

²⁹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 485.

³⁰ I am drawing here on Barclay’s terminology of the various perfections of grace. Notably, he goes on to say that “the perfection of abundance is here at the service of another perfection, the one we have already noted as the Pauline hallmark: God’s grace through Christ is marked as extravagant precisely in its *incongruity* with the human condition.” *Paul and the Gift*, 495.

Paul's emphasis on the abundance of God's gracious gift in Christ, which both surpasses and reverses the disastrous effects of Adam's transgression, must be interpreted within the Financial Transaction frame of this section of the letter. In Romans 5:12–21, we saw that sin is presented primarily (though not exclusively) as an immoral act against a holy God, which Paul conceives in financial terms—it incurs a debt. When God calls this sin-debt into account, judgment ensues, and death naturally follows. The gift of grace Christ offers functions as the solution to the human predicament of sin. But in Romans 5:12–21, it does so precisely by functioning as an undeserved, superabundant transaction—a *gift* credited to the sinner that annuls the debt of sin. The superabundant characteristic of this gift, therefore, likely denotes financial lavishness. The gift more than makes up for the sin-incurred debt. It cancels the debt, removes the threat of condemnation, and justifies the individual (5:19). Paul presents the interplay between sin and death in terms of competing quantities: “where sin increased (*πλεονάζω*), grace abounded all the more (*ὑπερπερισσεύω*)” (5:20). Paul employs a new set of metaphors in 5:21 involving sin and grace. Though commentators speak of sin and grace as powers or rulers throughout the chapter, it is only in this verse that they personified as such.³¹

The metaphors SIN IS A RULER and GRACE IS A RULER (5:21) are built on the metaphors EVENTS ARE ACTIONS and CAUSES ARE FORCES. The results of sin and the grace-gift have been laid out by Paul already: from sin comes judgment, and from the gift comes justification (5:16). Through EVENTS ARE ACTIONS, judgment and justification (events) are conceived of as actions, and as such, as activities performed by a particular agent.³² This slot for an agent in the newly created frame for judgment and justification

³¹ Once again, the question is not whether or not Paul *ever* conceives of sin and death as rulers or powers. The question is how does Paul depict sin and death in *these* verses? Though she does not discuss it in depth, I think Fabricius is mistaken in proposing that in 5:16, 18, 19 the metaphor HUMAN BEINGS ARE SLAVES is at play, and that in v. 18 the metaphor SIN IS A SLAVE-MASTER is employed. Paul's language there evokes a different frame and a different conception of sin and death than what she suggests. Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 279.

³² I will discuss the importance of the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS more carefully later in this chapter when I examine Paul's language of death in 6:1–2.

then gives rise to the personification we see in 5:21. Sin and grace are now agents, rulers, which exercise a kind of dominion (action) over human subjects leading to judgment on the part of sin, and justification on the part of grace (events).

Detecting the “Indicative-Imperative” Tension

Many have pointed out that the question posed by Paul in Romans 6:1 marks an important transition in Paul’s argument within the letter: “What shall we say then? Should we continue in sin (τῆ ἁμαρτίᾳ) so that grace might increase?” This is not the first time Paul interrupts the flow of his argument to pose a question precisely so that he might answer it (cf. 3:5). There is some debate, however, as to the specific reason for the question posed here. Some see it as a means for Paul to address the charge leveled against him and his perceived libertine gospel directly, a charge he previously hinted at in 3:8.³³ Some see here a diatribe for rhetorical purposes as a means of strengthening the argument.³⁴ In contrast, others consider Romans 6–7 an excursus.³⁵ More recently, Rudolph Gonzales has suggested that the question at the beginning of the chapter is an integral part of a chiasm that extends through verse 14.³⁶

Rather than being a digression from Paul’s previous comments, I argue that Romans 6 continues to answer crucial questions about how the new status of believers

³³ See for example Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 296; Kaye, *The Thought Structure of Romans*, 23; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 429.

³⁴ Käsemann sees here Paul using rhetoric as “a means of substantive argument.” Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 293. Andris Snyman suggests that the progressive lengthening of questions (as we have in Rom 6:1–3) can also be employed to draw attention to the substance of the author’s argument. Andris H Snyman, “Style and the Rhetorical Situation of Romans 8:31–39,” *NTS* 34, no. 2 (April 1988): 224, 228.

³⁵ Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem*, SNT 9 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1975), 18–21; Brendan Byrne, “Living out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom 6:1–8:13 to an Understanding of Paul’s Ethical Presuppositions,” *CBQ* 43, no. 4 (October 1981): 562–63.

³⁶ Rudolph D González, “Romans 6:1–14: The Case for a Chiastic Q & A,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (December 2021): 81–94.

affects their relationship with sin.³⁷ Paul has already charged that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin (3:9), and thus, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:23). Nevertheless, the good news of Paul's gospel of salvation is that though God had passed over former sins, Christ has made propitiation for sin by his blood (3:25) so that sins are now forgiven, they are covered, they are not counted against the sinner (4:7–8). Through this act of Christ, sinners who have faith in Jesus are justified (3:24, 26). The result of this justification is that sinners are now at peace with God (5:1) and have the assurance that they will be saved from the wrath of God to come (5:9).

In Romans 5:12–21, we saw that the narrative of sin and death serves as the context for the narrative of Christ and the gift of grace he offers. Paul uses various commercial metaphors to depict the dynamics between sin and humanity and grace and humanity, constructing a Financial Transaction frame to explain how Christ is the solution to the human problem of sin. The superabundance of grace more than covers the abundance of sinful actions and the debt they incur. Paul narrates the victory of Christ over sin in terms of a superior *quantity*, a superabundance of grace (5:20) that abolishes sin and eliminates its deadly results.

All this, we might say, makes up the “indicative” of Paul's gospel so far in the book of Romans. These statements are Paul's proclamation of how Christ's obedient death and resurrection in history past, in response to the disobedience and unbelief of sinners, has resulted in a believer's new status. However, the gift of grace (5:15, 16, 17), justification (5:9, 16, 18), and reconciliation (5:10, 11) through Christ's work in response to the debt, guilt, and hostility that resulted because of sinful disobedience is not the only

³⁷ Ivan Blazen is right, “Rom. 6, though answering an objection, is part of the larger meaning of salvation as it is presented in Romans. It is precisely Paul himself who introduces the objection at just this point in the development of his argumentation. He must have done so because it would contribute to what he wanted to say and needed to say. . . . The objection thus becomes a vehicle by which Paul, in answering it, is able to uncover further depths and shades in the meaning of the gospel of God's righteousness which he preached.” Ivan T. Blazen, “Death to Sin According to Romans 6:1–14 and Related Texts: An Exegetical-Theological Study with a Critique of Views” (PhD diss., Princeton, NJ, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1979), 70–71.

“indicative” his audience needs to hear. In fact, the radical acquittal from the divine transgression announced in Paul’s gospel generates questions about the believer’s relationship with sin that are more practical in nature (6:1, 15). Paul’s responses to these questions will include further/new elaborations of the gospel’s “indicative.” Moreover, these questions explicitly move the conversation to the interface between God’s past action and the believer’s present—from God’s mercy displayed in Christ to the believer’s present conduct as a justified individual. They move the conversation to the interface between the “has been done” indicative and the “ought to do” imperative.³⁸

As evidenced by the question posed in 6:1, Paul’s gospel “indicative” is so radical in its declaration of believers’ guiltlessness regarding sin (they have been justified) that some might deduce that intentional sin is no longer problematic. Some might even suggest that increased sin necessitates the demonstration of more extraordinary grace on the part of God if Paul’s gospel will stand. Sin might be profitable if it promotes the manifestation of God’s glorious mercy. This, at least, is the logic that appears to undergird the question that opens the chapter and what I have termed the “ethical tension” of the “indicative-imperative” problem.³⁹ As absurd as the question might seem, it is grounded on a sound understanding of Paul’s teaching so far. Why, then, is the promotion of ongoing sin so promptly dismissed by Paul if it takes Paul’s teaching about redemption and justification seriously? The short answer is that justification and redemption are not the only “indicatives” of Paul’s gospel. The long answer involves numerous other metaphors and the presentation of a rich narrative

³⁸ In fact, many see 6:1–14 structured by the “indicative-imperative” schema itself. Dunn sees in 6:1–11 “the ‘Already,’ . . . the indicative of a salvation process begun” which has to be qualified by “the ‘Not Yet,’ . . . the imperative of a salvation process as yet incomplete.” Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:303. Similarly, Teresa Tsui notes that “Rom 6:1–14 receives its structure from the linking of the indicative (6:2–10) and the imperative (6:11–14).” Teresa Kuo-Yu Tsui, “Reconsidering Pauline Juxtaposition of Indicative and Imperative (Romans 6:1–14) in Light of Pauline Apocalypticism,” *CBQ* 75, no. 2 (April 2013): 297. Likewise, Schreiner proposes that “In verses 11–14 the emphasis shifts from the indicative to the imperative.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 322.

³⁹ See “Defining the Question” in chapter 1.

recounting who believers *are* (and *where* they are) as a result of a death they have experienced.

Remaining, Living, and Dying in/to Sin (Rom 6:1–2):

Having introduced the so-called “indicative-imperative” tension acknowledged by Paul in the opening of Romans 6, I will now examine 6:1–2 to see how he deals with a possible misunderstanding of his gospel. Here, I will show that in this ethical section of the letter, Paul presents sin neither as an immoral action nor as a power but as a *container* that encloses individuals. I will then argue that the CONTAINER image schema is a central element of Paul’s ethical logic through which he presents sin as an existential state. Next, I will propose that this spatial framework of sin is problematic if one tries to read this text through the “indicative-imperative” schema. Finally, I will argue that the phrase ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ is an example of the DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor, which Paul employs as a crucial event in his metaphorical narrative.

Paul’s response to his own question in 6:1 begins the metaphorical narrative of Romans 6. But we must not move too quickly to Paul’s response since the *way* he presents the question itself is insightful: “What shall we say then? Should we continue in sin (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) so that grace might increase?” The phrase ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ is significant as it exposes Paul’s way of conceiving the issue. Paul could have said ποιῶμεν ἁμαρτίαν, ἁμαρτάνωμεν μᾶλλον, or even ἐπιμένωμεν ἁμαρτάνοντες, but he does not. In fact, Paul avoids the verbal form ἁμαρτάνω altogether. Nevertheless, many interpreters have taken Paul’s hamartiological language in 6:1 as denoting the *action* of sinning. For them, ἁμαρτία here is simply functioning metonymically and refers to sinful actions (plural).⁴⁰ Others take τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ as a dative of reference or respect and see here

⁴⁰ Ben Witherington III translates this Greek phrase as “Shall we continue to sin” in *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 155. Similarly, Eun-Geol Lyu suggests that since ἐπιμένω with the dative usually expresses the insistence on an abstraction, “das Beharren auf ein Abstraktum zum Ausdruck,” Paul’s construction in 6:1 simply denotes sinful behavior. Lyu, *Sünde und Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*, 285. Wolter also interprets the phrase to refer

a variation of Paul presenting sin as a power (cf. 5:12, 21; 6:7, 12).⁴¹ David Williams goes further and says that Paul introduces the metaphor of slavery in 6:1.⁴² Some instead see a dative of sphere.⁴³ Though Douglas Moo sees in 6:1–2 language that suggests believers have been “taken out from under [sin’s] tyranny,” he nevertheless notes that τῆ ἀμαρτία refers to “the state of sin.”⁴⁴ Robert Jewett follows Robert Tannehill in his interpretation of ἐν αὐτῇ (ἀμαρτία) in 6:2, suggesting that it “implies being in ‘a power field. It is the sphere in which a power is at work.’”⁴⁵ Interestingly, it is not clear whether he reads ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἀμαρτία in 6:1 the same way.

By employing the dative phrase ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἀμαρτία in 6:1, Paul presents sin differently from how he has so far in the epistle. The subtle change in his language about sin, not as a verb but as a noun, is important and should not be obscured by our English translations. Witherington’s translation, “Shall we continue to sin” trades the nominal form in Greek for the verbal form. In this translation, however, the way Paul

to sinful acts and suggests that Paul here means the same thing as Philo, *Sobr.* 69, “ἐπιμένειν τῷ ἀδικεῖν” and he also sees a parallel with Josephus, *Ant.* 5,108, “ἂν δ’ ἐπιμένητε τοῖς ἡμαρτημένοις” Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 368.

⁴¹ See Käsemann who translates 6:1 “Must we remain under the power of sin that grace may increase?” Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 159. Nevertheless, he suggests that ἐν αὐτῇ in 6:2 “refers to the sphere of sin.” *Commentary on Romans*, 165 It is thus not clear whether he is conflating power/sphere or whether he sees two different senses in the two verses. Although Dunn recognizes that ἀμαρτία here could have the sense of “sinful action,” in the immediate context it is “most likely equivalent to ‘remain under the lordship of sin’ (5:21; 6:14)” *Romans 1–8*, 38A:306. Similarly, it is not clear how Annette Potgieter interprets these clauses in her recent work focused on metaphors in Romans 5–8. On one hand, she suggests that ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ “evokes a metaphor of dominion,” though sin should not be seen as a personified power here. On the other hand, she suggests that the metaphor “communicates a continuation of location” denoting persistence of state. Annette Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5–8*, HTS Religion & Society 7 (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2020), 90–91. Schreiner notes that “most scholars . . . rightly describe sin as a power in these verses,” in *Romans*, 307.

⁴² Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 116. Fitzmyer similarly suggests that here, and throughout the chapter, ἀμαρτία is to be understood “as personified Sin, an actor on the stage of human history, the character that would enslave even Christians as a result of Adamic influence.” Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 430.

⁴³ “The dative denotes sphere,” John D. Harvey, *Romans*, EGGNT (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017), 149. Also Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1996), 145.

⁴⁴ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 379; 381n317.

⁴⁵ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 396; Cf. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 18–19.

frames the question in Greek and how he conceptualizes sin is lost.⁴⁶ Loving and being in love are certainly related, but they communicate different ideas. The same can be said of sinning and being “in sin.”⁴⁷ In this section, I will therefore argue for the importance of preserving the nominal form and translating τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ as “in sin” based on the explicit ἐν αὐτῇ [sin] in verse 2 and will explain the significance of the apostle’s conception of ἁμαρτία in this part of the letter.

Through the use of the preposition ἐν and the verbs ἐπιμένω and ζάω in 6:1–2, Paul frames his rhetorical question and answer by presenting and conceiving of sin metaphorically and spatially. In order to make sense of Paul’s language here, it will be best to examine the three hamartiological expressions in concert:

- (1) ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (6:1)
- (2) ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (6:2a)
- (3) ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ [ἁμαρτίᾳ] (6:2b)

Remaining and Living “in Sin”

In v.1, Paul does not merely speak of believers *being* τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, but of them *remaining* τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ. The verb ἐπιμένω often takes an accompanying verb or participle and refers to an action or activity that is continually carried out (John 8:7; Acts 12:16). However, with a nominal complement, as is the case in 6:1, the verb often refers to an agent remaining in the same place for some time (Acts 21:4; 15:34; 1 Cor 16:8), or it can be used figuratively to denote continuance in a specific state when the verb is followed by the simple dative (Rom 11:23; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:16).⁴⁸ The verb ἐπιμένω thus

⁴⁶ Similarly, the NIV translates 6:1 as “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”

⁴⁷ I might say “I love pizza,” but that is not the same as saying “I’m *in love* with pizza.” Similarly, we will see that for Paul, it is possible to sin but not to be *in* sin.

⁴⁸ BDAG, “ἐπιμένω” 1, 375. Interestingly, the verb almost never takes the preposition ἐν in the NT (with the exception of 1 Cor 16:8 and possibly Phil 1:24). When the verb is used figuratively to portray location/containment (as it does in Rom 6:1), it takes the simple dative (e.g., Rom 11:22, 23; Col 1:23). The verb’s more common non-compound form, μένω, on the other hand, almost always takes the preposition (e.g., John 8:31; 15:9; 2 Cor 3:11; 1 Tim 2:15; 1 John 3:14).

presents the person as a whole in a specific state or location without spotlighting the action. Similarly, the verb ζάω points to the individual's conduct or pattern of behavior holistically.⁴⁹ This spatial framework is made explicit by the prepositional phrase in verse 2 where Paul speaks about believers living “in it” (ἐν αὐτῇ), referring to sin.

Many linguists have pointed out the “notorious fluidity of meaning” of prepositions, which is perhaps greater than that of any other part of speech.⁵⁰ John Taylor notes that, across languages, prepositions are “amongst the most polysemous words” and that their polysemy “verges on the chaotic.”⁵¹ For this reason, interpreting prepositional phrases and translating prepositions is particularly difficult.⁵² Nevertheless, some have suggested that prepositions carry a primary meaning that is fundamentally spatial.⁵³ This spatial meaning is *synchronically* more salient than the others and serves as the starting point of the various other meanings.⁵⁴

How do cognitive linguists analyze prepositions in light of their seemingly complex semantics? For example, the polysemous nature of ἐν allows it to be used in

⁴⁹ BDAG, “ζάω” 3.a, 425.

⁵⁰ Jeanne van Oosten, “On Defining Prepositions,” in *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society*, ed. Kenneth Whistler, et al. (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Linguistics Society), 1977, 454–64. See also John Taylor's comments in *Linguistic Categorization*, 3rd ed., Oxford Textbooks in Linguistics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 112.

⁵² See for example the discussion in Jean Cervoni, “La «polysemie» de la preposition italienne *da*,” *Travaux de Linguistique et de Litterature* 18, no. 1 (1980): 230, who points out that the Italian preposition *da* can correspond to at least eight French prepositions.

⁵³ See, for example, Pietro Bortone's excellent discussion in *Greek Prepositions: From Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41–53. Maggie Tallerman similarly suggests that “perhaps the most typical role of prepositions and postpositions is to mark locative and temporal information.” Maggie Tallerman, *Understanding Syntax*, 2nd ed., Understanding Language Series (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), 48. Others, however, deny that prepositions are, even in the most abstract sense, local or spatial. See for example Viggo Brøndal, *Ordklasserne, partes orationis: studier over de sproglige kategorier* (Kjøbenhavn: G.E.C. Gad, 1928), 80; Niels Danielsen, “A Short Note on the Nonsensicality of Localistic Hypothesis Theories,” *Sprachwissenschaft* 4 sect.4 (1979): 478–79.

⁵⁴ This proposal, sometimes referred to as the “localistic hypothesis” is often applied to case systems, where a basic spatial meaning is applied to all oblique cases. For further discussion see John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 718; Jim Miller, “Space and Time in Natural Language: Some Parallels between Spatial and Temporal Expressions in English and Russian,” in *Relative Points of View: Linguistic Representations of Culture*, ed. Magda Strojinska (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 19–37; Bortone, *Greek Prepositions*, 46–47.

various ways even within the NT (e.g., to denote a physical and emotional state or condition, to denote an abstract realm of reference, to denote a social association, or even to refer to an instrumental cause or reason).⁵⁵ Despite its various uses, the spatial meaning of ἐν is foundational and provides the base meaning for its diachronically emerging metaphorical uses. The preposition ἐν marks a position defined in relation to a specific location; it is used for the space *within* which something is found.⁵⁶ Though ἐν is not always translated “in” in English, its semantic locative core is widely recognized. Much like the English preposition “in,” we understand the Greek ἐν to express schematic spatial relations between a Landmark (LM), which refers to the container space, and a Trajector (TR), the object being presented in relation to the LM.⁵⁷ In Romans 6:1–2, Paul’s question presents believers (TR) as remaining and living *in* sin (LM). Paul here is not speaking about sinning but of sin itself, and he conceptualizes sin as a container enclosing believers. In other words, *sin is a container*.

The CONTAINER Image Schema

As I have noted, cognitive linguists explain metaphors as the phenomenon of understanding or experiencing one thing in terms of another by mapping elements of one frame into another (the expression “stop wasting time” maps elements from the frame of MONEY into the frame of TIME). One of our most essential types of metaphors, and yet one that goes largely unnoticed, surfaces when we map the spatial domain into a different conceptual domain. In 1987, Lakoff and Johnson coined the term “image schemas” to refer to preconceptual spatial structures that, as Hampe later summarized, “arise from, or

⁵⁵ See the examples Howe gives in *Because You Bear This Name*, 235–37.

⁵⁶ BDAG, “ἐν” 1.a, 326.

⁵⁷ In the simple phrase “the toy is in the basket,” the TR would be “the toy” and “the basket” would be the LM.

are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects.”⁵⁸

Grady has recently defined image schemas as “mental representations of fundamental units of sensory experience.”⁵⁹ As such, unlike more vibrant metaphors, image schema metaphors evoke only skeletal structures such as containers, paths, and bounded regions.⁶⁰ Some examples of basic image schemas include; PART-WHOLE, CENTER-PERIPHERY, CYCLES, ITERATION, CONTACT, ADJACENCY, MOTION, FORCED MOTION (e.g., pushing, pulling, propelling), SUPPORT, BALANCE, STRAIGHT-CURVED, NEAR-FAR, SCALE, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, IN-OUT, UP-DOWN, AND FRONT-BACK.⁶¹ It is within these “skeletal” categories that image schema metaphors traffic.⁶² English expressions such as “try to follow *along*,”; “you can do it, just push *through* it,” and “I’m *in the middle* of something” all showcase these image schemas; they involve metaphors grounded on our perception and experience of the space around us. As such, image schemas are mental representations and preconceptual structures that arise from our interactions with the world around us. Like all metaphors, the way we employ image schemas in language uncovers how we conceive of the world, especially of more abstract

⁵⁸ Hampe, “Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics: Introduction”. See Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 459–61; Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 19–21. Some have suggested the nomenclature of “complex primitives” (CPs) over against “image schemas” for the same phenomenon, Margarita Correa-Beningfield et al., “Image Schemas vs. ‘Complex Primitives’ in Cross-Cultural Spatial Cognition,” in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Beate Hampe and Joseph E. Grady (New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 343–66.

⁵⁹ Grady, “Image Schemas and Perception: Refining a Definition,” 44.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 24; Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 99.

⁶¹ This list is taken from Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 35. For other examples, see “Table 9: image schema” in Evans, *A Glossary of Cognitive Linguistics*, 108.

⁶² Howe explains that “skeletal” is an apt description “because the deep, basic structures image schemas evoke are often not readily visible (unless one learns what to look for) in a text, yet they lend necessary support.” Howe, *Because You Bear This Name*, 75.

ideas. They are an integral part of our cognitive operations because, as Oakley notes, image schemas “map . . . spatial structure onto conceptual structure.”⁶³

One important image schema is the CONTAINER schema. As with all image schemas, the CONTAINER schema is grounded on embodied experience—in this case, that of containment. We experience objects as containers: we bathe in tubs, walk into rooms, ride in elevators, and exit vehicles. We also experience our bodies themselves as containers: food enters our bodies, and air goes in and out of our bodies. These various and repeated embodied experiences are responsible for the development of an experiential *gestalt* that we refer to as the CONTAINER image schema.⁶⁴ The notion of a container helps us structure our thought about many abstract realities. Our language exposes that we conceive of countries as containers (“our nation *contains* some of the best entrepreneurs in the world”), relationships as containers (“she’s *trapped in* that relationship”), and groups are containers (“this group *contains* over fifty members”). Even time periods are containers (“I’ve had a *very full* week”).⁶⁵

To speak of a CONTAINER image schema does not mean that one is talking about a literal container space. We might consider, for example, the phrase, “if he *steps into* office, protests will erupt.” Assuming the “he” here is a political figure or an individual with authority, the metaphor is POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE

⁶³ Oakley, “Image Schemas,” 215.

⁶⁴ See Raymond Gibbs’s more detailed discussion on the development of the CONTAINER (he refers to it as CONTAINMENT) schema from embodied experience and the various metaphors that employ it, in *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 103–4.

⁶⁵ This, of course, is not to say that we think of these abstract ideas as literal spaces or literal containers. Rather, expressions like “I’m *in* a new relationship” and “I’m glad I *got out* of that relationship” show that we use the skeletal features of a container to structure our conception about the dynamics of relationships. Correa-Benningfield et al. explain that “the spatial relationships expressed linguistically do not represent situational or real-world relations, but rather aspects of the ‘projected world’ . . . which are relevant for the observers’ (/speech community’s) aims, goals or interests in a particular environment.” Correa-Benningfield et al., “Image Schemas vs. ‘Complex Primitives’ in Cross-Cultural Spatial Cognition,” 353.

CONTAINERS.⁶⁶ We notice, however, that there is no literal space into which the individual steps. Instead, the responsibility inherent in the office is conceptualized as a bounded container such that one can step *into* it and be removed *from* it. Because image schemas convey a relatively minimal conceptual structure, they often work together with more detailed image metaphors or conceptual metaphors, giving rise to more complex metaphors.⁶⁷ Old Testament scholars have already begun to employ insights from cognitive linguistics to study metaphors in the Hebrew Bible by carefully analyzing the CONTAINER image schema.⁶⁸

Though Paul also repeatedly employs the container image schema, much less work has been done on these crucial metaphorical concepts in the New Testament.⁶⁹ Cognitive linguists have observed that English prepositions like *in*, *into*, *with*, *on*, *over*, and *under*, as well as the Greek ἐν, εἰς, μετά, ἐπί, ὑπέρ, ὑπό, are used frequently to formulate image schemas.⁷⁰ Paul speaks about living *in* sin (ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ [ἀμαρτία], Rom 6:2), walking *in* newness of life (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν, 6:4), living to God *in* Christ Jesus (ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 6:11), and sin reigning *in* mortal

⁶⁶ Other expressions of this same metaphor are statements like, “who’s *in control* of this situation?,” “she *got removed from* her post,” “who will *fill in* for him in the meantime?”

⁶⁷ See Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 37. One example that combines the container schema with conceptual metaphor is the often-discussed ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER. See for example Gibbs, “Researching Metaphor,” 44–45. Furthermore, Howe discusses an example from 1 Peter 2:21 where an image schema works in concert with a more detailed image metaphor in *Because You Bear This Name*, 76–77.

⁶⁸ See for example Basson, *Divine Metaphors in Selected Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation*; Basson, “Image Schemata of Containment and Path as Underlying Structures for Core Metaphors in Psalm 142”; Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis*; de Jooode, *Metaphorical Landscapes and the Theology of the Book of Job*.

⁶⁹ Three encouraging exceptions include the works of William E. W. Robinson, *Metaphor, Morality, and the Spirit in Romans 8:1–17*, ECL 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2016) focused on Romans 8; the volume by Bonnie Howe, which includes a helpful discussion on the significance of image schemas in 1 Peter, *Because You Bear This Name*; and the chapter by Richard A. Rhodes, “Greek Prepositions: A Cognitive Linguistic View,” in *Postclassical Greek Prepositions and Conceptual Metaphor: Cognitive Semantic Analysis and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. William A. Ross and Steven E. Runge, FoSub 12 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022), 11–36.

⁷⁰ Lakoff and Johnson discuss the English *in* and its role with container schemas in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 31.

bodies (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι, 6:12). In each of these cases, the Greek ἐν evokes the image schema of container (SIN IS A CONTAINER, NEWNESS OF LIFE IS A CONTAINER, CHRIST IS A CONTAINER, MORTAL BODIES ARE CONTAINERS). A similar phenomenon occurs when Paul uses εἰς (6:3, 4, 2, 16, 17, 19, 22). Each of these image schemas is significant for our study because they are an integral part of Paul’s conceptual ethic in this epistle. The remainder of this section will examine the image schema that is the basis for the spatial metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER in 6:1–2.

The CONTAINER is an image schema with logical constraints built into its very structure. Since metaphorical containers are not physical containers but rather conceptualizations we impose on a categorical idea, the constraints are logical rather than physical. Like physical containers, the CONTAINER image schema consists of three primary properties: (1) a *boundary*, (2) an *inside*, and (3) an *outside*. These essential properties then create the basic structure of the schema: a) If there is an *in*, there must be an *out*; b) the boundary of the container defines the two regions; c) whatever is in the contents is also in the container; d) as the container moves, so does its contents. The metaphor also evokes further structural features based on our experience with containers (e.g., containers restrict movement; containers shelter contents from outside forces; the ability for a container to contain depends on the permeability/resistance of its boundary).⁷¹ Finally, the inferential structure of containers creates a built-in logic, which George Lakoff and Rafael Núñez call the *Laws of Container Schemas*, that is part of the CONTAINER gestalt itself.⁷²

1. *Excluded Middle:*
Every object X is either in container schema A or outside container schema A.
2. *Modus Ponens:*

⁷¹ Correa-Beningfield et al. helpfully present the traits of containment as a set of propositions in “Image Schemas vs. ‘Complex Primitives’ in Cross-Cultural Spatial Cognition,” 350–51.

⁷² George Lakoff and Rafael E. Núñez, *Where Mathematics Comes from: How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 134.

Given two container schemas A and B, and object X, if A is in B and X is in A, then X is in B.

3. *Hypothetical Syllogism:*

Given three container schemas A, B, and C, if A is in B and B is in C, then A is in C.

4. *Modus Tollens*

Given two container schemas A and B, and an object Y, if A is in B and Y is outside B, then Y is outside A.⁷³

SIN IS A CONTAINER

The CONTAINER schema itself, along with its essential properties listed above, is primarily invoked by the preposition ἐν at the end of 6:2. As Paul conceptualizes it, if sin has an *in*, it must certainly have an *out* and must therefore have a boundary that separates the *in* from the *out*. Paul could have spoken about living *with* sin, living *while sinning*, or living *sinful lives*, but he does not. Instead, he speaks of living *in* sin because, for Paul, sin is a container that can be inhabited (though, as we will see later, not *only* as that).⁷⁴ Paul's choice of verbs in 6:1–2 furthermore solidifies the CONTAINER schema. L&N categorizes the verb ἐπιμένω (6:1) in the semantic domain of “existence in space” (85.55) and thus semantically contributes to the overall schema of containment, since the “space” of sin presumably has a boundary. The abstract notion of existence is often conceptualized via the metaphor EXISTENCE IS LOCATION HERE.⁷⁵ Since ζῶω is the primary verb used to denote animated existence, we should not be surprised to see the verb used within a CONTAINER frame.⁷⁶ In the spatial metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER, the entire

⁷³ Lakoff and Núñez, *Where Mathematics Comes From*, 135. See also Lakoff and Johnson, who borrow here from Aristotle's classical formulation (in Aristotle, *An. post. 24b*) of what they call his “container logic.” Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 380.

⁷⁴ If this strikes readers as a strange and foreign idea, it is only because we are often not aware of the very cognitive structures that we rely on every day to make sense of our world. The reason we speak about living *in* harmony and being *in* pain is because we too subconsciously conceive of harmony and pain as containers that can be inhabited, though perhaps we never *consciously* or explicitly speak of them in those terms.

⁷⁵ E.g., “The baby has arrived,” or “Grandpa has left us for good.”

⁷⁶ In other words, the phrase ζῆσομεν ἐν (6:2) depicts a conceptualized CONTAINER space (location) *in* which one experiences one's own existence.

schema of the container is mapped onto the domain of sin. As we will see, the notion of a container controlling/limiting the movement of its contents is the structural feature of containers that Paul will later exploit in his ethical instruction.

A notable feature of spatial metaphors is that they are not used deliberately.⁷⁷ When a speaker says, “I think I’m *in* trouble,” he is not intentionally trying to present “trouble” as a container and the issue in terms of containment. Instead, the metaphor simply reveals the speaker’s conceptual architecture for reasoning about the abstract notion of “trouble.” The same phenomenon occurs with Paul. Though the spatial metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER is not employed until 6:1 in the letter, it was nevertheless widespread conceptually and was a principal component of the framework that Jews and Christians used to reason about sin (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:3, 26, 34; Ps 51:5; Isa 64:5; John 8:21; 1 Cor 15:17; 1 Tim 5:20; Rev 18:4). Though it would be foolish to suggest that we should always translate figurative language using the glosses of the words in the expression, it seems that preserving the image schema for ἐν ἀμαρτία expressions fits the way English speakers conceptualize similar abstract phenomena.⁷⁸ Doing so helps English speakers follow Paul’s spatial conceptual logic as he addresses the ethical issue.

Thinking Spatially About Ethics

If we follow Jan van der Watt’s definition of ethics as that which represents “a logical, systematic, coherent, structured and motivated presentation of what ought to be

⁷⁷ Some metaphor theorists push back against CMT and argue that we should distinguish between deliberate metaphors and non-deliberate metaphors (Gerard Steen, “Deliberate Metaphor Affords Conscious Metaphorical Cognition,” *Cognitive Semiotics* 5, no. 1–2 [2009]: 179–97; Ellen van Wolde, “A Network of Conventional and Deliberate Metaphors in Psalm 22,” *JSOT* 44, no. 4 [June 2020]: 642–66), while others question the very idea of “deliberate metaphors” (Raymond W. Gibbs, “Are ‘Deliberate’ Metaphors Really Deliberate?: A Question of Human Consciousness and Action,” *Metaphor and the Social World* 1, no. 1 [January 1, 2011]: 26–52; Raymond W. Gibbs, “Do Pragmatic Signals Affect Conventional Metaphor Understanding? A Failed Test of Deliberate Metaphor Theory,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 90 [December 2015]: 77–87).

⁷⁸ Though Greek certainly uses the ἐν proposition more broadly when speaking figuratively than English does the preposition “in,” English speakers do speak about being *in trouble*, *in pain*, and *in quarantine*. Furthermore, the spatial metaphor is often preserved in English when it is translated from Hebrew or Greek elsewhere (see the previous list of references), suggesting good compatibility with the target language.

done and why,” then Paul clearly demarcates Romans 6:1ff as an ethical text.⁷⁹ Not only do we have in this chapter the most concentrated discussion of *ἁμαρτία* in the entire NT, but we also have one of Paul’s most systematic rationales for Christian conduct.⁸⁰ The apostle launches this ethical section with a diatribe that spotlights the believer’s relationship with sin—not as an action but as a different kind of entity. The question “shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?” uncovers an ethical complication that emerges from Paul’s own teaching about the superiority of the free gift of grace of Jesus Christ in response to the deadly effects of sin (cf. 3:8; 5:15–21). Supposed participation in the gospel narrative Paul has laid out thus far can potentially lead to an immoral life, which is why Paul feels the need not only to clarify some details in the narrative but to construct a parallel, complementary narrative altogether.

In 6:1–2, Paul does not present *ἁμαρτία* as an immoral act parallel to *παράβασις, παράπτωμα, or παρακοή* the way he repeatedly does in chapter 5. Instead, sin is viewed much more connected to the individual’s own mode of existence—it is a state inhabited rather than an act committed. In this way, Paul’s ethical discussion is framed not in terms of decisions and actions but of locative, ontic existence. Therefore, it should not surprise us that Paul in this chapter speaks not with “ought” and “should” but with past, present, and future existential terminology (e.g., *ἐπιμένωμεν, ἀπεθάνομεν, ζήσομεν*). The ethical possibilities are presented not as various points in a spectrum of moral behaviors but as two mutually exclusive inhabitable locations: *in sin* or *not in sin*.

This spatial conceptual framework is important as we think about how Romans 6:1–2 relates to the “indicative-imperative.” Reading these opening verses of Romans 6

⁷⁹ Jan van der Watt, “Reading the New Testament from an Ethical Perspective: A Comprehensive Approach,” in *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. Volker Rabens, Jacqueline Grey, and Mariam Kamell Kovalishyn, BINS 189 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 301.

⁸⁰ Many of van der Watt’s analytical categories for identifying ethical data are found even in these two short verses (e.g., the repetition of *ἁμαρτία*, which is semantically associated with ethics [1.1]; ethical statements or value judgements [1.2] the development of conceptual, ethical material [2.1]; metaphors that convey ethical content [4.1.1]; irony to address behavior [4.1.4]) van der Watt, “Reading the New Testament from an Ethical Perspective,” 302–14.

through the lens of the “indicative-imperative” can lead to misinterpretations of Paul’s ethical teaching in at least two ways. First, under the “indicative-imperative” schema, these two verses are part of the “indicative,” which eventually leads to the ethics of the “imperative” in 6:11 ff. However, if readers see in 6:1–2 “indicative” statements that simply anticipate the ethical “punch” that will come later, they will miss the important “implicit ethics” of these two verses. Second, whereas the “indicative-imperative” schema presupposes an individual’s relationship with sin to be that of an agent and an action (such that the essence of the “imperative” is to avoid sinning), the relationship depicted here is entirely different. Paul speaks not about *committing* sin(s) but about *residing in* sin. Readers who approach the text through the “indicative-imperative” schema anticipate the “imperative” to be something like “stop residing in sin,” which is not at all where Paul goes.⁸¹ In a way, this conceptual shift from sin as action to sin as space seems to make the “indicative-imperative” inoperable in the traditional sense.

Furthermore, though Paul will develop his understanding of *ἁμαρτία* as a power/ruler and a slave master later in the chapter, the elements of dominion that characterize those instances of personification are not present in 6:1–2.⁸² Many have pointed out the clear contrast between the past tense *ἀπεθάνομεν* and the future *ζήσομεν* in 6:2. While Paul likely intended for the contrast in the verbs to highlight the disparity between the two boundaries of human existence, Paul’s main point is not merely that living and having died are mutually exclusive. In fact, he will go on to say that believers have died *and* are living! Instead, his main point in these verses is that living *in a specific state*, the state of sin, and having died *to that state* are mutually exclusive. In Romans

⁸¹ In fact, as we will see, nowhere in Romans 6 does Paul exhort his readers to not commit sinful actions or to stop sinning. This expected “imperative” never comes.

⁸² Even though Paul has just spoken about sin as “reigning in death” in 5:21, the metaphor merely foreshadows what is to come later in chapter 6. Instead, Paul’s metaphors in 6:1–2 evidence a shift in his portrayal of sin, not as a *power* that is over humanity, but as a *state* that humanity is in. I am more sympathetic with Fabricius’s position that what we have here is *ἁμαρτία* as an existential powerful state. Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 175.

6:1–2, the spatial conception of sin as a container space, an existential state that is either inhabited or not inhabited, is what is central for understanding Christian conduct.

So far, I have argued that Paul’s ethical instruction in 6:1–2 comes to us in fundamentally spatial terms (SIN IS A CONTAINER). However, detecting the CONTAINER image schema in 6:1–2 is only the first step of interpretation. Two questions must still be answered. First, what does the CONTAINER schema convey about sin (is it a sphere, a state, a realm, a power?), and second, what is the hermeneutical payoff of being attentive to these image schemas in the biblical text and analyzing them as such?

Remaining and Living in a State of Sin

The various proposals for what exactly Paul refers to when he speaks about remaining *in* sin or living *in* sin confirm that New Testament scholars have often struggled to understand Paul’s metaphorical language. My goal in this section is to demonstrate that, via the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER in Romans 6:1–2, Paul presents sin as an existential state, not as a power. Studies in cognitive semantics have shown that we often use the CONTAINER image schema to conceive of and speak about various categories. In fact, we conceive of the very notion of *category* as a container (e.g., “are tomatoes *in* the fruit or vegetable category?”).⁸³ Additionally, Lakoff and Johnson have identified three categories whose “elements” we also understand and conceive of as containers: actions, events, and states.⁸⁴ *Actions*, which are often verbal grammatical forms, are commonly figuratively construed as containers.⁸⁵ Similarly, we conceive of

⁸³ See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 19–20.

⁸⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 30–32. Elements in these three categories are not the *only* ones conceptualized as containers.

⁸⁵ The expressions “How did you get *out of* washing the windows?” or “*Outside of* sitting on the couch, what did you do all day?” or “I can’t wait to get back *into* running” are all examples of the metaphor ACTIONS ARE CONTAINERS.

and speak about *events* like races in terms of containers.⁸⁶ Finally, various kinds of *states* are also conceptualized as containers: “I’m *in love*,” “we’re going to get *in trouble*,” “I need to get back *in shape*,” “he’s coming *out of a coma*,” “she fell *into a deep depression*” all manifest the underlying conceptual metaphor STATES ARE CONTAINERS.

Actions, events, and states are frequently causally related. As Fabricius points out, actions often bring about events, and events can also generate states in which we might find ourselves after the action and event have occurred.⁸⁷ She gives the example “she broke up with him,” which involves the *action* of breaking up, leading to the *event* of the breakup, and ultimately to the *state* of singleness or being separated. A state generally refers to a specific physical or emotional condition but can also involve a more broadly existential state of affairs (e.g., being married). As I noted, these states do not emerge in a vacuum but are almost always caused by a series of actions and events.

Furthermore, we often speak about our existence in certain states using verbs like “live,” “be,” “remain,” and “stay.” Expressions like “I want to stay in love forever” manifest the metaphors STATES ARE CONTAINERS and EXISTENCE IS BEING LOCATED HERE. Since we conceive of states as containers, we often speak about state changes as the transfer from one container into another (e.g., “My careless gambling *brought me out of* luxury and into bankruptcy”).⁸⁸ Because these metaphors and their underlying image schemas are grounded on our embodied experience, we should not be surprised to find that actions, events, and states are also conceived of and expressed in terms of containment in Ancient Greek.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ We might express the metaphor EVENTS ARE CONTAINERS by saying things like, “Are you *in* this week’s race?” or “He’s *out of* the race now.”

⁸⁷ Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 139.

⁸⁸ Such expressions are also examples of the important metaphors CHANGE IS MOTION and CAUSES ARE FORCES.

⁸⁹ The prevalent conceptual metaphor ACTIONS ARE CONTAINERS in Greek is evidenced by the common grammatical construction ἐν + articular infinitive (e.g., Acts 9:3). The common εἰς τὸ + infinitive is also indicative of this conceptual metaphor (e.g., 2 Cor 8:6; Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 3:13). Examples of

Notably, neither English nor Greek shows linguistic evidence for the conceptual metaphor POWERS ARE CONTAINERS.⁹⁰ While it is common to speak about being *under* authority, *climbing* the corporate ladder, *overseeing* employees, and being at the *bottom* of society, none of these expressions of power involve the CONTAINER schema Paul employs in Romans 6:1–2. Instead, these expressions are examples of the orientational metaphor pairs HAVING CONTROL IS UP; BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL IS DOWN. The vertical orientation that serves as the source domain for these metaphors is not arbitrary but, again, is grounded in our embodied experience where physical size typically correlates with physical strength, and the victor in a fight generally is on top.⁹¹ Therefore, those who see *ἁμαρτία* being personified or presented as a power in Romans 3:9 are likely correct, as Paul there presents sin as being *over* Jews and Gentiles (ὕφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι). This personification is even made explicit in 5:21 when Paul speaks about sin reigning (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία).

However, this is not how Paul conceives of sin in 6:1–2, and interpreters who assume that Paul must be presenting sin the way he did in 3:9 and 5:21 underestimate how coherent our discourse about a topic can be even while speaking about it figuratively in various ways.⁹² Let us consider the following text:

EVENTS ARE CONTAINERS include ἐν τῇ παροικία (Acts 13:17), ἐν ὑποκρίσει (1 Tim 4:2). The metaphor STATES ARE CONTAINERS is expressed in phrases like ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει (Acts 8:33), καὶ ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῶν ἐγενόμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς (1 Cor 2:3), ἐν ἀπλότητι καὶ εἰλικρινείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, [καὶ] οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ σαρκικῇ ἀλλ’ ἐν χάριτι θεοῦ (2 Cor 1:12). In Romans 4:10–11, circumcision, both as an *event* and as a *state*, is conceived of as a container. As in English, elements in the categories of actions, events, and states are not the *only* ideas conceived of as containers.

⁹⁰ As we will see later, however, the inherent limitation imposed by the boundary property of containers can sometimes be profiled and conceptualized as a controlling property. This inherent “power” of the container can then be exploited if one grants it agency. The existential state of sin, then, is closely related to the *power* of sin in that the container (sin) exerts force onto its contents.

⁹¹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 15.

⁹² It is interesting here to note that Paul’s parallel diatribe in 6:15 uses slightly modified language and a different spatial metaphor. There, Paul asks, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!” Three important differences are worth highlighting here: (1) Paul uses the verbal form, not *ἁμαρτία* (unlike in 6:1–2); (2) the question is answered in terms of the believer’s relationship to the law (not to sin); (3) The metaphor is not a spatial metaphor of containment (*in* the law) but one of vertical orientation (*under* the law) evoking power and dominion.

Thursday came and went, and I really wish I had spent my time more wisely. The project is due Monday, so I'm almost out of time. Lisa finished her project in two days, and I have been working on it for two weeks.

These two sentences involve various expressions pertaining to time that are nonetheless coherent and in no way disjointed. And yet, at least four different metaphors of time are employed: (1) TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT; (2) TIME IS MONEY; (3) TIME IS A RESOURCE; (4) TIME IS A CONTAINER. As this example shows, even adjacent figurative expressions involving the same target frame (Time, in the example) can express different source frames and, thus, different metaphors. We must analyze each metaphor individually based on its own structure.⁹³ The spatial frame on which Paul builds his argument in Romans 6:1–2 suggests that sin, rather than being presented as a power, a ruler, or a slave-master, is an existential state humanity can inhabit.⁹⁴

Dying to Sin: A Metaphor of Departure

Although Paul speaks about *remaining* and *living* in sin, he does not speak about *dying* in sin. Although ἀποθνῆσκω and ζάω are semantically related, they are not semantically parallel, and thus we cannot simply import the sense of ἐν from ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ (6:2b) to the simple dative in ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (6:2a) the way we did with ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (6:1). Though scholars have generally struggled to explain the meaning of this dative phrase, its significance cannot be overstated since it is Paul's concise response to the question in 6:1. Therefore, in this section, I will argue that Paul's metaphorical language of death in 6:2 is an example of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE which must be understood in light of the spatial schema of the question.

⁹³ It is very common for scholars to assume that Paul is speaking about ἁμαρτία in only one sense throughout Romans 6. Interpreters, thus, often pay little attention to the individual expressions and metaphors and instead read into them a specific sense that they assume must be ubiquitous throughout. For example, Dodson sees in Romans 6 only personified sin in *The "Powers" of Personification*, 128–30.

⁹⁴ In his discussion of ἁμαρτία in Romans 6:1–11, Romano Penna suggests that “the concept swings between two meanings: as state and as act.” I agree with him here but disagree with his later suggesting that sin as a state is “commonly expressed with the idea of power or ‘Machtsphäre.’” Conceptually, sin as state is different than sin as power, though the two are related. Romano Penna, *Paul the Apostle: A Theological and Exegetical Study*, trans. Thomas P. Wahl (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 127.

Part of the challenge of interpreting Paul’s comment about dying τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ is that the construction is unusual. The verb only takes a simple dative in the LXX twice. In Joshua 22:20, Achan ἀπέθανεν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ἁμαρτίᾳ (יָנַח בְּעָוֹן). Here the sense is clearly causal; Achan died *on account of* his sin. The second instance of the construction appears in Vaticanus’ reading of Judges 15:18, where Samson cries out to God, καὶ νῦν ἀποθανοῦμαι τῷ δίψει; (אָמַרְתִּי כִּי אָמַרְתִּי).⁹⁵ The meaning here is again clear: Samson wonders if, after God’s mighty deliverance, he was simply going to die of thirst or *on account of* his thirst. In the New Testament, the construction is only used by Paul and only in Romans (6:2, 10; 14:8). In 6:10, Paul declares that the death Christ died, he died τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ once and for all. The reality of believers having “died to sin” (6:2) appears to be dependent on Christ having “died to sin” (6:10).⁹⁶ Even though in 6:10 the construction is the same as what we see in 6:2, the perplexity of the apostle’s metaphoric language remains evident in the commentaries.⁹⁷ The third example of the construction occurs in 14:8, where Paul declares ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκωμεν. The expression τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκωμεν here, not surprisingly, has been similarly puzzling.⁹⁸ In this instance, dying to the Lord is interpreted as resigning oneself to the Lord and

⁹⁵ Interestingly, Alexandrinus’s reading of Judges 18:15 is ἀποθανοῦμαι ἐν δίψει. The dative definite article is replaced with the ἐν preposition. Though in English, we would likely render both readings as “and shall I know die of thirst,” the two Greek expressions convey two different ways of conceiving Samson’s death in relationship to thirst. Whereas ἀποθανοῦμαι τῷ δίψει leaves the relationship relatively vague implying a causal relationship between thirst and death, the preposition in ἀποθανοῦμαι ἐν δίψει conveys thirst in terms of a container *in which* Samson dies. Here, the expression profiles thirst as a container space, and is another example of the STATES ARE CONTAINERS metaphor: Samson might die *in a state of* thirst.

⁹⁶ See for example Moo who writes, “We ‘die to sin’ (v. 2) when we die ‘with Christ’ (vv. 3–6) because ‘the death that he died, he died to sin once for all.’” *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 403.

⁹⁷ Some take the dative constructions in 6:2 and 6:10 to communicate different things. For Cranfield, the expression “is now used in a quite different sense.” Here, Christ died to sin in that “He affected sin by His dying” *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 314. Schreiner takes this expression to mean that Christ defeated sin *Romans*, 321. Others, see the parallel expressions as deliberate and assert that they should *not* be taken in a different sense. See Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:323; “Again, what is claimed for Christ in terms of death to sin and life to God pertains in equal measure for believers.” Jewett, *Romans*, 407; See also Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 403.

⁹⁸ See Moo, “We can easily understand how Christians ‘live to the Lord’ . . . but what does it mean to ‘die to the Lord?’” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 861.

pleasing him,⁹⁹ being subject to God’s timing and circumstances for death.¹⁰⁰ Overall, discussions of Paul’s language of “death to sin” often appear to involve educated guesses based on theological arguments more than careful analysis.

The quest for the meaning of ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ in 6:2 is taken up by Sorin Sabou in his 2005 monograph, *Between Horror and Hope: Paul’s metaphorical language of death in Romans 6:1–11*.¹⁰¹ For him, the language of Christ’s “death to sin” in 6:10 is the starting point for understanding “death to sin” in 6:2.¹⁰² He presupposes, however, that Paul here is speaking of sin as a power and a slave master, based on his language in 6:12, 14. Even though there is much to commend from his analysis of elements of Paul’s figurative language of death in Romans 6, he misses the fact that the frame within which Paul speaks of believers’ death τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ is that of CONTAINMENT, not that of SLAVERY or POWER. Even though Sabou acknowledges that the meaning of ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ must be understood in the context of the apostle’s broader argument in the chapter, he seems to overlook the most immediate context—that of verses 1–2.¹⁰³ More specifically, he ends up interpreting the phrase in light of the various frames throughout the chapter, not primarily the one in which the phrase appears—that of CONTAINMENT.

How are death and containment conceptually related? We have already seen that we tend to conceive of our existence and life in spatial terms (EXISTENCE IS BEING LOCATED HERE). Interestingly, our language about birth and death (the two events that prototypically define existence) as motions through space either toward or away from our

⁹⁹ Schreiner, *Romans*, 699.

¹⁰⁰ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 861.

¹⁰¹ Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*. Sabou follows Janet Soskice’s terminology of *vehicle* and *tenor* for analyzing metaphorical expressions.

¹⁰² Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*, 58.

¹⁰³ Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*, 70.

current location. Because EXISTENCE IS BEING LOCATED HERE, it should not be surprising that BIRTH IS ARRIVAL (e.g., “My baby is here!”) and DEATH IS DEPARTURE (e.g., “Grandma has gone to a better place”) are almost universal metaphors.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, it is common for us to conceive of events in terms of actions, giving rise to the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS.¹⁰⁵ This is the case with the broad concept of *ἁμαρτία*, which can refer to the *event* of sin (1 Cor 6:18; 2 Cor 11:7) or the *action* of sin (Rom 2:12; 3:23; 5:16; 1 Cor 7:28).¹⁰⁶ Our concern, however, is with the way Paul and his contemporaries conceptualized death. Notably, like sin, we also conceive of death as an *event* and as an *action* we perform.¹⁰⁷ In Jewish and Christian thought, death was conceived of as payment to/from God for one’s deeds (Ps 94:2; Isa 59:18; Jer 51:56; Sir 11:26; *Ant.* 18.14; Matt 16:27; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30; Rev 22:2), and as a release from suffering (Wis 3:4–5; *Abr.* 14).¹⁰⁸ For many Jews, Greeks, and Romans, death was also understood as the entrance into the afterlife, sometimes in the form of resurrection, thus giving rise to the metaphor DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ See Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 1–11.

¹⁰⁵ Lakoff and Turner explain that “external events affect us in ways we cannot control, and via EVENTS ARE ACTIONS we can understand those events as actions by a world we cannot control.” Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 73.

¹⁰⁶ See Fabricius’s discussion and distinction between these two conceptions of AMAPTIA in *Pauline Hamartiology*, 124–30.

¹⁰⁷ Other metaphors that express the way we conceive of death include death is winter, DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS LOSS OF FLUID, and DEATH IS DELIVERANCE. See Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 18–25.

¹⁰⁸ See. C. Clifton Black II, “Pauline Perspectives on Death in Romans 5–8,” *JBL* 103, no. 3 (September 1984): 413–33. See also Marvin R. Wilson, “Death & The Afterlife” in *Dictionary of Daily Life: In Biblical & Post-Biblical Antiquity*, ed. Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 389–393; 400–407.

¹⁰⁹ In Jewish thought, this “destination” was a region separated from earthly existence known as Sheol (Gen 15:15; 25:8; Pss 63:9; Prov 2:18; Job 17:16). In Greek thought, the “destination” was the realm of Hades (Hom. *Od.* 10.513; cf. 4.563–4). Virgil, in his Roman epic, describes the “destination” as Limbo (from the Latin *limbus*, *Aen.* 6.426–893). Yamauchi and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life*, 396–400. Karen Sullivan and Wojciech Wachowski note that “variants of death is departure that do specify a Goal almost always take a religious stance.” Karen Sullivan and Wojciech Wachowski, “Everyone ‘Leaves’ the World Eventually: Culture-Based Homogeneity and Variation in Death Is Departure,” *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 18, no. 1 (2020): 79.

Our question, once again, is what Paul’s specific expression of death in 6:2 means. To answer this question, we must carefully consider the frame in which the expression appears. As we have seen, contrary to what many commentators suggest, Paul is not here speaking about sin as a power or as a slave master but as a container (SIN IS A CONTAINER), a state (STATES ARE CONTAINERS) *in which* human beings can live and have dynamic existence (conduct). By speaking of sin in terms of containment, Paul schematizes believers’ conduct spatially. Paul’s response to the question he raises in 6:1 assumes a spatial framework where it is impossible to be in two places simultaneously. Whatever dying τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ means, it makes living ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ nonsensical (“how can we . . . ? [6:2]). We can therefore infer that Paul’s language of dying τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ must make sense within the broader spatial schema he has already introduced. Before drawing a conclusion about the specific conceptual mapping in the dative phrase, we must examine one more feature of Paul’s conceptual framework: the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

DEATH IS DEPARTURE and the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The source-path-goal schema is fundamental to our understanding of literal and metaphorical motion events.¹¹⁰ Our experience consists of innumerable instances of motion, such as motion from our house (Source) along our driveway (Path) to our car (Goal). Almost any sense or expectation of movement can activate the source-path-goal schema, even if not all the elements are profiled in the expression. For example, the phrase “what time are you coming home?” is focused on the action of “coming.” The verb by itself activates the source-path-goal schema along with all its elements, even though only the Goal (home) is

¹¹⁰ See Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 168–75; Raymond W. Gibbs and Herbert L. Colston, “The Cognitive Psychological Reality of Image Schemas and Their Transformations,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 6, no. 4 (January 1995): 347–78; Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*, 91–93; Robert F. Williams, “The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL Image Schema in Gestures for Thinking and Teaching,” *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 17, no. 2 (2019): 411–37.

explicitly mentioned in the expression. Our experience of “coming” tells us that the action involves motion from X (Source), along Y (Path), to Z (Goal).

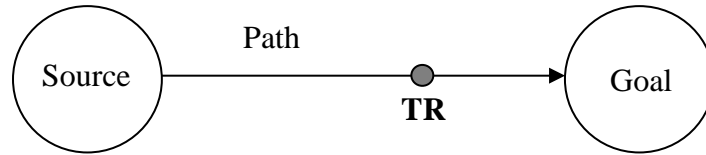


Figure 1: SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema

In my reading of Romans 6:2, Paul’s argument operates in explicit and implicit conceptually spatial categories. The logic of his question-response depends on the shared experience with his audience of containment and motion. Whatever “dying to sin” is, it is existentially incompatible with continuing to operate *in* the container state of sin (6:2b). Our experience moving into and out of “containers” like rooms, cars, and houses, therefore, helps us infer the logic: “dying to sin” involves moving *out of* the container state of sin via DEATH IS DEPARTURE.¹¹¹ Even though Paul does not make this motion “out of sin” explicit, the spatial schema he erects around sin as a container and our experience being in and out of containers activate the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The Source, in this case, is clearly the container of sin, out of which the believer moves. Though not explicit, the remaining elements (Path and Goal) are part of the semantic frame and remain in the background in the audience's mind.¹¹² As we will see, Paul will later fill

¹¹¹ Technically, there is another way to conceptualize the incompatibility of dying *τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ* and living *ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ*. Whereas I am suggesting the inconsistency is primarily along *spatial* lines (i.e., living *in sin* and no longer being *in sin* are mutually exclusive), one might see the incompatibility instead along *existential* lines (i.e., *living ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ* and having *died τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ* are mutually exclusive). If this were the case, however, one would have to conclude that Paul is really talking about the inconsistency of living *in sin* even though one has died *in sin*.

¹¹² In Romans 6:1–2, as is the case in the phrase “What time are you leaving work today?” only the Source is explicitly mentioned. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL FRAME, however, allows the reader/audience, to infer a Goal (home) and a Path (the road), and other additional elements (e.g., the office door as the boundary of the “office container,” the car on which the individual travels home, etc.)

these empty slots in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL frame as he continues his discourse throughout the chapter.

In short, when Paul speaks about believers having died τῆ ἁμαρτίᾳ, he is not strictly speaking about them being released from the *power* of sin. Instead, because thus far Paul has presented sin as a container space (a *state* inhabited by individuals) and because he suggests that dying τῆ ἁμαρτίᾳ is incompatible with inhabiting that same state, dying to sin is instead an instance of DEATH IS DEPARTURE. Though, as we have seen, death was used metaphorically in a variety of ways in the ancient world, the frame of Containment and the apostle's logic regarding the impossibility of being *in* a specified container activates the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, which further qualifies the frame in which the expression “dying to sin” occurs. Motion out of the container state of sin is conceived of as death to sin, where sin is the Source in the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema.

The Binary Ethics of Location

Thus far, I have argued that Paul combines the metaphors SIN IS A CONTAINER and DEATH IS DEPARTURE to frame his ethical instruction in Romans 6:1–2. In this section, I will further explore the interpretive payoff of reading this text through the spatial framework in which it comes to us. Cognitive linguists have shown that vertical¹¹³ and horizontal¹¹⁴ spatial metaphors are often employed to conceptualize the abstract realities of morality. Recently, Robinson examined Paul's language of being “in the Spirit” and “in the flesh” in Romans 8 and explained the moral implications of Paul's use

¹¹³ See for example Brian P. Meier, Martin Sellbom, and Dustin B. Wygant, “Failing to Take the Moral High Ground: Psychopathy and the Vertical Representation of Morality,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 43, no. 4 (September 1, 2007): 757–67; Wang Zeng and L. U. Zhongyi, “The Vertical Spatial Metaphor of Moral Concepts and Its Influence on Cognition,” *Acta Psychologica Sinica* 45, no. 5 (May 2013): 538–45; Heng Li and Yu Cao, “Who's Holding the Moral Higher Ground: Religiosity and the Vertical Conception of Morality,” *Personality & Individual Differences* 106 (February 2017): 178–82.

¹¹⁴ Rui Chen et al., “Horizontal Spatial Metaphors for Morality: A Cross-Cultural Study of Han Chinese Students and Ethnic Minority Hui Students in China,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9, no. 1145 (July 2018).

of the CONTAINER image schema in those expressions.¹¹⁵ The ethical question Paul raises at the beginning of Romans 6 activates an ethical and behavioral space onto which Paul maps the spatial elements of containment. Readers and hearers are thus asked to view their conduct in terms of containment. Specifically, believers ought to understand that their conduct is limited, restricted, and in many ways dictated by the state they are in. The one state mentioned thus far is the state of sin, which believers no longer inhabit. Just as water in a glass exhibits different dynamic patterns than water not in a glass, so too should believers exhibit different dynamic patterns of existence when compared to unbelievers, who are still in sin. Without the need for any explicit instruction, the conceptual blending between the input space of sin as a container and the input space of their own conduct that takes place in the minds of Paul's audience leads them to produce a blended space with a specific permissible and prohibited lifestyle.

Paul's choice to frame this instructional section of the letter in terms of containment is of further significance for understanding his ethical thought for at least three reasons. First, by framing the moral issue raised in his opening question in terms of a container state human beings can inhabit, he is able to address the issue in strictly binary terms. The very notion of containment operates with only two possibilities: either X is in Y, or it is not. Applying the spatial features of containment to believers and their relationship with sin also allows Paul to present the issue with only two possibilities: either one is *in* sin, or he is not. And believers, Paul stresses, are not. Therefore, readers should not expect that the subsequent ethical discussion will be qualified and nuanced; Paul is not interested here in acknowledging the uniqueness of specific situations and ethical dilemmas. Instead, Paul's metaphorical language takes the attention away from the circumstantial complexity of decisions and actions and focuses on the individual. He

¹¹⁵ Robinson, *Metaphor, Morality, and the Spirit in Romans 8*, 77–100.

spotlights not the nature of the behavior but the existential reality of the individual—his or her identity in relation to the container state of sin.

A similar feature is present in the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE in Paul's expression ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ. By asserting that believers have died to sin, rather than simply saying that they have left the state of sin, Paul maps the domain of death onto the domain of the believer's ongoing existence. Paradoxically, he argues, an essential aspect of the Christian's life is a particular death he experienced—a death to sin. The decisiveness of death and the binary schema in which it operates (living organisms are characterized either by life or death) serves to underscore the binary framework of Paul's ethical argument. Just as there is no middle position between *in* sin and *out of* sin, there is no intermediate mode of existence between being alive in sin and having died to sin. Paul's ethical argument in this section involves two and only two mutually exclusive possibilities. We see then that Paul will refute whatever conceptual extrapolation his opponents derived from his gospel narrative, which made it reasonable for an individual to deliberately sin with the supposed goal of praising God's grace, with an altogether new conception of the issue. This new conception leaves no room for alternatives or reconfigurations because of its intrinsic binary nature.

Crucial to Paul's ethical logic and the binary nature of his argument is the inseparability of one's locus of existence and one's behavior. In fact, Paul will eventually argue that the locus of existence is determinative of one's behavior. To suggest that this is what Paul is saying in 6:1–2 would perhaps be to read too much into the text, but the conceptual structure for that very argument has been erected. The limitations and constraints that sin had on believers previously (properties that Paul ascribes to sin using the SIN IS A CONTAINER metaphor) no longer apply to them since they have died to sin. Paul's point is not so much that believers *should* not sin, it is that living in sin is

impossible for believers.¹¹⁶ Again, Paul’s argument here operates not with “ought” and “should” but with the binary “can” and “cannot.”

Second, the very basic and skeletal conceptual structure Paul uses to conceive of sin through the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER in 6:1–2 gives him room for further development later on. While the focus in these two verses is the binary *location* of the individual with respect to the container of sin (either *in* sin or *not* in sin), we will see Paul exploit different features of the spatial metaphor throughout the rest of his ethical instruction. Later in the chapter, Paul will shift his focus away from the *location* of the individual in relation to the container and to the container itself. Every container has intrinsic properties of limiting and restraining force—the glass of water exerts force-dynamic control over the water inside such that the dynamic motion of the water inside is limited. This property that belongs to all containers, including sin, will be further developed by Paul into a dominant force that exercises significant power over the individual who inhabits it, which will lead to various personifications of *ἁμαρτία*.

Lastly, the spatial schema of containment allows him to explain the absurdity of the ethical question, “why not do evil that good may come?” (3:8) through an entirely different conceptual structure of God’s work in the Christian.¹¹⁷ We saw that Paul’s narrative in Romans 5:12–21 was built upon a specific conceptual framework. There, sin was an act that led to condemnation (5:16, 18), a kind of object/substance that increased with the coming of the law (5:20), and to which God has responded in Christ with grace and the free gift of righteousness in even greater measure (5:15, 20). But this very conceptual framework of humanity’s relationship to sin and God leads to the possible misunderstanding Paul feels the need to address. In other words, it is a specific

¹¹⁶ Here, of course, I am referring to the spatial logical and the physical conceptual framework that Paul uses in his argument. I am not suggesting that something literally physical is at play. This would be akin to saying that the CEO cannot get in trouble (TROUBLE IS A CONTAINER) with his company.

¹¹⁷ As I mentioned previously, this is likely the sentiment Paul is responding to with the diatribe in 6:1–2.

conceptual structure of believers, sin, grace, and Christ that, if extrapolated according to its own internal configuration, can lead to the foolish conclusion Paul repeals in 6:1–2.¹¹⁸

The perception of a new metaphorical narrative in Romans 6, which appears to be quite different from the one in the precedent chapters, is also insightful for our analysis of the traditional “indicative-imperative” schema. First, we noted that Paul was aware of, or at least recognized, that the narrative involving believers, sin, Christ, and grace could be appropriated and lived out in disastrous ways. We might say that the “indicative” of Romans 3–5 had the potential of activating a seriously flawed mode of existence. Even though there is not a single explicit command, exhortation, or instruction—not a single *imperative*—in the epistle to the Romans in the first five chapters, Paul’s message was nevertheless instructing and guiding human behavior. More fascinating, however, is that Paul responds to allegations of libertinism not with behavioral or imperatival corrections but with an entirely new narrative, a different “indicative,” or at least a different facet of it. In preliminary terms, we might say that Paul’s first move in responding to the “indicative-imperative” tension of Romans 6 is to reframe the “indicative” in very different terms with the hope of dismantling the ethical conclusion some are trumpeting.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, my goal in this chapter was to demonstrate how cognitive linguistics and attentiveness to Paul’s metaphors give us insight into the apostle’s ethical thought in Romans 6:1–2. More specifically, I have argued that Paul follows the metaphorical narrative of Romans 5 with an ethical diatribe. Paul’s opening comments in Romans 6 focus on believers and their relationship with sin. In these verses, Paul gives us his thesis, the logical and ethical conclusion of a conceptual dynamic involving the

¹¹⁸ See my discussion on the Invariance Principle in chapter 1 and how it operates in metaphorical discourse.

believer and sin. This thesis, however, comes to us not with the literal language of human agents and their actions but with the figurative language of human beings and their locus of existence. Through the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER, I argued that Paul conceives of this relationship in metaphorical spatial terms. The image schema employed here gives conceptual grounding to the various spatial categories used to explain the proposed syntax and grammar of phrases like *ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ* (e.g., dative of sphere) and even sheds light on what the apostle means when he says *ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ*. The same image schema also challenges readings that understand Paul to be talking about sin as a power or a slave master in 6:1–2.

Over the course of the chapter, the apostle will take his audience underwater to see the conceptual substructure of this ethical iceberg, which involves baptism, Christ, death, resurrection, slaves, wages, and obedience. But even at this preliminary surface level, it is clear that the conception of sin as a container is essential for understanding Paul's ethical thought. A decisive change has taken place in believers that affects their very locus of existence. Whereas they previously operated (*ἐπιμένω, ζάω*) in an existential state defined by sin, that is no longer the case. The introduction of the domain of death in the phrase *ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ* in a discussion about human conduct conceived metaphorically in spatial terms might at first seem out of place. Though not entirely straightforward, the expression is nevertheless intelligible and crucial for Paul's ethical argument. Though at this point in Romans, it is unclear exactly why Paul chose to use the language of death to develop an argument grounded on spatial logic, insights from cognitive linguistics are once again helpful in our exegesis. The expression is an example of the DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor. Here, Paul relies on the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema to convey a spatial translocation with respect to the state container of sin. The source of motion (DEPARTURE) fits well within the spatial conceptual framework of 6:1–2, and the target of death bridges nicely into Paul's elaboration in 6:3ff.

The two-word answer given in 6:2 is characteristic of Paul and leaves no room for misunderstanding, “Absolutely not!” (μὴ γένοιτο). It would be incorrect to conclude that God’s demonstration of grace in Christ towards sinners makes continuing τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (such that the abundance of God’s grace is further manifested) appropriate. Notably, his response does not recall any of the details of the narrative he has just presented in Romans 5:12–21, as if one of his comments was ignored or misunderstood. Instead, Paul introduces an entirely new narrative involving believers, sin, Christ, grace, and God—the characters remain the same, but the story is different. This new narrative reframes the issue altogether through different conceptions and metaphors. The narrative in Romans 6 is not intended to correct or replace the narrative in Romans 5, but it is an essential complement to it. That Paul spends the rest of the chapter expanding and explaining the logic of his answer tells us that Paul is not only (or even primarily) concerned with the *response* to the question as much as he is with the *ground* of his response. Paul is concerned with showing its inner logic, coherence, and necessity by further developing the narrative over the rest of the chapter. And since the building blocks of that narrative are metaphors, we will do well to continue to be attentive to how they are working and what Paul is doing by employing them.

CHAPTER 4

BAPTISM IS DEATH: EMBODYING DEATH AND NEW LIFE IN AND WITH CHRIST (ROMANS 6:3–4)

In this chapter, I aim to answer two fundamental questions about Romans 6:3–4. The first question concerns the *nature* of Paul’s baptismal language: is Paul speaking about the ritual of water baptism, or is he speaking about something else? The second question has to do with *why* Paul chooses to talk about baptism here and what exactly he claims baptism accomplishes in the believer. I will argue that Paul’s language of baptism is at times *literal* (it refers to the ritual rite of baptism) and at times *figurative* (it is metonymic and metaphorical). Paul’s variegated language thus allows Paul to ground the ethical assertions he made in 6:1–2 by (1) framing the ethical argument in terms of the believers’ spatially located *identity*; (2) conceiving of baptism as the metonymic embodiment of the death believers have experienced; (3) presenting Christ and his death as alternative containers/spheres of existence inhabited by believers; and (4) inferring that baptism is a kind of death that transports believers into a new container/sphere of existence characterized by new life.

These observations will further support my proposal that Paul’s ethical framework in Romans 6:1–14 focuses on the believer’s spatially defined *identity*. I will begin by introducing some interpretive issues pertaining to Paul’s baptismal language in 6:3–4. Next, I will consider Paul’s baptismal language in 6:3 and propose that it is both literal and metaphorical. I will proceed to examine his baptismal language in 6:4a, and will argue that it is both metonymic and that it employs the metaphor BAPTISM IS DEATH BY BURIAL. Finally, I will argue for the ethical import of NEW LIFE IS A CONTAINER in 6:4b.

Perspectives on Paul's Language of Baptism

In Romans 6:3, Paul begins to explain and ground the ethical thesis he presented in 6:2.¹ This explanation comes to us in three parts. First, Paul asserts that baptism immerses believers into Christ, into his death, and unto a new way of life (6:3–4). Second, he argues that this incorporation into Christ entails the death of our “old person” and a definitive break from sin (6:5–7). Third, he argues that dying with Christ entails life unto God now and promises life with Christ in the future (6:8–10).² Paul concludes these three elaborations with an adjusted restatement of his thesis in 6:11. This restatement comes in the form of an imperative (λογίζεσθε) calling believers to consider themselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” This thesis restatement then leads to Paul’s paraenetic conclusion in 6:12–14.

In 6:3, Paul asks a fourth question that introduces the next section of his ethical argument: “or are you unaware that . . . ?” (ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι . . . ;).³ Though the rhetorical question, and thus the content of the ὅτι clause, extends only to the end of verse 3, Paul makes inferences based on that content through 6:4. In 6:3–4, then, the apostle draws on baptism, Christ’s death, Christ’s burial, and his resurrection as significant realities that impact how a believer “walks” (6:4). It is essential at the outset to note that what we have

¹ Florence Gillman presents a detailed discussion of the inner structure of Romans 6:1–11, which includes a survey of previous proposals in *A Study of Romans 6:5a: United to a Death like Christ’s* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University, 1992), 16–24; She shows that though some have denied any internal structure in this section (see Peter Šiber, *Mit Christus leben: eine Studie zur paulinischen Auferstehungshoffnung*, ATANT 61 [Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971]; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964], 32), others have offered intricate structural analyses. See for example Andrie B. Du Toit, “Dikaiosyne in Röm 6: Beobachtungen zur ethischen Dimension der paulinischen Gerechtigkeitsauffassung,” *ZThK* 76, no. 3 (1979): 261–91; Lorenzo Alvarez Verdes, *El Imperativo Cristiano En San Pablo: La Tensión Indicativo-Imperativo En Rom 6* (Valencia: Artes Gráficas Soler, 1980).

² Many commentators view vv. 5–7 and vv.8–10 as two distinct elaborations of the thesis in 6:1–2. See especially Hubert Frankemölle, *Das Taufverständnis des Paulus: Taufe, Tod, und Auferstehung nach Röm 6.*, SBS 47 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 23–24; Otto Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel*, BFCT, 2.18 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 200–201; Paul Lamarche and Charles Le Dù, *Epître aux Romains V-VIII: structure littéraire et sens* (Paris: ECNRS, 1980), 36–42; Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 20–24.

³ I discussed the three questions in 6:1–2 in the last chapter: (1) Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; (2) ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ; (3) οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ;

in 6:3–4 is the first argument for the thesis Paul presented in v. 2.⁴ As such, any interpretation of 6:3–4 must, in the end, meaningfully support the ethical and existential notion that Christians have died to sin and cannot go on living in it.⁵ The nuances behind Paul’s comments in 6:3–4, especially as they pertain to baptism and the believer’s relationship with Christ, have been fervently debated. Virtually every phrase in 6:3–4 has elicited multiple interpretations.⁶ Because Paul’s baptismal language grounds the entirety of his ethical argument in this section, we must examine it carefully. Though we would

⁴ Although the phrase οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ; comes to us in the form of a question, we should not miss its affirmative intent. Holloway points out that the phrase is an example of contrary *sententia*. Paul Holloway, “Paul’s Pointed Prose: The *Sententia* in Roman Rhetoric and Paul,” *NovT* 40, no. 1 (January 1998): 50. The *sententia*, or γνώμη, is a prominent rhetorical feature that, according to the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, is “an expression of one’s personal conviction about some general principle of human action” (11.1430b.1). Cf. Holloway, “Paul’s Pointed Prose,” 35.

⁵ I will later argue that 6:3–14 is a series of arguments defending the thesis of 6:2. My point is similar to Hendrikus Boers’s who suggests that “the agenda for Paul’s entire reasoning in the passage [6:1–14] is set by the two rhetorical questions in vv. 1–2: ‘Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound?’ and ‘How can we who died to sin still live in it?’” Hendrikus Boers, “The Structure and Meaning of Romans 6:1–14,” *CBQ* 63, no. 4 (October 2001): 676.

⁶ There is a debate, for example, regarding how familiar the Roman Christians were with Paul’s subsequent comments on baptism. On this issue I agree with Douglas Moo who, following George Beasley-Murray and A. J. M. Wedderburn, concludes that “it is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to determine precisely how much of what Paul says in vv. 3–6 the believers in Rome already knew . . . while no single element of what Paul says would have been completely novel, the significance of each is ‘deepened’ in Paul’s teaching.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 384n338. Cf. George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 128; A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Hellenistic Christian Traditions in Romans 6?,” *NTS* 29, no. 3 (July 1983): 337–55.

Furthermore, although the extent to which Paul drew on the mystery religions as sources for his baptismal theology has been the subject of much scholarship and reconsideration in recent decades, it is largely irrelevant for the present discussion. Günter Wagner, in *Pauline Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries: The Problem of the Pauline Doctrine of Baptism in Romans VI.1–11, in the Light of Its Religio-Historical “Parallels”* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), 284, has argued strongly against those who suggested that Paul has in mind a sacramental mysticism that was influenced by the initiation rites of Hellenic mystery religions. Cf. Hans Windisch, *Taufe und Sünde im ältesten Christentum bis auf Origenes: Ein Beitrag zur altchristlichen Dogmengeschichte* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1908); Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen: nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1956).

Others are more cautious to assume direct dependence on the mystery religions and propose instead that Paul’s language here is his own mysticism and has either been modified by his own theology or been marked by his Judeo-Christian identity. See for example Adolf Deissmann, *Paulus: eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche skizze* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1925), 143; Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930), 18–20; Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1967), 2, 12–14; Günther Bornkamm, “Baptism and New Life in Paul (Romans 6),” in *Early Christian Experience*, trans. Paul L. Hammer (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 85n5. Even this modified proposal has been severely challenged by Wedderburn in A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 90–163.

benefit from exploring each point of debate individually, in this section, I will limit myself to introducing only the interpretive issues relevant to this project.

What are we to make of Paul's language of baptism? Paul speaks of believers being *baptized* into Christ and into his death (6:3) and, as such, as being buried with Christ into his death through *baptism*. But what does he mean by that? While most commentators have sought to answer this question, no one I am aware of employs any insights from cognitive linguistics in their response to that critical question.⁷ The various readings fall into two camps: (1) Paul is somehow speaking *metaphorically* about baptism, or (2) he is speaking *literally* about the rite of water baptism.

The minority position is that Paul here is not referring to the physical rite of baptism. John Brown, for example, is emphatic that Paul's baptism language here "cannot be understood of [sic] the baptism by water" and that the phrase "baptized into Christ" is that "of which water baptism is the emblem—that union to Jesus Christ."⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones suggests that Paul is speaking here about baptism in the Spirit.⁹ Eckhard Schnabel argues that "Paul speaks neither of water nor of any other substance into which the confessors of Jesus are immersed or submerged. Thus βαπτίζω is used metaphorically."¹⁰ Similarly, James Dunn notes that though ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν

⁷ One possible exception might be Smuli Siikavirta's discussion under the heading "Baptismal Metaphor or Concrete Rite?" in Siikavirta, *Baptism and Cognition in Romans 6–8*, 104–11. Although he speaks positively of Nijay Gupta's work on cultic metaphors, and even gives a nod to "the modern conceptual theory of metaphor," he really only focuses on what he calls Gupta's "rational aspect of metaphor" in his discussion. See Nijay K. Gupta, *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul: A New Approach to the Theology and Ethics of Paul's Cultic Metaphors*, BZNTW 175 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 180–204.

⁸ John Brown, *Analytical Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 91.

⁹ This reading sees Paul's baptismal language as metaphoric, referring not to the literal rite of water baptism, but to the metaphorical extension of baptism by the Spirit into Christ (i.e., 1 Cor 12:13). D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 6; the New Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 35.

¹⁰ My translation of "Paulus spricht weder von Wasser noch von einer anderen Substanz, in die die Jesusbekenner hineingetaucht bzw. versenkt werden, d.h. βαπτίζω wird metaphorisch verwendet." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, HTA (Witten: Brockhaus, 2016), 32.

Ἰησοῦν “leaves open the question of whether the divine act happens in and through the ritual act (as 6:4 may imply) or is rather imaged by the ritual act,” he is more persuaded in favor of the latter.¹¹ In other words, he reads Paul to be referring to the act accomplished by God whereby the individual is incorporated into the body of Christ—an act depicted through the metaphorical use of the verb βαπτίζω. Sorin Sabou’s reading also takes baptism here metaphorically as an act accomplished by God. He understands Paul to be saying that “we were overwhelmed by God toward (εἰς) Christ’s death.”¹² Annette Potgieter, too, argues for a metaphorical understanding of Paul’s baptism language.¹³ A unique reading is that of Tom Holland, who posits that Paul is conceiving of baptism here metaphorically, though not as the baptism in the Spirit of the individual, but as the corporate baptism that brought the church into existence.¹⁴

On the other hand, interpreters who conclude that Paul here is speaking about the physical rite of baptism (and thus take the verb ἐβαπτίσθημεν in 6:3 and the noun βαπτίσμα in 6:4 literally) nevertheless sometimes reach two very different conclusions. For example, a traditional Roman Catholic reading of 6:3–4 understands Paul as saying that it is precisely in the physical rite of baptism that a believer is incorporated into Christ’s death and buried with him. We might refer to this first literal understanding of baptism as the *sacramental* reading. As Scott Hahn explains, “In Paul’s theology, faith and baptism are twin instruments of salvation. Both are given by God, and both serve as a means of accomplishing our union with Christ. The faith of the believer and the sacramental action of the Church work in tandem. Faith in Christ becomes saving faith

¹¹ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:311. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, “The Birth of a Metaphor — Baptized in Spirit: (Part I),” *The Expository Times* 89, no. 5 (February, 1978): 134–38; “The Birth of a Metaphor — Baptized in Spirit: (Part II),” *The Expository Times* 89, no. 6 (March, 1978): 173–75.

¹² Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*, 105.

¹³ Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5–8*, 92–93.

¹⁴ Tom Holland, *Romans The Divine Marriage: A Biblical Theological Commentary*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Chapters 1–8 (London: Apiary, 2020), 244.

precisely when it is exercised in the liturgical setting of baptism.”¹⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer also understands Paul to be referring to the rite of baptism through which “one goes through the experience of dying to sin, being buried, and rising to new life, as did Christ.”¹⁶ Thus, both Hahn and Fitzmyer understand Paul to be talking about literal water baptism as an event that unites believers with Christ.¹⁷

There is, however, another group of scholars who take Paul’s baptism language literally and understand Paul to be saying something different. Moo, for example, also sees here a reference to water baptism noting that “by the date of Romans, ‘baptize’ had become almost a technical expression for the rite of a Christian initiation by water, and this is surely the meaning the Roman Christians would have given the word.”¹⁸ At first glance, it might seem that Moo’s interpretation is the same as Hahn’s and Fitzmyer’s since he affirms that “Christian baptism, by joining the believer with Christ Jesus, also joins him or her with the death of Christ,”¹⁹ that “Paul makes baptism the means by which we are buried with Christ (*through*” [dia] baptism),”²⁰ and that, as Beasley-Murray puts it, believers are set alongside Christ Jesus in his burial through the action of

¹⁵ Scott Hahn, *Romans*, CCSS (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 96. Hahn also explicitly states that baptism here is an efficacious rite, “what later Christian theology would come to call a ‘sacrament.’ Baptism transfers us from the dominion of sin and death into the realm of the Messiah’s risen life.” *Romans*, 94.

¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 434.

¹⁷ Otto Kuss takes a similar reading and concludes that “in the event of baptism, the death of Jesus Christ is ‘there,’ but naturally it is there in a form different from the event on Golgotha” (im Taufgeschehen ist der Tod Jesu Christ »da«, aber er ist naturgemäß in einer von dem Ereignis auf Golgotha verschiedenen Gestalt da). Otto Kuss, *Röm 1,1 bis 6,11*, vol. 1 of *Der Römerbrief* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963), 302. See also J. Schneider’s comment that “what Paul really has in view is the death and resurrection of Christ present in baptism. The sacramentally present death and resurrection of Christ are the ὁμοίωμα of His historical death and resurrection. This means that we are very closely linked with the saving realities of Christ’s death and resurrection as these are present in baptism.” J. Schneider, “ὁμοίωμα,” in *TDNT*, vol. 5, 1979, 195.

¹⁸ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 384.

¹⁹ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 385.

²⁰ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 386. He restates this point again in 388.

baptism.²¹ We see very similar language from Herman Ridderbos,²² Leon Morris,²³ and Robert Jewett.²⁴ However, all of these scholars explicitly reject the sacramental reading by saying that although Paul affirms that it is the literal rite of baptism through which believers are buried with Christ, he does not mean *that* literally.

Moo, for example, rejects the sacramental reading on two grounds: (1) he suggests that the “once-for-all” nature of Christ’s death and resurrection in verse 10 prohibits the event from being understood to take place repeatedly through every act of baptism, and (2) in locating death, burial, and resurrection with Christ in baptism, a weight is given to baptism that does not fit the argument of Romans 6.²⁵ While I agree with Moo’s first theological argument, his second argument is more questionable, especially since he himself repeatedly asserts that baptism is explicitly the means of co-burial with Christ, as noted previously. Tom Schreiner, following Moo, suggests that “Paul’s intention in introducing baptism is not to emphasize ‘*how* we were buried with Christ, but to demonstrate *that* we were buried with Christ.”²⁶ But, as both he and Moo point out elsewhere, in 6:4 Paul does not merely say “We were buried therefore with him into his death” but “We were buried therefore with him *through baptism* (διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος) into his death.” While I agree that baptism is not the central theme in

²¹ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 388. See Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 130.

²² He states, “Believers are in baptism brought to Christ’s death, that is to say, made to share in what has occurred once for all.” Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John R. De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 408.

²³ Leon Morris explains, “Baptism, so to speak, incorporates the baptized into Christ The act of baptism was an act of *incorporation* into Christ.” Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 247.

²⁴ Jewett, *Romans*, 398.

²⁵ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 388.

²⁶ Italics mine, although they are present in Moo. Schreiner, *Romans*, 312. See Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 388 for Moo’s quotation with italics. The second edition of his commentary preserves the wording of the first edition, which is technically what Schreiner quotes. Similarly, Ridderbos explains that “baptism is not the moment or the place of dying together, etc., with Christ.” *Paul*, 407.

Romans 6:1–11, it is undoubtedly a crucial component of this verse precisely in that it denotes the *means* of the believer’s burial with Christ and, thus, the *means* of union with Christ more broadly.²⁷ It seems, then, that the sacramental reading only gives baptism the significance and weight Paul gives it, and a weight which both Moo and Schreiner have affirmed in their exegesis at specific points in their commentaries. While I agree with them in rejecting the sacramental reading, it seems that a proposal for an alternate reading requires a more precise description of how the apostle’s language functions.

Therefore, as I mentioned at the opening of the chapter, my goal in the remainder of this chapter will be to answer two primary questions: (1) What is the nature of Paul’s baptismal language? (2) What is the function of employing that particular language in the context of Paul’s broader argument? I will argue that Paul speaks about baptism *literally*, referring to the ritual of water baptism (6:3a), *metaphorically* in the form BAPTISM IS DEATH BY BURIAL (6:3b), and *metonymically* as an event standing for the deliverance of sinners accomplished by Christ (6:4a). I will also make a case for why he chooses to do so. Analyzing this section of the letter through the lens of cognitive linguistics will also reveal essential features of the narrative Paul recounts, one that reminds his readers about the ethical consequences of their identity as those who have been baptized into Christ.

Embodying a New Identity Through Baptism (Rom 6:3a)

In 6:1–2, Paul emphatically rejected any notion that believers who have received the free gift of righteousness (5:16) are permitted to continue living in sin. Beginning in verse 3, Paul elaborates on his *μὴ γένοιτο* response (6:2) by returning to the

²⁷ Moo goes on to say that baptism, then, “is not the place, or time, at which we are buried with Christ, but the instrument (*dia*) through which we are buried with him.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 389. However, if we understand Paul’s language to refer to the literal rite of water baptism, which is itself, by definition, an event, it becomes questionable whether Paul is in fact denying the one while affirming the other.

narrative he started in chapter 5—a narrative that focused on the human indebtedness and devastation caused by sin and death. That Paul is returning to the narrative from the previous chapter becomes more apparent later when the chapter’s antagonists, *ἁμαρτία* (5:12, 13, 21) and *θάνατος* (5:12, 14, 17, 21), return to the stage in 6:6, 7, 10, 11 and they continue to carry out the same subjugation hinted at in chapter 5. My argument in this section is two-fold. First, I will argue that beginning in 6:3, Paul transports his audience to the narrative he began in 6:2 to highlight their new identity. Second, contra James Dunn and others, I will argue that Paul refers to the literal rite of baptism in 6:3a precisely because it embodies their new identity.

Transportation to the Narrative World

Romans 6:1–2 is an aside in Paul’s narrative involving humanity, sin, death, and Christ, one that addresses the narrative’s (potential) effect on the thinking and conduct of Paul’s contemporaries. If 6:1–2 is a rhetorical aside involving Paul’s contemporaries which follows a metaphorical narrative that climaxes with the Christ event (Romans 5), then 6:3–5 is Paul’s attempt to bridge the two time frames and conceptual realities. In other words, Paul’s elaboration in 6:3–5 is neither merely an argument about how his audience should conduct themselves in the present time nor is it simply a further development of Christ’s victory over sin and death. Instead, Paul inserts himself and his audience into the story recounting Christ’s conflict with the dual powers of sin and death by employing the language of baptism.

Incorporating Paul’s audience into the narrative is intended to renew a sense of who the believers *are* in order to reshape their thinking and modify their conduct. Narratives accomplish this reshaping by *transporting* readers into the story world as they *perform* the narrative.²⁸ Jae Hyun Lee’s discourse analysis leads him to conclude that

²⁸ Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds*, Cf. 2–11.

Paul's focus in Romans 6:1–14 is “the status or the situation of believers with regard to sin and God.”²⁹ The language of the believer's status is common in scholarship of this section of Romans, but I suggest that Paul is aiming at something more fundamental to the believer. His argument is not merely about the individual's *status* but about his or her identity. Paul's language of death and life suggests a new creation. For Paul, a correct understanding of one's ontology (identity) leads to proper epistemology and ethics. How does Paul transport his audience to his unfolding narrative? As 6:3–5 makes it clear, by means of baptism.

Dunn's Case for Metaphorical Baptism

There is a debate among scholars regarding the weight that Paul's language of baptism carries in this chapter. Some argue that though Paul never mentions baptism again after verse 5, it nevertheless plays a central role throughout the chapter.³⁰ Though I will argue for the importance of baptism within 6:3–5, I agree with Dunn, Tannehill, and many others who suggest that Paul's primary concern in the chapter is the believer's death to sin, not baptism.³¹ To say that baptism is not primary does not mean that one is relegating it to the role of mere illustration.³² In either case, to gauge baptism's centrality

²⁹ Lee, *Paul's Gospel in Romans*, 2010, 316.

³⁰ See for example Siikavirta, *Baptism and Cognition in Romans 6–8*, 103. Isaac Morales likewise argues that “the various compound forms and uses of the preposition ‘with’ in the passage (‘co-buried,’ ‘co-crucified,’ ‘died with’) make much more sense if they point to the same event, namely baptism.” Isaac Augustine Morales, “Baptism and Union with Christ,” in *“In Christ” in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine R. Campbell, WUNT 384 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 161.

³¹ Dunn writes, “It needs to be recalled that the real theme of 6.2–11 is not baptism but death to sin (6.2)” James D. G. Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” in *Baptism, the New Testament, and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, JSNTSup 171 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 307n42. Tannehill notes that “in Rom. 6 . . . Paul is not primarily concerned to set forth an interpretation of baptism.” Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 7.

³² For instance, Morales gives Dunn and Tannehill as examples of scholars who “recently marginalized the rite's significance, portraying vv. 3–4 as a digression or an illustration.” Morales, “Baptism and Union with Christ,” 160. It does not seem to me that either scholar “marginalizes” baptism; they merely suggest that it is not Paul's central focus in the chapter.

(or lack thereof), we must first carefully explore the nature of Paul’s baptism language. My goal in this section is to show that Paul’s language about baptism is both *literal* and *metonymic*. Together, they spotlight the believers’ identity and transport them into the narrative Paul recounts.

At this point, it is important to remember we must examine Paul’s language at the level of the individual utterance lest we conclude of the whole what is true only of the part. One of the problems with understanding this section of the text is that it has widely been assumed that Paul is speaking about baptism the same way throughout. We must therefore begin by noting that in this section, Paul uses the language of baptism in three different phrases:

- (1) ὅσοι **ἐβαπτίσθημεν** εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (6:3a)
All of us who have been **baptized** into Christ
- (2) εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ **ἐβαπτίσθημεν** (6:3b)
[we] were **baptized** into his death
- (3) συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ **βαπτίσματος** εἰς τὸν θάνατον (6:4a)
Therefore, we were buried with him by **baptism** into death

As most scholars have noted, it is difficult to concede that when Paul speaks of “all of us who have been baptized into Christ” (6:3a), he is not thinking of the literal act of baptism. Because Dunn has been the greatest proponent of the metaphorical reading and has penned the most substantive arguments, I will briefly interact with his reading here. Dunn points out the long string of metaphorical language following 6:3 as an apparent indication that Paul is likely speaking metaphorically about baptism in that verse.³³ Dunn also uses the lack of integration between the *rite* of circumcision and the

³³ He states, “The repetition of the metaphor (‘baptized into Christ’) in Rom. 6.3 is accompanied by an even richer sequence of images—death, burial, fusing of broken bones, crucifixion (6.3–6). Does it need to be said that these too are all metaphors? In conversion-initiation there was no literal death, no actual burial, no bones fused, no believer nailed to a cross.” Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 299–300.

metaphor of circumcision to suggest that we should let the metaphor of baptism be “distinguished from, even liberated from the rite from which it was drawn.”³⁴

The difference, as Dunn himself points out, is that “Paul reacted fiercely against the insistence of his fellow Christian Jews on circumcision as necessary for Gentile believers.”³⁵ In other words, since the *rite* of circumcision did not play a formative role in the identity and ethos of the Christian community the way baptism did, we should not be surprised to see a “liberation” of the metaphor from the rite. However, the argument that we should expect the same of baptism does not follow precisely because of the critical role that literal baptism still played in the Christian community.

Dunn then looks to John the Baptist’s statement in Matthew 3:11 to understand when and how the technical usage of the term βαπτίζω emerged. He writes, “it is important for our discussion, therefore, to note further that, in this formative usage, John himself played immediately on the metaphorical possibilities that the imagery of ‘immerse’ opened up—‘I baptize(d) you with/in water . . . he (the one to come) will baptize you in/with Holy Spirit (and fire).’”³⁶ This seemingly natural transition from the literal to the metaphorical, he suggests, is a point often ignored by scholars, “almost as though it was impossible to envisage the term ‘baptize’ being used metaphorically—almost as though it could never mean anything other than ‘plunge in water’”³⁷ I have no qualms with Dunn’s point here and will suggest that what we have in Romans 6:3 is a

³⁴ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 302. Surprisingly, Dunn later grants that Paul speaks about the literal rite of baptism in 6:4 and thus “Paul does relate his second metaphor (‘buried with Christ’) to the act of baptism (‘through baptism’—6.4; cf. Col. 2.12 ‘in baptism’).” Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 307.

³⁵ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 301.

³⁶ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 304.

³⁷ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 304.

kind of parallel with Matt 3:11 where baptism is used literally at first, and then, once the Baptism frame has been established, it is used metaphorically in the subsequent phrase.³⁸

Dunn next argues for a metaphorical reading in 6:3a from 6:3b: “The significance of the first phrase is evidently being clarified or elaborated by the second. It was not possible, for Paul, to conceive of a being baptized into Christ that did not include a being baptized into Christ's death.”³⁹ He points to the Jesus tradition where Jesus speaks metaphorically of his own death as a “baptism I am to be baptized with” (Mark 10:38; cf. Luke 12:50) and concludes that “‘baptized into Christ’ = ‘baptized into his death’ (6.3) thus functions as the first of the sequence of metaphors relating to death and dying.”⁴⁰ While I agree with Dunn’s two propositions: (1) Paul’s language of being “baptized into Christ’s death” (6:3b) is metaphorical; and (2) For Paul, being baptized into Christ (6:3a) corresponds in some way with “being baptized into his death” (6:3b), his conclusion does not follow, as I will show in a moment.

Baptism as Embodied Ritual (6:3a)

Overall, Dunn makes a good case for the possibility of a metaphorical use of βαπτίζω in the NT. However, he fails to convince that Paul uses the verb *exclusively* metaphorically in Romans 6:3. He further weakens his proposal by acknowledging that in 6:4, Paul is referring to the literal rite of baptism. The reader is left wondering why his arguments for a figurative reading in 6:3 do not apply to 6:4. Although in the next section I will side with Dunn and argue that in the phrase “baptized into Christ's death” (6:3b),

³⁸ Notably, Dunn recognizes that only in the second phrase is the language of baptism metaphorical: “The syntax itself indicates clearly enough that the second of the two clauses was intended in a figurative way—a kind of baptism, of course, but not a baptism ‘in water’—rather, a different kind of baptism, ‘baptized in Spirit’.” Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 304.

³⁹ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 306.

⁴⁰ Dunn, “‘Baptized’ as Metaphor,” 307.

Paul uses the verb figuratively, I will first make a case that Paul’s baptismal language in 6:3a (“baptized into Christ”) should be taken literally.

The most natural reading of 6:3a surely understands the verb βαπτίζω to denote the ritual act so central to the Christian community. Of the eleven other uses of the verb in Paul, only one is clearly metaphorical (1 Cor 10:2).⁴¹ Perhaps some of the confusion regarding the nature of Paul’s baptismal language has to do with the fact that the significance of the literal ritual is almost always presented metaphorically. For example, we see a clear, literal description of baptism in Mark 1:9, where Jesus is baptized “into the Jordan by John” (ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου). Here, immersion (baptism) *into* a body of water is clearly a literal description of the rite. We see a different description in Acts 19:5 when Luke writes that Paul baptized the Ephesians “into the name of the Lord Jesus” (ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ). The description of baptism here is figurative since they were not literally immersed *into* Jesus. However, we must recognize that even though the *description* is figurative, the baptism conveyed here is still the physical, literal rite. Likewise, the qualification εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν in Romans 6:3a, though itself a metaphorical phrase (there is no literal motion *into* Christ), does not entail that Paul also employs βαπτίζω metaphorically. The phrases εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (Acts 8:16; 19:5; cf. Matt 28:19) and ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 10:48) were standard formulas associated with the ritual of Christian baptism.⁴² This is why we are not inclined to think that Luke

⁴¹ However, there, the surrounding context clearly indicates a metaphorical use. For a summary of how βαπτίζω is functioning in these eleven instances, see Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 384n342.

⁴² Paul likely derived the qualification εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν in 6:3a from these well-known formulas for the sake of his own argument (which I will discuss in the next section). See Lars Hartman, “Into the Name of Jesus: A Suggestion Concerning the Earliest Meaning of the Phrase,” *NTS* 20, no. 4 (July 1974): 432–40; Lars Hartman, “*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*”: *Baptism in the Early Church*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), esp. 37–50; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 156, 182.

is speaking about baptism metaphorically in Acts 10:48 or 19:5, for example.⁴³ We begin to see, though, that literal and figurative language quickly become intertwined and almost inseparable because of the nature of ritual.

At this point, I am simply suggesting that Paul's statement about baptism in 6:3a would have evoked the physical rite of baptism in the minds of the Romans.⁴⁴ The mere mention of the verb βαπτίζω establishes the Baptism semantic frame for this section. The formulas associated with the rite (into [the name of] Jesus Christ) and the metaphorically expressed implications of the rite that follow 6:3a are all elements of the Baptism frame Paul presents.⁴⁵ Baptism is thus a crucial first element in Paul's reframing of the ethical issue introduced in verses 1–2. By introducing baptism, Paul puts aside the financial and legal frames of chapters 3–5 and opens a new conceptual space through which his audience is to understand their own identity and its appropriate conduct. Before moving on to the second half of the verse, we must note two more things about 6:3a.

First, Paul introduces baptism within the frame of Memory. The verse begins with the phrase ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι, which frames what follows in terms of a particular epistemology. Paul is fond of this rhetorical question, though he most often asks it using οὐκ + οἶδα (e.g., Rom 6:16; 11:2; 1 Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15). Regardless of its construction, the phrase “do you not know” has the same illocutionary force as the occasional Pauline imperative: μνημονεύετε ὅτι (Eph 2:11; 2 Thess 2:5) in that it serves to

⁴³ Because of the frequent practice of the baptismal ritual and the commonplace utterance of the prepositional phrases within the ritual, the figurative descriptions become prototypical elements within the Baptism frame. In other words, their presence does not lead the reader to think that something other than literal baptism is taking place even though they themselves involve figurative language.

⁴⁴ Even if I am wrong, as Jason Yuh notes, “would not any kind of reference to baptism - literal or metaphorical - conjure up memories of the actual ritual?” Jason N Yuh, “Analysing Paul’s Reference to Baptism in Galatians 3.27 through Studies of Memory, Embodiment and Ritual,” *JSNT* 41, no. 4 (June 2019): 481. I should note, though, that Yuh is speaking about Paul’s language in Galatians 3:27. However, most scholars (Dunn included), see there an important parallel to his baptismal language in Romans 6.

⁴⁵ It seems strange that Moo wants to somehow separate the rite of baptism from the event of baptism: “The focus in Rom. 6, certainly, is not on the *ritual* of baptism, but the simple *event* of baptism.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 387.

activate his audience’s memory.⁴⁶ Moreover, in Romans 6:3, Paul calls on them to remember something about *themselves*.⁴⁷ By doing so, Paul turns them from passive recipients to active participants in the narrative he began and the argument that will follow.⁴⁸ Additionally, studies in cognitive linguistics have shown that imperatives evoke first-person action patterns in the addressee and thus deepen the cognitive processing of the utterance’s content.⁴⁹ By opening the Baptism frame in the context of his audience’s memory, Paul invites them to reflect on a particular reality about themselves anchored in the ritual of baptism.⁵⁰

Second, Paul’s language in 6:3–5 reveals that his argument is fundamentally about who believers *are*—it shows that Romans 6 is primarily a text about Christian *identity*. Paul brings up the ritual of baptism in verse 3, not mainly because of what baptism accomplishes but because of whom it *identifies*.⁵¹ Social anthropologists have long understood this intricate relationship between ritual and identity:

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the “imperative” force of non-grammatically imperative sentences, see Mark Jary and Mikhail Kissine, *Imperatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14; Ana Bravo, “Rhetorical Imperatives: Reasons to Reasoning,” in *Imperatives and Directive Strategies*, ed. Daniël Van Olmen and Simone Heinold (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017), 79–80.

⁴⁷ By using the first person verb *ἐβαπτίσθημεν* in 6:3a (“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus”), Paul inserts himself and his audience into the narrative and into the ethical argument.

⁴⁸ I have already mentioned that for the purposes of this project, it is not important to determine just how familiar Paul’s audience would have been with the various components of what he will mention next. What is important is that the illocutionary force of Paul’s rhetorical question triggers a kind of reflection in the Roman believers on something previously taught.

⁴⁹ Jeannette Littlemore, for example, argues that first-person perspective, “can augment the sensorimotor responses triggered by embodied metaphor.” *Metaphors in the Mind: Sources of Variation in Embodied Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 75. See also Jiménez’s excellent discussion on the cognitive significance of the imperative *μνημονεύτε* in Eph 2:11, from where I am getting much of the insight I present here, Oscar E. Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22: Motion towards Maximal Proximity and Higher Status*, LBS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 48–51.

⁵⁰ Peter-Ben Smit draws on Paul’s reference to the Romans’ memory in 6:3 and 6:6 in his discussion of ritual failure in “Ritual Failure in Romans 6,” *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 72, no. 4 (October 2016): 9–10.

⁵¹ Technically speaking, Paul says nothing about what baptism accomplishes in 6:3. We might infer that through baptism, believers are “baptized into Christ’s death” (6:3b), but Paul does not explicitly say that. In other words, Paul’s point here is not so much that baptism itself *leads* to something significant, only that it serves to *identify* a particular group of people.

The idea that rituals have something to do with individual and collective definitions of self mostly stays on the level of knowledge that is taken for granted, representing one of those hypotheses of common sense which a scientist intuitively holds to be so true that he/she does not bother reflecting on it.⁵²

Ritual itself shapes and defines identity since “acting ritually . . . may be viewed as a means of securing the identity of culture.”⁵³ Furthermore, in Axel Michaels’s theoretical framework of rituals, he argues that one of the characteristics of rituals is that they are related to a change in identity, status, role, or competency (*novae classificationes, transitio vitae*).⁵⁴ The embodied nature of baptism also plays a vital role in remembering one’s identity. Since rituals are, by definition, *embodied* acts, and since they are a vital component of *knowing* and maintaining identity, the body thus becomes an essential epistemological aid in the “remembering” Paul elicits from the Romans.⁵⁵ We begin to see, then, why after referring to believers in 6:2 as those who have experienced a “death to sin” (a significant change in identity), Paul would now choose to identify them in terms of the conversion, identity-redefining ritual of baptism.⁵⁶ This will become particularly significant when we examine Paul’s metonymic use of *βάπτισμα* in 6:4.

Βαπτίζω’s Metaphoric Extension (Rom 6:3b)

I noted previously that we must analyze Paul’s language of baptism one phrase at a time. Whereas I argued that in 6:3a, *βαπτίζω* functions literally and denotes the ritual act of baptism, in 6:3b, the issue is less clear. Paul likely draws from a standard baptism

⁵² Klaus-Peter Köpping, Bernhard Leistle, and Michael Rudolph, eds., *Ritual and Identity: Performative Practices as Effective Transformations of Social Reality*, Performanzen 8 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006), 14.

⁵³ Köpping, Leistle, and Rudolph, *Ritual and Identity*, 16.

⁵⁴ Axel Michaels, “Le rituel pour le rituel: oder wie sinnlos sind Rituale?” in *Rituale heute: Theorien, Kontroversen, Entwürfe*, ed. Corina Caduff and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (Berlin: Reimer, 1999), 23–47.

⁵⁵ I will return to the significance of baptism as an embodied act in my discussion of Paul’s baptismal language in 6:4.

⁵⁶ See Hans Dieter Betz, “Transferring a Ritual: Paul’s Interpretation of Baptism in Romans 6,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 105.

formula in 6:3a, but the phrase εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν in 6:3b is less paradigmatic. It is unlikely that the notion of being baptized into Christ's death would have been part of the Baptism frame in the mind of Paul's audience. Is Paul then speaking about baptism metaphorically when he speaks about baptism into Christ's death? In this section, I will argue that Paul's baptismal language in 6:3b is metaphorical and that it evokes a series of new container spaces: CHRIST IS A CONTAINER and CHRIST'S DEATH IS A CONTAINER.

The phrase εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν in 6:3b is an example of metaphorical extension of the verb βαπτίζω where the metaphorical sense is not only related to but dependent on the literal sense. We can see a similar phenomenon by considering a more common phrase:

The Gills, who were *robbed* last month, were *robbed* of the peace of mind they deserve to enjoy in their home. Because of the *robber*, they were forced to move. Here, we see three instances of robbery language, which I have tried to parallel to the baptismal language we see in Romans 6:3–4a for illustrative purposes. The statement itself is easy enough to understand but analyzing the nature of the robbery language requires some care. It would be incorrect to conclude either that the statement refers to a literal robbery and thus the language of robbery is never used metaphorically, or that the language here should only be understood figuratively and does not depict the literal act of a robbery.

The verb “rob” refers to taking something from someone by unlawful force, threat, or violence. The verb, however, has also developed a metaphorical sense that is commonly employed. In the passive voice, “being robbed” can express the experience of loss—whether just or unjust (e.g., “we lost by one point, *we just got robbed* at the last minute,” or “those kids *were robbed* of their childhood”).⁵⁷ How do we distinguish the

⁵⁷ The event of being robbed results in a variety of experiences (e.g., fear, anger, confusion). One of the most closely connected experiences with being robbed is that of experiencing loss. Because the element of loss is native to the Robbery semantic frame, it becomes easy for the verb *rob* to develop a

literal use of the verb from the figurative? Sometimes the use is obvious, but sometimes the verb is used to depict the very junction between the literal and figurative meanings. In theory, the phrase “the Gills, *who were robbed* last month,” could employ the verb “robbed” literally or figuratively. However, even though the phrase does not mention elements of a literal robbery (a weapon, a thief, or the items stolen), our brains prioritize a literal reading precisely because of the absence of clues of a metaphorical usage.

On the other hand, the second half of the sentence, “[they] *were robbed* of the peace of mind they deserve to enjoy in their home,” does employ the verb metaphorically. We are clued into the metaphorical use because of the inanimate object, “peace of mind,” the verb takes. A thief does not *literally* rob a person of their peace of mind, though there is a real sense in which he does. The literal robbery results in and corresponds with the metaphorical robbery. In other words, we see two different uses of the same verb (literal and metaphorical), which are nevertheless conceptually and referentially inseparable. This phenomenon is precisely what seems to be at play in Romans 6:3.

Paul’s mention of the act of baptism, with a modified version of a paradigmatic formula (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν from εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ) opens the Baptism frame in 6:3a.⁵⁸ By moving from the literal sense of baptism in ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν to εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν, Paul metaphorically extends the meaning of βαπτίζω by highlighting a specific aspect of Christ, namely his death.⁵⁹ As we saw with the robbery example above, though the verb βαπτίζω takes on a more metaphoric sense in

metaphorical sense of loss, though not necessarily one caused by a literal robbery. For a good discussion of how this happens through metonymy and metaphor see John R. Taylor, “Category Extension by Metonymy and Metaphor,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, ed. René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 323–47.

⁵⁸ I will discuss the meaning and connection between the two phrases in the next section.

⁵⁹ This is the same phenomenon we saw with the robbery language. The phrase “The Gills, who were robbed last month” opens the Robbery frame, and by highlighting the element of loss native to the Robbery frame, we can metaphorically extend the sense of “robbed” to refer to something other than a literal robbery, as in “were robbed of our peace of mind.”

6:3b, it nevertheless remains anchored to the literal event of baptism mentioned in 6:3a. The metaphorical event of being baptized into Christ's death (6:3b) is thus distinct from the literal rite of baptism into Christ (6:3a) yet remains causally dependent on it.

CHRIST AND HIS DEATH ARE CONTAINERS

In the last chapter, I argued that Paul conceives of sin as an existential state humanity can inhabit using the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER in 6:1–2. I argued there that the preposition ἐν evokes the spatial framework and thus the container image schema. The conceptual structure of Paul's preliminary argument there was fundamentally spatial: believers cannot continue living *in* sin. Here, I will show that in 6:3b, Paul introduces the positive alternative in spatial categories—though, this time, with the preposition εἰς. Believers are no longer *in* (the existential state of) ἁμαρτία but are instead *in* a new state characterized by Christ Jesus (v. 3a) and his death (v. 3b).

Like all prepositions, εἰς has a wide range of meanings determined by the context. Nevertheless, as I discussed in the previous chapter, prepositions like ἐν, μετά, ἐπί, ἐκ, and ὑπέρ evoke schematic spatial relations. These spatial relations range from the more literal to the more abstract. The preposition εἰς, for example, can be used in the context of an actual spatial location like Syria (Matt 4:2), or it can involve motion towards a non-geographical goal, like a cheek (Matt 5:39) or someone's arms (Luke 2:28). It can be used in conjunction with the metaphor TIME IS SPACE, where an instance in time is conceived as the goal in a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema (Mark 13:13; Gal 3:24).⁶⁰ Εἰς is also used to denote a particular state or condition (Rom 11:32; 2 Cor 4:11; 1 Tim 3:6) or in the context of a result/purpose which is schematized spatially using the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema (Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 1:7). According to Silvia Luraghi, εἰς “denotes motion toward a landmark, conceptualized as a container when relevant, but the

⁶⁰ For a recent discussion of the time is space metaphor, see Alejandra Martín, Máximo Trench, and Ricardo Adrián Minervino, “The Sensory-Motor Grounding of the Time Is Space Conceptual Metaphor,” *Avances En Psicología Latinoamericana* 38, no. 1 (2020): 1–17.

trajectory may or may not end with contact of the trajectory [sic] with the landmark.”⁶¹ In other words, in 6:3b, Paul is conceiving of a Trajector (the believer) in motion via baptism *into* two conceptual containers: Christ (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) and Christ’s death (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ).

How, then, should we understand these two prepositional phrases evoking the CONTAINER image schema? The phrase εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν is likely derived from the more common phrase εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.⁶² The latter was a typical formula that characterized the ritual of baptism.⁶³ Most agree that the longer phrase “in(to) the name of Christ” identified Christian baptism as done with reference to Christ—it was an act of faith in him and worship toward him.⁶⁴ Some commentators suggest that the two phrases were synonymous, and thus Paul is merely speaking about being baptized *in reference* to Christ (or he is simply speaking about Christian baptism).⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the shorter phrase should probably not be understood as a mere summary of the latter since the two phrases likely evoked different ideas. Whereas the phrase “baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” probably served to identify the baptism event with Christ, Paul’s deliberate

⁶¹ Though she qualifies that εἰς only denotes a container space “when relevant,” she does not elaborate on when it would not be relevant. It seems like the preposition would evoke the container schema in every case, though certainly some “containers” would be more abstract than others. Silvia Luraghi, *On the Meaning of Prepositions and Cases: The Expression of Semantic Roles in Ancient Greek*, SLCSS 67 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 109.

⁶² See for example Hartman’s discussion of the relationship between the two phrases in “*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*,” 37–50.

⁶³ We see some variation in the prepositions used for the formula: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι (Acts 2:38 variant readings in B and D; 10:48. Cf. Luke 9:49; 10:17; 13:35; Acts 3:6; 9:28), εἰς τὸ ὄνομα (Acts 8:16; 19:5; Cf. 1 Cor 1:13, 15), and ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι (Acts 2:38; cf. 4:17, 18; 5:28, 40; Luke 1:59). See Hartman’s discussion in “*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*,” 37–50.

⁶⁴ Ferguson, draws from Thierry Maertens and concludes that “there is a solidarity between the preaching of the name, the confession of the name, and baptism in the name.” Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 183. Cf. Thierry Maertens, *Histoire et pastorale du rituel du catéchuménat et du baptême* (Bruges: Biblica, 1962), 45–47.

⁶⁵ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 301; Frédéric L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 239; Kaye, *The Thought Structure of Romans*, 59. Schreiner sees the two phrases as synonymous, but he does not take εἰς as meaning “with reference to” like the others *Romans*, 309.

(and rare) choice to speak about being baptized into Christ in Romans 6:3 should be understood within the context of this section of the letter.

Having already taught that believers should not remain *in* the existential state of sin, Paul now foreshadows the positive alternative sphere of existence—those who have been plunged into the waters of baptism (6:3a) have also been plunged *into* Christ (6:3b). The metaphor CHRIST IS A CONTAINER projects Christ into a mental space forming a container. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner observe that it is common for historical figures to become basic cognitive, cultural instruments.⁶⁶ Here, the phrase εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν opens up the Christ frame, which includes many aspects a reader would associate with Christ (e.g., accounts of his life, his character, and even his death).⁶⁷ Scholars have rightly seen a sense of being incorporated into Christ or united to him in the phrase. What precisely this incorporation entails will be fleshed out in the subsequent verses. However, it seems natural to anticipate that the properties of the CONTAINER schema Paul applied to ἀμαρτία in 6:1–2 will be applied to the CONTAINER of Christ as well. In other words, Paul will likely be drawing on the binary nature of containment (either *x* is *in* the container or *not* in the container). Later in the chapter, Paul will develop the properties of the CONTAINER as that which exercises a level of control over its contents. Tannehill is, therefore, likely correct in suggesting that the phrase posits that the individual “has entered Christ as the corporate person of the new aeon.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, in the following

⁶⁶ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and The Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 250.

⁶⁷ See Bonnie Howe's discussion on the “in Christ” Container in *Because You Bear This Name*, 238–39.

⁶⁸ Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 22. See also Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology*, 23; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 401–4; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 54–60; Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 385.

verses, Paul will unpack what he intends to communicate by presenting Christ as a container into which baptized believers have been plunged.⁶⁹

Whereas Paul likely draws from a standard baptism formula in 6:3a, the phrase *εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν* in 6:3b is less paradigmatic. Paul here seems to be reaching in three different directions. First, the phrase is clearly intended to be understood within the Baptism frame. Second, the phrase clearly evokes the event of Christ's own death. Third, Paul's language of death here builds on the notion that believers have "died to sin" (6:2) and begins to connect that death with Christ's own death. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the phrase also evokes a CONTAINER schema, though this time, the CONTAINER is an event (Christ's death), not a person (Christ). The resulting metaphor CHRIST'S DEATH IS A CONTAINER evokes an even more dynamic kind of incorporation precisely because of the dynamic nature of events—participation *in* the event is evoked by being included *in* the event itself.⁷⁰ The death-of-Christ CONTAINER, however, is inseparable from the Christ CONTAINER. In fact, inclusion in the latter results in inclusion in the former. As Tannehill notes, "Paul explains that baptism into Christ means baptism into his death The believer participates in Christ's death because he is included in Christ."⁷¹ This participation in death is the crucial thread Paul will pull on over the following few verses. His entire ethical argument is built on the death believers experienced—a death that depends on Christ's own death.

⁶⁹ Klyne Snodgrass is right in saying that the nuance of *εἰς* in the verse "is controlled more by the surrounding words than by the preposition." Klyne Snodgrass, "Baptized into Christ: Romans 6:3–4—the Text on Baptism and Participation," in *Cruciform Scripture: Cross, Participation, and Mission*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner et al. (Chicago: Eerdmans, 2021), 114.

⁷⁰ We can compare, for example, the phrases (1) "Max, were you in Saturday's race?" and (2) "Max, were you at Saturday's race?" The first phrase conceives of the event of the race as a container (*in* Saturday's race) and thus portrays Max as participating (running, perhaps) in the race. The second phrase does not employ the container schema and merely conveys Max's presence (as spectator, not participant) at the event.

⁷¹ Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 24.

However, Paul’s purpose in Romans 6 is not merely to introduce the containers of sin and Christ. Instead, his focus is on movement *out of* one container and *into* the other. The movement of a Trajector can be evoked using typical verbs of motion like *go*, *run*, *enter*, or *flee*. However, here Paul evokes movement *into* a space metaphorically through the verb βαπτίζω. The action profiled by βαπτίζω is interesting in that although it incorporates motion, the agent normally remains stationary. More specifically, because the verb profiles movement along the vertical axis and not on the horizontal axis, any entry into space resulting from baptism must be conceived as entry *up into* or entry *down into*. I will examine the significance of this phenomenon further in my discussion on 6:4. My point here is to highlight that Paul is employing baptism as a *means* of motion, as a means of vertical entry into the conceptual containers of Christ and his death.

The Ethics of Inhabiting a New Container

The specific ethical demands inferred from baptism will come later. But the logical structure that undergirds those demands is erected here. Paul’s focus in this first elaboration (6:3–4) conveys that believers’ spatial identity has changed through baptism. Through baptism, believers were plunged *into* a new existential state—that of Christ and his death (6:3).⁷² In the conceptual structure of Paul’s ethical argument, this new container stands in contrast to the container of sin, which Paul has already said believers cannot inhabit (6:2). Paul’s ethical, conceptual logic is thoroughly spatial and his use of the CONTAINER image schema continues to function to convey the strictly binary moral alternatives. In other words, believers cannot live *in* sin and be *in* Christ simultaneously any more than an object can be in two infinitely distant containers simultaneously.

⁷² Stan Porter is right when he writes “the implication is that being baptized into Christ Jesus’ death is the same as dying to sin.” Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*, NTM 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 132–33.

How does Paul respond to the possibility of believers continuing in sin in light of God’s gracious gift of grace? They simply cannot!⁷³ They are those who, via baptism, have exited the existential container of sin and now reside in Christ and in his death. Paul has more to say, but this preliminary response does not seem to fit the “indicative-imperative” schema. The ethical thrust of Paul’s response comes to us as an “is,” not as an “ought” or a “do!” Either 6:3–4 is still part of the “indicative” that anticipates a later “imperative” to carry the paraenetic freight of Paul’s moral logic, or it is part of something altogether different that transcends the two grammatical categories. I suggest the latter, and will continue to argue that the “substructure” of Paul’s ethical logic is best understood using the category of *identity*, and more specifically, an identity characterized by existence in a particular *location*.

**BAPTISM FOR CONVERSION:
Baptism and Conceptual Metonymy (Rom 6:4a)**

In chapter 2, I discussed how cognitive linguists have shown that metaphors are fundamentally conceptual rather than literary and how they are frequently derived from our embodied, sensorimotor experiences in the world. Having discussed conceptual metaphor in detail, I will now introduce conceptual metonymy and will argue that in 6:3b, Paul employs PART FOR WHOLE metonymy in the form BAPTISM FOR CONVERSION.

Having just said that believers have been baptized into Christ (6:3a) and that they have been baptized into his death (6:3b), in 6:4 Paul now states that believers have been buried with Christ through baptism into death (*συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον*). In Paul’s thought, this union with Christ’s burial (*συνετάφημεν*) into death is an inference (*οὖν*) from having been baptized into him and into his death. In the next section, I will explore Paul’s metaphorical language of being

⁷³ This is not the same as saying that they cannot sin, since being *in* sin is different than sinning. One can love without being *in* love.

buried with Christ and its significance. Here, I will focus once again on Paul’s baptismal language and seek to elucidate what Paul means when he says that it is through baptism (διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος) that believers experience this union with Christ’s burial and death.

Conceptual Metonymy

Part of the confusion over Paul’s language of baptism in this section is rooted in a lack of clarity about the possible options. As I mentioned, most commentators feel the need to argue either for a literal meaning or for a metaphorical meaning. However, figurative language extends beyond metaphors. It includes, for example, the essential conceptual mappings achieved by metonymy. In chapter 2, I followed George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in defining metaphor as *understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*. As such, I explained that a metaphor presents an element from one semantic frame (target) in terms of a different frame (source). In the phrase “she attacked every point of his response,” an element from the Argument frame (the speaker’s words) is being understood and experienced in terms of an attack (an element from the frame of War.) Thus, we say that the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is a unidirectional conceptual mapping from one frame (War) to another (Argument).

As with metaphor, cognitive linguists consider metonymy a conceptual process and thus a cognitive rather than a literary phenomenon.⁷⁴ Metaphor and metonymy are sometimes confused precisely because they both involve conceptual mapping. The main difference is that whereas a metaphor is a conceptual mapping from one frame to another, metonymy is a conceptual mapping within the same frame. Many cognitive linguists follow the traditional definition of metonymy proposed by Zoltán Kövecses and Günter Radde: “metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle,

⁷⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 36. Jeannette Littlemore points out that metonymy appears “in a range of other modalities besides language” and “has been found to play a role in a wide variety of different modes of communication and meaning creation, such as art, music, film, and advertising.” *Metonymy: Hidden Shortcuts in Language, Thought and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8.

provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or ICM.”⁷⁵ As I argued in chapter 2, it is better to understand the mapping happening at the level of the semantic frame rather than at the more vague level of conceptual domains. To avoid the language of “vehicle” and “tenor” more often associated with slightly different theories of conceptual metaphor, I will follow Jiménez, Eve Sweetser, and Littlemore and speak of the conceptual mapping in metonymy as mapping within the same frame.⁷⁶ Thus, whereas the standard nomenclature for metaphor is X IS Y (where X and Y are elements in different semantic frames), we speak of metonymies as X FOR Y, where X stands for Y, and both are elements in the same semantic frame.

Another critical distinction between metaphor and metonymy is the direction of the mapping. Whereas the conceptual mapping in metaphor is unidirectional (from the source to the target), metonymy can be bidirectional. For example, we can employ the metaphor TIME IS MONEY and map an element from the Money frame into the Time frame, as in “I just *spent five hours* fixing my computer.” However, we cannot reverse the direction of the conceptual mapping and speak of money in terms of time (e.g., “I have been *waiting ten dollars* for the bus”). The incoherence of the second phrase shows that TIME IS MONEY is a metaphor, whereas MONEY IS TIME is not. In metonymy, however, we can say “*America* and Canada have good diplomatic relations,” where America (the whole) stands for the United States (the part), but we can also say “*Berlin* declared war on *Washington*,” where the capital cities (the part) stand for the countries (the whole). Metonymy, thus, can map WHOLE FOR PART or PART FOR WHOLE. Although most

⁷⁵ Zoltán Kövecses and Günter Radden, “Metonymy: Developing a Cognitive Linguistic View,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 9, no. 1 (1998): 39. They remove the word “domain” from their definition in “Toward a Theory of Metonymy,” in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden, HCP 4 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 17–59.

⁷⁶ Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 37; Eve Sweetser, “Conceptual Mappings,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Barbara Dancygier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 382; Jeannette Littlemore, “Metonymy,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Barbara Dancygier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 409.

metonymies fall under these two categories of PART FOR WHOLE and WHOLE FOR PART, Kövecses and Radden have developed a helpful taxonomy of subcategories.⁷⁷

Though metaphor and metonymy involve different conceptual mappings and thus are two distinct phenomena, the two often interact conceptually and thus linguistically.⁷⁸ We see this interaction clearly in Jiménez’s example: “I am trying to digest this book.”⁷⁹ The phrase evokes two different frames: the Digesting frame (the source frame) and the Understanding frame (the target frame), thus leading to the metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING. However, a closer look also reveals that “book” is functioning metonymically, standing for the book’s contents. Therefore, we also see the metonymy BOOK FOR CONTENT at work in the phrase.

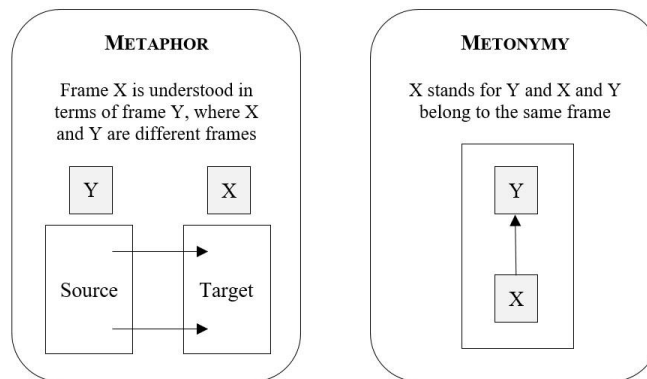


Figure 2: Conceptual mapping in metaphor and metonymy⁸⁰

⁷⁷ They also include a third category of metonymy: part for part metonymy. Radden and Kövecses, “Toward a Theory of Metonymy.”

⁷⁸ See for example Louis Goossen’s chapter where he discusses examples from British English. Louis Goossens, “Metaphonymy: The Interaction of Metaphor and Metonymy in Expressions for Linguistic Action,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, ed. René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 349–77.

⁷⁹ Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 46.

⁸⁰ Adapted from Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 46.

Though both types of conceptual mapping are at work in the same phrase, they accomplish two different things: the metaphor allows the reader/hearer to reason about understanding in terms of digesting, while the metonymy allows for a simpler utterance where the book element within the Reading frame stands for the contents of the book in the same frame.

Another place where metaphor and metonymy work together is in Romans 6:3–4. I have already argued that Paul uses βαπτίζω literally in 6:3a (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) and that he employs the verb metaphorically in 6:3b (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν). In 6:4a, he then uses the nominal βάπτισμα and writes, “we were therefore buried with him by baptism into death.” As I noted previously, interpreters struggle to explain Paul’s language here.⁸¹ Before I argue for a metonymic reading of 6:4a, it will be helpful to mention three other essential properties of metonymy. First, cognitive linguists have noted that “metonymy is often regarded as a *referential* phenomenon where the name of one referent is used to refer to another referent.”⁸² Since metonymy functions within a specific semantic frame, this referential function is accomplished by *highlighting* and thus mentally *activating* one element within the frame (target element) via another (source element).⁸³ Second, *metonymy serves as a carrier of social attitudes* and thus reveals something about a community’s conceptual

⁸¹ Interpreters who see a reference to literal baptism in 6:3 yet reject a sacramental reading of baptism in 6:4 struggle to explain how Paul could say that “we were therefore buried with him by baptism.”

⁸² Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda L. Thornburg, “Introduction: On the Nature of Conceptual Metonymy,” in *Metonymy and Pragmatic Inferencing*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda L. Thornburg, Pragmatics & Beyond New Series 113 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003), 2. This property of metonymy was first identified by Lakoff & Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, 35–36 (originally published in 1980). It is mentioned again in Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 100ff.

⁸³ For example, in the phrase “he’s got a good head on him,” the element of intelligence is highlighted and activated via the word “head.” For a good discussion on this property of (most) metonymies, see Antonio Barcelona, “Clarifying and Applying the Notions of Metaphor and Metonymy within Cognitive Linguistics: An Update,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*, ed. René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 223–26.

framework.⁸⁴ Third, cognitive linguists have observed that *metonymy often functions as a marker of group membership and cohesion*.⁸⁵ In this way, metonymy often creates and sustains group membership by “highlighting shared knowledge between members of the group and at times keeping outsiders out of the group.”⁸⁶

Paul’s Metonymic Use of βάπτισμα

In Romans 6:4, Paul’s inference from 6:3 is that “we were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death,” *συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον*. As we have seen, some scholars take Paul’s language of baptism here sacramentally, where baptism functions *ex opere operato*.⁸⁷ Some who reject this view but want to do justice to Paul’s comment that it is through (διὰ) baptism that believers are buried with Christ and united to him nevertheless fail to explain it adequately.⁸⁸ A step in the right direction is taken by Schreiner and Moo, who argue that Paul’s language of baptism needs to be understood within the context of conversion.⁸⁹ In the end, Moo points back to Dunn, who, in Moo’s mind, provides a helpful way to explain Paul’s

⁸⁴ Jiménez discusses how “circumcision” and “uncircumcision” function metonymically (a salient mark of a category for the category) in Ephesians 2:11 and their function in highlighting the community’s values and social attitudes. Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 61–64. See also Littlemore, “Metonymy,” 2017, 416–17.

⁸⁵ Alice Deignan, Jeannette Littlemore, and Elena Semino provide interesting examples from “groups” as diverse as a children’s nursery and a football team in *Figurative Language, Genre and Register* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 167–68; 213–14.

⁸⁶ Littlemore gives as an example the phrases “have I got a foot?” or “have I got a hand?” commonly used in climbing clubs. The phrases refer to a hand hold or a foot hold nearby, but to people outside the climbing community, the expression might not be as clear. Littlemore, “Metonymy,” 2017, 417.

⁸⁷ This was Albert Schweitzer’s view, who argued that in the moment when a person receives baptism, “the dying and rising again of Christ takes place in him without any co-operation, or exercise of will or thought, on his part.” Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*, trans. William Montgomery (London: Black, 1951), 225. See also Hahn, *Romans*, 94–96.

⁸⁸ Cranfield rejects Schweitzer’s sacramental position, but concludes that baptism is nevertheless “a decisive event by which a man’s life is powerfully and unequivocally claimed by God.” Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 304.

⁸⁹ Schreiner suggests that “Paul probably refers to baptism because it symbolizes dying and rising with Christ. Yet to separate baptism from other dimensions of the conversion experience is mistaken.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 312. Moo too is careful and seeks to both preserve the cruciality of faith and at the same time do justice to the mediatorial role of baptism in the text. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 390.

language. Dunn proposes that baptism, when used “in reference to becoming Christian is functioning as a kind of ‘concertina’ word.”⁹⁰ He means that the term “can be extended to embrace all that was involved in the crucial transition (justification, union with Christ, the gift of the Spirit). But it can also be squeezed concertina-like until all that is really in view is the ritual act itself—‘baptism’ in its original sense of ‘immersion.’”⁹¹

Dunn’s notion of a concertina word is fascinating. His proposal that the sense of a word can expand and contract within a certain range (much like a concertina expands and contracts within the confines of the instrument’s frame) is intriguing. Perhaps without realizing it, Dunn illustrated the phenomenon of metonymy, which is precisely how I think Paul’s baptismal language is functioning in 6:4a. Dunn, Moo, and Schreiner suggest that Paul is not speaking literally when he says that believers are buried into death through baptism. Instead, they argue that even though he speaks of baptism, he has the broader reality of conversion in mind.⁹² Whether they know it or not, all three scholars take *βάπτισμα* in 6:4 to be functioning metonymically: *baptism* (one element within the Conversion frame) stands for the whole of *conversion*.⁹³ Thus, we have PART FOR WHOLE metonymy in the form BAPTISM FOR CONVERSION.

The modern struggle to reconcile Paul’s language about faith, baptism, and union with Christ in this passage reveals something important about semantic frames—

⁹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 445. Dunn’s notion of baptism as a concertina word goes back to his book *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 5. A concertina is an accordion-like musical instrument that produces sound as air flows past a vibrating reed in a frame.

⁹¹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 445.

⁹² “Since unbaptized Christians were virtually nonexistent, to refer to those who were baptized is another way of describing those who are Christians, those who have put their faith in Christ.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 309. Schreiner further points to Colin Kruse and Michael Wolter who also state that all Christians were baptized and baptism was tied to conversion. See Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 260; Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 370–72.

⁹³ In the end, this is essentially what Moo concludes, though he does not use the language of metonymy: “In vv. 3–4, then, we can assume that baptism stands for the whole conversion-initiation experience, presupposing faith and the gift of the Spirit.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 390.

they can change over time. For many today, the experience of conversion and baptism is separated by several years or decades (if the latter has even occurred). Many believers today regard baptism as a mere formality that is at most recommended but certainly not indicative or pertinent to the conversion experience. As a result, baptism has largely been removed from the modern semantic frame of Conversion. This was not the case for early Christians. They, like Paul, would have affirmed that faith in Christ resulted in salvation (even before baptism) and yet seem to have understood baptism to be the initiatory rite of conversion.⁹⁴ Because of the conceptual inseparability of baptism and faith within the Conversion frame in the mind of Paul's original audience, Paul can emphasize faith as the sole requirement for salvation throughout Romans (3:22, 25, 26, 28; 4:5, 9, 11, 16; 5:1; 10:6) and at the same time to say that burial with Christ occurs through baptism (6:4) by speaking metonymically.⁹⁵

The Purpose of Paul's Metonymy

The last question we need to ask is why Paul would choose to speak metonymically about baptism or why he would choose to speak about baptism at all if baptism itself is used to stand for something else.⁹⁶ Since, so far in Romans, Paul's emphasis has been on faith as the prerequisite for salvation, why not speak about *faith* as

⁹⁴ See Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 150–57. William Flemington persuasively shows that even the context of Romans 6 makes clear that for Paul, baptism and faith were inseparable, though distinct. William F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1957), 81.

⁹⁵ What we see is that Paul's metonymic use of baptism in 6:4a reveals something about the social attitudes of the early Christians. His ability to speak of baptism to stand for the entire process of conversion reveals that the early church held baptism and conversion as prominent elements within their understanding and experience of salvation. Schreiner does not discuss this text in terms of metonymy, but his understanding of what Paul is saying fits with my argument here: "At baptism (i.e., conversion) the death of Christ becomes ours because we share the benefits of his death by virtue of our incorporation into him." *Romans*, 312.

⁹⁶ This is an important question Isaac Morales raises in response to those who tend to underplay the significance of baptism in this section of the letter: "The chief problem with the many readings that marginalize baptism is that they fail to offer persuasive explanations of Paul's references to the rite." Isaac Augustine Morales, "Baptism, Holiness and Resurrection Hope in Romans 6," *CBQ* 83, no. 3 (July 2021): 467n5.

resulting in union with Christ? In this section, I will propose two reasons: (1) baptism is a shared, embodied experience Paul has in common with his audience; (2) baptism was associated with death.

First, as I argued in the last chapter, Paul introduces the moral dimension of his argument in binary and spatial categories by depicting sin as a container—an existential space that can be inhabited (6:1–2). Believers, of course, do not live *in* sin; they have been transferred out of that state of existence. Theologically, Paul *could* have chosen to speak about faith as the *means* by which the believer has been spatially removed from the existential container of sin. Conceptually, however, faith does not logically lead to spatial translocation because of faith’s abstract, non-physical nature. Baptism, on the other hand, because of its embodied, physical architecture, works as a better conceptual vehicle to depict movement from one state to another.⁹⁷ By speaking about baptism in 6:4 as that which unites the believer to Christ and his death, Paul *embodies* the transfer out of sin. Through metonymy, he gives flesh and bones to the believer’s transportation out of sin.

The second reason why Paul probably chose to speak of baptism metonymically in 6:4 is because of how he previously framed the spatial exit out of the existential container of sin in 6:2. Believers no longer inhabit sin because they have *died to sin*. I suggested in the last chapter that the metaphorical expression is a form of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE. Again, Paul could have expressed that this death to sin, this burial with Christ through union with him, resulted from faith. But, once again, the conceptual parallels between faith and dying are unclear. Baptism, however, carries with it nascent evocations of death. Though many today associate baptism primarily with a

⁹⁷ A similar motivation of conceptual coherence and specificity explains the metonymy “can you give me a hand carrying this box up the stairs?” The phrase could have been “can you help me carry this box up the stairs.” But, by using “hand” metonymically, the speaker is able to highlight an element within the Physical Help frame that better coheres with the broader request he is making—he needs physical help in the form of the individual’s hands and strength to carry the box up the stairs.

washing (perhaps a washing away of sins, as in Acts 22:16),⁹⁸ Paul himself never does so.⁹⁹ Instead, the metaphorical use of the verb βαπτίζω was perhaps more readily associated with death.

Josephus uses the word once to speak of John the Baptist, but aside from that, the term refers to sinking ships (*Ant.* 9.212), people drowning (*J.W.* 3.423; *Ant.* 15.55), a man “baptizing” a sword into his own entrails (*J.W.* 2.476), and a city being destroyed (*J.W.* 3.196). Josephus’s uses of the verb reflect those of Philo and other ancient Greek authors (e.g., Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.4.6.3; Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 16.80; Plato, *Symp.* 176b; Lucian, *Timon* 44).¹⁰⁰ It is unlikely, then, that Paul’s contemporaries would have found his comments connecting baptism and death surprising. In short, Paul’s ethical argument in Romans 6 is grounded on the conception of a physical departure from a state of existence (sin) and that departure being a kind of death. These two bricks in the conceptual foundation of Paul’s argument make baptism a great lexical and conceptual candidate to convey how believers have experienced this death to sin.¹⁰¹

Though the indicative-imperative schema usually explains this section of the text as part of the “indicative” that will later lead to the “imperative,” we can easily be more specific about the apostle’s ethical argument. Paul has been and continues to speak in terms of identity: *we who died to sin* (6:2), *we who have been baptized* (6:3). In this section, Paul connects the reality of the believer’s death to sin (a departure from the state

⁹⁸ The word does denote cleansing/washing in LXX 2 Kings 5:14; Judith 12:7; Sir 34:24.

⁹⁹ Paul sometimes speaks of believers being washed/cleansed (1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:25; Titus 3:5), but he never explicitly connects baptism with washing/cleansing.

¹⁰⁰ I am relying here on Snodgrass’s helpful survey of βαπτίζω in the ancient world in Snodgrass, “Baptized into Christ: Romans 6:3–4—the Text on Baptism and Participation,” 108–9. Sabou too provides a helpful and more detailed survey of the use of the verb in ancient Greek writings in *Between Horror and Hope*, 102–5.

¹⁰¹ Toan Do misses the important lexical connection between βαπτίζω and death, as well as the metonymic language, in his explanation of this text. Toan Do, “Christ Crucified and Raised from the Dead: Paul’s Baptismal Theology and Metaphorical Appropriations in Romans 6:3–4,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 34 (2014): 204–25.

of sin) with the event of baptism. Modern readers are sometimes surprised that Paul's first elaboration on his thesis is centered on baptism and not on the exercise of faith or repentance, for example. Cognitive linguistics, however, helps us see how by employing the embodied ritual of baptism metonymically (and not an alternative, more abstract identity marker), Paul conveys that his audience has physically experienced an *identity*-shaping change with ethical implications.

**BAPTISM IS DEATH BY BURIAL:
Baptism as a Ritual Embodiment of Death (Rom 6:4a)**

I have already argued that when Paul writes *συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον* in Romans 6:4, he is employing metonymy. However, this verse is also an example of metaphor since even a metonymic understanding of baptism does not lead to literal burial with Christ into death. However, determining the precise metaphor at play is more complicated than one might think. The phrase “therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death” evokes the image schema SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, where death is the GOAL.¹⁰² Once again, the conceptual structure erected by the text involves translocation in the form of motion through space into (εἰς) a container—death.¹⁰³ The state of death is thus conceived in terms of a container (DEATH IS A CONTAINER) that can be entered.

Additionally, the metaphorical utterance of 6:4a conveys the *vehicle* that carries out transportation into the container of death. It is by means of/through (διὰ)

¹⁰² There is some debate as to whether the prepositional phrase *εἰς τὸν θάνατον* modifies *συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ* or *διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος*. For a brief survey of the arguments for each position, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 311. As I will show, the debate creates a false dichotomy. Paul is not speaking about being buried with Christ *and* about being baptized. Rather, his language seems to indicate that he conceives of being buried with Christ through baptism as a unified event. Thus, *εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ* should be understood to modify the entire clause and not merely one of its two elements.

¹⁰³ Though we saw that in 6:3b, Paul conceives of Christ's death as a container, Godet points out the significance of Paul not speaking of “*his* death” in this verse as that into which one has been buried. If this had been the apostle's view, “he would have expressed it by adding the pronoun *αὐτοῦ*, of *Him*. He evidently wished to leave the notion of *death* in all its generality, that the word might be applied at once to *His* death, and *ours* included in *His*.” Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 240. Against Godet, Dunn suggests that “the absence of *αὐτοῦ* in the second clause is hardly significant.” *Romans 1–8*, 38A:314.

baptism that this movement is achieved.¹⁰⁴ As I showed previously, the notion of baptism leading to death, though peculiar to modern readers, would have sat well in the minds of Paul’s contemporaries and is not even a uniquely Christian idea.¹⁰⁵ Adolf Schlatter suggests that “*thanatos* does not denote the process of dying, or the moment when life is extinguished, but the condition into which the individual is put at the end of his life.”¹⁰⁶ I think Schlatter overstates the case, but Paul’s language in 6:4 does seem to point to a conception of death as a state/condition (STATES ARE CONTAINERS). If baptism is the vehicle of translocation into the state of death, what can we say is the metaphor employed? Fundamentally, it is the *event* of death itself that leads to the *state* of death. If this is the case, then the metaphor at play must be BAPTISM IS DEATH, where baptism is a death event resulting in and leading “into” the state of death.

What, then, should we make of Paul’s language of co-burial in 6:4? Some commentators have challenged the notion that Paul is conceiving here of baptism as death. Morris, for example, notes that “if we take the reference to burial with full seriousness, then baptism is not death, but interment: . . . when we are baptized the burial is carried out.”¹⁰⁷ Godet, too, suggests that “it is not to death, it is to the *internment of the dead*, that Paul compares baptism.”¹⁰⁸ Most scholars explain Paul’s burial language here by suggesting that burial functions as the seal of death. In other words, burial *infers* that death has truly occurred.¹⁰⁹ Paul’s logic, however, seems to go the other way: believers

¹⁰⁴ See Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5–8*, 94.

¹⁰⁵ I should note that in 6:4a, Paul uses the nominal *βάπτισμα* and not the verb *βαπτίζω*. I showed that the verb is commonly used in contexts of drowning, death, and destruction. The noun *βάπτισμα*, however, is original to Paul. He nevertheless seems to be drawing from the conceptual connection between *βαπτίζω* and death even in his use of the nominal.

¹⁰⁶ Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 137.

¹⁰⁷ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 247n17.

¹⁰⁸ Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 238.

¹⁰⁹ Bornkamm suggests that “‘to be buried with him’ is a seal of the believer’s dying with him.” Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 74. Cranfield similarly understands that “by stating that we

were baptized into Christ and into his death (6:3), and *therefore* (οὕτως) were buried with Christ (6:4). It is baptism into Christ's death that grounds (and thus functions as the seal of) burial with Christ, not the other way around. Sabou's explanation for the burial language is based on the observation that Paul is not merely emphasizing believers' burial but believers' burial *with Christ*. Drawing from Jewish texts (1 Kgs 14:31; 15:24; 22:50; Josephus, *A.J.* 10.48; *B.J.* 1.551), he concludes that in Jewish thought, one person's burial with another implies that the former belonged to the family of the latter.¹¹⁰ Although Sabou's observations about family co-burial are likely correct, it is not as clear that this is what Paul intends to communicate here. One does not easily infer from 6:3 that because the believer has been baptized into Christ, he therefore (οὕτως) belongs to his family and would naturally be buried with him.¹¹¹

We should interpret Paul's burial language in 6:4 in light of his inference from 6:3. We should not assume that Paul is inferring a subsequent reality that follows baptism into Christ and his death (i.e., since we were baptized into Christ and into his death, *we were therefore subsequently* buried with him). Instead, the phrase διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος indicates that the inference is drawn from the reality of baptism, not from the notion of death or even the suggestion of union with Christ.¹¹² Paul's burial language, then, is not

have been buried with Christ (cf. Col. 2:12) Paul expresses in the most decisive and emphatic way the truth of our having died with Christ; for burial is the seal set to the fact of death . . . the death which we died in baptism was a death ratified and sealed by burial," *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 304. So too Dunn *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 141; Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 34; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 370.

¹¹⁰ Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*, 91–93.

¹¹¹ Morris and Godet should be commended for their careful observation about the apostle's figurative language in 6:4 and the importance of burial in the phrase. Sabou is also helpful in bringing what seems to be an important frame element of co-burial—that of family/kinship. However, I will argue that the core metaphor is still BAPTISM IS DEATH, though burial is an important component.

¹¹² Some scholars seem to take the inference as drawing on the idea of union with Christ. The logic, as they understand it, is that since believers have been united with Christ in his death, they must therefore be buried with him by virtue of their union with him. For Moo, "Paul draws a conclusion ('therefore' [*oun*]) from the believer's incorporation into the death of Christ. If we have died 'with' Christ through baptism, Paul reasons, then we have also been buried with him." Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 385. Though in 6:5 Paul will use this type of logic (from *union* with the likeness of Christ's death he infers *union* with him in a resurrection like his), this is simply not Paul's logic in 6:3–4. Paul's inference, I

merely describing the next step of Jesus's interment but describes baptism itself. As we saw, βαπτίζω was often used to describe drowning, where being submerged (we might say, "buried") in water results in death. Since believers were baptized into Christ and his death (6:3), it follows that in that baptism, they were buried with him into death (6:4) since that is what baptism is and does. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that in Romans 6:4, Paul employs the metaphor BAPTISM IS DEATH BY BURIAL where the baptismal event of death by burial (βαπτίζω, i.e., drowning) leads to the state of death.

Paul's burial language, however, does double duty. As it pertains to the believer, it further colors Paul's conception of baptism—which, by 6:4, is presented as a submersive event in water resulting in death. At the same time, it advances the narrative of the Christ event present in early Christian formulae: he died, was buried, and was raised on the third day (1 Cor 15:3–4). Christ's burial follows his death and anticipates his resurrection. Having already connected the believer with Christ's death in 6:3 by conveying that the believer, by virtue of baptism, is in Christ and in his death, Paul now conveys that believers also share in Christ's burial (also by virtue of baptism). Paul does not linger much on the co-burial's significance and seems more interested in its result: "in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

NEW LIFE IS A CONTAINER (Rom 6:4b)

The purpose clause in 6:4b seems to have been Paul's destination all along. Believers have been baptized into Christ and into his death, and they have been co-buried with him *so that* they would walk in newness of life. Of course, walking after death and burial implies resurrection. Readers anticipate this resurrection-like experience since Paul has already taught that believers are in Christ's death and have been buried with him.

suggest, is not from a vague notion of union with Christ but from the very nature of what baptism is—an experience of death by burial in water.

Moo is correct in noting that although Paul’s language might appear to simply compare Christ’s resurrection with the believer’s post-mortem walking, “the context suggests that more than comparison is intended.”¹¹³ Paul will soon shift his focus more fully to Christ and what his death means for believers who have been baptized into him. Here, though Paul has been going back and forth between believers and Christ, his emphasis still appears to be on the identity of believers and their moral situation.¹¹⁴

Once again, the preposition ἐν in 6:4b opens up a CONTAINER image schema: καινότητι ζωῆς (“newness of life”) is conceived as a container *in which* one walks. As we saw previously, the container one inhabits profoundly impacts what one is able to do. Being *in trouble*, living *in regret*, and being *in need* all reflect states of being controlled and constrained by certain phenomena. These metaphorical conceptions of existence reflect our own embodied experience of being *in* things. If I am *in* bed, I cannot swim. If I am *in* my car, I cannot jump. The container one inhabits acts as a form of restraint that both limits and directs one’s actions. Believers are buried with Christ through baptism into him and his death so that they might inhabit a new container of new life (6:4b).¹¹⁵

This container of καινότητι ζωῆς is the third container Paul conceives of as being inhabited by believers. In 6:3, we saw that baptism is the vehicle that transports believers into the container of Christ (εἰς Χριστόν) and into the container of Christ’s death (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ). Therefore, believers find themselves in a place defined both by

¹¹³ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 391.

¹¹⁴ I am not here referring merely to the state of affairs, but to a more locative sense of situatedness. As we have seen, Paul’s arguments thus far are largely locative and spatial. He presents the reality of the believer in light of Christ’s death and resurrection, but his focus here is still on the believer’s identity and state as determined by his location.

¹¹⁵ I follow Dan Wallace here in taking καινότητι ζωῆς as what he calls an “attributed genitive” to convey new life. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 89–90. Likewise, Richard Longenecker translates the result clause as “in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might live a new life.” Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 614. Schreiner and John Harvey take it as an attributed genitive too, though Schreiner still prefers to translate it as “newness of life.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 313; Harvey, *Romans*, 151.

death *and* by life. This new space of death and life is further defined by Christ's own death and Christ's own resurrection. This triple inhabitation is the first major pit stop in Paul's ethical argument, which he began in 6:1–2, and we see his spatial conception of morality come full circle. He started by rejecting the notion that believers can inhabit the container space of sin and now teaches that believers occupy a new existential space characterized by new life through baptism into Christ and his death. The believer's transition from the container of sin (and its associate, death) into the container of life is paralleled with Christ's own trajectory. By saying that Christ was "raised from the dead," Paul conveys an exit from a container. Christ previously inhabited the container space of νεκρῶν but has been raised *out of* (ἐκ) that space marked by death. In like fashion (ὡσπερ . . . οὕτως), believers cannot possibly remain *in* sin (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) since they now walk *in* new life (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν). Notably, this "new" container space is καινός, not νέος; not a life new in time or origin but new in nature, superior to the old.¹¹⁶

The moral dimension of his argument illuminates a second metaphor in 6:4b: MORAL CONDUCT IS WALKING. This metaphor, which is an extension of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, highlights the believer's agency within the container and is very common in Paul (1 Cor 7:17; Gal 5:16; Eph 4:1; 5:8; Col 1:10; 1 Thes 2:12; 2 Thes 3:6, 11).¹¹⁷ Though the container exerts a kind of restrictive force, the believer nevertheless *walks* freely within the confines of that container. In light of Paul's argument, it is perhaps best to take the ἵνα clause to denote result rather than purpose and the aorist subjunctive περιπατήσωμεν as resultative rather than as a subjunctive of purpose. Paul's focus seems to be not so much on what was intended to be accomplished through baptism but on what

¹¹⁶ See Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 305n3. See also J. Behm, "καινός," in *TDNT* 3:447, 1966.

¹¹⁷ See Jewett, who also posits that the metaphor is "unparalleled in classical Greek." *Romans*, 399. Cranfield sees this metaphor in the LXX in Exod 16:4; Deut 8:6; Ps 101:6; Prov 6:12; Dan 9:10. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 305.

actually resulted from it. The transfer *out of* the container space of sin and *into* the container of Christ and the new life is not a mere possibility or potential reality but an actual accomplishment in the believer's life.

Conclusion

Romans 6:3–4 shows a shift in Paul's argument. Having established believers' current state of affairs in relation to sin (6:1–2), Paul now launches into a narrative depicting the believers' *identity* that will disclose how that state of affairs came about. Paul includes himself and his readers in that narrative by using first-person plural verbs. Paul transports his audience into the narrative, which depicts Paul and his audience in motion through space until they enter the new conceptual space of Christ and his death (6:3). The means of transportation into this new space is also presented—it is baptism. Additionally, we saw that Paul conceives of baptism as a death by submersion/burial, which believers experience (6:4), by which they also die to sin (6:2).

Paul anticipates that the death-by-baptism believers have experienced is not only a departure from the container-state of sin and an incorporation into Christ. Instead, drawing on a standard formula of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4), incorporation into Christ's death through baptismal burial results in believers walking *in* new life. The metaphor MORAL CONDUCT IS WALKING, a favorite of Paul's, continues to showcase the ethical dimension of his argument. It is important to note that the apostle's ethical logic continues to come to us in spatial terms that define believers' identity, rather than in "imperative" terms. Believers do not inhabit the container state of sin but now inhabit the container state defined by Christ and marked by new life. Even Paul's language about ethical conduct comes to us not as that which believers ought to do, but as conduct defined and limited by the boundaries of the container they already inhabit; it comes to us, if anything, in "indicative" terms. For this reason, I continue to propose that, at least for Romans 6:1–14, a better framework for understanding Paul's logic is that of

the believer's new spatially-defined *identity*, an identity that is deeply Christological and marked by Christ's own life, death, and resurrection.

CHAPTER 5

DEATH, LIFE, AND THE SELF: CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND THE SHAPING OF AN IDENTITY (ROMANS 6:5–10)

The death experienced by believers is crucial in Paul's ethical logic. In 6:1–2, Paul framed immoral conduct in terms of living “*in sin*,” which believers cannot do since they have “died *to sin*.” In 6:3–4, Paul metonymically identified believers' death with baptism, wherein they were buried and died with Christ and thus now look forward to walking in new life. However, his brief baptismal discussion has left some questions unanswered. As Thomas Tobin notes, Paul has not yet explained in what sense believers have “died” to sin.¹ It is not yet clear how Christ's resurrection affects the “new life” of believers or in what sense they *cannot* continue to live in sin. In this chapter, I will argue that the answer to Tobin's implied question involves two scenes and several crucial metaphors that further illustrate and structure the believer's dynamic identity in relationship with sin and with Christ.

After situating the narrative of 6:5–10 within Paul's argument in Romans 6, I will examine the first scene (vv. 5–7). I will begin by discussing Paul's enigmatic metaphorical language in 6:5. Rather than speaking of the believer's union with Christ, I will argue that there, Paul presents death to sin as an event that reshapes the believer's identity and anticipates future transformation. Then, I will show how Paul employs the Subject-Self metaphor in 6:6–7 in conjunction with the personification of sin to convey the believer's new identity as one characterized by release from sin's subjection. This

¹ Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 193. Notably, Paul will not fully elucidate all the implications of this death to sin until 6:15–23.

new “self” is the foundation of the believer’s ethical conduct and what makes walking in new life possible. Finally, I will consider the second scene (vv. 8–10), which focuses on Christ’s own relationship with sin and death. My focus there will be to explain the spatial logic whereby his death to sin grounds his release from the dominion of death. This will be important since, in verse 11, Paul will apply a similar logic to believers.

Overview of Paul’s Second and Third Arguments (Rom 6:5–10)

Most scholars see 6:5–7 and 6:8–10 as comprising two distinct units within the chapter. These two sections function as Paul’s second and third arguments for the thesis he laid out in verse 2 by supporting and further explaining the main idea of verses 3–4. In Romans 6:5–7, Paul is primarily concerned with explaining the kind of death believers experienced by virtue of their baptism into Christ and his death. In 6:8–10, his attention shifts to the implications of Christ’s death and resurrection for his own relationship with sin and death.² Günther Bornkamm has noted an insightful parallelism between the argument of 6:5–7 and the one in 6:8–10. Robert Tannehill further points out that verse 5 and verse 8 each move from a conditional protasis (εἰ + indicative), which asserts death with Christ as a reality, to an apodosis focused on the future resurrection with Christ. He also points out that verses 6 and 9 are linked to the preceding context by a causal participle (v. 6 γινώσκοντες; v. 9 εἰδότες) and that the clauses in verses 7 and 10 provide further support with the connecting γάρ.³ Though some of the implications of the supposed parallelism have been critiqued, a certain symmetry between the two units

² Annette Potgeiter and Jae Hyun Lee note a similar focus in these two supporting arguments. See Annette Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5–8*, HTS Religion & Society 7 (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2020), 96–97; Jae Hyun Lee, *Paul’s Gospel in Romans: A Discourse Analysis of Rom. 1:16–8:39*, LBS 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 318.

³ Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1967), 9.

seems undeniable.⁴ I agree with Florence Gillman that the parallelism exists primarily at the structural level and should not be pressed to include parallelism in the substance of the arguments themselves.⁵

Table 1. Parallels between Rom 6:5–7 and Rom 6:8–10⁶

vv. 5–7	vv. 8–10
<i>Protasis</i>	
5a εἰ γὰρ σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ,	8a εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ,
<i>Apodosis</i>	
5b ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα·	8b πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συνζήσομεν αὐτῷ·
<i>Explanation and Consequence</i>	
6 τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ.	9 εἰδότες ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει, θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει·
<i>Basis and Result</i>	
7 ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.	10 ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφάπαξ· ὁ δὲ ζῆ, ζῆ τῷ θεῷ.

⁴ Peter Siber, for example, sees the general statement in 6:7 as a poor correspondent to the important christological statement in 6:10. Peter Siber, *Mit Christus leben: eine Studie zur paulinischen Auferstehungshoffnung*, ATANT 61 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971), 235n122.

⁵ Florence Gillman states, “it must be concluded that the parallelism seen by Bornkamm and others between vv. 5–7 and 8–10 is not present to the extent to which it has been defended. Only the striking similarity of vv. 5 and 8 and the similar structures of the units of argumentation which they introduce ought to be stressed.” Florence M. Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a: United to a Death like Christ’s* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University, 1992), 20.

⁶ This table is adapted from Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 75. Florence Gillman includes virtually the same table in Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 18.

United to One's Death and Resurrection: A New Identity Shaped by Death (Rom 6:5)

Romans 6:5 introduces the next scene in Paul's narrative, consisting of 6:5–10.

The verse also serves to ground (γὰρ) Paul's previous assurance that the death and burial believers experienced in baptism leads to them walking in newness of life (v. 4).

However, the verse raises so many interpretive issues that Søren Agersnap considers Romans 6:5 “the most complicated verse in the whole of this passage [6:1–11].”⁷ In this section, I will argue that Paul presents believers' identity as a dynamic reality shaped by their Christ-like death, which terminates in Christ-like resurrection. Whereas the life-from-death motif embodied in baptism served to *identify* believers in verses 3–4, the focus in verse 5 is on how the experience of death *shapes* their identity, promising a future identity characterized by resurrection. The main hermeneutical crux of Romans 6:5 involves the meaning of the phrase *σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ*, which informs the meaning of the second half of the verse.⁸ Readers interested in a

⁷ Søren Agersnap, *Baptism and the New Life: A Study of Romans 6:1–14* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1999), 274. Over the last few decades, scholars have wrestled with at least four separate questions as they try to make sense of what Paul says in Romans 6:5. The first question has to do with the meaning of the adjective *σύμφυτοι*, which Paul uses to refer to himself and his readers: is the adjective derived from the verb *συμφυτεύω* (“to plant together”) or the verb *σύμφύω* (“to grow together”)?: The second question has to do with the meaning of *ὁμοίωμα* in the phrase *τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ*. Does the word refer to the copy or image of a separate reality, or does it refer to the form or appearance of the reality itself? The third question, related to the second, pertains to the syntactic function of that dative phrase within the verse. Is Paul here referring to the object with which believers are *σύμφυτοι*, or is he expressing the means by which believers are made *σύμφυτοι* with Christ? The last question has to do with the nature of the future verb *ἔσόμεθα*—should this be taken as a logical future (believers presently are *σύμφυτοι τῷ ὁμοιώματι* of his resurrection) or as a genuine future (believers will be *σύμφυτοι τῷ ὁμοιώματι* of his resurrection)?

⁸ The debate over the meaning of *σύμφυτοι*, an adjective not found anywhere else in the NT, has reached a general consensus in recent years. Most scholars today agree that the compound word is derived from *συμφύω* (not *συμφυτεύω*), which means *to grow together, join, unite, become assimilated*. For a thorough survey of the use of *σύμφυτος* in the Septuagint and in extra-biblical Greek, as well as a survey of proposed meanings in Romans 6:5, see Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 119–32; LSJ, “*σύμφύω*,” 1689. For recent scholarship in favor of *σύμφύω* and not *συμφυτεύω* as the derivative verb, see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 45–49; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 2: Röm 6–11, EKK 6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 13; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, vol. 38A, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 316; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, HTA (Witten: Brockhaus, 2016), 41–42; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 314–15. Doug Moo sees the issue so settled, that his discussion of *σύμφυτος* is relegated to a short footnote in *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 392n380.

thorough discussion of this interpretive conundrum might wish to consult “Appendix: Ὁμοίωμα: What Kind of ‘Likeness’? (Rom 6:5)” Here, I will simply follow Florence Gillman, who argues that ὁμοίωμα always carries the sense of “likeness” (*abbildlich*) and that τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ refers to the believer’s own death in baptism, which is like Christ’s.⁹

The Sense of συμφύω

How, then, does the phrase σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν fit in with this understanding of the ὁμοίωμα of Christ’s death? The idea of believers having been united or joined to their own death to sin is difficult to conceptualize in English. But the verb συμφύω can connote the idea of becoming assimilated or becoming organically linked with something.¹⁰ Perhaps the way Aristotle speaks of the “union” between an individual and the knowledge of the things he studies is helpful for understanding the “union” between believers and their death to sin. For Aristotle, the knowledge of the thing studied “has to become part of (συμφύω) the tissue of the mind.”¹¹ If we apply this sense of συμφύω to Romans 6:5, Paul might simply be referring to the profound union between a believer and the death he died to sin such that it becomes part of who he is himself—the event of dying to sin becomes part of the believer’s own nature and identity. We might then translate Romans 6:5 as “for if the likeness of his death [our death to sin] has become an

⁹ Like Gillman, I do not take Paul, in Romans 6:5, to be speaking about believers being joined or united *with Christ* (supplying αὐτῷ as the object of σύμφυτοι and taking the phrase τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ to be a dative of means as the NIV, ESV, and NASB do). I also do not think Paul is speaking of believers being joined or united with *Christ’s death* (or with the form of Christ’s death, which is Christ’s death itself). If ὁμοίωμα is indeed *abbildlich*, the union must be with something akin to but different from the death of Christ. The best alternative, and what has been a widely attested interpretation throughout church history, is that τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ refers to the Christian’s own death to sin (6:2), which is *like* Christ’s death.

¹⁰ LSJ, “συμφύω,” 1689.

¹¹ The full phrase reads καὶ οἱ πρῶτον μαθόντες συνείρουσι μὲν τοὺς λόγους, ἴσασι δ’ οὐπω· δεῖ γὰρ συμφυῆναι, τοῦτο δὲ χρόνου δείται. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 10.1147a22 (H. Rackham, LCL). Josef Gewiess himself notes the wide range of meanings of συμφύω. He stresses that the word was frequently used to denote that something in a person or thing was “innate” or “of its own nature.” Josef Gewiess, “Das Abbild des Todes Christi (Röm 6,5),” *Historische Jahrbücher* 77 (1958): 341.

organic part of who we are, the likeness of his resurrection will certainly become an organic part of who we will be.”

If “the likeness of Christ’s death” is the believer’s own death to sin, what then is Paul suggesting in Romans 6:5? First, this death that believers experienced must surely be the death that Paul presented spatially (DEATH IS DEPARTURE) and in terms of baptism in 6:1–4.¹² Once again, we must be careful not to overinterpret or underinterpret the significance of baptism as it pertains to the believer’s death.¹³ It seems that for Paul, baptism both *mediates* believers’ union with Christ (as the *occasion* and *instrument* of the union) and is the *means* of that union (it is the “location” of that union).¹⁴ The nuance, admittedly, is difficult to articulate. Josef Gewiess explains the *ὁμοίωμα* of Christ’s death by saying that it “does not exist in the rite or somehow in the baptismal event as such, but becomes a reality in our person at our baptism since we die the baptismal death.”¹⁵ In 6:5,

¹² Gillman explains that this death is a death “which images the death of Christ, a death which (in baptism) has become our own.” Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 225. She notes that Paul’s argument in 6:5–7 is primarily anthropological, unlike that of vv. 8–10 which is primarily christological. Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 228. Herman Ridderbos similarly proposes that 6:5 “harks back to baptism.” Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John R. De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 207. Schreiner notes that the function of v. 5 is to ground (*γάρ*) the main proposition of v. 4 and to provide an explanation for it. Schreiner, *Romans*, 314. However, he believes that those who, like Gillman, see an anthropological focus there (and a christological focus later), “unduly may begin to emphasize *our* death, burial, and resurrection in this text, whereas Paul’s purpose is to emblazon on readers’ minds the death, burial, and resurrection of *Christ* and our participation with it” Schreiner, *Romans*, 312.

¹³ On the one hand, the rite of baptism in and of itself did not accomplish the believer’s death, as Joseph Fitzmyer suggests. Fitzmyer takes the phrase τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ as a dative of instrument, “referring to baptismal washing as the means of growing together.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 435. For him, the *ὁμοίωμα* of Christ’s death is baptism itself. On the other hand, those who stress that Paul conceives of baptism there not as the *means* but as the *occasion* of the believers’ burial with Christ or as the *instrument* via which God unites believers to Christ must remember that Paul is comfortable saying in Colossians 2:12 that believers have been buried with Christ *in* baptism: συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε. Notably, Colossians 2:12 not only speaks of baptism as the event wherein believers were buried with Christ, but also as the event wherein they were raised with him. There, the means (*διὰ*) is not baptism, but faith (*διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ*).

¹⁴ It is unlikely, therefore, that Paul is thinking about believers being united *in* the likeness of Christ’s death. The “means” of this union is what Paul has delineated in 6:3–4 when he spoke of baptism. Instead, the union is *with* the likeness of Christ’s death. Following Hubert Frankemölle, Moo suggests that the plain teaching of v. 4 is that “baptism mediates our union with Christ—it does not ‘contain’ it.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 394. Cf. Hubert Frankemölle, *Das Taufverständnis des Paulus: Taufe, Tod, und Auferstehung nach Röm 6.*, SBS 47 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 65–70.

¹⁵ Gewiess, “Das Abbild des Todes Christi (Röm 6,5),” 345.

then, Paul refers to the believer's death to sin, which is *like* Christ's death to sin, though not in every respect.¹⁶

Baptism as an Identity-Shaping Event

I began this section by proposing that for Paul, the believers' experience of death shapes their identity. Paul conveys this in 6:5 by employing the verb *συνφύω*, which evokes the union and identification of one thing with another, along with the metaphor EVENTS ARE SUBSTANCES. Paul reifies death to sin in order to speak of and experience the event as a substance that his person can absorb. This way of conceptualizing events (as substances that we absorb and shape us) is a common way of speaking even today: "dealing with sibling conflict *contributes to* children's personal development"; "youth *gain experience* by working thankless jobs." In these examples, the events of dealing with conflict and working are conceived and experienced as substances that positively build and grow the person (GOOD IS UP).

This conception of the person as a sponge-like body that absorbs and is changed by experiences fits well with Dale Martin's proposal that in Paul's Hellenistic context, one's embodied existence was inseparable from one's participation in the world.¹⁷ Following Martin and Ernst Käsemann, Susan Eastman thus speaks of a "porous body" that acts primarily as "a mode of relationship with external realities that also operate internal to the self."¹⁸ For Paul, we are more than what we do and experience, but

¹⁶ Ridderbos compares the language in Romans 8:3 to the language in 6:5 and notes that "Christ came (and died) indeed 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3), yet without himself being sinful. His dying to sin is therefore not the same as the church's having died to sin." Ridderbos, *Paul*, 207.

¹⁷ Dale Martin posits that "the shape of the body and its inner constitution are thus subject to the molding of civilization; the idea of a self left to grow all by itself appears to have been unthinkable." Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 27.

¹⁸ Susan G. Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 104, cf. 92; Ernst Käsemann, "On Paul's Anthropology," in *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: Singler, 1996), 1–31.

not less than that.¹⁹ In Romans 6:5, then, the focus is not on the believer’s union with Christ (and the resulting implications of that union) but on the believer’s identity being modified and shaped by the baptismal experience.²⁰ With the perfect verb *γεγόναμεν*, Paul implies a change in the believer’s identity because of the death he has experienced.

The identity-shaping nature of the life-from-death event becomes more significant in the second half of the verse, which reads, *ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα*. What Paul has said in 6:5a only serves to stress the certainty of the reality of 6:5b. In other words, believers’ death to sin having become an organic part of who they are means that their resurrection (i.e., the *ὁμοίωμα* of Christ’s resurrection) will also become an organic part of who they are.²¹ Additionally, it is also important to remember that the apodosis in the conditional phrase is the main point in this section of Paul’s argument and is directly connected with what Paul said at the end of 6:4. Believers have been buried with Christ in baptism into death so that they might walk in newness of life (6:4) *because* (*γάρ*) they have been “united with the likeness of his death” and will therefore also be “united with the likeness of his resurrection” (6:5). This point is worth emphasizing because it reminds us that Paul’s main proposition in 6:5 is ethical in nature and as such has present implications for the life of the believer since it grounds the moral metaphor of the believer’s “walk” in the previous verse.

A Death that Anticipates Resurrection

The main interpretive issue with 6:5b has to do with the nature of the future verb *ἐσόμεθα*, which stands in contrast to the perfect *γεγόναμεν* in 6:5a. Several scholars

¹⁹ As we saw with Aristotle, when a person is “united” (*συμφύω*) with knowledge, the sense is that the knowledge becomes part of who the person now is; the event of study modifies the person.

²⁰ Of course, Paul has already made clear that the baptismal death experienced by believers is an event that transfers them *into* Christ.

²¹ Or, to render the verse more literally, the believer’s “union with the likeness of Christ’s death” will mean “union with the likeness of Christ’s resurrection.” Most scholars agree that *σύμφυτοι τῷ ὁμοιώματι* from the protasis needs to be supplied in the elliptical apodosis.

see it as a logical future.²² In contrast, others take it as a genuine future, noting that it is hard to see why Paul would not use an aorist or a perfect verb if he wanted to convey a reality already true for believers.²³ Moo strikes a good balance proposing that Paul here is referring to the future physical resurrection of believers “with Christ” (cf. 2 Cor 4:14), but this does not mean that all allusions to the present are eliminated. He continues,

even as union with the “form” of Christ’s death at baptism-conversion works forward to the moral life, so the union with the “form” of Christ’s resurrection at death or the parousia works backward. It is in this sense that the believer can be said to have been “raised with Christ” and to be living in the power of that resurrected life. Perhaps, then, as our union with Christ’s death cannot be fixed to any one moment, so we should view our union with Christ’s resurrection as similarly atemporal.²⁴

We see, then, that Romans 6:5 primarily functions to ground a critical ethical point raised by Paul at the end of 6:4. Paul connects the believer’s identity and Paul’s expectation of the person’s ethical conduct. He anticipates that believers will walk in new life (6:4) because (γὰρ) of the events that have become an organic part of who they are. Rather than speaking of an “indicative” that leads to an implied “imperative,” it seems more accurate to speak of an *identity* reshaped by death which both anticipates a future reshaping (believers *will be* united to the likeness of their resurrection) and enables a new

²² Fitzmyer suggests that “because the context describes the present experience of the Christian” the future ἐσόμεθα “has to be understood as gnomic, expressing a logical sequel to the first part of the verse, for baptism identifies a person not only with Christ’s act of dying, but also with his rising.” Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 435. Schreiner acknowledges the possibility of it being a genuine future, but he himself takes it as a logical future arguing that “those who are baptized (i.e., converted) experience the impact of Christ’s death and resurrection in their present existence.” His reading seems to be influenced by the connection with 6:4b, “believers are enabled to walk in newness of life because the power of Christ’s resurrection has become theirs by virtue of their union with Christ.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 314.

²³ C. E. B. Cranfield understands the verb to refer to the eschatological fulfillment in the believer. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC 42A (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 308. Paul Achtemeier says that “Paul is clear that we do not yet share in Christ’s resurrection the way we share in his death.” Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 105. James Dunn too argues that a logical future would be misleading. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:318. So also Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers’ Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology*, CBET 29 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 159–60. Robert Jewett suggests that the future tense should be understood “with its fully eschatological dimension: while believers have already participated in the death of Christ, their joining in his resurrected state will occur at the end of time.” Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 402.

²⁴ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 395–96. See also Siber, *Mit Christus leben*, 242–43.

kind of conduct—walking “in new life.” Who the believer *is* will continue to be the focus of Paul’s argument throughout the chapter. In the next section, I will continue to argue that what many view as Paul’s “indicative” in Romans 6 is better understood as Paul’s metaphorical narrative that recounts and shapes the believer’s identity.

**The Subject-Self Metaphor:
The Death of Self and Christian Identity (Rom 6:6a–6b)**

So far in the chapter, Paul has used the language of death in every verse except for verse 1. As we have seen, his ethical argument is rooted in a kind of death the believer has experienced. In verse 2, Paul spoke about the believer’s death *to* sin (a death that does not entail the physical death of the individual). He then introduced the believer’s baptism as that movement *into* death vv. 3, 4), and subsequently, the believer is said to have been united with the likeness of Christ’s death (v. 5). Paul elaborates on the significance of this death by saying that the believer’s “old person” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) has been crucified with Christ (6:6), that the believer has died (6:7) and has died with Christ (6:8). My goal in this section is to show how Paul employs the Subject-Self metaphor and the Multiple Selves metaphor in conjunction with DEATH IS DEPARTURE in order make two points. First, the Self he refers to as the “old self” has been crucified such that it no longer affects the Subject. Second, the “body of sin” Self has been rendered ineffective in its control and influence over the Subject.

I will begin with a brief survey of Pauline texts outside of Romans 6 that illuminate the apostle’s anthropology and will show that the believer’s death is an identity-redefining experience for Paul throughout his writings. Returning to Romans 6, I will then note the metaphorical portrayal of the believer’s identity as a complex dynamic between the believer, his death, and his “self.” To make sense of Paul’s language about the believer and the “self,” I will apply insights from cognitive linguistics and will argue that by conceiving of the believer via the Subject-Self and Multiple Selves metaphors in a

spatial relationship with sin (SIN IS A CONTAINER), Paul frames the believer's ethics, not as a matter of *doing*, but as a matter of *being*.

“Old Person” and “New Person” in Paul

Most scholars understand Paul's reference to “our old person” not as the sinful part of the individual or the sinful nature of the self, but as “the whole self ruled by sin.”²⁵ The *παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος* is a redemptive-historical designation of who the believer was as a result of being in Adam, before his union with Christ.²⁶ This “old person” stands in contrast to the “one new person” (*ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον*) who is Christ (Eph 2:15), who is also the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45).²⁷ In response to those who take the designation “old man” to refer to a strictly corporate idea, Schreiner suggests that although the designation “refers to the corporate structure to which believers belonged,” it would be a mistake “to eliminate the individual altogether. The redemptive-historical and corporate dimensions affect individual existence.”²⁸

Paul's epistles display a fascinating metaphorical conceptual schema through which the apostle understands himself and other believers as persons. Before looking further at Romans 6, I will survey other texts that shed light on Paul's conceptual

²⁵ Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 162. In his discussion of Romans 6:6, Dunn emphasizes that “the old person” should not be taken “as a dispensable part of the Christian: ‘our old man’ (v 6) = the ‘we’ of vv. 2–5, 7.” *Romans 1–8*, 38A:318–19. Similarly, Cranfield posits that “ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος denotes the whole of our fallen human nature, the whole self in its fallenness. It is the whole man, not merely a part of him, that comes under God's condemnation, and that died in God's sight in Christ's death.” Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 308–9. John Stott explains that “what was crucified with Christ was not a part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted.” John R. W. Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5–8* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966), 45.

²⁶ Dunn points out that “παλαιός is used consistently by Paul to denote the condition of life prior to conversion (1 Cor 5:7–8; Col 3:9; also Eph 4:22), explicitly life under the age prior to Christ, the old covenant (2 Cor 3:14; so also Rom 7:6).” Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:318.

²⁷ See Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 398.

²⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, 316–17. So too Moo, “while the phrase always has undoubted corporate associations—in the sense that ‘the old man’ is what he is by virtue of belonging to Adam—‘old man’ in this verse refers to the individual.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 398n416.

anthropological framework. As in Romans 6:6, in Galatians 2:19–20, Paul speaks about a death he has experienced. In verse 19, he says, “I have been crucified with Christ,”²⁹ and yet claims to still “live in the flesh by faith.” His language here is obviously metaphorical—there is a sense in which Paul has died through crucifixion, and there is a sense in which he is alive. Unlike in Romans 6:6, Paul does not use the language of the “old person” but presents the subject of the cocrucifixion with Christ as ἐγώ.³⁰ Later in Galatians, Paul once again speaks about believers having been crucified. In 6:14, this crucifixion is again tied to the crucifixion of Christ, though this time, he presents it as a crucifixion *to the world* (ἐσταύρωται καὶ γὰρ κόσμῳ). The qualification of this crucifixion is unique in that it includes the death of the whole self, but only as it pertains to the sphere of the κόσμος.

Galatians 5:24 displays a fourth facet of Paul’s metaphorical construal of the self and Christian experience. There, Paul claims that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Once again, we see the language of crucifixion with Christ presented as an important past, completed event (ἐσταύρωσαν) in the life and experience of the believer.³¹ However, two crucial differences emerge. First, the object of the crucifixion in Galatians 5:24 is neither Paul himself (as in Gal 2:19–20) nor “the old person” (as in Rom 6:6) but the flesh. Second, the crucifixion does not appear in a passive construction as in Romans 6:6 or Galatians 2:19–20, but rather in the active voice. Interestingly, here, the believer is the *agent* of crucifixion—he is the one

²⁹ The phrase Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι is part of v. 19 in the Greek text (NA28), though it is translated as part of v. 20 in English translations.

³⁰ Though there is a difference in subject between Romans 6:6 and Galatians 2:19–20, the linguistic parallel of the “cocrucifixion with Christ” suggests that Paul is referring to the same reality.

³¹ David DeSilva notes that “the past tense of ‘crucified’ (5:24) is significant here.” David A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 470. Though in 5:16–23, Paul was calling for a decisive break with the values, thinking, behaviors, and domination systems of this age, Paul nevertheless affirms that it is to those things which the believer has been crucified.

killing (the flesh), not the one dying.³² If Galatians 5:24 is read in light of 2:19–20 (as most scholars suggest it should be), then we should understand the believer (2:19–20) and the flesh (5:24) synonymously. In other words, *σάρξ* in 5:24 refers to a dimension of the believer himself rather than to an external power.³³

Yet another set of texts that inform our understanding of Paul’s conception of the self and the death believers experience is found in Colossians 2:11; 3:9 and Ephesians 4:22. In Colossians 2:11, the “circumcision of Christ” (i.e., regeneration) resulted in the “putting off” (*ἀπέκδυσις*) of the body of the flesh (*τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός*) in believers.³⁴ The surrounding context and its parallel with Romans 6 suggest that this “putting off” is related to the kind of death believers died with Christ.³⁵ The “body of sin” in Colossians 2:11 should probably be understood much like “flesh” in Galatians 5:24, referring to the self as characterized by sin. Later in Colossians, Paul once again employs the language of the “old person” (*τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον*) to speak about that which believers have “put off” (*ἀπεκδύομαι*) (Col 3:9). This “old person” is contrasted with the “new person” (*τὸν νέον [ἄνθρωπον]*) which believers have put on (*ἐνδύω*) and which is being renewed.³⁶ The

³² Schreiner notices this important change in voice and suggests that “given the context of all of Galatians Paul is scarcely suggesting that the Galatians crucified the flesh autonomously. Such a notion flies in the face of the whole of the letter. Those who are in Adam and in the flesh do not have the resources to crucify it. . . . Perhaps the active form of the verb ‘crucified’ is used to indicate that believers have chosen to be aligned with Christ at conversion, that they said no to their life in Adam and in the flesh when they put their faith in Christ.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 351. F. F. Bruce misses this point by ascribing agency to the cross. He states, “When Paul said earlier *Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι* (2:19), he meant that the cross of Christ severed his relation to the law; here [in Gal 5:24] he says that the cross of Christ severs believers’ relation to the flesh.” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 256.

³³ BDAG seems to take the reference to *σάρξ* here as referring to the believer by suggesting that it refers to the parts of the body “which is dominated by sin to such a degree that wherever flesh is, all forms of sin are likewise present.” BDAG, “*σάρξ*,” 2.c.α, 915. In this reading, what has been crucified is internal to who the believer is rather than external.

³⁴ Colossians 2:11 reads *ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, “in whom you also were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.”

³⁵ Paul begins Colossians 4:12 with *συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ*, a phrase almost identical with what we read in Romans 6:4a.

³⁶ The middle participle *ἀπεκδυσάμενοι* in 3:9 suggests that the subject is the community of believers. The “putting off” is something the believers themselves have done.

context and the aorist tense suggest a pair of completed actions in the past. Notably, in Colossians 2:11 and 3:9, Paul does not speak about the “old man” in terms of crucifixion but in terms of clothing. The “old person” (i.e., “body of flesh”) is not someone who has been crucified but someone who has been “removed” and replaced by a “new person.”

We see a similar metaphorical conception of the self in Ephesians 4:22, where “the old person” is again “put off.” The verb ἀποτίθημι there is synonymous with ἀπεκδύομαι in Colossians 2:11 and 3:9.³⁷ Two additional features of Ephesians 4:22 are worth noting. First, the construction is the only one we have seen so far that comes in the form of an imperative rather than a statement of fact.³⁸ Second, the “old person” is explicitly associated with a “former manner of life” (τὴν προτέραν ἀναστροφὴν). The clear connection Paul makes here between the identity of believers and their corresponding conduct is foundational for understanding Paul’s ethical thought and is something we will see throughout Romans 6. These six texts, in conjunction with Romans 6:6, present us with a complex conceptual understanding of who believers are as a result of the death they have experienced themselves:

1. the believer has been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:19–20)
2. the believer has been crucified to the world (Gal 6:14)
3. the flesh has been crucified by the believer (Gal 5:24)
4. the body of flesh has been removed (Col 2:11)
5. the believer’s “old person” has been removed by the believer (Col 3:9)
6. the “old person” should be removed by the believer (Eph 4:22)

³⁷ The dative ἀπεκδύσει in Colossians 2:11 is the nominal form of the verb ἀπεκδύομαι.

³⁸ The interpretation of the infinitive as imperative is argued by Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Zondervan, 1990), 283–84; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 431; Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 286. The notion that a command is in view here is rejected by John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (London: Tyndale, 1957), 214–18; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 599.

We will now look more carefully at what Paul says in Romans 6:6–8 in light of the observations we have made elsewhere in his epistles.

The Death of the “Old Self” in Romans 6

Paul begins in 6:6a by stating that his “old person” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) was crucified with Christ.³⁹ The phrase involves the intertwining of two threads we have seen Paul weave throughout the chapter so far: the thread of death and the thread of who the Christian is. The two cannot be separated since one informs the other. In verses 6–7, Paul presents a three-fold portrait of believers’ identity that culminates in a new vivid depiction of their new relationship with sin. In other words, Paul’s ethical narrative focused on the life and identity of the believer continues.

Paul’s reformulation of the death of the believer in terms of the “old person” in verse 6 is likely due to the fact that he is no longer interested in establishing *that* the believer died (6:1–2) or in describing *how* the believer died (6:3–5). Instead, his focus now is to explain *in what sense* he died. Paul’s language elsewhere suggests that what he means by his “old person” in Romans 6:6 is synonymous, and at times interchangeable, with the first-person singular pronoun (e.g., Gal 2:19–20).⁴⁰ Paul’s “old person” is, in fact, Paul himself—the “self” of the subject, we might say. Moo is correct in arguing that Paul’s language of the “old person” and the “new person” should not be explained using the language of nature (i.e., the “old nature” and the “new nature”).⁴¹ As suggested by most scholars, partitive language is not an accurate way to describe Paul’s thinking here

³⁹ Because Paul speaks in the first-person plural and not in the first person singular, what he says here should be understood to be true of all believers.

⁴⁰ Even within the context of Romans 6, the “old person” being crucified with Christ in v. 6 certainly is intended to be understood as part of the death narrative Paul began in v. 2 wherein believers (not a part of themselves) died.

⁴¹ Moo points out that “many popular discussions of Paul’s doctrine of the Christian life argue, or assume, that Paul distinguishes with these phrases between two parts or ‘natures’ of a person. With this interpretation as the premise, it is then debated whether the ‘old nature’ is replaced with the ‘new nature’ at conversion, or whether the ‘new nature’ is added to the ‘old nature.’ But the assumption that ‘old man’ and ‘new man’ refer to parts, or natures, of a person is incorrect.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 397–98.

since Paul is not thinking about *part* of himself but instead of his *whole* self.⁴² In other words, the “old person” refers not to something believers *have* but to who they *are/were*.

Moreover, Paul’s language about his own death is intentionally nuanced. He does not say that *he* was crucified but that his “old person” was crucified—he intends to convey his metaphorical death through a particular lens. Therefore, a helpful and appropriate translation of ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος is “our old self.” The ontological nature of Paul’s language here is important since Paul’s understanding of the believer’s identity is what will continue to ground his ethical admonitions.⁴³

The particular lens through which Paul views the self that was crucified is somewhat clarified for us in 6:6b. He states that the “old self” was crucified *so that* (ἵνα) the “body of sin” (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) might be rendered powerless (καταργέω). The language of the “old self” shifts to that of the “body of sin,” and the language of crucifixion shifts to that of making ineffective.⁴⁴ Interpreters have struggled to explain what Paul means by the “body of sin.” Still, most agree that here, as is often the case for Paul, σῶμα is an aspectival way to refer to the whole embodied individual “with an

⁴² This partitive language is employed by William Ames when he refers to the “old person” as “the corrupted part which remains in the sanctified.” *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John D. Eusden (Pittsburg: Pilgrim, 1968), 171.

⁴³ Interestingly, Moo twice rejects the idea that Paul’s language here is ontological. Speaking of the crucifixion of the “old self” described in 6:6, he says, “This is no more a physical, or ontological, death than is our burial with Christ (v. 4) or our ‘dying to sin’ (v. 2).” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 397. Later, he proposes that Paul’s language is primarily about a change in relationship such that “‘old man’ and ‘new man’ are not, then, ontological but relational or positional in orientation.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 398. Schreiner rightly points out that “it is a false dichotomy to separate redemptive history from ontology” *Romans*, 317.

⁴⁴ Dunn notes that in Paul, καταργέω “is one of the most difficult words to pin down as to its precise meaning.” *Romans 1–8*, 38A:319. Some, like Frankemölle, suggest that the verb here carries the full force of bringing to an end (i.e., “destroy” or “annihilate”) and should not be watered down to convey merely rendering inactive, idle, or ineffective. Frankemölle, *Das Taufverständnis des Paulus*, 76. So too Schreiner *Romans*, 317. However, Dunn’s observation that “the verb has its strongest force when finality of eschatological judgment is in view (1 Cor 15:24, 26; 2 Thess 2:8)” suggest that the way it is used here to describe a decisive event in the “already” side of the “already not-yet” spectrum, carries less force. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:317. Likewise, Moo states that “Paul’s use of this verb in similar salvation-historical contexts (see Rom. 3:31; 4:14; 7:2, 6; Gal. 3:17; 5:4; Eph. 2:15) suggests rather the connotation of a power whose influence is taken away.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 399.

emphasis on that person’s interaction with the world.”⁴⁵ While it is legitimate to read *καταργέω* with more definitive force, the shift and progression in language we see in 6:6b supports the proposal that the verb carries less force than *συνεσταυρώθη* does in 6:6a. The logical and conceptual progression in verse 6 involves three different propositions:

1. Our “old self” was crucified (*ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη*)
2. [Our] “body of sin” was rendered powerless (*καταργηθῆ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας*)
3. We are no longer enslaved to sin (*τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ*)

In these propositions, we see Paul referring to the believer in three different ways: as the “old self,” as the “body of sin,” and wholistically with the first-person pronoun. These three instances of the “self” also seem to progress temporally and spatially from most distant to most near—Paul begins with our *old* self crucified in the past and concludes with the present-day “we.” Likewise, we see a three-fold progression in the events affecting the “self,” beginning negatively with definitive destruction (crucifixion) and ending positively with freedom from sin.

Paul’s language of the “old self,” the “new self,” the “body of sin,” as well as the agency of the self even after death all suggests that Paul, like modern speakers, had a metaphorical conception of his inner life. In Paul’s mind, the Christ event radically redefined the very identity of the believer. Who Paul is was redefined through the death he experienced by virtue of being united with Christ and his death. What is important to note here is that Paul conceives of the identity-redefining experience of believers as a series of events (i.e., a narrative) affecting not one but multiple metaphorical “selves.” Because these metaphors are crucial for understanding Paul’s conception of the believer’s identity (and, as we will see, the believer’s conduct), interpreters must understand the various ways Paul employs them. As with other metaphors, recent work on cognitive

⁴⁵ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 400. See also Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:319–20.

linguistics can help us make sense of Paul's figurative language, especially when it appears inconsistent, if not self-contradictory. It is to these matters we now turn.

Subject and Self in the Cognitive Unconscious⁴⁶

One of the many fascinating observations pertaining to the unconscious cognitive structures we use to understand and convey our experiences is the one that has to do with our inner lives—with who we are and with ourselves. Consider, for example, the linguistic similarity and the semantic difference in the following two phrases:

(1) *If I were you, I would hate me*

(2) *If I were you, I would hate myself⁴⁷*

While one may quickly perceive the difference in meaning between the two phrases, explaining those differences or what is precisely conveyed in each phrase is more complicated. If Person A utters (1) to Person B, they are saying that if they were Person B, they would hate Person A. If instead, Person A uttered (2) to Person B, the sense there would be that they would hate Person B. But precisely who the subject and object are in each case is challenging to discern. For example, if Person A utters (1) to Person B, does that convey that Person A would hate themselves or that Person B would hate Person A? We could ask the same question of (2).

To understand what these sentences mean, George Lakoff has proposed a model that includes the following features:⁴⁸

⁴⁶ I am borrowing this subheading from one of the sections in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 268.

⁴⁷ George Lakoff explores the conceptual mappings and the metaphor that underlies them in George Lakoff, "Sorry, I'm Not Myself Today: The Metaphor System for Conceptualizing the Self," in *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar*, ed. Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 91–96.

⁴⁸ George Lakoff, "Multiple Selves: The Metaphorical Models of the Self Inherent in Our Conceptual System," in *A Conference of the Mellon Colloquium on the Self at the Emory Cognition Project at Emory University* (Atlanta, May 1992). In this paper, and in most other places where George Lakoff discusses this topic, he notes that his work on the Subject-Self metaphor was informed by Andrew

1. Person = Subject + Self
 2. The Subject is normally inside the Self
 3. The Subject can separate from the Self and can perceive the Self from the outside
 4. Person A's subject can combine with Person B's Self to form a new Person C
 5. In Person C, Person A's Subject keeps A's values but adopts B's interests and body
- A complete presentation of what happens conceptually when either of these phrases is uttered involves understanding the dynamics between different mental spaces created by the clause "If I were you" and is beyond this project's scope.⁴⁹ What is essential for our purposes here is to note that cognitive linguistic studies have helped us see that we conceive of ourselves and others as an ensemble containing one person, the Subject, and at least one other entity, a Self.

Lakoff's proposal for the metaphor system that undergirds our self-understanding involves the important distinction between what he calls the Subject and the Self. The Subject is the person-like center of experienced consciousness, "the locus of reason," and exists independently of the Self and outside the body.⁵⁰ The Self "consists of everything else about us—our bodies, our social roles, our histories, and so on."⁵¹ As we will see, the Self can be conceived of as a person, an object, or a location.⁵² Therefore, the various ways we speak of and project ourselves into hypothetical situations usually involve a particular relationship between the Subject and the Self. Lakoff thus presents the following schema for the basic Subject-Self metaphor:

Lakoff and Myles Becker in a paper they wrote in 1991 for one of his courses on metaphor at the University of California, Berkeley. The paper was entitled "Me, Myself, and I."

⁴⁹ Readers who are interested can read Lakoff's own explanation of what happens conceptually in Lakoff, "Sorry, I'm Not Myself Today: The Metaphor System for Conceptualizing the Self," 91–99.

⁵⁰ Lakoff and Johnson explain, "The Subject is the locus of consciousness, subjective experience, reason, will, and our 'essence,' everything that makes us who we uniquely are." Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 268.

⁵¹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 268.

⁵² Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 268.

Table 2. Basic Subject-Self metaphor schema

Source Frame <i>People and Entities</i>		Target Frame <i>The Whole Person</i>
A Person	→	The Subject
A Person, Thing, or Location	→	A Self
A Relationship	→	The Subject-Self Relationship

The metaphors we employ to communicate about our inner lives are built off this basic schema. In the phrase “I dragged myself out of bed,” we see a distinction between the Subject and the Self: the Subject is a conscious, active agent, while the Self is conceived of as an object that is dragged. In other words, the Self is an object manipulated by the Subject. The Subject being in control of the Self evokes self-control via the metaphor SELF-CONTROL IS OBJECT POSSESSION, as in “I held myself back from hitting him.”

There are times when the Subject and the Self are at odds and even in conflict. We might say, for example, “she’s at war with herself,” “stop torturing yourself,” or “you’re your own worst enemy.” In these cases, the Self is not conceived of as an object but as a person, like the Subject. The relationship conveyed between the two in the previous three examples is that of adversaries. At other times, however, the Subject is presented as having authority over the Self. We might say things like, “I have to get myself to bed early tonight,” “I will get myself to the airport with plenty of time,” or “I am disappointed in myself.”⁵³ These are just some of the numerous ways our language about ourselves evidences a particular self-understanding.

Finally, the Subject-Self metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Mark Johnson is not peculiar to either English or the Western mind. Yukio Hirose, a professor of linguistics at the University of Tokyo, has shown that though there are radical differences

⁵³ Lakoff and Johnson refer to these as examples of “Subject as Master, Self as Servant” in *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 279.

between American and Japanese cultures, the American conception of the inner life is remarkably like the Japanese one.⁵⁴ This observation suggests that the particular cognitive structure of the Subject-Self metaphor, which undergirds our self-understanding, is grounded in the universal embodied experience we share with others around the globe. It is thus likely that the embodied experience of individuals in previous cultures and civilizations (individuals such as Paul) undergirded their self-understanding as well. I will now seek to apply these insights from CL to illuminate what Paul is saying about who believers are and what that implies for their ethical conduct.

The Influence of the Selves (vv. 6:6a–6b)

The distinction at the cognitive level between the Subject and the Self that Lakoff and Johnson propose is very pertinent to Romans 6:6–8. We saw that Paul begins this section by referring to the believer (and himself) in three distinct ways: as the “old self,” as the “body of sin,” and with the first-person pronoun. The fact that Paul speaks of his “old self” (ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος) and elsewhere of his “new self” (ὁ καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) demonstrates not only a conceptual distinction between Paul as Subject and Paul’s Self but also shows that Paul’s self-understanding involves multiple “Selves.” Additionally, Pauline scholars have observed that Paul’s reference to himself as the “body of sin” in Romans 6:6b also indicates a unique conceptual schema of the self, which accords very well with Lakoff and Johnson’s model. My goal in this subsection will be to show that (1) Paul conceives of the person as consisting of one Subject but multiple Selves, and that (2) “the body of sin” is a Self that is conceived as a container with the potential to influence and control its contents (the Subject).

⁵⁴ See for example Yukio Hirose, “Public and Private Self as Two Aspects of the Speaker: A Contrastive Study of Japanese and English,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 32, no. 11 (October 1, 2000): 1623–56; Yukio Hirose, “The Conceptual Basis for Reflexive Constructions in Japanese,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 68 (July 1, 2014): 99–116. Lakoff and Johnson provide several examples in Japanese that evidence the same kinds of metaphors that structure the Japanese inner life, Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 284–87.

The Multiple Selves metaphor (v. 6a). Our experience of having contradictory values or being unable to decide between two options results in interesting linguistic expressions. Since the Self consists of our bodies, social roles, histories, and values, we metaphorically conceptualize these conflicting situations as a splitting of ourselves into two or more Selves. This conceptualization leads to a variation of the Subject-Self Metaphor known as the Multiple Selves metaphor:

The Multiple Selves metaphor conceptualizes multiple values as multiple Selves, with each Self instantiating the social role associated with that value. Indecisiveness over values is metaphorized as the Subject's indecisiveness about which Self to associate with Some examples of values as social roles of Selves are: I keep *going back and forth* between my scientific self and my religious self. I keep *returning to* my spiritual self. I keep *going back and forth* between the scientist and the priest in me.⁵⁵

Table 3. The Multiple Selves metaphor⁵⁶

Source Frame <i>People and Entities</i>		Target Frame <i>The Whole Person</i>
A Person	→	The Subject
Other People	→	Selves
Their Social/Moral Roles	→	Values/Morals Attached to Roles
Being In The Same Place As	→	Having the Same Values As
Being in Different Places	→	Having Different Values

In other words, an individual's embrace or rejection of values and beliefs is often conceptualized metaphorically as the Subject's association or dissociation with a

⁵⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 280.

⁵⁶ I adapted this table from Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 280.

particular Self. The Multiple Selves Metaphor builds on the basic Subject-Self Metaphor schema and conceptualizes multiple values as multiple Selves.⁵⁷

This schema is precisely what Paul seems to be conveying beginning in Romans 6:6a. As we noted, when Paul speaks of the crucifixion of his “old self” (6:6a), he is not speaking about *part* of who he is but about himself viewed through a redemptive-historical lens. Paul’s center of consciousness and reason (the Subject) conveys a radical inability to be associated with his “old self” because that Self has been crucified by virtue of Paul’s union with the death of Christ. In this way, Paul employs the metaphor THE “OLD SELF” IS A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED, with whom the Subject can no longer associate.⁵⁸ Moreover, because metaphors allow us to experience one thing in terms of another, they often convey attitudes, emotions, and evaluations, not merely propositional truth. By presenting the “old self” as a person who was crucified, Paul brings the entire frame of Crucifixion to bear upon his audience. The “old self” is a criminal of the highest order who has been judged and sentenced to death. Thus, Paul’s metaphor informs and affects his audience’s attitudes, opinions, and perspectives regarding the “old self” without explicitly calling for any response.

⁵⁷ Although there are some parallels between the conceptual schema of Subject and Self and Paul Ricœur’s philosophical idea of the *idem* identity and the *ipse* identity, the two should frameworks are very different. One is grounded on cognitive science and our conceptual structures, and the other is a philosophical and psychological framework. Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 116. For a fascinating discussion of the “Self” in Romans with Ricœur’s categories of *idem* identity and *ipse* identity through a narrative lens, see Valérie Nicolet-Anderson, *Constructing the Self: Thinking with Paul and Michel Foucault*, WUNT 324 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 126–48.

⁵⁸ Ephesians 4:22 thus raises two issues that illuminate Paul’s trajectory in the rest of Romans 6:6 and 6:7. First, in Paul’s thought, believers have a complex and paradoxical relationship with their “old self.” On the one hand, in Romans 6:6 the “old self” is depicted as definitively dead (crucified), such that the association of the Subject with the Self is unimaginable and conceptually inconceivable. On the other hand, Ephesians 4:22 presents the “old self” as a garment the believer must “put off” (*ἀποτιθημι*) and presumably can “put on” (*ἐνδύω*). There, the possible association between the believer and the “old self” is assumed such that the believer must take intentional steps to dissociate himself from that Self. Second, Paul’s use of *ἀναστροφή* in Ephesians 4:22 anticipates the issue of the principles that appear to govern the conduct of the Self. His language about one’s “manner of life” raises an important question also pertinent to Romans 6: what are the “deceitful passions” (*ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ἀπάτης*) that influence the “old self” and what is their relationship with believers?

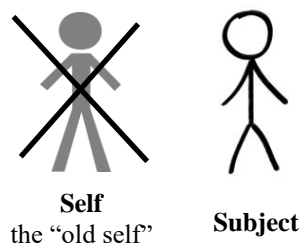


Figure 3: Metaphorical depiction of Subject and Self in Romans 6:6a

The exegetical payoff of the Subject-Self metaphor and the Multiple Selves metaphor is significant for understanding Paul’s ethical thought. Whereas the “indicative-imperative” struggles to explain the connection between the things that are true for believers (“indicative”) and what they are called to do (“imperative”), Paul’s understanding of the “self” in Romans 6:6 incorporates them both. By employing the two metaphors, Paul conveys the believer’s identity as a dynamic where the Subject seeks to align himself with a particular “Self” and separate himself from other “Selves” with whom he is incompatible. Whereas the categories “indicative” and “imperative” do not easily blend, the category of “identity” incorporates elements of beliefs, values, expectations, and even duties.

THE BODY IS A CONTAINER-SELF (v. 6b). Conceptually, the intention behind the metaphor in 6:6a is to convey that because of a crucifixion experienced by the “old self” (along with its values and morals), believers are no longer able to participate with that Self (nor should they wish to). However, the crucifixion of the “old self” is only the metaphorical means to a logical end. The death of the “old self” occurred in order that the *σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας* might be rendered powerless, so that “we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6b). This means that the Multiple Selves metaphor Paul employs in 6:6a is only the first step in the conceptual path that ultimately leads to verse 7. The next stop in that path is Paul’s reference to the powerlessness of the “body of sin” (6:6b).

Rudolf Bultmann makes several important observations about the way Paul uses *σῶμα* in Romans 6:6 and elsewhere. First, he notes that “the *soma* is not a something that outwardly clings to a man’s real self . . . but belongs to its very essence, so that we can say man does not *have* a *soma*; he *is soma*.”⁵⁹ In other words, *σῶμα* is not a part of who the individual is but a way of referring to the individual. Based on this, Bultmann makes a second important observation: by portraying the individual using *σῶμα*, Paul conveys man “as being able in a certain sense to distinguish himself from himself. Or, more exactly, he is so called as that self from whom he, as subject, distinguishes himself” such that *σῶμα* is “the self with who he can deal as the object of his own conduct.”⁶⁰

The language Bultmann uses to explain the dynamic between Paul and his “body” is identical to that of the Subject-Self metaphor Lakoff and Johnson propose—the person is conceptualized in terms of a subject and at least one “self.”⁶¹ Furthermore, according to Lakoff and Johnson, our language reveals that we sometimes conceive of the Self simply as a body.⁶² In the utterance “I have made up my mind, you are not going to budge me,” the phrase “you are not going to budge me” employs the metaphor THE SELF IS A BODY. The speaker (the Subject) is not speaking about being physically budged but instead is speaking of his whole self (i.e., his mind, his values, his ideas) in terms of a body that can be moved. I noted previously that Lakoff and Johnson propose that the Subject-Self metaphor works by conveying a relationship, an association, between the Subject and the Self. This relationship is often spatial—a person’s conduct is depicted in terms of the spatial relationship between the Subject and the Self. As we will see later,

⁵⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 194. This is such, he notes, that in many cases *soma* can be translated simply as “I” (e.g., 1 Cor 13:3; 9:27; 7:4; Phil 1:20; Rom 12:1).

⁶⁰ Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 196. He even notes that “the *soma*-self . . . is a self distinguished from the subject-self.” *Theology of the New Testament*, 197.

⁶¹ Lakoff and Johnson even affirm that the body is “a special case of the Self” which gives rise to utterances like *he’s just sitting on the work order*. See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 272.

⁶² Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 272.

the spatial dimension of the Subject's relationship with the Self opens up significant metaphorical possibilities for conceiving this relationship.

If we follow Bultmann's understanding of *σῶμα*, Paul's use of "body of sin" in verse 6 is a way of referring to the individual through the particular lens of his embodied interaction in the world.⁶³ If we then apply Lakoff and Johnson's proposal that we often conceive of the body as a Self, it becomes clear that Paul here is employing the metaphor THE BODY IS A SELF. What, then, do we make of the modifier *τῆς ἀμαρτίας*? Paul is not insinuating that the body is inherently sinful. Neither does the phrase merely refer to man in his fallenness.⁶⁴ Instead, the phrase *τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἀμαρτίας* highlights the person's sinful embodied existence in a sinful world. Some of the specifics of this sinful environment man inhabits have been laid out already in verses 1–2, where we saw that *ἀμαρτία* is an existential state inhabited by human beings conceptualized as a container.

Often, the Self is conceptualized as a container the Subject can inhabit. When the Subject is presented as being outside the container or "out of the part of the Self where the Subject is normally understood as residing," the metaphor conveys a sense of being out of control.⁶⁵ The phrase "I was beside myself" is one example where the Subject and the Self are not co-located—the Subject is outside the Self. Here, "the *I* refers to my Subject—my experiencing consciousness. If the Subject is *beside* the Self, then it is also outside the Self, that is, outside the body, which is not where it normally resides."⁶⁶ In this way, the speaker employs the metaphor THE SELF IS A CONTAINER to

⁶³ See Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 192–203; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 115–17; Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 400. Dunn explains that "it does not denote the physical body as such, rather a fuller reality which includes the physical but is not reducible to it." Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:319.

⁶⁴ Contra Jean Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Ross Mackenzie, Calvin's Commentaries 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 125; Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 308–9.

⁶⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 274.

⁶⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 274.

convey the experience of being out of normal control.⁶⁷ When this metaphor is used, the “relationship” between the Subject and the Self is presented in terms of containment.

The metaphor THE SELF IS A CONTAINER is also important for understanding expressions where the Subject is portrayed as having a kind of responsibility or obligation towards the Self (e.g., “I let myself down” or “I disappointed myself”). In 6:6, Paul brings up “the body of sin” to note that it has been rendered powerless (*καταργέω*). The phrase implies that “the body of sin” formerly exercised a kind of power, but over what or who?⁶⁸ Paul likely has in mind that it exercised power over the individual. Here, the Subject-Self metaphor helps us understand how the “body of sin” (the individual) could exercise power over the individual. Conceptually, the metaphor Paul employs is a combination of THE BODY IS A SELF and THE SELF IS A CONTAINER, which results in the metaphor THE BODY OF SIN IS A CONTAINER-SELF. On the one hand, by distinguishing the “body of sin” (a Self) from the individual (the Subject), the metaphor allows Paul to speak of the individual’s ability to interact with himself. On the other hand, by conceiving the Self as a container, Paul can draw on the container’s controlling properties to convey the sense of force/power the Self exercises over the Subject.

I previously noted that the CONTAINER image schema is grounded in our embodied experience of being inside and outside containers. We saw that in Romans 6:1–2, Paul employs the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER through which he conveys that sin is not a power but an inhabitable container state (STATES ARE CONTAINERS). However,

⁶⁷ Interestingly, the Subject not residing with the Self can convey either lack of normal consciousness (e.g., “I kept drifting off during lecture”) or just the opposite, too much focus or enhanced focus (e.g., “let me back up, I got a little ahead of myself”). In the phrase “he’s out to lunch,” the Subject (the locus of consciousness, reason, and judgment) is not functioning in a way that results in proper/controlled conduct.

⁶⁸ In the end, whether *καταργέω* is taken to mean “render powerless” or “abolish” makes little difference. Even Jewett who argues for the full force of *καταργέω* understands “the ‘body of sin’ [to be] the body of the individual person which is *dominated* by sin” (*italics mine*). Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings*, AGJU 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 291. Similarly, Schreiner, who also sees in *καταργέω* the full force of “abolish,” nevertheless concludes that here, Paul is speaking of the body as “the emblem of sin that has *dominated* those who are in Adam” (*italics mine*). Schreiner, *Romans*, 317.

containers, by definition, exert restrictions and control over their contents.⁶⁹ We often highlight these controlling properties when we employ the CONTAINER image schema in our everyday language via the metaphor CONTAINMENT IS CONTROL.⁷⁰ In Romans 6:6b, Paul activates these properties of the “body of sin” container. The influence and control the “body of sin” exercises over individuals is thus conceptualized as a container (the “body of sin”) enclosing, restricting, and exerting force over its contents (the Subject).⁷¹

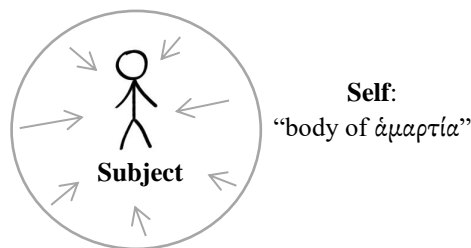


Figure 4: CONTAINER schema of “the body of ἁμαρτία”

Another important thing to note in Paul’s language is that he speaks not only of τὸ σῶμα but of τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας in 6:6. By depicting the body in hamartiological terms, Paul implies that this container-Self is *defined* by ἁμαρτία. This description is

⁶⁹ We can imagine, for example, a child throwing a small bouncy ball in a room. The room (floor, walls, ceiling) functions as a container enclosing the bouncy ball. When the ball hits any of the surfaces of the room (which function as the “boundaries” of the container), it is redirected *within* the container. Through the metaphors CAUSES ARE FORCES and CAUSED MOTION IS FORCED MOTION, conceptually, the room begins to exercise a kind of force over its contents.

⁷⁰ We might say things like “I feel *trapped* in this relationship,” or “I am *in trouble* and I’m *not getting out of it* any time soon.”

⁷¹ The resulting conceptual and ethical mechanics in this scenario are fascinating. Because the Self is associated with one’s role and position in society (by virtue of the Self’s interaction with the world through the body), social and moral obligations are also associated with the Self. But since the individual’s judgment and will are elements of the Subject, a divide is created between the part of the individual that embodies the social/moral obligations (the Self) and the part that wields the judgment and volition to act (the Subject). The Subject can decide to “be true to” the Self and honor those social/moral obligations, or to betray the Self by failing to honor those obligations. In short, “the Subject has an obligation to the Self and the Self has no choice but to trust the Subject to carry out those obligations.” Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 280. We will explore this important dynamic further when we examine Paul’s exhortation in Romans 6:11.

evocative of what Paul said back in verses 1–2, where he conceived of *ἁμαρτία* as an inhabitable container space. Paul as Subject, then, thought of himself as once having simultaneously inhabited two containers, each exerting a controlling force over him: he resided *in* the container-Self of the “body of sin” and *in* the container space of *ἁμαρτία*. By applying the controlling properties of containers discussed previously to the container of sin, Paul’s conceptualization of sin also begins to take on new attributes.

The metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER STATE is subtly transformed into SIN IS A POWERFUL CONTAINER STATE, and *ἁμαρτία* begins to take on characteristics of power and control. As Steffi Fabricius notes, *ἁμαρτία* thus “becomes a *powerful* state by installing its being as an atemporal state in the world, which man is unable to leave by using his own efforts.”⁷² In this way, Paul begins to depict *ἁμαρτία* as exercising force and influence over its contents. Because a person’s *σῶμα* is “that which constitutes him a social being, a being who relates to and communicates with his environment,”⁷³ it makes sense for Paul to conceive of the body as a container directly affected by the larger container of *ἁμαρτία*. Sin’s influence over the Subject’s body thus renders it “the body of *sin*,” which, in turn, exercises force and restricts the Subject residing within.

The “controlling force” property inherent in containers is crucial for appreciating the ethical thrust of Paul’s ethical logic here. By continuing to employ the CONTAINER schema and conceiving of believers either inside or outside these containers, Paul incorporates elements of force, pressure, and influence by simply discussing the believer’s spatial *location*. These elements are the same factors that are difficult to account for using the “indicative-imperative” schema, which operates only at the level of “is” and “ought.” Furthermore, because of the binary spatial location pertaining to

⁷² Steffi Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences: Positioning Cognitive Semantic Theory and Method within Theology*, HUT 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 174–75.

⁷³ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:320.

containers (either *inside* or *outside* the container), Paul continues to present the identity of the believer, which includes ethical dimensions, as a strictly binary system.

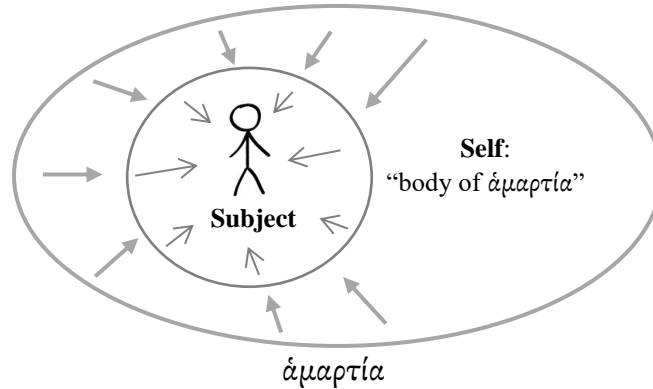


Figure 5. CONTAINER schemas of ἁμαρτία and the “body of sin”

Paul’s purpose in bringing up the “body of sin” in 6:6b is to remind readers that it has been rendered powerless. More specifically, Paul seems to suggest that the “body of sin” was rendered powerless *as a result of* (ὡς) the crucifixion of the “old self” (6:6a). How, then, should we understand the conceptual logic? We begin by identifying the various conceptual propositions we have seen up to this point:

1. Believers have died to sin (6:2)
2. Believers were baptized into Christ’s death (6:3)
3. Believers were co-buried with Christ through (διὰ) baptism (6:4)
4. The “old self” of believers has been crucified (6:6a) . . . so that (ὡς)
5. The “body of sin” has been rendered powerless (6:6b)

I already argued that the death believers died in baptism is the same death to sin Paul conceived of in 6:2. This death of the believer through baptism resulted in the crucifixion of the “old self” (6:6a), which in turn resulted in the powerlessness of the “body of sin.”

The key to understanding the logical connection between (4) and (5) is to follow the spatial logic of Paul’s conceptual argument.

I argued that the death to sin experienced by the believer through baptism is an example of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE.⁷⁴ The individual’s transition from the interior of the *ἁμαρτία* container to the exterior of the container is conveyed in three ways: as death to sin, as baptismal death, and as the crucifixion of the “old self.” In this way, the crucifixion of the “old self” in 6:6a corresponds to the death experienced by the believer—a death *to sin* resulting in removal from within the powerful container state of *ἁμαρτία*.⁷⁵ The removal of the individual (his body included) from the powerful container-state of *ἁμαρτία* affects the “body of sin’s” capacity to contain.

Our experience with containers tells us that a container’s ability to contain an object depends not only on the object’s location (inside or outside the container) but also on the container itself (e.g., its permeability, its ability to enclose the object fully, what the container is made of). Much like a wooden box’s ability to contain depends on the “state” of the wood, the body of sin’s ability to contain largely depends on the “state” of *ἁμαρτία*. We know *ἁμαρτία* has lost its enclosing force on believers since they are no longer “in sin” (Rom 6:1–2). This spatial change results in “the body of *ἁμαρτία*” also losing enclosing force over the Subject by virtue of the fact that *ἁμαρτία* has lost enclosing force over the individual and his body. The conceptual structure of Paul’s argument can thus be conveyed in Figure 6 below.

⁷⁴ I argued in chapter 3 that since, in Paul’s mind, “dying to sin” (6:2a) implies an inability to live *in sin* (6:2b), that Paul conceives of death to sin spatially as movement from within the container state of *ἁμαρτία* to the outside of the container.

⁷⁵ It is helpful here to note that although we have two Selves in 6:6 (the “old self” and the “body of sin”), they are not conceived the same way. As we saw, the Self can be conceived as an object, as a person, or as a container. However, it is not all three things all the time. As with all metaphors, the language determines the specific source frame. The “old self” is conceived as a person whereas the “body of sin” is conceived as a body, a container the Subject inhabits.

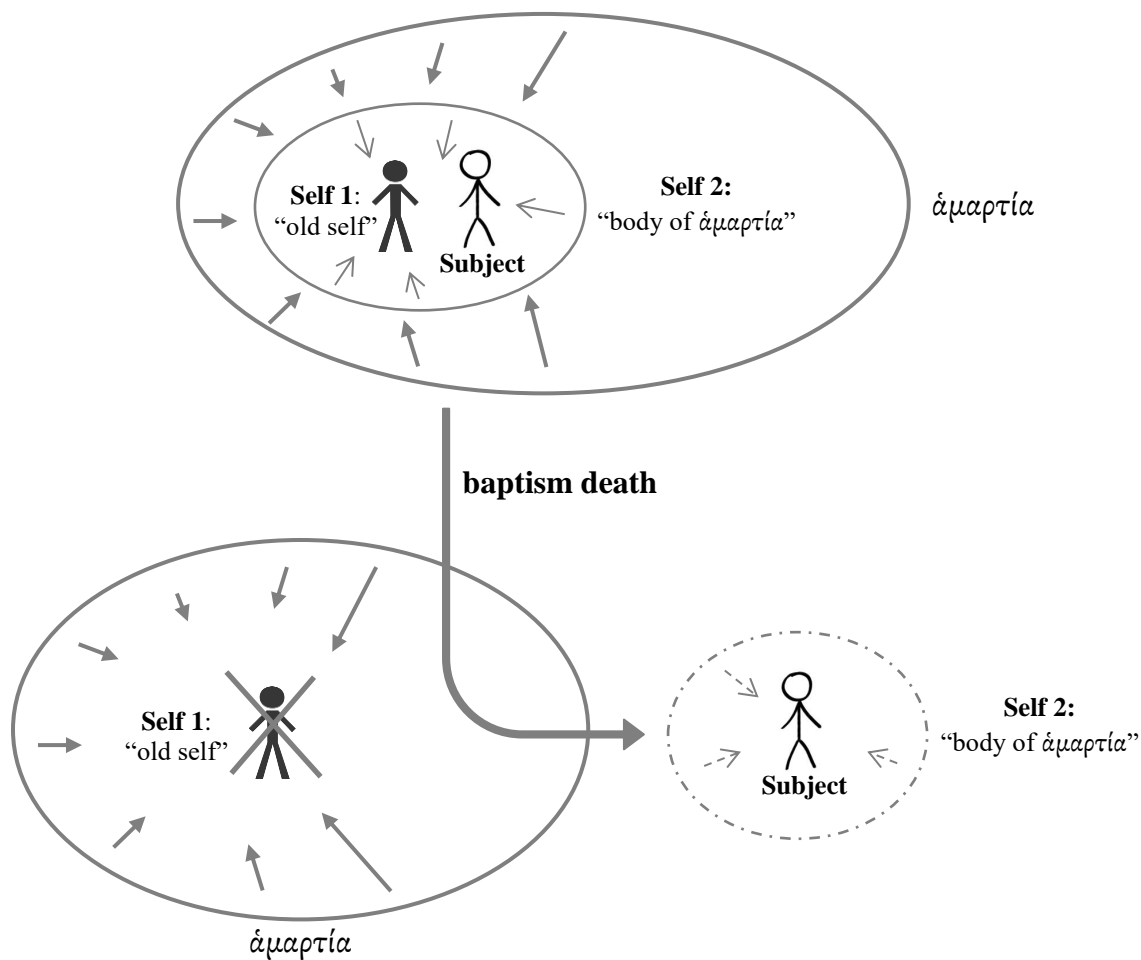


Figure 6: Conceptual structure and logic of Romans 6:1–6b⁷⁶

In summary, the language Paul uses to describe how he relates to himself mirrors our conception of ourselves today. Paul conceives of himself as consisting of a Subject and multiple Selves who interact with his Subject. Moreover, Paul understands believers to consist of an “old self” that has been crucified such that it no longer affects

⁷⁶ The believer has died to sin through baptism. By means of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE, he is no longer in the existential container-state of *ἁμαρτία*. The “old self,” which Paul conceives as person, has been crucified and so the Subject is no longer able to associate with it. Paul does not state that the container-Self of the “body of sin” has vanished or that it is no longer inhabited by the believer. Instead, Paul states that it has been rendered powerless. Because the individual (and his body) is no longer *in* the sin container, sin no longer exercises any force on the individual’s body. Consequently, the container’s ability to contain and exercise control has been severely impaired as shown by the broken line.

the Subject. And yet, he also conceives of the “body of sin” as a container-Self that has been rendered ineffective in its ability to control and influence its contents, the Subject. The resulting powerlessness of the “body of sin” leads to Paul’s final comment in verse 6—believers are no longer enslaved to sin (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ). Paul’s ethical language in this last clause evokes a new semantic frame and a new metaphor that deserves its own careful analysis as it carries into verse 7.

**DEATH IS RELEASE FROM SIN’S SUBJECTION:
Δουλεία and Sin’s Personification (Rom 6:6c–7)**

Throughout this study, I have focused on how Paul presents the believer with respect to sin. We have seen that this relationship is metaphorically structured by means of a narrative involving the believer’s experience. Paul has exploited the controlling properties of containers the believer inhabits to convey a sense of pressure and influence. In this section, I will focus on the personification of sin as one to whom individuals are enslaved. My argument will be twofold. First, I will show that the personification of sin introduced in 6:7 is the telos of a metaphorical development that Paul employs to vividly communicate the sense of obligation inherent in one’s identity. After identifying the personification’s source frame (Δουλεία), I will then argue that through that personification, Paul uses DEATH IS DEPARTURE to convey not merely exit from a container but release from a dominant power. The question raised by Paul in 6:1, which expresses the “indicative-imperative” tension, continues to be answered in terms of believers’ identity, which must be continually understood in terms of the death they experienced.

**Personification as Metaphorical
Composition (v. 6c)**

Just as the “old self” was crucified *in order that* (ἵνα) the body of sin might be rendered powerless, so now we examine the fact that the body of sin was rendered powerless *such that* believers are no longer enslaved to sin (6:6c). Moo notes that the

articular infinitive could be (1) *epexegetic*, thus restating the previous clause;⁷⁷ (2) *consecutive*, “with the result that . . .”; or (3) *final*, “with the purpose that . . .”⁷⁸ As I have argued, the logical progression between each clause in verse 6 is conceptual in nature. The metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE conveys motion out of the container state of *ἁμαρτία*, which leads to the metaphor THE BODY OF SIN IS A POWERLESS CONTAINER. The same conceptual logic continues and leads to the metaphor SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER in the last clause of verse 6—the first personification of sin in the chapter.

It is somewhat surprising that most commentators have very little to say about the important personification of sin that arises in Romans 6:6c.⁷⁹ As I have noted, the tendency to see in Romans 5:12–6:6 the personification of sin as a power, as a ruler, or as a slave master is the result of reading subsequent figurative expressions into earlier ones. Romans 6:6c is only the second time in the letter Paul uses any form of the word *δουλεύω*.⁸⁰ Furthermore, this is the first time in the letter when sin is presented as an agent within the ΔΟΥΛΕΙΑ frame through the metaphor SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER. Though the specific frame and the specific metaphor are new in the epistle, they arise very naturally from Paul’s metaphor cluster—so naturally, in fact, that many assume that Paul has been speaking about sin as a powerful ruler this whole time.

Why do we so often miss the grand entrance of this significant conceptualization of sin?⁸¹ The answer has to do with our mind’s ability to combine

⁷⁷ See BDF §400(8); cf. §394.

⁷⁸ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 400n427.

⁷⁹ Many read the three propositions in 6:6 on the same level. Rather than seeing the conceptual evolution of *ἁμαρτία* that unfolds (culminating with personification in 6:6c), many assume that Paul, from the start, is simply speaking about freedom from the dominion of sin.

⁸⁰ The only other time up to this point where Paul used a similar word was when he introduced himself as a *δούλος* of Christ Jesus (Rom 1:1).

⁸¹ Though this is the first instance of the personification SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER, the powerful characteristics of sin have been building throughout the letter. In chapter 3, I mentioned that Romans 3:9 is an example of a pseudo-personification of sin as a powerful entity that is *over* (*ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι*) Jews and Gentiles. The only other explicit personification of sin is in 5:21 where sin is personified as a ruler

multiple metaphors and compose new ones without our awareness. George Lakoff and Mark Turner suggest that metaphorical composition is like musical composition:

Just as the composer combines the simple elements of tonality—notes and chords and harmonies—into musical phrases and musical movements of great richness and complexity, so the poet combines ordinary concepts, everyday metaphors, and the most mundane knowledge to form conceptual compositions, orchestrations of ideas that we perceive as rich and complex wholes. Complex metaphors are such compositions.⁸²

As such, metaphors like SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER are composed by combining conventional conceptual elements and previously established metaphors.⁸³ We saw already that Paul moved from SIN IS A CONTAINER STATE to SIN IS A POWERFUL CONTAINER STATE simply by activating the restrictive properties of containers.⁸⁴ If we conceive of the contents inside the ἁμαρτία container as being in motion, though restricted by the container that encloses them, the “push-back” force exerted by the container quickly becomes a repeated event.⁸⁵ Via the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS, the restrictive force exerted by the container becomes an *action* it performs on the object within it.

The metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS is a vital link leading to the personification of sin. Lakoff and Turner note that “external events affect us in ways we cannot control, and via EVENTS ARE ACTIONS we can understand those events as actions by a world we

(ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία). Interestingly, Paul drops this metaphor immediately as he launches into chapter 6. It is only beginning in 6:12 that we begin to see Paul rebuild and develop that metaphor further.

⁸² George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 72. Though Lakoff and Turner’s book is focused on poetic metaphor, their proposal here extends far beyond poetry.

⁸³ Lakoff and Turner themselves point out the power of this metaphorical composition: “to create complex new ideas from simpler conventional ideas reveals itself in especially clear form in personification—metaphors through which we understand other things as people.” Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 72.

⁸⁴ Mark Johnson notes that the schematized embodiment of an object in a container logically entails a restriction of force, which directs and restrains one’s “forceful movements,” and forces a “relative fixity of location” on that object. Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 22.

⁸⁵ If we return to the example of the bouncy ball in the room, each bounce against one of the surfaces in the room (the floor, ceiling, or wall), can be conceived as an event.

cannot control.”⁸⁶ This logic leads us to conceptualize diseases as enemies we are fighting (e.g., “I’m going to keep fighting cancer until I beat it”). By conceiving of the physiological realities causing a patient pain and illness as *actions* performed by an entity, we end up with the metaphor BEING ILL WITH CANCER IS A CONFRONTATION WITH THE DISEASE, and cancer is subsequently personified.⁸⁷ Lakoff and Turner suggest that all personification is simply a composition of the metaphor EVENTS ARE ACTIONS (which introduces an agent) “with some further knowledge that characterized the nature of the event and the nature of that agent.”⁸⁸

In the case of Romans 6, by giving agency to *ἁμαρτία* (which Paul already established is a powerful container state that exercises restrictive control over its contents), Paul finally conceives of sin as a subjecting agent—the final link in the metaphorical chain we have traced through the chapter so far.⁸⁹ But what exactly is sin personified as? Interestingly, the personification is made indirectly. Sin is personified by conceiving of its contents (human individuals) in a new way—as those who are enslaved/subjected (*δουλεύειν*). We might thus conclude that the most appropriate way to convey the personification of sin is to say that sin is being presented as a slave master. We will see, however, that this personification needs to be nuanced for English speakers due to the differences in semantic frames evoked by the *δοῦλος* word group in Greek and the slave word group in English.

⁸⁶ Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 73.

⁸⁷ The different metaphors used to speak of cancer are analyzed and discussed in Elena Semino, Zsófia Demjén, and Jane Demmen, “An Integrated Approach to Metaphor and Framing in Cognition, Discourse, and Practice, with an Application to Metaphors for Cancer,” *Applied Linguistics* 39, no. 5 (October 2018): 625–45. This article also discusses the various implications our language has within healthcare.

⁸⁸ Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 74.

⁸⁹ Fabricius shows a similar development of the personification of *ἁμαρτία* in *Pauline Hamartiology*, 162–63.

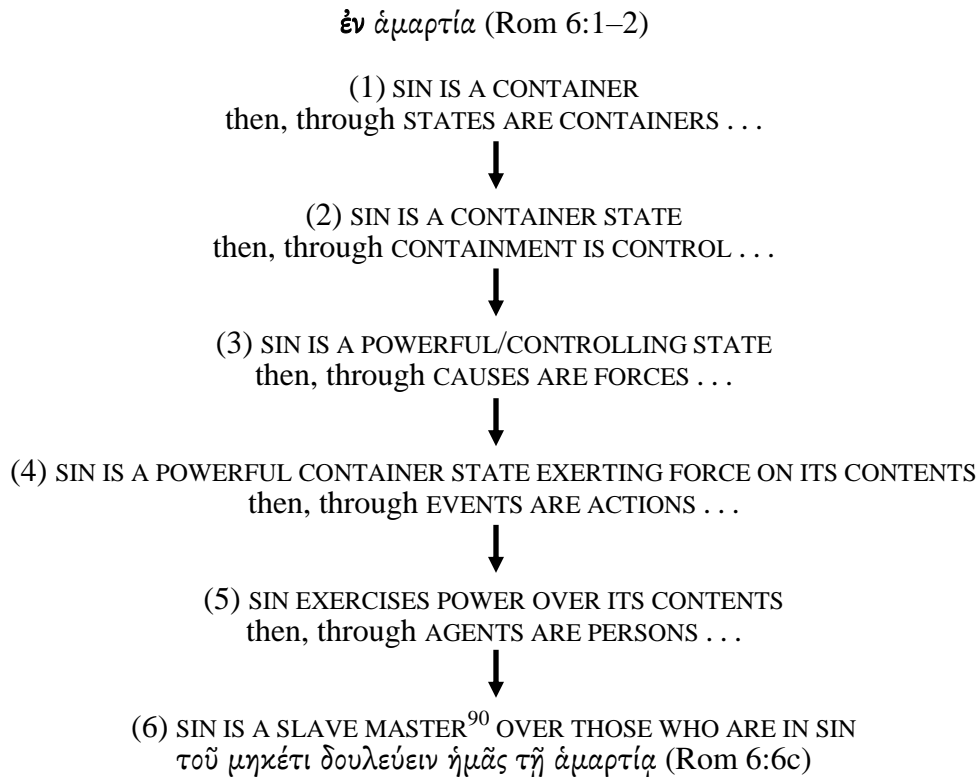


Figure 7: Metaphorical development leading to SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER

Evoking the Δουλεία Frame

As I argued in chapter 2, semantic frames are crucial for understanding utterances and texts.⁹¹ Identifying these semantic frames correctly involves more than merely understanding the audience’s socio-historical context.⁹² For Charles Fillmore, the

⁹⁰ I am identifying the personification as SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER tentatively. In the following section, I will argue that SIN IS A ΚΥΡΙΟΣ (or SIN IS A LORD/MASTER in English) will help modern readers operate within a semantic frame that more closely resembled that of the early church community.

⁹¹ Oscar Jiménez suggests that semantic frames are no “mere ‘background’ but [are] conceptually essential to the meaning of an utterance or text” since they allow readers “to access the values, understanding, and morality of a discourse community.” Oscar E. Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22: Motion towards Maximal Proximity and Higher Status*, LBS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 29.

⁹² Much of the recent work that has sought to analyze and understand Paul’s so called “slave metaphors” seems to assume that the key to understanding Paul’s figurative language is to correctly discern the socio-historical background of slavery for the Christian community (e.g., Jewish notions of slavery vs.

key question when discerning the semantic frame evoked in a text is, “what categories of experience are encoded by the members of this speech community through the linguistic choices that they make when they talk?”⁹³ Frames have to do with how a community’s experiences shape their cognition, with the general elements of a particular socio-historical context. As a result, the same word can evoke different frames for different socio-cultural speech communities. Therefore, we must tread carefully as we consider the frame opened by the verb δουλεύειν in 6:6c.

For most modern western speakers, our indirect experience with and historical proximity to chattel slavery are certainly determinative in the conceptual *gestalt* evoked whenever we encounter the word “slavery.” Nevertheless, the frame evoked by the word “slave” might differ even between two modern western speakers (the script evoked by the term “slave” for a black American from Alabama will be different than the script evoked for a white Canadian from Alberta). As a result, there is a sense in which the very meaning of the word “slave” might vary between two western speakers because of their different experiences and the different unconscious conceptual structures evoked.⁹⁴

In the same way, we must not assume that what comes to our mind when we hear the words “enslave,” “slave,” or “slavery” is the same as what came to mind when ancient speakers heard the words δουλεύειν, δοῦλος, or δουλεία. In other words, we must be attentive to the semantic differences between the Slavery frame and the Δουλεία frame

Greco-Roman slavery). Some recent volumes that focus on this dimension of the problem include Kenneth C. Russell, *Slavery as Reality and Metaphor in the Pauline Letters* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1968); Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984); Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church*; Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity*.

⁹³ Charles J. Fillmore, “Frame Semantics,” in *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 111.

⁹⁴ Hendrik Goede aptly points out that “there is currently no general theory of slavery that allows a single definition of slavery for all cultures and times.” Hendrik Goede, “Constructing Ancient Slavery as Socio-Historic Context of the New Testament,” *HvTSt* 69, no. 1 (2013): 2. Cf. Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 24; James A. Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., HUTH 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 14.

lest we misunderstand the metaphors and, thus, the argument laid out by Paul in Romans 6.⁹⁵ At least three important frame distinctions are worth mentioning at this point. A helpful entry point into the first difference between the slavery frame and the *Δουλεία* frame is the personification of sin we observed in 6:6c, “so that we would no longer be enslaved (*δουλεύειν*) to sin.” Most English speakers would conclude that, here, sin is personified as a slave owner/master. This conclusion stems from the fact that the frame evoked by the English verb “enslaved” evokes a frame with specific roles that we naturally fill in our minds—if there is *enslavement*, there must be a *slave* and a *slave owner/master*. However, how would a Greek speaker articulate the personification (ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ . . .)?

In the *Δουλεία* frame of the early Christian community, there are several possible fillers for the role we usually fill in English with “slave owner/master.” A *δοῦλος* could be under the authority of a *δεσπότης* (Luke 2:29; 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:9) or a *βασιλεύς* (Matt 18:23; John 18:36). However, by far, the most common word used to refer to one with authority over a *δοῦλος* was *κύριος* (Matt 6:24; John 15:15; Col 3:22; James 1:1). The parable Jesus tells in Luke 19 further demonstrates the complexity of the *Δουλεία* frame for this ancient community and how different it is from the Slavery frame evoked in many western minds.⁹⁶

To return to the original question, what filler would be naturally supplied for the agent in authority by a member of the early church community? Likely *κύριος*, though possibly *βασιλεύς* or *δεσπότης*.⁹⁷ This ambiguity is important for our study for two

⁹⁵ I only have the space to make a few preliminary remarks. My intention here is not to present a fully nuanced picture of slavery in the ancient world.

⁹⁶ In the parable of Luke 19, ten *δοῦλοι* are under the authority of a man who, upon receiving a kingdom, begins to reign (*βασιλεύω*) over them (v. 14b). It also seems that these *δοῦλοι* are among the citizens (*πολιῖται*) of the country (v. 14a) and engage in business (v. 13). Furthermore, the *δοῦλοι* refer to this reigning figure as *κύριος* (vv. 16, 18, 20).

⁹⁷ To complicate matters even more, the early church community seems to have had multiple ways to fill not only the role of the subjecting agent, but of the agent performing the service of *δουλεία*. While the word *δουλεύειν* would naturally evoke *δοῦλος*, we know that a *οἰκέτης* could also be engaged in

reasons. First, *κύριος* does not communicate in Greek exactly what “slave owner/master” does in English.⁹⁸ This means that the metaphor SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER evokes something slightly different from the metaphor ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΚΥΡΙΟΣ. Second, we will see that Paul weaves βασιλεία language with δουλεία language throughout the rest of the chapter. Whereas “slave master” and “king” likely evoke two different frames in the western mind, *κύριος* and βασιλεύς both live comfortably in the Δουλεία frame in the mind of the early church community.

The second important frame distinction has to do with the very notion of δοῦλος. Though all the words in the δουλεία family pertain to “a service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes or not, because he is subject as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner,”⁹⁹ the term can evoke such complex and varied situations, that it is difficult to identify a monolithic thought-picture associated with δοῦλος. The third important factor to keep in mind about the Δουλεία frame is the influence of the Septuagint. For Jews, the word *κύριος* did not automatically evoke a slave owner since the word is the one that most commonly translates the Hebrew terms יְיָ and הוֹיָה and is used hundreds of times to refer to Israel’s God. Additionally, the word *κύριος* was one of the most common ways for the Christian community to refer to Jesus and God.¹⁰⁰ To be sure, Paul’s Greco-Roman

δουλεία (Luke 16:13; cf. LXX Lev 25:39). *TDNT* makes the following distinction between the two: “οἰκέτης is almost exactly synonymous [with δοῦλος], but in δοῦλος the stress is rather on the slave’s dependence on his lord, while οἰκέτης emphasises the position of the slave in relation to the world outside and in human society.” Karl H. Rengstorf, “δοῦλος, σύνδουλος, δούλη, δουλέω, δουλεία,” *TDNT* 2:261, 1964. The activity filler also varied: a οἰκέτης would be expected to δουλεύειν but also to ὑποτάσσειν (1 Pet 2:18) his master. The specifics of this δουλεία, however, also varied. For example, δοῦλοι would be entrusted with goods by their master (παραδίδομι; Matt 25:14) and were called to be faithful (πίστος; Matt 25:23).

⁹⁸ Certainly, the word *κύριος* is sometimes used to convey what we in English would refer to as “slave master” (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). My point is simply that “slave master” is not the full extent of what *κύριος* evokes and thus we should be careful not to assume a one-to-one correspondence between the terms across the two languages.

⁹⁹ Rengstorf, “δοῦλος, σύνδουλος, δούλη, δουλέω, δουλεία,” *TDNT* 2:261.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Nagel observes, “The term *κύριος* is one of the, if not the, most significant ‘title’ assigned to Jesus of Nazareth.” Peter Nagel, “Towards a Better First-Century CE Understanding of the Term ‘Kyrios’: Contributions from Philo and Paul,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 7, no. 1 (2017): 89.

milieu certainly shaped his understanding of δουλεία. My point here is simply that his understanding of “lordship” and “slavery” was influenced by the combination of his socio-historical as well as his religious background.

The three differences I have noted between the frame evoked in the early church community by the word δουλεύειν and the frame evoked in the western mind by “slavery” means that we must pay particularly close attention to Paul’s language. This is the only way we will be able to correctly identify the frame elements so we can, in turn, correctly understand how the metaphors fit together. With that said, we can now move on to examine the metaphors Paul employs in Romans 6:6–7 using δουλεία terminology.

DEATH IS RELEASE FROM SIN (v. 7)

Though Paul finally personifies sin in 6:6c, this personification remains somewhat dormant until 6:12.¹⁰¹ What Paul seems to be doing is simply introducing a new semantic frame (the frame of Δουλεία) which he will build on later.¹⁰² This personification of SIN AS A KYPIOS is a kind of *terminus ad quem* in Paul’s argument. Paul’s main point in 6:6c, however, is not merely to portray sin as κύριος but to emphasize that believers are no longer (μηκέτι) enslaved to sin. The cessation of enslavement to sin (6:6c) came about as a result of (τοῦ + inf.) the “body of sin” being rendered powerless (6:6b), which itself was the result or intended goal (ἵνα) of the crucifixion of the “old self” (6:6a). The logic that undergirds 6:6, as I have argued, is primarily spatial and depends on the container image schema and the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER STATE. Beginning in verse 7, Paul further explains the connection between

¹⁰¹ Though in v. 7, Paul grounds his assertion in v. 6, he will not speak of sin again for the next few verses.

¹⁰² Paul has done this already in Romans. In 3:9 Paul subtly conceptualized of ἁμαρτία as an entity that stands over individuals (a power perhaps?), though he does not elaborate on that at all. Similarly, in 5:21, sin and death are both presented as rulers that reign (βασιλεύω), though the personification remains dormant until the second half of Romans 6.

the death experienced by the believer and no longer being enslaved to sin: “for (γὰρ) one who has died δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας.”

Commentators have struggled to understand the sense of δικαίω here and precisely how the phrase ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας functions as a ground (γὰρ) to verse 6. Often, when the verb δικαίω is used in conjunction with ἀπό, the prepositional phrase depicts that which carries out or enables the justification—that *by which* someone or something is justified (e.g., LXX Isa 45:25, Matt 11:19; Luke 7:35).¹⁰³ Here, however, Paul is certainly not suggesting that an individual is justified *by* sin. Some read the verb δικαίω to carry its usual Pauline sense of forensic legal acquittal such that the death the believer has experienced through baptism results in justification *from* sin.¹⁰⁴ Moo rightly points out the biggest problem with this interpretation: “Paul does not connect our dying with our justification anywhere else.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Paul has not laid out any conceptual logic that would connect no longer being slaves to sin (6:6c) with being justified from sin (6:7).¹⁰⁶ Wolter makes the important observation that Romans 6:7 is unique among δικαίω ἀπὸ texts in that here, Paul is speaking of ἁμαρτία in terms of

¹⁰³ One possible exception is Acts 13:38 where the author might be using δικαίω + ἀπό forensically to speak of being justified *from* sin. This text, however, is not decisive since it is equally possible that there is no forensic sense in δικαίω in this context, as proposed by most English translations.

¹⁰⁴ See for example Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), 44; John H. P. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament: Justification in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 81; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 437. Cranfield also argues for the forensic sense over and against the sense of “being freed” from sin. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 310–11.

¹⁰⁵ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 401.

¹⁰⁶ The problem with taking δικαίω as a forensic legal term is that it appears to violate the invariance principle (see chapter 1). When in Romans 3:21–26 Paul speaks of God justifying sinners as a display of his righteousness, the semantic frame of his metaphorical language is that of a courtroom. Jews and Gentiles have sinned (ἁμαρτάνω; 3:23) in that they have transgressed the law of God. Sinful acts are then conceived as debts (EVENTS ARE OBJECTS) that are forgiven in the act of justification. Paul’s hamartiological language in Romans 6, as I have argued, is very different. In 6:7, “sin” is neither an event of transgression nor a moral debt incurred—it is a state and a personified power. If δικαίω in δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας referred to being “justified” in the forensic sense, he would more naturally be speaking about being “justified” from sin as a state (or perhaps as a power). The legal frame is simply not in focus in Romans 6:7. Taking δικαίω to mean “release” makes more sense of the context and of the logic of v. 7 as grounding believers no longer being “enslaved to sin” (v. 6).

personified sin, not as an immoral action with consequences.¹⁰⁷ A more likely option, then, is that *δικαιόω* here carries the non-forensic sense of *being released* (cf. BDAG,¹⁰⁸ Sir 26:29; *T. Sim.* 6:1), and Paul is talking about being released from sin.¹⁰⁹

Even among those who take *δικαιόω* to mean “free” or “release,” there is some disagreement as to Paul’s logic.¹¹⁰ Some suggest the connection between death and release from sin depends on a maxim that understands death to release an individual from the hold of sin.¹¹¹ However, a more likely explanation is that Paul is simply speaking of death in the same figurative manner he has been since the beginning of the chapter. The death experienced by the believer was, first and foremost, a spatial reality conveyed by the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE—the believer who has died to sin can no longer live *in it*. Just as Paul’s conception of sin has evolved throughout the chapter, so now, his depiction of the death believers died takes on a slightly different form.

¹⁰⁷ Wolter states, “With *ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, Paul does not focus on the concrete deed of a sin, but, as in v. 6c (and as in v. 2), on sin as a personified power He is not concerned with the absolution of sins, but with liberation from the dominion of sin” (Mit *ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας* nimmt Paulus nicht die konkrete Sündentat in den Blick, sondern wie in V. 6c.d [und in V. 2] die Sünde als personifizierte Macht. . . . Es geht ihm nicht um die Lossprechung von den Sünden, sondern um die Befreiung von der Herrschaft der Sünde). Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2014), 380. Somewhat surprisingly, Dunn takes the exact opposite approach and prefers a translation “where the sinful act rather than the more typically Pauline idea of sin as a power is in view.” Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:320.

¹⁰⁸ BDAG, “*δικαιόω*” 3, 249.

¹⁰⁹ So Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 194, 202; Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 307; Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*. Schreiner too seems somewhat persuaded by this reading, *Romans*, 320.

¹¹⁰ Though Schreiner notes that v. 7 provides a reason or ground for the proposition in v. 6, he acknowledges that “it is quite difficult to discern the logical relationship between the two verses.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 319.

¹¹¹ Some, like Ernst Käsemann, see here a reference to a general rabbinic maxim that understands death to result in an individual being released from any moral obligations and thus from any consequences of sin: “When a man is dead he is freed from fulfilling the law” (*b. Shabb.* 151b). Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 170. Similarly, Moo suggests that Paul’s purpose in v. 7 is “not to prove v. 6, but to illustrate his theological point by reference to a general truth.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 401. Karl Kuhn sees in Romans 6:7 a rabbinic reference to an even more specific rabbinic maxim affirming the expiatory force of death: “All who die receive atonement through their death” (כל המתים במיתה מתכפרים) (*Sifre Num.* 112 on Num 15:31). Karl G. Kuhn, “Rm 6,7: ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεικνύεται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας,” *ZNW* 30 (1931): 305–10. This reading takes the text in Romans to mean that the death believers died through baptism resulted in atonement. Others still suggest that “the one who dies” is Christ, who secures justification for himself and others. See for example Robin Scroggs, “Romans 6:7: Ho Gar Apothanōn Dedikaiōtai Apo Tēs Hamartias,” *NTS* 10, no. 1 (October 1963): 104–8.

When the death of believers is presented in terms of their relationship to sin as a container state (6:1–2), death is merely departure or removal from the container. But when the death is conveyed in terms of their relationship to sin as a *κύριος* (6:6c–7), the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE takes on more human characteristics—DEATH IS RELEASE FROM BONDAGE/SUBJECTION. If we see in verse 7 the same underlying metaphor on which Paul has built his argument up to this point, the logical relationship between verse 6 and verse 7 becomes more apparent. That is, even if we grant that Paul might have had a rabbinic maxim in mind, the maxim would simply be an example of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE, a well-established conceptual metaphor Paul can evoke without allusion to a specific rabbinic saying. With verse 7, Paul concludes the second argument that supports his thesis, which began in verse 5: by virtue of believers’ death with Christ (through baptism), their “old self” has died such that they are now “released” from sin.

**Dead to Sin and Dead to Death:
Christ’s Death and the Assurance of Life (Rom 6:8–10)**

Rather than developing the metaphor SIN IS A KYPIOS in Romans 6:8–10, Paul retraces his steps and returns to the Christological rationale for the believer’s new identity. Up to this point, we have seen that the identity of believers is characterized and shaped by a kind of death they experienced. However, Paul’s goal in this chapter is not merely to discuss who the believers *are* but to narrate and explain the ethical implications of that new identity. In this last section, I will argue that, for Paul, the path that connects the believer’s identity to the believer’s ethical conduct is paved on the ground of Christ’s own death and resurrection. After outlining Paul’s argument in this section of the text and demonstrating how Paul’s language continues to incorporate readers into his narrative, I will proceed to discuss two main metaphors that illustrate and structure Paul’s logic. I will first briefly examine the personification DEATH IS A KYPIOS. Then, I will explain the spatial structure implied by Paul’s logic that Christ’s death to sin grounds his release from death’s dominion (vv. 9–10).

Overview of Paul's Argument

In Romans 6:8–10, Paul presents the third and final point of discussion: because Christ has died to sin and lives, believers are assured that they, too, will live. In verses 3–4, Paul argued metonymically that baptism unites a believer to Christ's death—baptism itself is a death-by-baptism experience into Christ himself and into his death. The nature of this union with Christ's death and the nature of the death experienced by the believer was the focus of verses 5–7. Baptism, however, does not merely unite a believer with Christ and his death. It also ensures and anticipates new life (v. 4b). It is this second new-life-promising aspect of union with Christ through baptism that Paul has been hinting at from the beginning (v. 2b) to which he now turns.

Interestingly, Romans 6:8–10 focuses not primarily on the believer but on Christ. Paul develops the metaphorical narrative he began in verse 2 by shifting the focus from the believer's death to sin to Christ's own death to sin and the life that ensues. The logic in this section is as follows: the believers' death with Christ is what guarantees they will also live with him (v. 8). This guarantee is grounded in Christ's own resurrection from the dead, whereby he was released from death's dominion (v. 9). This release from the power of death is grounded on Christ's death to sin, which in turn leads to a life lived to God (v. 10). Moo notes the critical role verses 8–10 play in Paul's broader chain of reasoning: "we 'die to sin' (v. 2) when we die 'with Christ' (vv. 3–6) because 'the death that he died, he died to sin once for all.'" ¹¹² While Paul often speaks literally about Christ's death and resurrection, he must use metaphorical language to convey its significance for believers. These metaphors will be the focus of my analysis in the following section.

¹¹² Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 403.

Transportation into the Narrative

Because the notion of believers being “with Christ” is so central to Paul’s conception of their identity, we might miss the fact that Paul’s language of believers dying with Christ in verse 8 is metaphorical.¹¹³ We saw in verses 3–4 that for Paul, this death with Christ is encapsulated and embodied in baptism. In 6:8, the believer’s death with Christ is expressed as part of a conditional phrase that, once again, links death with Christ to life with Christ. Just as in verse 5, in verse 8, Paul uses εἰ with “the indicative of logical reasoning.”¹¹⁴ We might paraphrase verse 8, “since it is true that we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”¹¹⁵

The apodosis contains the central element in the clause—living with Christ (συνζήσομεν αὐτῷ).¹¹⁶ However, the way Paul frames the protasis is also important. Not only does the wording of the conditional phrase harken back to the link between death and life presented in 6:4 and 6:5, but it also preserves and further develops the narrative. Paul here seeks to “transport” his audience into the narrative he is recounting.

Melanie Green and Timothy Brock have demonstrated that audiences perceive narratives to be more persuasive when they are “transported” into them.¹¹⁷ The language

¹¹³ Romans 6:8a is the only occurrence of σὺν Χριστῷ in Romans, but Paul has been developing the idea throughout the chapter through various compound verbs (συνετάφημεν, 6:4a; συνεσταθρώθη, 6:6b). Though Potgieter points to the metaphor in 6:5a (σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν) as another manifestation of the idea of union with Christ, I argued previously that the “union” there is not with Christ but with his likeness of death. See Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5–8*, 103.

¹¹⁴ BDF §373(2b)

¹¹⁵ See Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 401n436.

¹¹⁶ The future verb here, as was the case with συνζήσομεν in 6:4, is taken as a logical future by some (see for example David M. Stanley, *Christ’s Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology*, *Analecta Biblica* 13 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1961], 186; Jewett, *Romans*, 406; Schreiner, *Romans*, 321). Others take the verb as a genuine future. See Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 254; Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 380; Schnabel, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer: Kapitel 6–16*, 49. Notably, Paul presents the apodosis as a faith proposition: “we believe that (πιστεύομεν ἔτι) we will also live with him.” This reference to the believer’s trust and faith seems to fit better with the life with Christ that believers have been promised rather than with the life they already possess. However, the present implications of the promise are undeniably also in Paul’s mind, as we see in the subsequent verses, so the differences between the two positions are not significant.

¹¹⁷ Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, “The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives,” *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 79, no. 5 (November

of “transportation” merely refers to the ability of an audience to “experience” the narrative for themselves. In cognitive linguistics, this phenomenon is often referred to as “embodied simulation.” When we speak of embodied simulation in the context of conceptual metaphors, we are highlighting that “part of our ability to make sense of metaphorical language, both individual utterances and extended narratives, resides in the automatic construction of a simulation whereby we imagine performing the bodily actions referred to in the language.”¹¹⁸ Our ability to visualize and simulate literal language also applies to metaphorical language.¹¹⁹ For example, in a study that asked participants to recall either ethical or unethical deeds from their past and then offered them a choice of a parting gift for their help in the study (either a pencil or a cleansing wipe), those who were asked to recall unethical actions picked the cleansing wipe three times more often than the other participants. Likewise, those asked to recall ethical actions picked the pencil twice as often as their counterparts.¹²⁰ The study showed that participants subconsciously perceived themselves as either clean or dirty depending on the type of moral conduct they recounted (ETHICAL CONDUCT IS CLEAN and UNETHICAL CONDUCT IS DIRTY).¹²¹ This observation is best explained by embodied simulation.

When we turn again to Paul’s language in 6:8, we see that Paul prompts his audience to consider their own participation in the narrative of death he has presented

2000): 701–21; Melanie C. Green, “Transportation into Narrative Worlds: The Role of Prior Knowledge and Perceived Realism,” *Discourse Processes* 38, no. 2 (September 2004): 247–66.

¹¹⁸ Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., “Metaphor Interpretation as Embodied Simulation,” *Mind & Language* 21, no. 3 (2006): 434.

¹¹⁹ For example, when we are asked “what color is a polar bear’s nose?” most of us do not simply have a mental “fact sheet” which includes the color of a polar bear’s nose. Instead, we conjure in our minds the image of a polar bear and we deduce the answer from our mind’s image.

¹²⁰ Chen-Bo Zhong and Katie Liljenquist, “Washing Away Your Sins: Threatened Morality and Physical Cleansing,” *Science* 313, no. 5792 (September 8, 2006): 1451–52.

¹²¹ This is one of the experiments referenced by Benjamin Bergen in *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), cf. 215. This book is a very accessible introduction to embodied simulation where he details various scientific studies that observe how language affects our mind and our bodies.

thus far. His statement in verse 8 is not merely about a condition an individual must meet for eschatological life with Christ to follow (cf., John 5:25; 6:51, 57; Rom 8:13). Instead, the first person plural conditional phrase is embedded in the very metaphorical narrative that makes up Romans 6 up to this point. Living with Christ depends on *trusting*, *receiving*, and *participating* in Paul’s narrative.

DEATH IS KYPIOS (v. 9)

By presenting θάνατος as the agent of κυριεύει in 6:9, Paul personifies death for the third time in the epistle. Paul’s previous conception of death as a ruling king (ἐβασίλευσεν; Rom 5:14, 17) is semantically related to that of death as κύριος in 6:9.¹²² Paul has spoken similarly about sin in 5:21 (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία) and in 6:6 (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτία). The relationship between these two rulers is important for Paul’s conceptual and ethical argument. In Romans 5, death was the dominant κύριος. Death reigns *through* (διὰ) Adam *because of* (γὰρ) his trespass (5:17), whereas sin reigns *in* (ἐν) death (5:21). When the preposition ἐν follows βασιλεύω, it normally delineates a ruler’s domain spatially by conceiving the domain as a container. The boundaries of the container limit the ruler’s power.¹²³ The metaphorical expression ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ (Rom 5:21) thus suggests that Paul conceives of sin’s rule to be limited to the space (or realm) of death. Sin reigns *in* death in that it reigns over those who dwell *in* the death container—in the state of death (STATES ARE CONTAINERS).

We see, then, that Paul conceives of death and sin as both states (via the metaphor STATES ARE CONTAINERS) and as rulers, as κύριοι.¹²⁴ Human beings are born in

¹²² L&N categorize κυριεύω (37.50) and βασιλεύω (37.64) under subdomain 37D: Rule, Govern.

¹²³ See, for example βασιλεύω + ἐν in LXX Judges 4:2; Joshua 13:12; 2 Samuel 15:10; 1 Kings 11:25. It is notable that Paul says those who receive the abundance of grace, and the free gift of righteousness will reign in life (ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν) through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17).

¹²⁴ Fabricius has a helpful discussion of death as a state and the relationship between ἁμαρτία and θάνατος in Romans 5:21. See Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 199–204.

a state of death and reside in the container-space of death. Death rules over them in that they eventually succumb to death. At the same time, because sin has jurisdiction over the space of death, sin is also ruler over them—sin reigns *in death* (5:17), much like David reigned *in Hebron* (2 Sam 2:11). Christ’s resurrection was thus an affront to the dominion of death and his victory over it, “death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom 6:9)

Christ’s Death to Sin and to Death (v. 10)

Romans 6:10 is intended to ground Paul’s statement in verse 9. On what grounds does death no longer exercise dominion over Christ? On the one hand, Paul implies that Christ’s resurrection grounds the cessation of death’s dominion over him.¹²⁵ But in verse 10, Paul grounds his previous statement about death’s dominion over Christ in metaphorical terms that operate within the spatial framework of the narrative. Death no longer has dominion over Christ *because* (γὰρ) his death was a death to sin (6:10a).¹²⁶ I will focus my discussion on this verse on two important conceptual issues. First, I will explore in what sense Christ “died to sin.” Then, I will examine the spatial logic in Paul’s argument whereby his death to sin grounds his release from death’s dominion.

Moo notes how striking it is that Paul uses the same language to describe Christ’s relationship with sin as he does to describe a believer’s (6:2).¹²⁷ Believers have “died to sin,” and so has Christ. Despite the same unusual phrase appearing in 6:2 and

¹²⁵ Though it is not explicit, this seems to be the inner logic of 6:9, “We know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again—death no longer has dominion over him.”

¹²⁶ The two ellipses in this verse (ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν and ὁ δὲ ζῆ) involve two cognate accusatives according to A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 479. See also BDF §154. As such, ὁ ἀπέθανεν stands for τὸν θάνατον ὃν ἀπέθανεν and ὁ ζῆ stands for τὴν ζωὴν ἣν ζῆ. Jewett, however, is not convinced this is a cognate accusative “because the verbs ‘to die’ and ‘to live’ are intransitive and cannot take an accusative object.” He follows Smyth and suggests that what we have here is an accusative of respect: “in respect to that he died . . . in respect to that he lives.” Jewett, *Romans*, 407n176. Cf. Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, ed. Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), §1600–1.

¹²⁷ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 403.

6:10, some conclude that the two do not refer to the same idea.¹²⁸ Most interpreters, however, consider the metaphor to be essentially the same in both instances.¹²⁹ The issue for those who see a difference is that if the phrase in 6:10 has the same meaning as in 6:2, that might imply that Christ was guilty of sin just as believers are. However, this is not necessarily the case.

So far in Romans 6, sin does not describe a set of actions but a ruling power that also functions as a container state (6:1–2). As we saw, sin’s jurisdiction is delineated by death. By dying, Christ demonstrated that he had subjected himself to sin—not in its demands to perform sin (2 Cor 5:21), but in its ultimate penalty of death.¹³⁰ Therefore, Christ’s death to sin must be understood within the conceptual framework already established by Paul—as a final separation (DEATH IS DEPARTURE) from the state and power of sin.¹³¹ Thus, while it is true that in verse 10, Paul stresses the once-for-all (ἐφάπαξ) character of Christ’s death, it is not altogether true that he is “not concerned to draw out the meaning of Christ’s death as death to sin” as Cranfield suggests.¹³² The meaning of the metaphor is clarified by the conceptual logic of Paul’s narrative.

In what sense, then, does Christ dying to sin (6:10) result in his release from the dominion of death (6:9)? The logic, as we have seen, is fundamentally spatial and

¹²⁸ See for example Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, KEK 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 208. Cranfield suggests that though “the expression τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀποθνῆσκειν was used in v. 2 . . . it is now used in a quite different sense.” Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 314.

¹²⁹ See Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:323. Wolter also sees the metaphor having the same sense in 6:2 and in 6:10 depicting death to sin as “final separation” from sin. Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 382. For Moo, the two phrases depict “a close parallel between the situation of Christ and of the Christian.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 403.

¹³⁰ Jewett’s wording here is helpful. He notes that “while believers had been under the power of sin in performing its actions, Christ had been subject to the murderous consequences of such actions while remaining sinless himself.” Jewett, *Romans*, 407.

¹³¹ I do not think it is sufficient or clear enough to simply say that Christ died to sin, “that is, He affected sin by His dying.” Cf. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 314; Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 403.

¹³² Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 314.

involves various containers. As I have argued, both sin and death are conceptualized as powerful states that also exercise dominion over those *in* them (SIN AND DEATH ARE CONTAINERS).¹³³ Although the two are rightly described as coregents, conceptually, the death container is inside the sin container—sin rules *in* death and not the other way around. If we think of A as the container-state of death and B as the container state of sin, then we might depict Christ’s death to sin this way: Christ’s death is his exit (departure) from the container state of sin (B). However, a container schematic logic tells us that if X is in A and A is in B, X must, by definition, leave A when X leaves B. In other words, because θάνατος is *in* ἁμαρτία, when Christ is “released” from the state power of ἁμαρτία (B), he is also “released” from the power of θάνατος (A).¹³⁴ This is why Paul can say that death no longer has dominion over Christ—because he has died to sin.¹³⁵

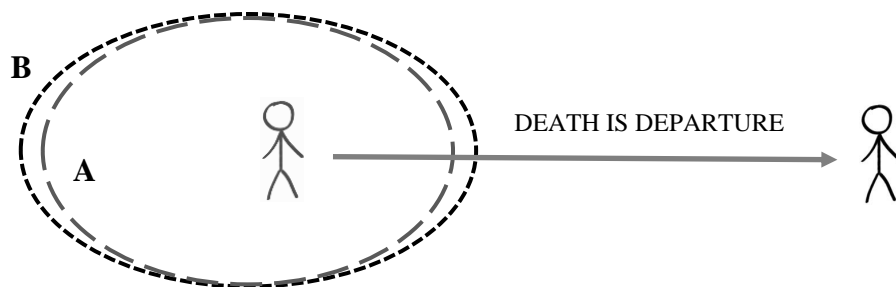


Figure 8: Conceptual logic of Romans 6:9–10

¹³³ It is important to remember that sin and death here are conceptualized not as *events* but as *containers* exhibiting ruler-like characteristics. It is therefore not helpful to think of one causing or leading to another since that is not how Paul is speaking about the two concepts.

¹³⁴ Fabricius explains the spatial logic this way following her own schematic: “This experience infers the schematic representation of *modus tollens*: if one is no longer in the state of ἁμαρτία, one is consequently no longer in the state of death—B (death) is in C (sin), A (man) is in C (sin) (and therefore also in B [death]), if A (man) is no longer in C (sin), then it is also no longer in B (death).” Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 202.

¹³⁵ Schreiner articulates the conclusion of this conceptual logic clearly: “if the authority of sin has been shattered by Christ’s death and resurrection, then it follows that the mastery of death has been ended as well.” *Romans*, 321.

The last phrase in verse 10 is often only briefly discussed in the commentaries: the life Christ lives, he lives to God. In Romans 6:8–10, the focus shifts from believers to Christ and from death to the life that follows death. As Moo notes, “as he has done throughout the passage, Paul sees death as the gateway to life,” and so the ultimate goal of life cannot be overlooked.¹³⁶ The resurrection life that follows Christ’s death is central to Paul’s gospel proclamation in this passage. There is a sense in which every individual is eventually released from the dominion of sin and death—when they die physically. However, freedom from sin and death is of no consolation if no life ensues. In this way, Christ’s resurrection is good news to believers because they are the ones who have joined him in death and are promised to join him in the life that follows.

Overall, then, by alluding to the believers’ death to sin in this section which focuses on the results of Christ’s death for himself, Paul foreshadows what he will make explicit in Romans 6:11–14.¹³⁷ Christ died to sin and death, and now he lives to God. The narrative of Christ’s death shapes the narrative of believers and thus their identity in relation to sin, death, and God as well. As Fitzmyer notes, here, “Paul formulates the Christological basis of the answer that he gives in v. 6 to the objection in v. 1.”¹³⁸

Conclusion

With Romans 6:5–10, Paul concludes the first metaphorical narrative in Romans 6. Beginning in verse 11, Paul will exhort his audience using the metaphorical language of the narrative, but the narrative itself has been recounted. In 6:5–10, Paul employed numerous new metaphors and schemas to connect a narrative of Christ’s death

¹³⁶ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 404.

¹³⁷ Ridderbos articulates the Christocentric nature of Christ’s death and resurrection in this section: “Here again the thought is not that Christ died once ‘for the sake of’ or ‘for the atonement of’ sin (in the sense of justification or of reconciliation), but that he once died to sin . . . freed himself from it and escaped it by his death, just as now by having risen he lives for God, at his command and for his service.” Ridderbos, *Paul*, 208.

¹³⁸ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 438.

and resurrection to the narrative of the believer's own life. If we combine the series of conceptual schemas, we end up with the structural logic that undergirds Paul's argument. Through baptism, the believer has died to sin; that is, he has undergone movement out of the container-state of *ἁμαρτία*. Whereas the believer's locus of consciousness (the Subject) remains alive and is now situated *outside* the container state of sin, the Self presented as "the old self" has not. Together with Christ, the "old self" has been crucified (*συνεσταυρώθη*) along with its morals, values, and social roles. Because the Subject resides outside the container-state of *ἁμαρτία*, he is no longer under its control and power. Furthermore, Christ's freedom from sin and death by virtue of his death and resurrection anticipates that believers, too, will "live to God" and will walk in new life (6:8–10).

I have sought to show that in this section of Romans, Paul presents a *narrative*. This metaphorical narrative pertains to *events* involving the believer and *events* involving Christ. Paul speaks not merely about *what is* but *what has taken place*. He does not simply present facts; he narrates events. The narrative recounts events that resulted in the believers' change in status by virtue of their new relationship with Christ. Moreover, this is a narrative that redefines who the believer *is*. That Paul here is focused on the *identity* of his audience is seen by the complex metaphors of the self we have examined (6:6) and by the overarching framework of life and death. Death signals the terminus of existence, whereas the beginning of life marks the entry point of one's very being. We might say that Paul's language of life and death is fundamentally about the believer's sense of being, about who believers *are*.

Romans 6:10 concludes a section in Paul's letter many refer to as the "indicative" section of his argument. Indeed, there are many "indicative" statements, if by that we mean propositions about what God has done in redemptive history resulting in salvation. However, I have sought to show that Romans 6:1–10 is more than a mere set of propositions of what God has done. Paul has been recounting a metaphorical narrative that has focused on the believer's identity, especially in relationship to Christ and to sin.

Reading Romans 6:1–10 through this lens of a metaphorical narrative about *identity* is preferable to reading it through the lens of the “indicative” for at least two reasons.

First, the lens of the believer’s *identity* is wide enough to include ethical dimensions. Features such as character, values, virtue, vice, and volition are part of the picture when the lens we look through is “identity.” On the other hand, many see in these eight verses an “indicative” that merely prepares the reader for Paul’s “imperative” and thus for the apostle’s ethical punch in the verses that follow. The “indicative” lens sharpens the image when what is in view are propositional statements, but the cost of this crisp image is that the lens also filters out many of the ethical elements that would be observable otherwise. This filter is built into the lens system designed as a set of two lenses: the “indicative” and the “imperative.” The wide-angle lens of “identity” seems to me to be the best option for viewing this portion of text.

Second, “identity” rightly identifies the ethical import of this section of Romans by focusing on who the believer *is* rather than what the believer *does*. Paul’s portrayal of sin further underscores the existential character of his ethical discussion in Romans 6:1–10. Even though, as we have seen, *ἁμαρτία* does not here refer to immoral human *actions*, the term remains embedded within a moral framework.¹³⁹ By portraying sin as a state and power, Paul has effectively broadened the framework of human morality beyond that of actions. In other words, the Financial Transaction frame Paul used in Romans 5:12–21 to explain the human problem of sin and the free gift Christ offers accounts only for one part of Paul’s gospel.

That frame did not allow Paul to communicate all that sin is and does and all that Christ accomplished. Conceiving sin merely as an action incurring a debt that must be paid could lead to the kind of question Paul anticipates in Romans 6:1—a question

¹³⁹ Paul has never once in this chapter spoken about sin as an action. Nevertheless, from the beginning, sin has been connected to a believer’s conduct—it is something that an individual can live in, and thus is still tied to the individual’s morality and ethical conduct.

that, ridiculous as it may sound, is consistent with the metaphorical logic of the narrative in 5:12–21. Because sin has to do not only with human actions but also with the human state, Paul’s ethical discussion in Romans 6 comes to us in terms of who the believer *is*. Whereas “indicative” can competently describe Christ’s salvific work in forgiving transgressions (Romans 5) and in redefining who the believer is in relationship with sin (Romans 6), “identity” seems more precise as a category to describe the shift in his ethical language and the framework he uses to resolve the ethical tension he anticipates through his question in 6:1.

It seems, then, that the ethical import of Romans 6:3–10 is twofold. At the broadest level, Paul reframes sin—in Romans 5 it is an immoral act that incurs a debt, in Romans 6 it is a state, which is itself later reframed into a power. This framing and reframing allows Paul to discuss the believer’s relationship with sin, not simply as a matter of *doing* but as a matter of *being*. Second, by virtue of a believer’s union with Christ, a believer is a different kind of being. For believers, there is a Self that has been crucified and a Self that has been rendered powerless. Christ’s resurrection has affected the very nature of who the believer is. Because Christ has been released from the power of death and sin and because believers are united to Christ in his death, they also share the benefits of being released from these powers. In other words, the believer’s death to sin hinges on Christ’s own death and resurrection. Christ was the one who died to sin, escaped from the grip of sin and death, and yet lives to God. His accomplishment only benefits those united with him in his death and resurrection through baptism. It is they who are promised life after their death to sin. Many questions remain, and Paul will answer a few of them beginning in 6:15. But now that the narrative has been presented, Paul is ready to exhort his audience using the narrative’s language and frame.

CHAPTER 6

“CONSIDER YOURSELVES TO BE . . .”: THE ETHICS OF SELF-PERCEPTION (ROMANS 6:11–14)

Many of the problems associated with the “indicative-imperative” surface as we transition from Romans 6:1–10 to 6:11–14. As Sang Chang Park notes, “if believers died to sin in baptism (Rom 6:2), how can they be urged to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God (Rom 6:11)? If believers are set free from sin (Rom 6:7ff), how can they be admonished not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies (Rom 6:12f)?”¹⁴⁰ This aspect of the “indicative-imperative” is what I referred to earlier as the “consistency tension.”

Furthermore, those who see Romans 6:1–10 as depicting the “indicative” of God’s gift of grace see in 6:11–14 the “imperative” of Paul’s ethical demands. Some recognize that in Paul’s thought, the “imperative” in verses 11–14 is logically grounded on the “indicative” of verses 1–10 (οὐτως, 6:11; οὖν, 6:12). What that logic is, however, has been the issue of much debate, as I showed in chapter 1.¹⁴¹ My goal in this chapter is to explore the Pauline imperatives of Romans 6:11–14 and to propose a logical “bridge” that connects this section to the previous section. I will argue that the categories of *identity*, *obligation*, and *location* are conceptually inseparable in Paul’s ethical thought

¹⁴⁰ Sang Chang Park, “The Relation of the Imperative to the Indicative in Paul’s Thought: An Exegetical Study of Romans 6” (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1977), 2. The tension is not simply a theological tension (i.e., if God is sovereign, are human beings responsible for their actions?). Instead, what makes these statements difficult to harmonize is the fact that they involve the same lexical units and metaphors, though they are implored in seemingly inconsistent ways. In this way, the “indicative-imperative” tension is more akin to the tension regarding justification that arises from James’ statements and Paul’s statements.

¹⁴¹ I referred to this feature of the “indicative-imperative” problem as the “logical tension.” See “Defining the Question in chapter 1.

and that together they serve as the logical ground for his prohibitions and admonitions in this section of Romans 6.

I will begin by considering the important imperative in 6:11, λογίξεσθε ἑαυτοὺς. I will argue that this non-prototypical imperative primarily urges Paul’s audience to participate in the metaphorical narrative of 6:2–10 through autobiographical reconstruction. The imperative operates at the conceptual level, reshaping the believers’ self-understanding. Furthermore, I will show that the admonition for believers to “consider themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God” evokes the Essential Self metaphor. Paul will use this metaphor in verses 12–13 as well to conceptualize the complex reality of the believer’s identity in relationship to sin and Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). The second section of this chapter will focus on verses 12–14, where I will argue that Paul’s imperatives are grounded and only make sense in light of the believer’s new *identity*—an identity that is defined by *obligational relationships* based on the *believer’s conceptual location* (with respect to sin and with respect to Christ).

“Consider Yourselves” and the Imperative of Autobiographical Reconstruction (Rom 6:11)

Romans 6:11 is a significant transitional verse in the chapter. Some scholars think it belongs with 6:5–10,¹⁴² while others prefer to keep 6:1–14 as a whole unit.¹⁴³ There are clear connections between verse 11 and the previous section (such as the repetition of being “dead to sin” and “alive to God”) as well as thematic parallels with the verses that follow (such as the presence of imperative verbs and second-person

¹⁴² So James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, vol. 38A, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 323, 333; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 438; Hendrikus Boers, “The Structure and Meaning of Romans 6:1–14,” *CBQ* 63, no. 4 (October 2001): 676; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 258. For Jewett, v. 11 belongs with 6:1–10 since he takes the verb λογίξεσθε as an indicative related to εἰδότες in v. 9. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 408.

¹⁴³ C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC 42A (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 296; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 378–79; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 305–6.

pronouns). Because of this project’s focus on Paul’s ethical framework (and on the “indicative-imperative” schema in particular), I will analyze Paul’s metaphorical language in verse 11 as part of the paraenetic section consisting of 6:11–14.

The Imperative of Participation

As the only finite verb in verse 11, *λογίζεσθε* carries significant freight in the verse for at least three reasons. First, if we follow most scholars and take the verb as an imperative, the verb serves as an entry point into the paraenetic section of the letter.¹⁴⁴ The introductory words *οὕτως καὶ*, which connect the imperative to the narrative of 6:2–10, suggest that this imperative expresses an implication, the inferential course of action Paul wants his audience to take based on the preceding text.¹⁴⁵ As I mentioned earlier, under the “indicative-imperative” schema, verse 11 marks a transition into the “imperative” section of this chapter, mainly because the verb is the first second-person imperative to appear in Romans.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the imperative conveys that Paul wants the content of the command to become a reality; the verb thus functions as “an inducement for the addressee to bring about the content.”¹⁴⁷ However, the imperative phrase *λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς* is a non-prototypical imperative. It is unclear how “consider yourselves” has any immediate effect or how the completion of the action could be verified.¹⁴⁸ Because of the cognitive dimension of the verb *λογίζομαι*, the “reality” that

¹⁴⁴ Robert Jewett is virtually alone in taking the verb as an indicative, though he claims to follow Bengel and Hoffmann in that reading. Jewett, *Romans*, 408, 408n184.

¹⁴⁵ The adverb *οὕτως* is often used to draw an inference from what precedes. See BDAG, s.v. “οὕτω/οὕτως” 1.b., 741.

¹⁴⁶ The first imperative verb in the letter comes in Romans 3:4: *γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής* . . .

¹⁴⁷ Cleo Condoravdi and Sven Lauer, “Imperatives: Meaning and Illocutionary Force,” *EISS* 9 (2012): 38.

¹⁴⁸ This comment is based Oscar Jiménez’s discussion in *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22: Motion towards Maximal Proximity and Higher Status*, LBS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 57. Jiménez quotes Laura A. Michaels, professor and chair of linguistics at the University of Colorado Boulder, from a personal correspondence regarding the imperative “remember” in Ephesians 2:11.

Paul desires of his audience is less about a specific action-produced result and more about them internalizing the new reality of their identity as those who have died to sin.

It is curious that Paul bothers to write the command at all. Assuming his audience has been baptized into Christ, has Paul not already implied that they should see themselves as dead to sin (6:2, 6)? If he wishes to be explicit about his audience’s reality, why not simply say, “you have died to sin and are alive to God in Christ Jesus”?¹⁴⁹ Studies in cognitive linguistics have shown that the use of the imperative evokes first-person perspective action patterns in addressees that create deeper cognitive processing.¹⁵⁰ Because of the nature of the verb, the deeper processing will manifest itself at the *cognitive* level—the imperative elicits deep self-consideration of the addressees.¹⁵¹

The second feature of the verb is its role in transitioning the discourse from the first person back to the second person. Paul had not used a second-person verb since verse 3 (ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι . . .) when he introduced the narrative, which he recounted entirely in the first-person plural. The use of λογίζεσθε, by contrast, spotlights the audience. Furthermore, cognitive linguists have shown that “the pronoun ‘you’ has [also] been found to promote the active mental simulation of events from the perspective of an immersed protagonist as opposed to a passive onlooker.”¹⁵² The verb λογίζεσθε thus

¹⁴⁹ The question I raise here is inspired by a similar question Jiménez asked of the imperative in Ephesians 2:11. Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 58.

¹⁵⁰ Johan Blomberg and Jordan Zlatev have shown that perspective shapes people’s responses to narrative and embodied metaphors. Thus, Paul’s audience was more likely to experience an active simulation from the imperative in 6:11 than if the phrase had been communicated in the indicative mood. Johan Blomberg and Jordan Zlatev, “Non-Actual Motion: Phenomenological Analysis and Linguistic Evidence,” *Cognitive Processing* 16, no. Sup 1 (September 2015): 153–57. See also Jeannette Littlemore, *Metaphors in the Mind: Sources of Variation in Embodied Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 65–66.

¹⁵¹ Although he acknowledges that Paul here is calling believers to “arm themselves with the mentality that they are dead to sin,” Joseph Fitzmyer misapplies the imperative by suggesting that Paul is also calling believers to “imitate Christ (because he has died to sin, so you too).” Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 438. Paul is not calling for believers to *imitate* Christ in his death to sin. The event of the believers’ death to sin has already taken place and it is not repeatable.

¹⁵² Littlemore, *Metaphors in the Mind*, 65. See, for example, the studies by Tad T. Brunyé et al., “Better You than I: Perspectives and Emotion Simulation during Narrative Comprehension,” *Journal of Cognitive Psychology* 23, no. 5 (August 1, 2011): 659–66; Perrine Ruby and Jean Decety, “Effect of

evokes the *agency* of Paul’s audience and turns them into explicit participants within the narrative he has presented.¹⁵³

The third significant feature of the imperative is Paul’s lexical choice. Especially when it takes a double accusative (or accusative + infinitive), the verb *λογίζομαι* can be translated as “reckon,” “judge,” or “consider.”¹⁵⁴ The original text likely included *εἶναι* as part of the construction, but even if it did not, the meaning of the phrase does not change.¹⁵⁵ Paul calls for his audience to consider themselves *to be* a particular kind of people. In other words, Paul here calls for his audience to think upon who they are, to consider their *identity*. C. E. B. Cranfield rightly notes that *λογίζομαι* does not denote “a pretending (‘as if’), nor a mere ideal, but a deliberate and sober judgment on the basis of the gospel.”¹⁵⁶ This reckoning does not involve “a supreme effort of moral will” but calculates “what is in fact the case.”¹⁵⁷ As a non-agentive verb, *λογίζομαι* functions primarily as attention-directing rather than to highlight a specific action with a desired, observable and consequential result.¹⁵⁸

Subjective Perspective Taking during Simulation of Action: A PET Investigation of Agency,” *Nature Neuroscience* 4, no. 5 (May 2001): 546–50.

¹⁵³ The fact that Paul is thinking about his audience as participating specifically *in the narrative* is evidenced by the content of the imperative. He wants them to consider themselves “dead to sin and alive to God,” language that makes sense only in the context of 6:3–10. In other words, the only way for Paul’s audience to follow through with the imperative is for them to embrace the realities of the narrative.

¹⁵⁴ BDAG, “*λογίζομαι*” 1.b., 597.

¹⁵⁵ NA28 includes the word *εἶναι* in brackets: *λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. For a brief discussion on the witnesses and the variants, see Jewett, *Romans*, 390nk.

¹⁵⁶ Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.

¹⁵⁷ N. T. Wright, “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” in *Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and Elizabeth E. Johnson, vol. 3, *Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 48. Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 323.

¹⁵⁸ See a similar discussion pertaining to the verb *μνημονεύετε* in Ephesians 2:11–12 in Jiménez, *Metaphors in the Narrative of Ephesians 2:11–22*, 56–59.

Studies by sociologists of religion have isolated “biographical reconstruction” as an important marker of the conversion experience.¹⁵⁹ Steven Chester notes that converts “come to tell a radically different story of their lives from that which they would have told before their conversion.”¹⁶⁰ He further argues that Romans 6 depicts a series of events that reconstruct the biography of believers by shaping their orientations, dispositions, and allegiances.¹⁶¹ This idea of “biographical reconstruction” fits well with the argument I have been developing about what the narrative of Romans 6:2–10 is intended to do—it reshapes and reframes believers’ identity. Up to this point, Paul himself has been engaged in the reconstruction of who believers are, but in 6:11, he tasks believers with that same biographical reconstruction. The biography they need to consider, however, is their own. Thus, the shift from first-person narrative to second-person imperative also creates a shift from “biographical reconstruction” to “autobiographical reconstruction.” Cranfield concludes, “So here the imperative followed by *ἑαυτοὺς εἶναι* means something like ‘Recognize that the truth of the gospel means that you are . . .’”¹⁶²

Chester makes one more significant argument about *λογίζομαι* in 6:11. He argues that Paul intended the verb to resonate with *δικαιόω* in 6:7 and form a link to

¹⁵⁹ The term “biographical reconstruction” was used by David Snow and Richard Machalek in their studies of conversion. David A. Snow and Richard Machalek, “The Sociology of Conversion,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 1 (1984): 167–90. Clifford Staples and Armand Mauss further argue that “biographical reconstruction” is a unique marker among converts. Clifford L. Staples and Armand L. Mauss, “Conversion or Commitment? A Reassessment of the Snow and Machalek Approach to the Study of Conversion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (1987): 133–47. See also Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 28–29.

¹⁶⁰ Stephen J. Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11): Biographical Reconstruction, Conversion, and the Death of the Self in Romans,” in *Religious and Philosophical Conversion in the Ancient Mediterranean Traditions*, ed. Athanasios Despotis and Hermut Löhr, *Ancient Philosophy & Religion* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 344. See also Stephen J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul’s Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 15–25.

¹⁶¹ Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11),” 364. Chester borrows the phrase “allegiances, dispositions, and emotions” from John Barclay, who also includes actions as part of the believers’ “new mode of existence.” See John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 500–501.

¹⁶² Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 315.

Paul’s earlier teaching of God reckoning believers righteous (Rom 3:28; 4:5, 6, 22).¹⁶³ In a sense, he proposes that in 6:11, Paul forges an intentional link between the “indicative” of Romans 3–5 and the “imperative” that begins with Romans 6:11 (though he himself does not use those terms). Chester suggests the human reckoning elicited by the imperative λογίζεσθε “is the counterpart and response to the divine act of reckoning involved in the justification of those who have died with Christ in baptism (6:7).”¹⁶⁴ Though it is true that Paul’s unexpected use of δικαιώω in 6:7 invites a connection with Paul’s previous discussion on justification, it seems to me that the link Paul is making here is a different one than the one Chester proposes.¹⁶⁵

The content of the “consideration” is, of course, as important as the consideration itself. Paul has spoken about death to sin and life to God throughout the chapter, but he now switches from the verbal form to the adjectival form to describe the death. In 6:2, he noted that “we have died (ἀποθνήσκω) to sin,” and in verse 10 that Christ “died (ἀποθνήσκω) to sin.” In verse 11, however, he calls for believers to consider themselves νεκροὺς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ. The adjective shifts the focus from the event to the result—from what believers experienced to who they now are. As I mentioned earlier, this instruction is meant to be obeyed at the cognitive level. Paul continues to refrain from accompanying his comments about believers’ death to sin with an explanation of

¹⁶³ Chester proposes that λογίζομαι “points backwards, for the reckoning by believers of themselves as dead to sin in 6:11 should be heard in the context of the earlier discussion of justification by faith.” Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11),” 360.

¹⁶⁴ Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11),” 362.

¹⁶⁵ It is well established that δικαιώω in Romans 3–5 is forensic. By counting/reckoning (λογίζομαι) the sinner’s faith as righteousness (Rom 4:3, 23–24), God effectively *reckons* the individual in a new light; God *justifies* sinners in that he *reckons* them righteous. God’s reckoning about believers’ legal status elicits an act of faith on their part whereby they affirm the metaphorical narrative about their justification: “we consider (λογίζομαι) that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:28). Chester is right, then, that for Paul, God’s “reckoning” of the sinner’s righteousness has a human counterpart. That counterpart, however, is found in Romans 3:28, not in Romans 6:11. Instead, Romans 6:11 is the “λογίζομαι” counterpart to the metaphorical narrative of 6:3–10 such that, by virtue of their baptism-death with Christ, believers have died to sin and are alive to God and should consider themselves as such.

the reality's *behavioral* implications.¹⁶⁶ In short, he continues to speak about sin as a power rather than as concrete action, precisely as he did in his presentation of Christ's relationship with sin in verse 10.

Self-Consideration and the Essential Self

We recall that Paul often distinguishes individuals from themselves such that they, as subjects, can interact with themselves.¹⁶⁷ We saw Paul do this in verse 6 (see "THE BODY IS A CONTAINER SELF [v. 6b]" in chapter 5). By calling believers to consider themselves to be a certain kind of individual, Paul, once again employs the Subject-Self metaphor, though in a different way than he did previously. Lakoff and Johnson explain that in our conceptual system, we have a general metaphor "in which our Essence is part of our Subject—our subjective consciousness, our locus of thought, judgment, and will."¹⁶⁸ This "Essence," they explain, "is what makes you unique, [what] makes you *you*. It is your Essence that makes you behave like you, not like somebody else."¹⁶⁹

However, we do not always behave in a way that is consistent with our values. It is common for people to be polite in public and to refrain from expressing their true feelings lest they offend others.¹⁷⁰ We also find ourselves apologizing for our behavior by

¹⁶⁶ Paul certainly is not saying that the believers' death to sin means that they can no longer commit sinful actions. Nevertheless, my point is that, up to this point, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about what the believers' death to sin means for their moral conduct.

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, the comments by Rudolf Bultmann in *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 196.

¹⁶⁸ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 282.

¹⁶⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 282.

¹⁷⁰ In these situations, we conceive of our Inner Self (our "real" Self) as hiding inside our Outer self. The Outer Self is pleasing to others while the Inner Self hides because it is fragile, ashamed, or fearful of what will result if it is revealed to the public. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 282.

saying something like, “I wasn’t myself this morning,” “my impatient self came out,” or “that wasn’t the real me.”¹⁷¹ Lakoff and Johnson explain:

Our concept of who we essentially are is often incompatible with what we actually do. This incompatibility between our Essence and what we really do is the subject matter of the Essential Self metaphor. In the metaphor, there are two Selves. One Self (the “real,” or “true,” Self) is compatible with one’s Essence and is always conceptualized as a person. The second Self (not the “real,” or “true,” Self) is incompatible with one’s Essence and is conceptualized as either a person or a container¹⁷²

The Self compatible with the Subject is referred to as the Essential Self. It is “compatible” in that the Essential Self’s values, social roles, and expectations are compatible with the Subject’s locus of thought, judgment, and will.

The model of the Essential Self is helpful for reading Romans 6:11 for two important reasons. First, it conceptualizes and structures the relationship between who we are and how we live as an element of our *identity*.¹⁷³ Moreover, because metaphors help us experience one thing in terms of another, the Essential Self metaphor helps us visualize and *experience* our conduct in terms of who we really are. When Paul tells the Romans, “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God,” he presents one Self as dead and one Self (the Essential Self) as alive. The Selves are thus persons who embody different values and morals. The audience visualizes and experiences one set of values and motives as lifeless and inert and another as full of life and oriented toward God. Through the Essential Self metaphor, the categories of ethics, morality, and conduct are

¹⁷¹ In these examples, the speaker recognizes that his conduct (an element of the Subject) was inconsistent with his “real” Self. There are other Selves that can “come out” if we are not careful.

¹⁷² Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 282. The authors suggest that the second Self (the one incompatible with one’s Essence) is conceptualized as a person or a container “that the first Self hides inside of.” However, this does not seem to always be the case, as Paul will demonstrate in v. 13.

¹⁷³ The individual is not a static being but is one who has a role in community and has certain values and expectations (the Self) which influence how one lives (the Subject).

activated in the minds of the readers, even though Paul is still speaking only about their identity.¹⁷⁴

Second, the Essential Self metaphor helps us see the significance of Paul's exhortation to the Roman believers. The Essential Self is modified over a person's life. Martin Edwardes suggests that we tend to hold cognitive representations of several Essential Selves, although only one at a time.¹⁷⁵ Over time, we cycle through a range of Essential Selves shaped by our community and culture. Since our own perception of our "true self" directly influences our conduct, Paul is concerned that his audience perceives themselves in light of the narrative he has presented. In other words, because self-perception has implications for one's ethics, Paul considers it essential to urge his readers to view themselves in light of the death they have experienced and the life that ensues.

CHRIST IS A CONTAINER

I have focused so far on Paul's exhortation that believers consider themselves dead to sin. However, the second half of verse 11, ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is also important in that it prepares the way for Paul's subtle transition into the realm of the believer's *conduct*. The phrase "live to God" recalls Paul's deduction that believers cannot "live in" sin (6:2b) as well as the statement that Christ now "lives to God" (6:10). Though the verb ζάω often denotes physical or transcendent life, it can also mean "to conduct oneself in a pattern of behavior."¹⁷⁶ The context in 6:10–11 makes it difficult to determine the sense there. Still, Paul has already explained that Christ's resurrection promises believers will walk in new *life* (6:4). The verb περιπατέω, as I discussed in

¹⁷⁴ We remember that whereas the Subject is the person-like center of experienced consciousness, the "locus of reason," the Self consists of everything else about us—our bodies, our social roles, values, and our histories. See "Subject and Self in the Cognitive Unconscious" in chapter 5.

¹⁷⁵ Martin P. J. Edwardes, *The Origins of Self: An Anthropological Perspective* (London: UCL Press, 2019), 167. Edwardes uses the term "self-model" to refer to what I have been calling the Essential Self.

¹⁷⁶ BDAG, "ζάω" 3., 425.

chapter 4, evokes the metaphor MORAL CONDUCT IS WALKING (which itself is an extension of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY).¹⁷⁷ In verse 11, then, Paul alludes to a kind of living, a kind of walking, a kind of conduct unto God that is befitting those who have died to sin.

The final clause in 6:11, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is also significant. As we have seen throughout Romans 6, the preposition ἐν opens up a CONTAINER schema. Paul here reintroduces the positive counterpart to the container of sin that has dominated Romans 6—CHRIST IS A CONTAINER.¹⁷⁸ Conceptually, the phrase evokes the space where believers “live to God” and, presumably, where believers enjoy walking in new life. Romans 6:11 is only the second time the phrase appears in the book of Romans. The first instance is in 3:24, where Paul proclaimed that believers are justified by God’s grace, as a gift, through the redemption that is ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. There too, the locative preposition creates a conceptual space where God’s gracious gift is enjoyed—in Christ Jesus.

Conceptually, then, Paul not only urges the Romans to consider themselves to be something but also to be *somewhere*. The imperative calls for them to view themselves in an alternative container, an alternative state. Though, strictly speaking, the metaphor does not present Christ as a ruler or a power (the metaphors at play in verse 11 are CHRIST IS A CONTAINER and perhaps STATES ARE CONTAINERS), the recognition of Jesus Christ as κύριος would likely result in the metaphorical extension from CHRIST IS A CONTAINER to CHRIST IS A POWERFUL AGENT. As John Barclay notes, then, an essential aspect of Paul’s understanding of the believers’ new identity is that it is “not in the first place an *anthropological* phenomenon: it is experienced by human beings only inasmuch as they share in, and draw from, a life whose source lies outside of themselves, the life of

¹⁷⁷ See the section entitled “NEW LIFE IS A CONTAINER (6:4b)” in chapter 4.

¹⁷⁸ Even though this is only the first time we see ἐν Χριστῷ in Romans 6, Christ as a container was also evoked by the preposition εἰς (εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) in 6:3. See the section “CHRIST AND HIS DEATH ARE CONTAINERS” in chapter 4.

the risen Christ.”¹⁷⁹ Finally, Paul’s spatial conception of the place of believers foreshadows what he will make explicit in subsequent verses: being *in* Christ is the necessary and exclusive alternative to being *in* sin.¹⁸⁰ But being in Christ, much like being in sin, implies being under someone’s control or influence.¹⁸¹

Though verse 11 includes an important imperative, it is a non-prototypical imperative. It operates at the cognitive level and does not call for a particular action or behavior. However, the imperatives in 6:12–13 do evoke a specific form of conduct. They also create cognitive tension with the metaphorical narrative that precedes them—a tension rightly perceived within the “indicative-imperative” schema. It is to these imperatives and to this tension we now turn.

Identity and Presentation: Sin, Subject, and the True Self (Rom 6:12–14)

In Romans 6:12, Paul continues to incorporate elements from the metaphorical narrative of 6:2–10 (SIN IS A RULER, BODIES ARE CONTAINERS). The prohibition *μὴ βασιλευέτω*, an inference from verse 11 (*οὖν*), forms the next imperatival link in the brief paraenetic section that extends to verse 14. Many see in this verse one of the clearest pieces of evidence for the tension/antimony inherent in the “indicative-imperative” schema (the indicative that believers are no longer enslaved to sin [6:6] and the “imperative” found in 6:12, “Sin is not to reign in your mortal bodies.”)¹⁸² I will begin

¹⁷⁹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 501.

¹⁸⁰ BDAG notes that, especially for Paul, *ἐν* denotes “a close personal relation in which the referent of the *ἐν*-term is viewed as the controlling influence.” BDAG, s.v. “*ἐν*” 4.c., 327.

¹⁸¹ Paul’s important conception of believers being *in* Christ does not necessitate the theological conclusion that Paul is speaking mystically of what has been recently termed “theosis.” But even if these theological conclusions are correct, that does not therefore mean that Paul is not here speaking metaphorically as Nigel Turner suggests: “To be ‘in Christ’ is not to be taken in a local sense, which is crude and meaningless, but neither is it a metaphor. It is what certain theologians have termed ‘Christification,’ a sharing of the *physis* or nature of Christ . . .” Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament*, Biblical Studies: Gospel Narrative (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 119.

¹⁸² For Niklaus Gäumann, *μὴ βασιλευέτω* is the first paraenetic imperative since *λογίζεσθε* in v. 11 “is not directly a paraenetic imperative, but a warning call (mahnende Aufforderung) to recognize the facts that have been established and to let them be binding on oneself.” Niklaus Gäumann, *Taufe und Ethik:*

this section by arguing that we must read the ethical implications of the phrase *μὴ βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία* in light of the conceptual logic of the Essential Self metaphor embedded in Paul’s argument. I will conclude by proposing that the category of *identity* (which has been the focus of Paul’s argument thus far) helps relieve the antimony tension between the “indicative” of 6:2–10 and the “imperative” of 6:12–13.

The Continued Possibility of Sin’s Rule

Paul’s prohibition in verse 12 introduces substantial ethical implications for the life of believers. Sin’s rule over individuals recalls Paul’s final metaphorical development of sin in 6:6 (SIN IS A RULER). The imperative only makes sense if sin is not merely an action but a state and a ruling power that exercises influence over individuals. In other words, the communicative event of Paul’s prohibition is embedded within the narrative framework of Romans 6:2–10. It can only be correctly applied if believers accept and participate in that same narrative.

The prohibition itself implies two important complementary realities. First, it implies that an alternative to being under sin’s rule exists—it is possible for believers *not* to be ruled by sin. This implication flows naturally from Paul’s metaphorical narrative. If the rule of sin over an individual is fundamentally a matter of the individual’s location *in* sin, and believers are no longer *in* sin (6:2), then the default position of believers is *outside* of sin’s dominion. In other words, the metaphorical narrative reframes the moral life of believers by making the rule of sin over believers a matter of *where* they are and not primarily a matter of what they *do*.¹⁸³ Furthermore, as Paul has presented it, the

Studien zu Römer 6, BEvTh 47 (Munich: Kaiser, 1967), 88n171. So also Søren Agersnap, *Baptism and the New Life: A Study of Romans 6:1–14* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1999), 361.

¹⁸³ I am not convinced, for example, by Moo’s description that in 6:12, Paul is “moving from thought to action.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 405. The “action” (imperative “may not reign”) is not specifically directed at Paul’s audience and neither is it clear what the “action” consists of. Cranfield interprets v. 12 as an admonition for believers that they “must fight—they must not let sin go on reigning unopposed over their daily life.” Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 316. Interestingly, here, Paul does not employ any metaphors to communicate combat or competition, though he is not hesitant to do so elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor 9:25, 26; Eph 6:10–18; 1 Tim 1:18).

spatial location of the individuals is a matter of their *identity*. The autobiographical reconstruction he called for in verse 11 is defined by the believer’s spatial relationship with sin (DEATH IS DEPARTURE). Compliance with Paul’s exhortation in verse 12, then, fundamentally requires a particular self-perception and understanding of one’s spatial identity with respect to sin.

However, Paul’s prohibition in 6:12 also implies a second more problematic reality—that sin *can* continue to exercise some kind of rule over believers.¹⁸⁴ If we take the prohibition in 6:13a as an elaboration of the prohibition of 6:12, then it seems clear that sin can continue to exercise control over the believer’s “members.” If believers are no longer “in sin” (6:2) and sin’s rule is a matter of control over its contents (SIN IS A POWERFUL CONTAINER), then how can Paul imply the possibility of sin’s continued rule in believers if their death to sin has removed them from sin’s control? How does Paul’s own logic help us resolve the supposed tension between the “indicative” and the “imperative”? The answer involves returning to Paul’s presentation of who the believer is and, more specifically, to his depiction of the believer’s “Self.”

The “Mortal Body” as a Container Self

Paul’s language about the “old self” and the “body of sin” in 6:6 suggested that Paul understood himself, like we do today, as a complex of a Subject and multiple Selves. We saw that Paul presented one Self (the “old self”) as crucified and thus lifeless, while a second Self (the “body of sin”) as rendered ineffective (*καταργέω*) by virtue of its removal from the sin container. The prohibition to believers in 6:12 that sin is not to reign *ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι* seems to introduce a third Self, the “mortal body.”¹⁸⁵ As with

Cranfield’s explanation seems to diminish Paul’s narrative about the incapability of sin’s reign over those who are no longer “in it” (vv. 3–10).

¹⁸⁴ If this were not the case, then Paul’s exhortation would be meaningless.

¹⁸⁵ It is possible, as Moo suggests, that the “mortal body” in v. 12 is the same as the “body of sin” in v. 6. He writes, “In characterizing the body as ‘mortal,’ Paul is reminding us that the same body that

the “body of sin,” the “mortal body” is not *part* of who the believer is but a way of referring to the believer as a whole through the lens of his mortality and its susceptibility to the corruption of the cosmos. As such, τὸ θνητὸ ὑμῶν σῶμα encompasses more than just the physical body; it refers to the whole self along with its inner passions, as 6:12b indicates.¹⁸⁶

In verse 6, the “body” is the “body of sin” (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἀμαρτίας), in verse 12, Paul speaks about sin reigning in a “mortal body” (θνητῷ σώματι). We should not miss the difference. In verse 6, the “body of sin” describes a Self defined by the container-state of sin the individual inhabited. When believers die to sin (DEATH IS DEPARTURE), they are removed from the container of sin such that its influence over them dissipates since they are no longer *in* sin.¹⁸⁷ The prohibition in 6:12 implies that sin’s continued effect on the believer is possible through the “mortal body.” Paul has already explained that sin rules *in* death (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ; Rom 5:21), and the qualification of the body in 6:12 as the *mortal* body is no coincidence.¹⁸⁸ The mortality of the human individual is evidence that the fingerprint of sin remains even in believers.¹⁸⁹ The

has been severed from its servitude to sin (6:6) is nevertheless a body that still participates in the weakness, suffering, and dissolution of this age.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 406. However, it is also possible that Paul introduces a new somatic container Self not with sin but with mortality to contrast the mortality of believers’ bodies with Christ who will “never die again” (6:9).

¹⁸⁶ Contra Robert H. Gundry, “*Sōma*” in *Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, SNTSMS 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 29–31. See Schreiner, *Romans*, 324.

¹⁸⁷ As we saw in v. 6, though the “old self” is crucified, the “body of sin” is rendered powerless, though it does not appear to be abolished altogether.

¹⁸⁸ Matthew Croasmun suggests that the singular “‘mortal body’ does not refer to each individual’s body. . . . Rather, the body referred to in 6:12 is the collective, social body of Sin, of which they are members. It is ‘mortal’ inasmuch as it is subject to Sin, and therefore subject, at the mythological level, to Death, the consort of Sin.” Matthew Croasmun, “‘Real Participation’: The Body of Christ & the Body of Sin in Evolutionary Perspective,” in *“In Christ” in Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine R. Campbell, WUNT 384 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 146. Though intriguing, his proposal seems to contradict what Paul has been arguing about the state of the believer in relationship to sin. The believer is no longer “in sin,” and thus, no longer under its dominion. Moreover, the “mortal body” is that of believers (ὑμῶν), not that of sin.

¹⁸⁹ Moo observes, “Paul is reminding us that the same body that has been severed from its servitude to sin (6:6) is nevertheless a body that still participates in the weakness, suffering, and dissolution of this age.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 406.

believer’s “mortal body” stands in contrast to Christ, “who will never die again” (v. 9). We see, then, that believers do not yet enjoy the full benefits of Christ’s resurrection—they are still “mortal bodies” and, as such, remain within reach of sin and its effects.

In 6:12, Paul speaks of sin’s reign *in* his addressees’ mortal bodies, thus conceiving the “mortal body” as a container (MORTAL BODIES ARE CONTAINER SELVES).¹⁹⁰ He does not say that sin is merely in the “mortal body,” but that sin *reigns* in the “mortal body.” Thus, unlike what we have seen before, the *contents* of the container exercise force and influence over the container. How do we explain this conceptual phenomenon? We must place this container schema within the broader spatial schema Paul has presented already. We know that sin is a container state that exercises dominion over its contents. Therefore, if sin is to rule in the “mortal body,” the latter must both *contain* sin and be *inside* the container of sin. If we think of sin as A and the “mortal body” as B, then the conceptual picture appears to be the following:

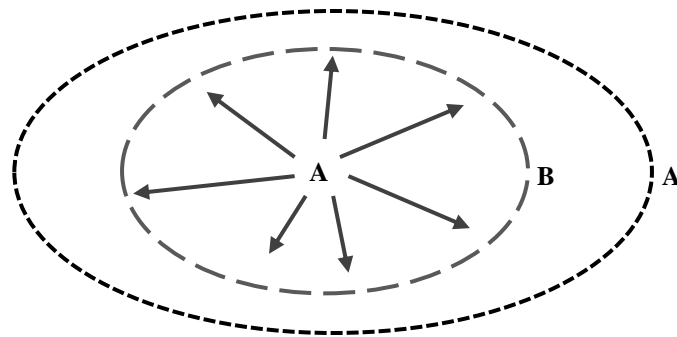


Figure 9: Conceptual logic of sin’s rule in the mortal body (Rom 6:12)

¹⁹⁰ Contra Agersnap, the preposition *ἐν* should be taken to denote location rather than instrument such that βασιλευέτω ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι means “reign in your mortal body” and not “reign by virtue of your mortal body.” Søren Agersnap, “Rom 6,12 og det paulinske imperativ,” *Dansk teologisk tidsskrift* 43, no. 1 (1980): 36–47. Agersnap makes the same argument, though less forcefully, in *Baptism and the New Life*, 374–75.

The apparent incoherence of sin being both *in* the mortal body and being that which *encloses* the “mortal body” is one shared by various container schemas in the NT: believers are *in* the Spirit (Rom 8:9), yet the Spirit is *in* believers (2 Cor 1:22); believers are *in* Christ (Rom 8:1), yet Christ is *in* believers (Col 1:27). Fabricius explains this “intermingling of container schemas” through the example of a cloth and a fluid:

Paul probably would have known the situation when a cloth, which is a container object, is drenched in a fluid, which is a container substance What one usually perceives to happen is that the dry cloth is now wet, cloth and fluid combining into one piece of wet cloth. The container substance is kept by the container object and they seem to become one, although we would still recognise the cloth and the fluid to be two separate entities, only now they have mixed. The fabric contains the fluid, but we can imagine that the fabric is simultaneously in the fluid.¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, the “indicative-imperative” tension in Paul’s theology remains: how can sin still have dominion over believers if Paul’s argument thus far is that it does not?

The Incongruous Self and the True Self

As we saw in chapter 1, scholars often attempt to resolve the “indicative-imperative” tension in Romans 6 and elsewhere by connecting it to Paul’s eschatological tension of the “already” and the “not yet.” The purpose of this project is to use Paul’s own metaphorical categories to explain the tensions that sometimes arise in his ethical argument. Here I will argue that the Essential Self metaphor provides a better conceptual path toward understanding the logic of Paul’s ethical argument in Romans 6. I noted earlier that we often employ the Essential Self metaphor to express the incongruity we experience within us.¹⁹² The structure of this conceptual metaphor reveals that our actions are associated with a Self, and the “core” of who we are (our Essence) is associated with our Subject. Since our bodies generally carry out our actions, and our bodies belong to

¹⁹¹ Steffi Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences: Positioning Cognitive Semantic Theory and Method within Theology*, HUTh 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 210.

¹⁹² We say things like “I wasn’t myself this morning,” or “that wasn’t the real me.”

the Self, the incongruity is one between our Self and our Subject.¹⁹³ Therefore, I will argue that Paul conceives of the “indicative-imperative” tension as an existential tension between our Subject and our various Selves, and, more specifically, as a tension between our Incongruous Self and our True Self.¹⁹⁴

We have seen that our description (and Paul’s) about who we are reveals that we understand ourselves metaphorically as comprised of one Subject and multiple Selves. Lakoff and Johnson’s Essential Self metaphor involves one Self, the “Real Self,” which is congruent with the Essence of the Subject, and a second Self that is not the “Real Self” and is not congruent with the Essence of the Subject.¹⁹⁵ For the purposes of this study, I will refer to these as the “True Self” and the “Incongruous Self.” Though the believer’s union with Christ has resulted in a new identity marked by spatial location outside sin and in changes to the Subject and the Self, Paul nevertheless conceives of a situation in which sin’s dominion can still affect the believer (6:12–13a).

We find an important clue about how Paul conceives the possibility that believers can still be affected by the rule of sin in his language in verse 12. There, Paul conceives of the mortal body both as *enclosing* sin and *enclosed* by sin (see Figure 7). However, as I argued, the “mortal body” is a Self, distinct from the Subject and the Essence of the believer. Moreover, it is important to note that in verse 12, Paul does not state that sin can make the *believer* obey its passions. The prepositional phrase εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ makes the subject of obedience ambiguous. However, conceptually and grammatically, it is better to understand Paul to be speaking about sin making the *mortal body* (rather than the believer, “you,” as most English translations

¹⁹³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 283.

¹⁹⁴ In this section, I will specifically address the tension that arises between the “indicatives” of v. 6 (“. . . so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin”) and v. 7 (“For one who has died has been set free from sin,”) and the “imperative” of v. 12, (“Sin, therefore, is not to reign in your mortal bodies”).

¹⁹⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 283.

render the phrase) obey its passions. This distinction is important; Paul has emphasized that the believer is no longer under sin's rule. Later in 6:14 he declares, "sin will have no dominion over you" (ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει). He grounds these realities on a spatial conception of the believer's new Essence located *outside* sin. Because the believer is no longer *in* sin, he *cannot* be ruled by it. Nevertheless, believers can act in ways that are contradictory and inconsistent with who they are. Thus, Paul conceives of a Self, the "mortal body" (v. 12), and its members (v. 13a) who can come under sin's reign.

The spatial schema already erected by Paul in 6:2–10 helps us to understand the conceptual nature of 6:12–13a. In 6:13a, Paul prohibits the presentation (μηδὲ παριστάνετε) of the believers' members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness.¹⁹⁶ The mention of "members" (τὰ μέλη) carries the somatic scope of the exhortation in verse 12 into verse 13, which seems to be a more direct elaboration of the prohibition in the previous verse. Paul here calls believers not to put their "natural capacities" at the disposal of sin, the ruler, to be used for unrighteousness. Once again, we must understand and conceptualize Paul's language in light of the metaphorical narrative in which he embeds it. Based on the existing spatial logic of Paul's argument, the "presentation" Paul prohibits implies the motion of the "mortal body" and the believer's "members" across space in the direction of sin from a location outside of sin.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, Paul's language depicts a Subject with the rational and volitional capabilities to "present" the Self (the "mortal body" along with its members) to sin, a ruler, resulting in obedience to sin's passions. We can therefore illustrate the situation Paul prohibits this way:

¹⁹⁶ Though Cranfield and François Malan understand to refer to "tools" or "instruments" here, most scholars rightly observe that Paul's use of the word μέλος suggests a more specific military meaning (Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4). See Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 318; François S. Malan, "Bound to Do Right," *Neotestamentica* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1981): 124.

¹⁹⁷ More specifically, if v. 13 is understood as an elaboration of the prohibition in v. 12, then the rule of sin is also assumed in v. 13. As I mentioned previously, then, the presentation of one's members to sin implies *entrance* into the container of sin where sin asserts its controlling force (see Figure 7).

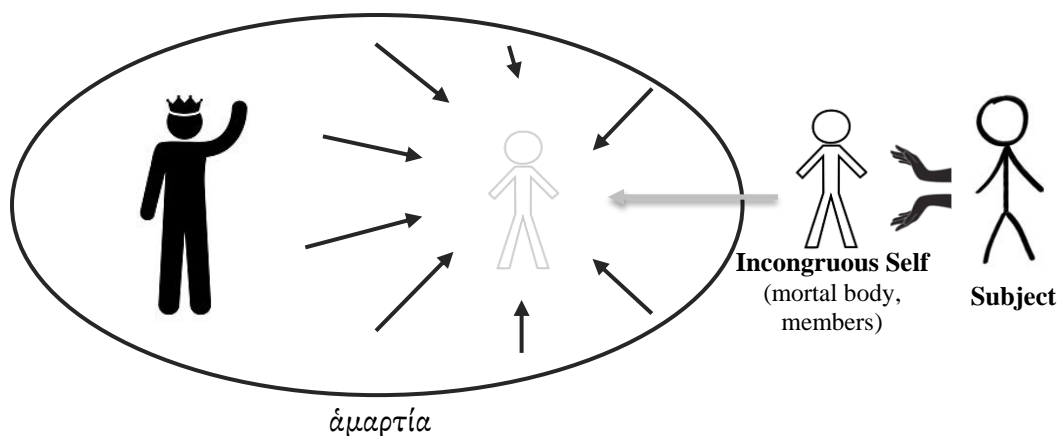


Figure 10: Conceptual structure and logic of Romans 6:12–13a

Although the believer, by virtue of his death to sin, is one who has been set free from sin (6:7) and one whose “old self” was crucified such that he is no longer enslaved to sin (6:6b), Paul nevertheless recognizes the reality of the “mortal body” (6:12). The “mortal body” is a way of referring to the believer while acknowledging the mark of death left by sin.¹⁹⁸ The “mortal body” and its members thus constitute an Incongruous Self the believer can choose to “present” to sin. This act of the believer’s will results in sin having temporary dominion over the believer’s mortal body/members Self (εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ).

Because the believer is fundamentally no longer *in* sin, an alternative to the scenario depicted in 6:13a exists. Believers now have the option, capability, and duty to present themselves to God “as those who have been brought from death to life” (6:13b). The fact that Paul’s imperative is to present “yourselves” (ἑαυτοὺς) and “your members” (τὰ μέλη) to God, and not “your mortal bodies,” evokes a different Self from what we

¹⁹⁸ The “mortal body” is a way to refer to the believer’s embodied existence marked by decay and death. Though it does not present the believer in a negative light, it does evoke the negative sin-stained features of the believer’s identity. Paul uses “mortal body” to speak of a facet of the believer’s post-conversion identity susceptible to sin’s continued influence—it is a Self that wields significant immoral potential.

saw in 6:12 and 6:13a.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the phrase *παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς . . . ὡσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας* in 6:13b evokes the True Self, a Self the Subject is to present to God that is in harmony with the Essence of who the believer is.²⁰⁰ The phrase *τῷ θεῷ* reminds readers of what Paul said about Christ in 6:10, “the life he lives he lives to God.” This living “to God” is also an essential part of the believers’ new identity, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11).

This alternative form of living Paul commands in 6:13b is thus informed and enabled by virtue of the fact that believers are now alive *in Christ* (CHRIST IS A CONTAINER).²⁰¹ The conceptual location of the believer “in Christ” is tremendously important in Paul’s ethical argument. Believers’ spatial relocation from *in sin* to *in Christ* means that they are now fundamentally under the control and influence of the Christ container. Moreover, the Essence of the believer is now “in Christ,” which further confirms that the Self depicted in 6:13b is the True Self since it is the Self that aligns both with Christ’s own living (6:10) and with the new identity of the believer (6:11). Paul’s exhortation for believers to present themselves to God and not to sin is a call to conduct themselves in harmony with their new identity as those who now live *in Christ*. We can therefore illustrate the conceptual logic of Paul’s exhortation in 6:13b as follows:

¹⁹⁹ The “members” appear to be a morally neutral.

²⁰⁰ The word *ὡσεὶ* here means “as you really are” rather than “as if you were.” Furthermore, “while formally a comparison, [it] has something of a causal nuance: ‘present yourselves to God, since you are alive from the dead.’” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 409n482.

²⁰¹ Paul first mentioned believers’ new location “in Christ” in 6:3 when he spoke about them having been baptized *into* (*εἰς*) Christ, thus depicting Christ as a container into which believers have entered.

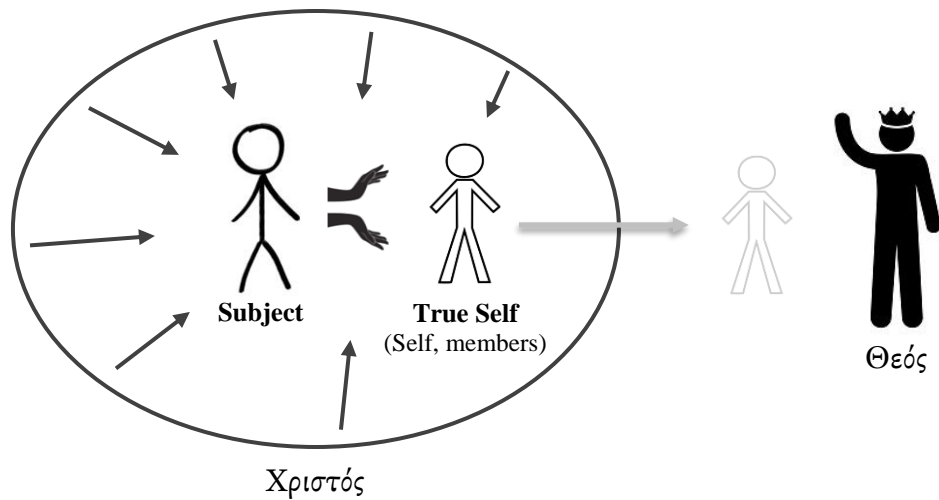


Figure 11: Conceptual structure and logic of Romans 6:13b

Obligation, Location, and Identity

So far in this chapter, I have approached the logic of Paul’s ethical argument by considering the significance of the Essential Self metaphor, which the apostle employs in his exhortation. However, we must examine another cluster of metaphors in 6:12–14 to fully appreciate his ethical thought. Paul’s personification of sin in 6:12 as a ruler that demands obedience from his subjects highlights both the control of the ruler (*βασιλεύω*) and the compulsory obedience of its subjects (*εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν*). The metaphor evokes the picture of a subject forced to succumb to the ruler’s wishes and demands—the subject is obligated to obey the tyrannic ruler because of the socio-political relationship that binds them together.

There is some debate among scholars on the best way to translate the imperative *μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ* in 6:13. The question is over the sense of *ὄπλα*: is Paul conceiving of the body’s members as “tools” an enslaved person presents to his master or is Paul evoking a military metaphor where the

body's members are "weapons" presented to one's general in the midst of battle?²⁰² Donghyun Jeong has argued that the two need not be pitted against each other.²⁰³ Drawing from Richard Horsley and K. Edwin Bryant, Jeong argues that "slavery" and "warfare" comfortably coexisted within the Roman reality of military slaves.²⁰⁴ The metaphor ΜΕΛΗ ΕΙΣΙΝ ΟΠΛΑ in the context of Paul's argument thus likely evoked not one of two possible frames but a singular frame that included both slavery and warfare. The dual nature of the semantic frame is supported by Keith Bradley's observation that "slavery at Rome had, in reality, always been integrally connected with Roman warfare."²⁰⁵ Thus it seems appropriate to translate 6:13a as "Do not present your members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness" in this context.

The prohibition of 6:13a is contrasted with the imperative of 6:13b, "but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as weapons for righteousness." The issue for Paul is not whether believers will conceive of their embodied selves as weapons but to whom they will present themselves and for what purpose. Paul's language of "presentation" (παρίστημι) evokes subjugation and recognition of obligation. It anticipates Paul's important

²⁰² Many argue, based on the use of ὄπλον in Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:7, that the term refers to "weapons." See for example Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 38A:337; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 447; Jewett, *Romans*, 410; Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2018, 408n472. Others, however, argue that refers to the tools of a master based on the slavery terminology that surrounds the passage (cf. vv. 6, 16, 19). Proponents of this position include Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 318.

²⁰³ Donghyun Jeong, "God's Hoplitēs: Slaves and Warfare in Romans 6:12–23," *한국기독교신학논총* 105 (July 2017): 47–72.

²⁰⁴ Donghyun Jeong, "God's Hoplitēs: Slaves and Warfare in Romans 6:12–23," *한국기독교신학논총* 105 (July 2017): 71. Richard Horsley suggests that "Paul's use of the imagery of slavery/servitude here does not refer to the relations of master and slave in the household, but to the broader Roman imperial conquest, subjection, and enslavement of people such as the Jews/Israel." Richard A. Horsley, "Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings," *Semeia* 83/84 (1998): 174. K. Edwin Bryant argues that in Romans 6:12–14, Paul "indicate[s] that participation in messianic community is a weapon of justice that culminates in an anti-Imperial response" such that "Paul sought to equip slaves to participate ideologically in a contestation of Roman power that was strategic and calculated." K. Edwin Bryant, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave: Death and Resurrection of the Oppressed in the Epistle to the Romans*, BINS 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 170–71.

²⁰⁵ Keith R Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 B.C. –70 B.C.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 17.

statement in 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whom you obey, whether to sin leading to death or to obedience leading to righteousness?” There, Paul presents two alternative identities defined by obligation (either slave of sin or slave of obedience) manifested by two alternative “presentations” of oneself. In other words, Paul’s exhortation that believers “present” themselves to God implies the recognition of their *obligation* to God by virtue of their new identity. This God-ward obligation is also anticipated by the fact that believers are “in Christ” (6:11). Their enclosed location implies that they are under the Christ-container’s control. We have seen that conceptual containers are easily personified as rulers (SIN IS A CONTAINER → SIN IS A RULER). Christ as *κύριος* further facilitates this personification. In short, the new identity of believers, by nature of their location *in* Christ, is one marked by *obligation* to a new master, the Lord Jesus.

The absurdity of believers offering themselves to sin for unrighteous purposes is grounded (*γὰρ*) on their present and permanent freedom from sin’s dominion (6:14a). Though Paul’s declaration is in the future tense (“sin will have no dominion over you”) Moo is correct in noting that this should not be taken as a promise for the future (“sin will one day have no control over you”) or as a conditional promise (“if you stop letting sin reign, it will have no mastery over you”), but, based on Paul’s entire argument thus far, “as a promise that is valid for every believer at the present time.”²⁰⁶ This magnificent concluding promise is further confirmed by the assurance that “you are not under the law but under grace” (6:14b). Because believers are no longer *in* sin, sin *cannot*—by Paul’s own metaphorical logic—reign over them. As Søren Agersnap concludes, “Sin’s dominion hitherto cannot and must not continue. It is an anachronism—a non-possibility.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 411.

²⁰⁷ Agersnap, *Baptism and the New Life*, 374.

Moreover, believers' spatial location (no longer in sin) is fundamental to their identity. They are *who* they are because of *where* they are: no longer in sin (6:2) but buried with Christ in his death (6:3–4). In 6:12–14, Paul dismantles a metaphorical identity defined by an obligation to sin but does not fully assemble an alternative one. However, the appeal in 6:13b implies it and thus anticipates its full development in 6:15–23. There, Paul will make explicit that believers have become “slaves of righteousness” (6:18), slaves of God (6:20). The obligation that defines the believer's identity has been redirected from sin, which leads to death, to obedience, which leads to righteousness (6:16). In this way, the believer's *identity* is defined by a particular *obligation* (either to sin or to God), which is grounded in a particular *location* (either *in sin* or *in Christ*).²⁰⁸

Conclusion

Paul's ethical argument so far in Romans 6 has focused on the believer's *identity*. The apostle's metaphorical narrative is intended to shape the believer's self-understanding. If we consider this self-understanding from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, we can distinguish Paul's characterization of the Christian *Subject* from his characterization of the Christian *Selves*. Much of what Paul has said so far depicts the believer's new Essence, the core of their Subject: their baptism into Christ and his death (6:3), their baptism burial into death (6:4), their “union” with the likeness of Christ's death (6:5), their state as non-slaves of sin (6:7), and their death with Christ (6:8).

Furthermore, for Paul, then, there is an “Essential Self,” a conception of the believer's “true Self,” and in 6:11, he calls for believers to think of themselves in light of that narrative. This “Self” is an *identity* defined by a particular *obligation* (either to sin or to God), which is, in turn, grounded by a conceptual *location* (*in sin* or *in Christ*). Proper Christian conduct (6:13) begins with acknowledging and considering oneself as having

²⁰⁸ Though Fabricius's treatment of the various container schemas in Romans 6 is the most detailed I have seen, I think she incorrectly concludes that believers are still, to some extent, *ἐν ἁμαρτίᾳ* and that sin still actively (though indirectly) encloses believers. Fabricius, *Pauline Hamartiology*, 215.

died to sin and being alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11). Nevertheless, Paul does not call his audience to carry out tasks or actions in a prototypical way. Instead, as Chester notes, “Paul’s imperative seeks to elicit a commitment to a particular way of interpreting reality.”²⁰⁹ This reality is the reality of their own identity in light of Christ and their relationship with him. Moreover, the imperatives in 6:12–13 can only be obeyed by participating in the metaphorical narrative where sin is conceived as a personified power.

Though the “indicative-imperative” struggles to explain the antimony that arises between verses 2, 7 and verses 7, 12, a solution emerges as we pay careful attention to Paul’s focus on the believer’s identity and the multiple Selves. Paul’s metaphors show that the believer’s identity is complex. In 6:12, Paul acknowledges that believers do not always act according to their “Essence.” There is sometimes incongruity between their Self (the actions carried out by the body) and their new Essence in Christ, their Subject. Though sin can no longer rule over believers, they can still present their mortal bodies to sin as if sin was still their master. This possibility, however, involves their incongruous Self—a Self at odds with their Essence and their new identity in Christ. Therefore, there is no contradiction. The “indicative” is not nullified by the “imperative,” nor is the “imperative” softened by the “indicative.” Instead, Paul’s entire ethical framework is one pertaining to the believer’s new identity. This identity, however, is defined by a particular *obligation* by virtue of the believer’s new *location* in Christ and no longer in sin.

²⁰⁹ Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11),” 361.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: A NEW IDENTITY OF OBLIGATION

In this chapter, I will bring together the previous chapters' contributions and show how they answer the question, "How does Paul respond to the 'indicative-imperative' tension in Romans 6:1–4?" I will begin by highlighting the main features of my reading of this section of Romans. I will then provide a concise and direct response to my research question. I will conclude the chapter by proposing some avenues for further research for those seeking to better understand Paul's ethical thought.

Paul's Ethical Argument in Romans 6:1–14

Throughout my study of Romans 6, I have pointed out several features of Paul's argument, many of them with the help of cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory. I will summarize my overall reading of Paul's ethical teaching in this section of the epistle with the following seven points:

1. Romans 6:1–14 Is a Metaphorical Narrative

My first broad goal in this project was to show that Romans 6:1–14 is a metaphorical narrative. Both elements of that description are essential, but together they constitute something beyond the sum of their parts. Stories sustain and transmit cultural knowledge, beliefs, values, and ethics within a community. Since narratives are one of the ways stories are passed along, they represent an essential epistemic element in a community's moral framework. However, a community's ethics transcends its code of laws or legal records. Our language reveals that many of the core abstract principles of our morality are metaphorical. For example, we understand and experience immoral acts

as debts and apologies as repayments (i.e., MORAL TRANSACTIONS ARE FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS, MORALITY IS WELL-BEING).

Romans 6:1–14 is more than an account whereby Paul presents helpful background information. It involves characters and a plot; it consists of a problem, raises questions, and provides a resolution. Yet this narrative is recounted metaphorically. The various metaphors provide structure by connecting the multiple elements in the narrative. In other words, what we have in Romans 6:1–14 is what David Ritchie refers to as a metaphorical story: “Each metaphor in the passage seems to express a distinct idea, but taken as a sequence, they blend into a single complex story.”¹ Noticing the narrative form of this text does not require us to deny that it comes to us as part of Paul’s ethical argument within an epistle. It does, however, compel us to read the narrative *as* a narrative, attentive to how Paul intends it to shape the very identity of those about whom the narrative is told.

2. Sin Is an Existential Container State

In the second half of chapter 3, I showed that Paul’s question, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?” (Rom 6:1) assumes an often overlooked but crucial depiction of *ἁμαρτία*: SIN IS A CONTAINER. This conception of sin is vital because (1) it lays the foundation for Paul’s *spatial* argument throughout this section of Romans, and (2) it prepares the way for the personification of sin as a power. Though we conceive of many things as containers (e.g., countries, categories, groups, etc.), I argued that Paul conceives of sin as a container *state* that human beings can inhabit. The spatial framework of CONTAINERS is crucial for Paul’s ethical argument since it allows Paul to present his argument in binary terms since, by definition, an object

¹ L. David Ritchie, *Metaphorical Stories in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 13.

is either *inside* or *outside* the container. Paul's ethical argument will primarily be based on the believers' location relative to the container of sin.

3. The Narrative Shapes Believers' Identity

Andrie B. du Toit observed that “except for Romans 1:18–3:20, almost every other verse in Romans suggests that Christian believers have a new identity and that they therefore share a new existence.”² One of my main arguments in this project has been that the narrative of Romans 6:1–14 depicts and shapes a believer's identity. At first, Paul's language appears merely to describe a believer's state. However, several features of the narrative indicate that Paul's goal is more constructive and involves something more fundamental to believers. That Paul is aiming at the believers' *identity* is first evidenced by his language of baptism. In chapter 4, I argued that in 6:3, Paul first brings up the ritual of baptism because of whom it identifies, “Do you not know that we who have been baptized . . . ?” Social anthropologists have long recognized that ritual itself shapes and defines an individual and a group's identity since “acting ritually . . . may be viewed as a means of securing the identity of a culture.”³

That Paul's argument centers on believers' identity (not merely their status) is further supported by the life and death language that pervades the narrative. For Paul, the issue is not that a change has occurred in believers' status (it has), but that they have *died* and now enjoy a new *life*! His language is thoroughly existential and ontological. Moreover, Paul is interested not only in *discussing* believers' identity but in shaping it. This goal is most clearly seen in Paul's imperative in 6:11, where he calls believers to

² Andrie B. Du Toit, “Shaping a Christian Lifestyle in the Roman Capital,” in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. Van der Watt and François S. Malan, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 167.

³ Klaus-Peter Köpping, Bernhard Leistle, and Michael Rudolph, eds., *Ritual and Identity: Performative Practices as Effective Transformations of Social Reality*, Performanzen 8 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006), 16.

consider themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. Believers are a particular new kind of people, and Paul wants them to embrace that new identity as their own. In other words, Paul engages in what Stephen Chester calls “biographical reconstruction.”⁴

4. Believers Have “Died to Sin” through Baptism

Fundamental to Paul’s understanding of who believers are is a death they have experienced—they have died to sin (6:2). I argued that this phrase expresses the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE, which must be understood within a spatial conception of sin. Believers have died to sin in that they have exited the sin container they previously inhabited. Conceptually, this motion is carried out via baptism according to Romans 6:3–4. First, Paul evokes the ritual of baptism as an identity marker for believers. He then speaks of baptism *metonymically* (BAPTISM FOR CONVERSION) in order to embody the physical move out of sin. Finally, Paul employs the metaphor BAPTISM IS DEATH BY BURIAL precisely because baptism language would have evoked death itself (*βαπτίζω*, i.e., drowning).

As Paul develops his conception of sin, from SIN IS A CONTAINER (6:2) to SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER (6:6), the death that led to the believer’s exit from sin also takes new shape. When the sin container is personified and conceptualized as a slave master, “departure” from sin also takes on personal features and becomes “release from dominion.” This shift leads to the metaphor DEATH IS RELEASE FROM SIN (6:7). The personification Paul employs here is crucial because it connects spatial *location* (being inside the container of sin) with relational *obligation* (being subject to sin, the slave master). By personifying sin as a slave master within a spatial framework, Paul evokes clear ethical and moral categories without ever speaking paraenetically.

⁴ Stephen J. Chester, “‘Consider Yourselves Dead’ (Rom 6:11): Biographical Reconstruction, Conversion, and the Death of the Self in Romans,” in *Religious and Philosophical Conversion in the Ancient Mediterranean Traditions*, ed. Athanasios Despotis and Hermut Löhr, *Ancient Philosophy & Religion* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 342–68.

5. Believers Inhabit the Christ Container

Baptism is a crucial aspect of Paul's ethical argument because it conveys death and because it embodies the death to sin believers experienced. However, baptism is not merely a means of *exiting* a container (sin); it is also the means by which believers *enter* a new container. In Romans 6:3–4, believers are baptized *into* Christ and *into* his death (CHRIST IS A CONTAINER, CHRIST'S DEATH IS A CONTAINER). In Paul's binary framework, the Christ container is the necessary and only alternative to the sin container. Individuals either inhabit the sin container, or they inhabit the Christ container. The two spatial modes of existence are mutually exclusive, but they are also the only two options. In other words, one either resides *in* sin or *in* Christ; there is no middle ground since the same event (baptism) that takes one *out of* sin is what transports one *into* Christ.

6. Believers Consist of a Subject and Multiple Selves

Because Paul's narrative and ethical argument orbit around the believer's new identity, understanding how Paul conceives of the person is important. Much like we do today, Paul's language reveals that he conceived of his person as constituting a Subject and Multiple Selves. This dynamic allows Paul (and allows us today) to distinguish ourselves from ourselves, which is especially useful when evaluating and reflecting on our conduct and morality. When we say things like "I wasn't myself yesterday" or "You're getting a little ahead of yourself," we show that our conception of who we are involves a Subject (the "I" in these statements) who can interact with the Self.

Similarly, when Paul speaks about his "old self" having been crucified and his "body of sin" having been rendered ineffective (6:6), he is demonstrating that same complex self-understanding. I argued that his language is an example of the Subject-Self metaphor and thus needs to be understood within its proper conceptual framework. This conceptual distinction between the Subject in the Self is important for Paul because it allows him to speak definitively about the believers' freedom from sin while at the same

time acknowledging sin's continued effects on believers via the Essential Self metaphor. One's Essence is part of one's Subject; it is what makes us who we fundamentally are. In this metaphor, "there are two Selves. One Self (the "real," or "true," Self) is compatible with one's Essence and is always conceptualized as a person. The second Self (not the "real," or "true," Self) is incompatible with one's Essence and is conceptualized as either a person or a container."⁵

Conceptualizing of himself and believers as Subjects with an Essence and multiple Selves allows Paul to assert that believers are no longer enslaved to sin (6:6), while at the same time calling them not to let sin reign over their mortal bodies (6:12). The tension between these two statements is relieved most clearly by recognizing that although Paul is speaking about believers in both statements, he is speaking about them in different ways by speaking of different Selves. Believers are to consider themselves (the Essential Self, who the believers fundamentally *are*) as dead to sin and alive to God (6:11). At the same time, Paul recognizes that believers do not always act in accordance with their Essence, which spurs his exhortation in verse 12 pertaining to a different Self, the "mortal body" (or the Incongruous Self).

7. Location Implies Obligation

Although the imperatives in this section of Romans come only in verse 11, the text is laden with ethical instruction because location implies obligation in Paul's framework. The ethical implications of an individual's location are foundational for believers' morality. Because containers exercise control over their contents, being *in* a container implies being subject to certain limiting forces. If the container is personified (SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER) or if the container is a person (CHRIST IS A CONTAINER), then being *in* that container implies subjection to that individual. Notably, Paul's focus in

⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 282.

Romans 6:1–14 is on establishing that believers are those who are no longer *in sin*, which implies a change in obligation. Though Paul lays the foundation for believers' new obligation to Christ (by virtue of the fact that they are *in Christ*), the implications of this new obligation are not fully developed until 6:15–23.

Nevertheless, Paul does not leave readers to make the metaphorical connections between the CONTAINER schema and the activation of the container's restricting properties for themselves. I argued that Paul carefully develops the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER into the personification SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER precisely to activate "obligation" and other ethical elements. Interestingly, by depicting an individual's obligation in terms of enslavement, Paul effectively presents *obligation* (one's ethical demands) as a feature of one's *identity*. A slave is subject to another precisely because of his identity as a slave. As we have seen, however, this obligation is the conceptual result of one's location. In short, one's *obligation* is a matter of *who* they are (their *identity*) because of *where* they are (either *in sin* or *in Christ*).

Romans 6:1–14 and the "Indicative-Imperative."

I began this project by noting that the "indicative-imperative" schema has been the standard framework by which Pauline scholars have studied and discussed the apostle's ethics. I, therefore, introduced (and framed) my project using the categories of the "indicative" and "imperative," primarily to smoothly bring it into conversation with previous works. However, in this study, I have sought to consider Paul's ethical argument on its own terms and to discuss it using its own conceptual framework. Having concluded my exegesis, how, then, does Paul respond to the "indicative-imperative" tension in Romans 6:1–14? To answer this question adequately, I must return to an important distinction I made in chapter 1. The problem of the "indicative-imperative" actually consists of three different tensions: (1) the "ethical tension," (2) the "coherence tension," and (3) the "logical tension."

The “ethical tension.” The “ethical tension” has to do with the fact that Paul’s gospel proclaims a God so gracious that it could appear as if Paul is preaching license to sin. This erroneous ethical conclusion is observed as early as Romans 3:8, where Paul writes, “And, as some people slanderously charge us with saying, ‘Let us do evil things in order that good things might come!’” The diatribe in 6:1 appears to address this tension as well, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?).

Suppose we seek to answer the question, “How does Paul respond to the ‘indicative-imperative’ tension in Romans 6:1–14?” using the “indicative-imperative” schema with the ethical tension in mind. In that case, we might say that Paul responds simply by presenting the “imperative.” In other words, Paul understands that the “indicative” is radical and glorious; therefore, to avoid any charge of antinomianism, he also presents the gospel’s demands. Notably, this is not what Paul does, at least not in Romans 6. Paul’s answer in 6:2 does not include any imperatives or exhortations. In fact, the first imperative does not come until 6:11, and even that imperative is a non-prototypical imperative. Instead, I have argued that Paul responds to the “ethical tension” by presenting a *metaphorical narrative*. This metaphorical narrative complements the narrative of Romans 5 and comes to us with different characters, a different plot, and a different resolution. Without any of the expected imperatives, this narrative effectively responds to the antinomian charge and provides a logical explanation for why believers cannot continue in sin despite the grace offered by Christ. The specific “logic” of this narrative will be further explained in the subsection below.

The “cohesion tension.” The second facet of the “indicative-imperative” problem is what I referred to as the “cohesion tension.” Like the “ethical tension,” the “cohesion tension” is not a unique problem of the “indicative-imperative.” Regardless of how one approaches Paul’s ethics, one must make sense of Paul’s seemingly contradictory language. If believers truly are free from sin (6:6), why must they still resist

the dominion of sin (6:12)? The most common way scholars explain this tension is by using the language of the “already” and “not-yet” to describe the eschatological tension believers live in.⁶

There is a sense in which the “already” and “not-yet” contributes to the tension in Romans 6:1–14. After all, much of Paul’s teaching is grounded on temporal logic: believers *have* (“already”) been united with the likeness of Christ’s resurrection, but they *will* (“not-yet”) be united to the likeness of his resurrection (6:5). However, Paul’s metaphorical narrative involves more than a distinction between past, present, and future realities. I argued that Paul’s ethical argument must be understood within the conceptual framework of the Subject-Self metaphor evidenced by his language. The “already” is true of believers and their Essence. But Paul frames the “not-yet” as an existential tension between the Subject and the multiple Selves. In other words, Paul can say that believers have died to sin (v. 2) because this is what is true of them in their Essence. However, because believers do not always conduct themselves in accordance with their Essence (Paul acknowledges the existence of an Incongruous Self), he must remind them not to let sin reign in their *mortal bodies* (a Self that is *not* their Essential Self).

The “logical tension.” The last facet of the “indicative-imperative” problem is the “logical tension.” Stanley Hauerwas clearly articulates this tension: “It is not clear . . . how the ‘indicatives’ of the faith—God has done X and Y for you—provide the rationale or justify the imperatives: Do this X and Y.”⁷ This is perhaps the most challenging feature of the “indicative-imperative” schema and the one I believe is most helpfully

⁶ See Douglas J. Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 606–12; For Tsui, the solution is found in Paul’s apocalypticism: “Paul’s apocalyptic vision, which the indicative conveys, liberates believers’ perceptions and motivates their behaviors, while Paul’s imperative exhorts believers to behaviors befitting the apocalyptic vision that has already set believers in motion.” Teresa Kuo-Yu Tsui, “Reconsidering Pauline Juxtaposition of Indicative and Imperative (Romans 6:1–14) in Light of Pauline Apocalypticism,” *CBQ* 75, no. 2 (April 2013): 312.

⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 92.

addressed by following Paul’s metaphorical narrative. Romans 6:1–14 follows a strict and carefully crafted conceptual logic that effectively connects the “is” with the “ought.” I have argued that Paul responds to this facet of the “indicative-imperative” tension by recounting a narrative of the believer’s identity. While many have noted that the “indicative” incorporates elements of who the believer is, few, if any, can trace the logic that leads from identity to obligation.

Paul depicts believers’ identity in fundamentally spatial terms in relation to two containers: sin and Christ. For Paul, either one is *in* sin or one is *in* Christ. These are the only two locations one can inhabit and are determinative of one’s identity. The genius of Paul’s metaphorical narrative is that in it, he develops the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER into the personification SIN IS A SLAVE MASTER by activating and highlighting the controlling property of containers. If one exists *in* the container of sin, one is limited by the container itself—one is subject to the restrictions imposed by the container. Therefore, Paul seamlessly develops an identity defined by *location* (being in sin) into an identity defined by *obligation* (being a slave of sin). Without a single imperative, Paul makes an ethical argument about the believer’s obligation grounded on the believer’s identity. In short, because of the binary framework of human existence (either in *sin* or in *Christ*), the location of one’s existence implies an obligation. For Paul, believers are no longer in sin. Following the conceptual spatial logic of Romans 6:1–14, they are, therefore, no longer slaves to sin and must consider themselves as such.

Finally, I must clarify that my observations about the “indicative-imperative” only pertain to Paul’s ethical argument in Romans 6:1–14. The “indicative-imperative” schema has been the standard way of viewing Paul’s ethical teaching *throughout his writings*, not merely his ethical teaching in Romans. Therefore, the main goal of this project has been to examine Paul’s ethical argument in Romans 6:1–14 and only secondarily evaluate the usefulness of that schema for understanding that particular text.

Avenues for Further Research

Though I hope this project offers a substantial contribution to the field of Pauline ethics, much work remains to be done. Moreover, I hope this multidisciplinary project has opened the door for further avenues of study that might shed greater light on Paul's ethical framework in Romans and his other epistles. I will conclude by suggesting two such avenues.

Romans 6:15–23 and the “Slave” Identity

The most obvious avenue for further research flowing from this project is to consider Paul's subsequent argument in Romans 6:15–23. Whereas in 6:1–14, Paul's emphasis is on who the believer is *not* (and why they are not so anymore), his diatribe in 6:15 introduces the positive complement to the first half of the chapter. Since believers are in Christ, they have a new master; they have a new obligation. This new identity of obligation is developed more fully in the second half of the chapter. There, Paul explicitly conceives of believers as slaves of God (6:22), clearly a “new identity of obligation.”

One of the core features of the “indicative-imperative” schema is its unidirectionality, what Birgitte Hjort has termed the “irreversible sequence.”⁸ While I agree that Paul's presentation of Christian behavior (and the entire system of Paul's ethics) is fundamentally grounded on the gift of God in Christ, my argument is that Christian conduct also impinges upon the eschatological identity of the believer. According to the schema's proponents, Paul always grounds the “imperative” in the “indicative.” In other words, the “indicative” is logically prior to the “imperative.” However, the logic appears to flow in the other direction in Romans 6:18: “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to

⁸ See Birgitte Graakjaer Hjort, *The Irreversible Sequence: Paul's Ethics: Their Foundation and Present Relevance* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).

righteousness?” The logic in Paul’s argument here is that the kind of person one *is* (the “indicative” of being either a slave of sin or of obedience) flows out of (or we might say is determined by) the kind of *obedience* one exhibits (i.e., the “imperative”).⁹ Here, the “doing” informs the “being.” Because the notion of an “identity of obligation” encompasses elements of “being” and “doing,” the directionality between the two is more fluid and the logic of texts like Romans 6:18 is less problematic.

My point here is simply that Romans 6:15–23 provides us with further clarity and metaphorical logic regarding Paul’s ethical thought. Moreover, it seems that Paul’s argument there continues to focus on the identity of believers, a new identity that is inseparable from an obligation. Perhaps reading Paul through the “identity of obligation” framework allows us to see a little more bidirectionality between “being” and “doing”—who we are determines what we do, and what we do informs who we are.

Virtue Ethics

Much work has been done on the intersection between identity and ethics. An entire approach to ethics sees who we are and who we want to be as foundational for Paul’s ethical vision, namely virtue ethics.¹⁰ Other contributions focused on identity formation in the New Testament would also sharpen and advance the proposals of this project.¹¹ Though I did not interact with virtue ethics or other works that focus on identity

⁹ A slave has an obligation that informs his identity, but we might also say that a slave’s identity informs his obligation.

¹⁰ See for example Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985); Joel D. Biermann, *A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

¹¹ I am thinking of contributions like Halvor Moxnes, “From Theology to Identity: The Problem of Constructing Early Christianity,” in *Moving beyond New Testament Theology?: Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen*, Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran Julkaisuja 88 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 264–81; Jan G. Van der Watt and François S Malan, eds., *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, BZNTW 141 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winnige, eds., *Identity Formation in the New Testament*, WUNT 227 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); William S. Campbell, *Reading Paul in Context - Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, LNTS 428 (London: T & T Clark, 2010); Kathy Ehrensperger, “‘Called to Be Saints’: The Identity-Shaping Dimensions of Paul’s Priestly Discourse in Romans,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honor of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and

formation, based on my reading of Romans 6:1–14, it seems that these studies have much to offer Pauline scholars interested in the apostle’s ethical thought. If our “doing” not only flows out of but also informs our “being,” then we should be attentive to Paul’s focus on moral formation as an ongoing process involving the “is” and the “ought.”¹²

In the end, much work remains to be done to better understand how Paul understood himself and how he understood his ethical obligation. I hope to have shown that Romans 6:1–14 and cognitive linguistics offer an important contribution to that end. Believers do indeed exist in an eschatological and existential tension. But Paul is adamant that they are a new kind of people with a new kind of obligation, and those of us who believe his gospel would do well to consider ourselves to be this new kind of person.

J. Brian Tucker, *LNTS 428* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 90–109; Paul R. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Paul R. Trebilco, *Outsider Designations and Boundary Construction in the New Testament: Early Christian Communities and the Formation of Group Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹² In this sense, I agree with James Thompson who reminds us that “[Paul’s] readers stand not at the end of the story, but in the middle. The readers stand within a corporate narrative between their original conversion and the end.” James Thompson, *Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 1. Thompson shows that for Paul, “ethics” is about moral formation and that the goal of his ministry is the transformation of his readers.

APPENDIX 1

‘ΟΜΟΙΩΜΑ: WHAT KIND OF “LIKENESS”? (ROM 6:5)

One of the interpretive difficulties in Romans 6:5 has to do with how to understand the term ὁμοίωμα and the phrase σύμφυτοι γεγονάμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ. A critical, recent, and extensive survey of the word’s usage in the extra-biblical Greek, in the LXX, and in the New Testament is that of Florence Gillman.¹ She notes that studies on the LXX² generally agree that there are two senses in which the word is used there: (1) ὁμοίωμα as an *image, copy, or likeness*, and (2) ὁμοίωμα as *form*. The term often conveys the notion of *image* as in the command against idolatry in Deuteronomy 4:23, “take care lest . . . you make for yourselves a γλυπτὸν ὁμοίωμα.” The word has the same sense in 2 Kings 16:10 (where it might be translated as *model* or *pattern*), in Isaiah 40:18 (where it is often translated as *likeness*), and in most of its uses in the LXX.

Though scholars generally agree that the first meaning is the most common in the LXX, many emphasize that sometimes the word is best translated as *form* rather than *copy, image, or likeness*. Hermann Cremer was among the first to emphasize that when

¹ Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 133–206.

² She points to studies like those of Hermann Cremer, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch Der Neutestamentlichen Gräcität* (Gotha: Perthes, 1902), 756–57; Josef Gewiess, “Das Abbild des Todes Christi (Röm 6,5),” *Historische Jahrbücher* 77, 1958, 340–41; Hans W. Bartsch, “Die theologische Bedeutung des Begriffes ΟΜΟΙΩΜΑ im Neuen Testament,” in *Entmythologisierende Auslegung: Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1960*, Theologische Forschung 26 (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Reich, 1962), 160–67; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology*, 50–51; J. Schneider, “ὁμοίωμα,” in *TDNT*, 5:191; Ugo Vanni, “Ὅμοιωμα in Paolo (Rm 1,23: 5,14: 6,5: 8,3: Fil 2,7): Un’interpretazione esegetico-teologica alla luce dell’uso dei LXX,” *Gregorianum* 58.2 (1977): 321–45; 431–70.

the term refers to the *form* of the reality itself, there is no longer the thought of a copy.³ According to him, this second and more rare use of the word refers to the object's own *form* or outer *manifestation*. Gillman suggests that Cremer's influence on later exegesis in respect to this point is widespread such that many today suggest that the word may or may not carry a sense of *copy* or *likeness*.⁴ Gillman herself, following Joseph Gewiss, proposes that even when the word is better translated as *form*, it does not exclude a sense of *copy*—an *abbildlich* sense, as she calls it. She concludes that

the term normally denotes an “image, copy or likeness” and perhaps in some rare instances (in the visionary description of Ezekiel) has the sense “form”. In every case a *ὁμοίωμα* is *abbildlich*, that is, it copies its referent. And, a *ὁμοίωμα* is also normally concrete—it is visible to a knowing subject. Only in the few examples from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers is a tendency observed to give the term somewhat of an abstract sense.⁵

Gillman identifies eight different groups of interpretation of the phrase *τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ*⁶ and offers a compelling case for understanding Paul to be referring to the Christian's own death in Romans 6:5. She shows this is the mainstream interpretation of the phrase among Patristic and Medieval scholars (e.g., Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrosiaster, John of Damascus, Photius, Oecumenius, Theophylact). In the end, Gillman makes a strong case for *ὁμοίωμα* always being *abbildlich*.⁷ Like Gillman, I do not take Paul, in Romans 6:5, to be speaking about believers being joined or united *with Christ* (supplying *αὐτῷ* as the object of

³ Cremer explains this second sense as “the form in which something is seen” (die Gestalt, wie etwas ist, in der etwas gesehen wird). Cremer, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch Der Neutestamentlichen Gräcität*, 757.

⁴ Gillman notes that Cremer's influence has been mediated via Schneider's *TDNT* article on *ὁμοίωμα*, an entry heavily dependent on Cremer. See Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 144.

⁵ Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 152.

⁶ Gillman categorizes the various interpretations as follows: (1) The form of Jesus or of his death; (2) Baptismal immersion and emersion as a likeness of Christ's dying and rising; (3) Baptism as the cultsymbolic presence of Christ's death; (4) Christ's death sacramentally present in baptism; (5) Christ's death as the type of death experienced by the Christian; (6) The body of Christ, the church; (7) The believer's post-baptismal death condition; (8) The Christian's death to sin. She also summarizes representative interpretations of each in Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 212–28.

⁷ See Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, 229.

σύμφυτοι and taking the phrase τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ to be a dative of means as the NIV, ESV, NASB do). I also do not think Paul is speaking of believers being joined or united with *Christ's death* (or with the form of Christ's death, which is Christ's death itself). If ὁμοίωμα is indeed *abbildlich*, the union must be with something akin to but different from the death of Christ. The best alternative, and what has been a widely attested interpretation throughout church history, is that τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ refers to the Christian's own death to sin (6:2), which is *like* Christ's death.⁸

⁸ The “ὁμοίωμα of Christ's death” likely conveys aspects both of similarity and distinction with Christ's own death. The “death of Christ” almost certainly refers to the historical event of his death on the cross. Its ὁμοίωμα, its “copy,” very likely also refers to an event—one that is like Christ's death, but distinct from it. Moo agrees that even in places like Philippians 2:7 and Romans 8:3, where ὁμοίωμα is used to denote something close to the identity of the reality (i.e., the true “form”), the word “may [nevertheless] suggest an element of difference.” Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 394n388. Michael Wolter similarly concludes that ὁμοίωμα is “a formal concept that expresses on the one hand that a commonality exists between two situations, and on the other hand that there is also a categorical difference.” Michael Wolter, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. Robert L. Brawley (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 142.

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ABSTRACT

A NEW IDENTITY OF OBLIGATION: PAUL'S METAPHORICAL RESPONSE TO THE INDICATIVE-IMPERATIVE TENSION IN ROMANS 6:1–14

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This dissertation recognizes that in Romans 6:1–14, Paul responds to the “indicative-imperative” tension, which arises from his gospel in Romans 3–5. It then argues that Paul’s response to this tension comes in the form of a metaphorical narrative that constructs the believer’s new identity. This identity is presented conceptually in terms of existence in a new location, which inherently results in a believer’s new obligation. To defend my thesis, this dissertation analyzes Romans 6:1–14 by employing tools from cognitive linguistics (CL) and especially from conceptual metaphor theory (CMT).

Chapter 1 presents my research question, my thesis, and a preview of my overall argument. It also offers a brief survey of scholarship on the “indicative-imperative” schema. Chapter 2 lays out the methodology for the study by noting the benefits of a narrative reading of Paul and by offering a way of reading metaphors grounded on conceptual metaphor theory. My exegetical work begins in chapter 3, where I examine Paul’s figurative language in Romans 6:1–2. In these opening verses, Paul presents sin in spatial terms as a container. Chapter 4 examines Romans 6:3–4 and focuses on Paul’s literal, metaphorical, and metonymical baptismal language. I argue that his baptismal language is part of a larger metaphorical narrative focused on the believer’s identity.

In chapter 5, I consider Romans 6:5–10 and offer two main contributions. First, I show how Paul employs the Subject-Self metaphor to convey the complex dynamic of his self-understanding. Second, I demonstrate that Paul develops the metaphor SIN IS A CONTAINER into SIN IS A KYPIOS. This new metaphor allows Paul to speak more concretely about the believer's sense of obligation as a matter of location (either in sin or in Christ). The last exegetical section comes in chapter 6, where I analyze Romans 6:11–14, focusing on Paul's imperatives. I show the significance of Paul's Essential Self metaphor and conclude by tracing Paul's conceptual logic in Romans 6 as he conceptualizes the believer's new identity as one defined by a particular obligation. Chapter 7 summarizes my findings and offers possible avenues for further research.

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