

## A Pauline Complement to *Laudato Si'*

Theological Studies  
2016, Vol. 77(2) 308–327  
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DOI: 10.1177/0040563916635117  
tsj.sagepub.com  


**Brendan Byrne, SJ**

University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia

### Abstract

References in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* to the writings of Paul are brief and rare. Yet the creation stories of Genesis 1–3, which do feature prominently, receive a rich development in Paul's theology, notably in his presentation of Adam as a negative foil to the redemptive work of Christ. This article argues that an appreciation of the Adamic theology emerging from passages such as Romans 5:12–21; Philippians 2:6–11; 1 Corinthians 15:21–28, and particularly Romans 8:18–22, can fruitfully enlarge the range of Scripture to which the encyclical makes appeal.

### Keywords

Adam, anthropocentrism, eco-theology, Genesis, *Laudato Si'*, Paul, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Psalm 8

Pope Francis addresses his call for an urgent conversation about the crisis affecting “our common home” to “every person living on this planet”<sup>1</sup> (*LS* 3). The encyclical is open then to dialogue “with all people of good will” (*LS* 62) and recognizes the variety of philosophical and religious viewpoints that can be brought to the conversation (*LS* 63). Nonetheless, and understandably granted its

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1. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (May 24, 2015) 3, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

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### Corresponding author:

Brendan Byrne, SJ, 175 Royal Parade, Parkville, Victoria, 3052, Australia.

Email: [bbyrne@jtc.edu.au](mailto:bbyrne@jtc.edu.au)

provenance within the Christian tradition, the document devotes an entire chapter (2, “The Gospel of Creation” [LS 62–100]) to “principles drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition which can render our commitment to the environment more coherent” (LS 15). Such “faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters” (LS 64).

Within this perspective offered by faith, the biblical narratives naturally bulk large (LS 65–75), with the creation stories in the early chapters of Genesis taking the lead role (LS 65–71). There follow shorter appeals to the Psalms (LS 72), the writings of the prophets (LS 73), and the experience of the Babylonian captivity (LS 74). Apart from a few scattered references here and there, the New Testament really features only in a final section of chapter 2 entitled “The Gaze of Jesus” (LS 96–100). Here the encyclical simply notes, in rather homiletic tone, the keen perception of the natural world that is a constant feature of the imagery employed by Jesus in the Gospels. A couple of final paragraphs (LS 99–100) dealing with “the destiny of all creation” appeal to the role of Christ in creation as recorded in the Prologue of John (1:1–18) and the hymn describing his preeminence in Colossians 1:15–20. A brief allusion to 1 Corinthians 15:28 in connection with Christ’s handing all things over to the Father at the end of time brings this sparse appeal to the New Testament to a close.

It is not my intention to fault the encyclical for its limited use of the New Testament. The document is already lengthy and, granted the space devoted to more directly ecological issues, it would be churlish to require a wider appeal to Scripture. Rather, what I offer here is a Pauline complement to the scriptural base of the encyclical in the interests of adding to its theological weight and credibility. I do so out of a conviction that the creation stories in the early chapters of Genesis that form the most substantial element of Scripture in the document play a foundational role in Paul’s own theology and sense of the Gospel. Paul not only re-read these stories in the light of Christ. His view of Christ as “Last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45), playing the role in the new creation that Adam “muffed” in the old, together with his profound understanding of life “in the body,” has significant theological bearing upon how believers relate to the other-than-human remainder of creation. My plan is to tease out this Pauline re-reading of the creation stories with the aim of providing a richer scriptural background for the overall argument of *Laudato Si'*.

It is somewhat ironic that the encyclical actually cites the most relevant Pauline passage at its very start (LS 2) when it notes that “the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, . . . ‘groans in travail’ (Rom 8:22).” The encyclical is obviously understanding the “groaning” here to be a groaning in distress. Paul, however, at this point is speaking of creation groaning in the pangs of childbirth. Such groaning, while a response to pain, is also for him an index of hope, hope for a new creation that is being born as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ. The encyclical’s pessimistic understanding of creation’s groaning is understandable but somewhat out of kilter with what would appear to be the original meaning of the text. The document could have done better with Paul, particularly though not only in regard to Romans 8:18–22, as I hope to show.

This text at the center of Romans 8 is really the only place where Paul treats the nonhuman creation as an entity in itself with which human beings are in relationship aside from their essential relationship with God. It naturally comes first to mind in any consideration of a Pauline contribution to the scriptural basis of the encyclical. It needs to be approached, however, from a wider understanding of Paul's reading of the Genesis creation stories, his view of Christ as "last (= "latter-day") Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), the wider flow of the argument in Romans, and other relevant passages in the letters.

While Romans 8:18–22 has been seized upon with eagerness by those seeking a biblical foundation for ecological concern, the attempt to achieve this has met with some measure of scholarly reserve.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, not all interpreters of Paul are convinced that the sparse references to Adam in his extant letters justify the belief that a view of Christ in "Adamic" terms was central to his theology.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it is necessary to address these issues when proposing a Pauline complement to the appeal to Scripture in *Laudato Si'*. I propose to proceed by (1) discussing Adam in the theology of Paul, (2) considering Adam in Romans apart from Romans 8:18–22, (3) offering an Adamic reading of Romans 8:18–22, and, in conclusion, (4) adding Paul to the scriptural background of *Laudato Si'*.

## Adam in the Theology of Paul

The view that the figure of Adam plays a significant role in Paul's conception of Christ and his saving work has been both proposed and criticized in various forms for over a century. In some German scholarship of the mid-20th century there was a view that a thoroughgoing *Urmensch* myth of Gnostic type where a heavenly redeemer descends into the world to liberate human beings from bondage to alien spiritual powers lies behind the passages where Paul treats Christ in Adamic guise, notably Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45.<sup>4</sup> The existence of such a myth has been discredited as

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2. See Cheryl Hunt, David G. Horrell, and Christopher Southgate, "An Environmental Mantra? Ecological Interest in Romans 8:19–23 and a Modest Proposal for Its Narrative Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (2008) 546–79 (for a survey of ecological readings of Rom 8:19–23 see pp. 547–56); Jan Lambrecht, "Ecocentric or Anthropocentric? A Reading of Romans 8:18–25," in *Celebrating Paul: Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, OP, and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, SJ*, ed. Peter Spitaler, CBQMS 48 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2011) 169–88.
  3. See H. A. Lombard, "The Adam–Christ 'Typology' in Romans 5:12–21," *Neotestamentica* 15 (1981) 69–100; Martin Meiser, "Die paulinischen Adamaussagen im Kontext frühjüdischer und frühchristlicher Literatur," in *Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, ed. H. Lichtenberger and G. S. Oegema, *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, vol. 1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 2002) 376–401; Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) 271–72; PHEME PERKINS, "Adam and Christ in the Pauline Epistles," in Spitaler, *Celebrating Paul* 128–51.
  4. E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1952; repr. 1971) 1:164–83; Ernst Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11," in *God and Christ*,

a composite scholarly construction based on documents from a much later period.<sup>5</sup> More widely accepted, especially in certain circles of British scholarship since World War II, has been a belief that postbiblical Jewish traditions about Adam as bringer of death to the human race influenced Paul or at least that his presentation of Christ offers New Testament parallels to such speculation on the Jewish side. A small monograph by Robin Scroggs was influential in this regard.<sup>6</sup> Notable also has been the work of Morna D. Hooker, followed especially by James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright.<sup>7</sup> The discussion has focused particularly upon Philippians 2:6–11 and the question as to whether this hymnic passage depicts Christ, not as a preexistent divine being entering the world from a “before” with God but as a unique human being who, in contrast to Adam, did not exploit his “likeness to God” for selfish gain but for the self-sacrificial benefit of others.<sup>8</sup>

Those who have reacted against the view that an Adamic “back story” is as significant in Paul’s presentation of Christ and his redemptive work as Dunn and Wright maintain have done so basically on three grounds: first, that traditions concerning Adam in Jewish literature are neither as prevalent or significant as previously believed; or, second, that they occur in literature (notably *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*) too late to be

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ed. Robert W. Funk (*Journal for Theology and Church* 5; New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 45–88 at 73; Egon Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtlich Untersuchungen zu Röm 5:12–21 (1 Kor 15)* (WMANT 7; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962).

5. See James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1989; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 98–100; Fee, *Pauline Christology* 12–14.
6. Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966); see also John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism from Sirach to 2 Baruch* (JSPseudSup 1; Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).
7. Morna D. Hooker, *Pauline Pieces* (London: Epworth, 1979; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006) 26–52; Hooker, “Adam in Romans I,” *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959/60) 297–306; Dunn, *Christology in the Making* 98–128; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) 79–101, 200–204, 282–90; Dunn, “Adam (Person)” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, ed. H.-J. Klauck et al. (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2009) 1:306–11; N. T. Wright, “Adam, Israel and the Messiah,” in *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) 18–40; Wright, “Romans,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002) 10:303–770 at 512, 524–25; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013) 745, 762, 769, 783–95, 889–95, 908.
8. See Dunn *Christology* 114–21; Wright, “Jesus Christ is Lord: Philippians 2:5–11,” in *Climax of the Covenant* 56–98; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* 685–86. A key difference between Dunn and Wright in regard to Phil 2:6–11 lies in the fact that whereas Dunn believes the contrast with Adam excludes any sense of the “preexistence” of Christ, Wright considers that the two motifs are compatible and operative together. In agreement with Dunn, see also J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Christological Anthropology in Phil II, 6–11,” *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976) 25–50.

brought into consideration in connection with the letters of Paul; or third, that Paul's Adamic allusions can be explained simply as interpretations of details in Genesis 2–3 without the need to postulate a developing intermediary tradition.<sup>9</sup>

While acknowledging these reservations, I would nonetheless maintain that a countervailing "Adam" story is far from marginal to Paul's presentation of Christ. I would agree, then, with Dunn: "To sum up. There does seem to have been abroad in the first generation of Christianity an already quite sophisticated Adam christology."<sup>10</sup> Paul is fundamentally an antithetical thinker, constantly pitting negative quantities and motifs over against the contrary positive ones (death–life; sin–grace; flesh–spirit; etc.) in order to stress the surpassing power of the latter.<sup>11</sup> It is natural, then, for him to set the gospel's announcement of the prevailing power of God's grace, universally accessible through a single figure, Christ, over against the opposing human alienation from God instigated by a figure of similarly universal significance, namely, Adam, the original ancestor of the race. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that the introduction of references or allusions to the latter are wholly at the service of central affirmations about Christ. Christology is driving the Adam statements, not the other way around.<sup>12</sup>

The paucity of explicit references to Adam and the fact that they are made in passing without further elaboration actually strengthens the impression that Paul simply takes for granted that his readers know of an Adamic tradition. That such is the case emerges particularly from Romans 5:12–21 where, addressing a community he has not himself founded and one that does not necessarily share all his views, he simply begins by talking about "one man" as the instrument through whom sin and death entered the world, leading to their universal prevalence in the human race (v. 12). Paul's Roman audience would not have a clue about whom he was speaking and would be at a loss to grasp the force of the powerful antithetical argument that he enters upon here if they did not straightaway recognize and accept an allusion to an early Christian conviction about Adam as bringer of sin and death. The whole tenor of Paul's case for hope at this point suggests confidence of his audience's awareness of such a development of the Genesis stories. This remains true whether or not the existence of such an awareness owed something to Adamic speculation in pre-Christian Jewish circles, as seen later in postbiblical Jewish works such as *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*,<sup>13</sup> or whether it evolved more or less independently on the basis of early Christian interpretation of the stories under the stimulus of developing faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

9. See Lombard, "The Adam–Christ 'Typology'" 90–93; Meiser, "Die paulinischen Adamaussagen" 386–93; Fee, *Pauline Christology* 271–72; Perkins, "Adam and Christ" 150–51.

10. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle* 204.

11. E.g., Rom 3:27; 4:4–5; 5:6–9, 10, 15b, 16b, 17–19, 20b, 21; 6:17–19; 7:5–6; 8:5, 10, 15; 11:30–31; 1 Cor 15:47–49; 2 Cor 3:7–11; Gal 4:1–5; 4:21–31; 5:19–24; etc.

12. See Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Glazier, 1996) 173–74.

13. See *4 Ezra* 3:21–22; 4:30; 7:118–19; *2 Baruch* 54:15–19.

## 1 Corinthians 15

Likewise, the seemingly casual, *en passant* nature of the Adamic allusions in 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, addressed to a community Paul *had* founded, suggests a recall on his part of something that he had taught them in the course of his initial instruction in the faith. In the overall interests of securing and maintaining hope for the resurrection of believers who had died, Paul addresses in this context the time gap between the resurrection of Christ (past) and that of believers who had died (yet to come). Having asserted, “since through a human being came death, so through a human being (has come) the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, just so in Christ all will be made alive” (vv. 21–22, author’s translation), Paul sets out in vv. 23–28 what might be called the “program” of the eschatological events, insisting that each are raised in their proper “rank” (*tagma*): first Christ, then those who belong to him at the time of his appearing (v. 23); then will come “the end” when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, having first done away with every opposing power (v. 24). Somewhat against the flow of the program he has just set forth, in vv. 25–27 Paul goes back to expand upon what Christ as risen and exalted Lord has been/is doing during his messianic reign prior to handing over the kingdom: he has been putting all his enemies under his feet, the last of them being death itself. The subjection of this ultimate enemy will clear the way for the general resurrection and the handing over of the kingdom to the Father (v. 28).

To explain this interim messianic reign of the risen Lord, Paul cites in a scriptural aside (v. 27a), a modified form of Psalm 8:6 (MT and LXX 8:7b): “He has put all things under his feet (*panta . . . hypetaxen hypo tous podous autou*)” (author’s translation).<sup>14</sup> Psalm 8, of course, uniquely celebrates the dignity and role of human beings within the wider creation; it is, in fact, a poetic elaboration of Genesis 1:26–28. (The absence of any allusion to Psalm 8 in *Laudato Si'* is striking, especially in view of the prominence given to Gen 1:26–28.<sup>15</sup>) In all likelihood reflecting an earlier christological tradition, Paul is presenting the messianic reign of Christ until the *parousia* as the enactment of the role sketched out by God for human beings in Psalm 8. Though Adam is not mentioned, in view of the contrast made explicit a few sentences before (vv. 21–22), it is almost certain that this messianic reign culminating in death’s defeat is

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14. While the subject of the “subjecting” in Psalm 8 is God, it seems likely that Paul thinks of Christ as the agent of the subjection in the flow of the passage as a whole: clearly the case in v. 25 but also in v. 27a—otherwise the exceptive clarification regarding God in v. 27b seems otiose. See Jan Lambrecht, “Paul’s Christological Use of Scripture in 1 Cor. 15:20–28,” *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982) 502–27 at 508–11; see also Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 274; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville, MN: Glazier, 1999) 553–54.
15. Allusions to Psalm 8 would be particularly appropriate within the section dealing with the “The Wisdom of the Biblical Accounts” (chap. 2.2), especially *LS* 66–69 (on Genesis 1–3) and *LS* 72 (on the Psalms), and perhaps also in early sections of “The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism” (chap. 3.3), especially *LS* 115–19.

being presented as the counterpoise to the rule of death instigated by the first patriarch of the race. In other words, Adamic Christology, or perhaps more accurately “counter-Adamic” Christology, is operative here.<sup>16</sup>

What is in fact remarkable is the number of times within the short span of this passage that the notion of “subjection,” expressed in various forms of the Greek verb *hypotassein*, occurs: no less than six times. It is clearly a significant motif that Paul seems at pains to get right (hence the labored explanation in v. 27b). It forms an important connection with the text most widely cited or alluded to across the New Testament in connection with Christ’s exaltation and messianic reign: Psalm 110 (LXX 109):1:

The Lord says to my lord,  
 “Sit at my right hand  
 until I make your enemies your footstool.” (NRSV)<sup>17</sup>

Having one’s enemies made into one’s footstool (*hypopodion*) is simply a more concrete metaphorical description of their subjection (*hypotassein*). Similarly, writing to the Philippians, Paul expresses the hope of resurrection as

expecting (from heaven) a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself (*kai hypotaxai hautō ta panta*). (3:20b–21, author’s translation)

An echo of the same motif appears in the later Pauline tradition in Ephesians 1:22, with a citation of Psalm 8:6 in similar reference to the victorious accomplishment of the exalted Lord.

This cluster of allusions makes clear that Paul (and the Pauline school after him) understood the messianic reign of the risen Lord to be the fulfillment of the Creator’s design for the universe and specifically the role of human beings within the universe as expressed fundamentally in Genesis 1:26–28 and poetically in Psalm 8. Christ’s “subduing” role is no mere appendage to the total christological cluster but enters centrally into his fundamental mission of conquering death and bringing life to the world. *Laudato Si’*, while acknowledging at length the biblical motif of human dominion, for good and for ill, emanating from Genesis 1:28 (*LS* 66–68, 82; see also *LS* 115–19, 200) does not, as I have noted, appeal to Psalm 8, nor consequently to Paul’s

16. Dunn, *Theology of Paul* 201–2, 286; “Adam (Person)” 308–9; Wright, “Adam, Israel and the Messiah” 26–30; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* 1064.

17. On the significance of Ps 110 (LXX 109) in the development of early Christian Christology see Barnabas Lindars, *Early Christian Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961) 45–51; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973); Aquila H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus’ Self-Consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms* WUNT 2/192 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 203–39.

elaboration of the psalm in regard to the messianic reign of Christ. I shall return to the possibilities this might provide in due course. For the present let us consider Paul's final, explicitly Adamic, allusion later in 1 Corinthians 15:

Thus it is written, "*The first man, Adam, became a living being*" [Gen 2:7]; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (15:45, NRSV)

The first Adam became a living being in the sense of being vivified by a soul breathed into the preformed clay by God. Being materially made of earth (*choikos* [v. 47a]) he remained liable to mortality and decay—which, as a consequence of his disobedience, turned out to be the case.<sup>18</sup> The "last Adam," having a heavenly origin (*ex ouranou* [v. 47b]), became a "life-giving Spirit" (*pneuma zōopoion*). Just as God breathed life into the clay-formed first Adam—a destiny to life that Adam forfeited for himself and his descendants—God, in the sending of the Son from heaven (Rom 8:3–4) as "last Adam," breathed the Spirit of life anew into human beings, conforming their bodily life to his (Phil 3:21; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 6:13c–20) and drawing them into the "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).<sup>19</sup>

### *The Christ-hymn: Philippians 2:6–11*

To complete this survey of Adamic texts aside from those in Romans, a word about the controversial Christ-hymn in Philippians 2:6–11. While, as noted above, many have played off a sense of preexistence here over against an allusion to Adam, Wright is correct in maintaining that the two are not mutually exclusive.<sup>20</sup> I have argued elsewhere<sup>21</sup> that the sequence across vv. 6–7 points unmistakably to an "entrance" on the part of Christ into the human condition from "outside," as it were:

[Christ] who, though he was in the form of God [*en morphē theou*], did not regard equality with God [*to einai isa theō*] as something to be exploited [*harpagmon*],

18. See Meiser, "Die paulinische Adamaussagen" 389–90.

19. Crucial to Paul's argument is the distinction between human bodily life vivified by the soul (*psychē*) so as to bring about the *sōma psychikon* of Adam and all his descendants, on the one hand, and human bodily life vivified by the (Holy) Spirit so as to bring about the *sōma pneumatikon* of the risen Christ that believers are destined to share in resurrection (v. 44). As "life-giving Spirit" (*pneuma zōopoion*) Christ will transform the lowly bodily existence (*sōma psychikon*), in which believers have borne the image of the earthly one (Adam), into the *sōma pneumatikon*, in which they will bear the image of Christ's heavenly existence (v. 49), the process described in Phil 3:21; see Perkins, "Adam and Christ" 133; Morna D. Hooker, "Philippians," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2000) 11:467–549 at 536.

20. See also Hooker, "Philippians" 503–5.

21. Brendan Byrne, "Christ's Pre-existence in Pauline Soteriology," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) 308–30 at 314–20; see also Perkins, "Adam and Christ" 134–36 (though unconvinced about allusions to Adam).



but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [*morphēn doulou labōn*], being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form,  
 he humbled himself  
 and became obedient to the point of death—  
 even death on a cross. (NRSV)

Christ “emptied himself” of a prior status in order to take on the “slave” condition of humanity as such.<sup>22</sup> Within that condition, he further “humbled himself,” in that he became “obedient” to the point of death, death on a cross.

Those who maintain a contrast with Adam in the hymn have to contend with the fact that the expression of likeness to God in the opening hymn statement (v. 6) does not accurately reflect in the Greek the LXX statements of that likeness in the creation account of Genesis 1:26–28, which reads *kat' eikona hēmeteran kai kath' homoiōsin*, whereas the hymn reads *en morphē theou* and later expresses “equality” with God as *to einai isa theō*. The variance, however, may be accounted for by the fact that the preexistent One is “like God” in a transcendent degree, outstripping the likeness to God conferred upon human beings by the Creator.<sup>23</sup> Within a wider view of likeness to God that could embrace both this transcendent sense and that intended for human beings, Christ, in taking on human form and living this out to the extremity of the cross, showed that being “like God” meant self-emptying, sacrificial love, rather than exploitation for selfish gain (*harpagmon*).

As expounded in a classic study by R. W. Hoover,<sup>24</sup> the rare Greek term appearing here, *harpagmon*, conveys precisely the sense of “exploitation” decried over and over again in *Laudato Si'* with respect to the self-serving—as opposed to the responsible—exercise of human “dominion” over the natural world (*LS* 4, 11, 27, 33, 67, 106, 132, 145, 175, 190, 230). In terse phrases the hymn, by stating how Christ did *not* act, is already suggesting a comparison with one, namely, Adam and, in his train, human-kind, who *have* acted in a self-serving, exploitative way.

The clearest Adamic indication in the hymn, the reference to Christ’s “obedience” in v. 8, can then be seen to set this self-emptying understanding of divine likeness over against the disobedience of Adam (Rom 5:19a). Adam acted upon a suggestion of the serpent that failure to obey the single prohibition would result, not in death, but being “like God” (Gen 3:4–5). The suggestion was deceptive (see Rom 7:11): Adam lost the God-like immortality that God was intending to *give* him (through access to the tree of life [Gen 2:9; 3:22–24]) and passed on to his descendants a legacy of sin and death (Rom 5:12).

22. Texts such as Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:1–7, 8, 24; 5:1 make clear that Paul views human existence prior to the divine intervention in Christ as “slavery” (to alien spiritual powers, and hence to sin and death [see Rom 5:14, 17a; 6:16–17, 20]). For a sustained presentation of this Pauline presupposition, see Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, chap. 3., 79–161 also Käsemann, “Critical Analysis” 66; Hooker, “Philippians” 504.

23. See Hooker, “Philippians” 505–6.

24. R. W. Hoover, “The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971) 95–119; see also *BAGD* 133 (2b).

The true obedience of Christ to the divine likeness, while it brought him to physical death, reversed the human destiny to death, instigated by Adam, and led (*dio*, v. 9) to his exaltation by God to the lordship of the universe intended by God for human beings from the start (Phil 2:9–11; Gen 1:26–28; Ps 8:5–8):

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name that is above every name  
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. (NRSV)

What is described in 1 Corinthians 15:23–28 as an eschatological “program” still in process, is here, in the hymn’s concluding stanza, portrayed in liturgical mode as something already achieved. The whole of creation—heaven, earth, and underworld—acknowledges Jesus Christ as “Lord” (*kyrios*). But, as in 1 Corinthians 15:27b–28, the hymn is careful to note that all is directed ultimately to the glory of God the Father (v. 11c). Christ has taken on the “slave” status to which humanity had been reduced through Adam and by so doing has redeemed the possibility for human beings to reclaim and live out the destiny intended by the Creator: that they should be “lord” of creation, not in a selfish exploitative way, but in the unselfish way modeled and enacted by the “self-emptying” obedience of Christ. Directed ultimately to the glory of God, such an exercise of lordship fulfills the vision of Isaiah 45:23, cited in the hymn’s final stanza (vv. 10bc–11a; see also 1 Cor 3:21–23). Understood in this Adamic way, the two key texts 1 Corinthians 15:21–28 and Philippians 2:6–11 provide a Pauline foundation for a benign rather than exploitative human responsibility for creation, thereby enlarging the scriptural basis for such responsibility emerging from *Laudato Si'*, where we read, “Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures” (68). That said, let us return to Paul’s Letter to Rome.

## Adam in Romans aside from Romans 8:18–22

### *Adam and Christ: Romans 5:12–21*

An adequate response to the issue concerning Romans 8:18–22 requires further consideration of the explicitly Adamic sequence appearing earlier in the letter, 5:12–21. It is not within the scope of this essay to enter upon a lengthy discussion of this controversial passage. Relying upon the detailed justification of particular points that I have given elsewhere,<sup>25</sup> I would simply reiterate the central matters to be affirmed, especially in regard to the portrayal in the text of the role and significance of Adam.

25. Brendan Byrne, “‘. . . The Type of the One to Come’ (Rom 5:14): Fate and Responsibility in Romans 5:12–21,” *Australian Biblical Review* 36 (1988) 19–30; Byrne, *Romans* 173–87; Brendan Byrne, “Paul’s Adam Myth Revisited,” in *Sin and Salvation. Task of Theology Today III*, ed. Duncan Reid and Mark Worthing (Hindmarsh, SA: ATF Press, 2003) 41–54; Brendan Byrne, “Adam, Christ and the Law in Romans 5–8,” in Spitaler, *Celebrating Paul* 210–32 at 213–20.

First of all, the passage occurs as part of the assertion of the hope of salvation that is the central thesis of this major section of Romans, chapters 5–8.<sup>26</sup> Where the first half of Romans 5 (vv. 1–11), asserts this boast in the context of suffering, Romans 5:12–21 does so more in the context of the continuing reality of physical death. In line with his characteristic antithetical mode of argument, Paul sets what he wants to affirm about Christ as the bringer of righteousness and, on that basis, destiny to eternal life, over against a statement, reiterated over and over again, of Adam as instigator of unrighteousness (sin) and death—death in both a physical sense but also in the more profound, spiritual sense of eternal separation from God. It is crucial to a correct interpretation of the passage—and especially to the controversial opening statement in v. 12—to keep in mind that all Paul says about Adam, initially simply “one man,” is entirely at the service of what he wants to affirm regarding the hope of salvation introduced by Christ. Paul is not giving an explicit teaching about Adam and about his role in the onset of sin and death; he *assumes* such knowledge in his audience. He employs what might be called the “Adam schema” as a negative foil, rhetorically speaking, to bolster what he wants to say about Christ.

Needless to say, the focal point of controversy regarding the passage from earliest times has been its opening sentence (v. 12) and the interpretation of its final clause (v. 12d): “Therefore, as sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and so death passed to all on this basis, namely, that all sinned—” (author’s translation). Where the opening three clauses of the statement suggest that Adam alone bore responsibility for the onset of a regime of sin and death in the world, the final clause, “that all sinned” (*eph’ hō pantes hōmarton*), would seem to refer unmistakably, *pace* Augustine, to personal sinning of the part of subsequent human beings.<sup>27</sup> Thus, packed into this one lengthy sentence (which is itself only the first, negative side of a comparison left incomplete), is a statement about the onset of death in the human race attributable *both* to a legacy from Adam *and* to subsequent human “ratification” of that legacy through personal sin.<sup>28</sup>

It seems then, in a way that has so far defied truly adequate explanation, that we have to accept an understanding on Paul’s part of a “double” causality in regard to the onset of sin and death in the human race.<sup>29</sup> The traditional doctrine of original sin may stand sorely in need of acceptable contemporary formulation, but to be true to Paul it does seem necessary to preserve this sense of “legacy” or “fate” stemming from Adam

26. See Byrne, *Romans* 162–64.

27. On the interpretation of *eph’ hō* in an (intensively) causal sense—“for this very reason, namely that”—see Byrne, *Romans* 177, 183.

28. While Augustine may have wrongly derived his sense of the “legacy” aspect from a misleading Latin translation (*in quo*) of the Greek *eph’ hō* in v. 12d, the motif is confirmed by the expression *hamartōloi katestathōsan hoi polloi* (“the many were made sinners”) stated of Adam in v. 19a.

29. By insisting on personal responsibility 2 *Baruch* 54:15–19 reflects the existence of a controversy regarding a legacy from Adam versus responsibility in Jewish circles of the late first century CE; see Byrne, *Romans* 175.

as proto-patriarch.<sup>30</sup> Otherwise, the entire point of the comparison/contrast with Christ is lost. If human beings are entirely determinative of their fate on the negative side, then the comparison would suggest that they are equally determinative of their destiny to life on the positive side; Christ's influence is then reduced to that of example, as in the view of Pelagius to which Augustine took such notable exception. Without explaining precisely how the elements of fate and responsibility operate together in practice, it seems that Paul wanted to set a universal solidarity in grace, righteousness, and destiny to (eternal) life in Christ over against a universal solidarity in sinfulness, lack of righteousness, and destiny to death in Adam.<sup>31</sup> That there is hope stems from the fact that the grace of God operating on the positive side is so "much more" powerful than the force of sin on the negative.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the sending of the Son represents an "invasion" of divine grace that addresses the human predicament on a transcendental scale prior to any individual human response.

Paul undoubtedly understood Adam to be a historical figure, albeit one standing at the very beginning of human history. Granted our present scientific knowledge, we cannot follow him there. However, Adam is equally if not more significant for Paul as a symbol and archetype of each and every human being relating wrongly—that is sinfully—to God.<sup>33</sup> In Romans 7:7–13, he appears to let Adam describe in the first-person singular ("I") the story of his confrontation with the single commandment in the garden (Gen 2:16–17) in a way that represents the plight of all unredeemed humanity, including Israel with respect to the Mosaic Law, confronted simply with external moral demand aside from the grace of Christ.<sup>34</sup> In Adam, then, is told the "sin" story of the human race, over against which Christ has instigated a (much more powerful) "grace" story leading to righteousness and life.

If, as I have said, there is a tension between "legacy" and individual responsibility in regard to the "sin" story told in Adam, the same is true in a certain sense of the

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30. See Otfried Hofius, "The Adam–Christ Antithesis and the Law: Reflections on Romans 5:12–21," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn (Cambridge, UK: Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001) 164–205 at 184–86; Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Mythologizing Program in Romans 5–8," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2013) 1–20 at 11–14; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Original Sin and Original Death: Romans 5:12–19," in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Hans Madeume and Michael Reeves (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014) 271–88 at 275, 280.

31. For a concise yet comprehensive discussion of the issues see Frank J. Matera, *Romans Paideia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010) 143–44.

32. The expression of hope emerges from the reiterated "much more" (*pollō mallon*) phrase and sense of "excess" or "overflow" (*perisseuein*) on the positive (Christ) clauses across Rom 5: see vv. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20b.

33. See de Boer, "Paul's Mythologizing Program" 12.

34. On the Adamic reference of this passage, see especially Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004) 188–92.

“grace” story told in Christ. Believers, having received the gift of righteousness through the justification brought about through faith (5:1), must “live out” that gift in a pattern of righteous life in the body.<sup>35</sup> In Romans 8:1–13, over against the lively description of impossibility of living righteously under the law (7:14–25), Paul outlines the necessity and the possibility of so living as a consequence of the sending of the Son and the release of the Spirit as indwelling power:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak because of the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk now, not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (8:3–4, author’s translation)

In the face of so much that could be said regarding this overladen statement, I would simply single out the passive “might be fulfilled in us” (*plērōthē en hēmin*). The “fulfillment” occurs in the bodily life of believers (see 6:12–13); it is “theirs” in this sense. But, in a way that preserves the divine initiative, it is wholly the product of the Spirit working within.<sup>36</sup> So, in the working out of the “grace” story told in Christ, we have the combination of gift or legacy, on the one hand, and human responsibility, on the other, that corresponds to the similar, negative combination of the “sin” story told in Adam. While the body may remain “mortal” (*nekron*) as a legacy from Adam (8:10b), the Spirit means that there is “life” (destiny to eternal life) because of the gift of righteousness in Christ (8:10c) and the capacity, imparted by the Spirit, to live out that righteousness in the body.<sup>37</sup>

## An Adamic Reading of Romans 8:18–22

The passage that is the goal of this study, Romans 8:18–22, appears at the point where the argument for hope that is the overall theme of Romans 5–8 returns to confront explicitly once more the fact of suffering (v. 17; see 5:3–4). It is the first element of a three-part sequence where Paul points to a “groaning” on the part of various parties

35. See Brendan Byrne, “Living Out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom 6:1–8:13 to an Understanding of Paul’s Ethical Presuppositions,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981) 557–81.

36. See Stanislas Lyonnet, “Gratuité de la justification et gratuité du salut,” *Études sur l’Épître aux Romains*, AnBib 120 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989) 163–77 at 175–77.

37. See Byrne, “Living Out the Righteousness of God” 567–75. In view of the references in Rom 8:3–4 to “God,” “Son,” and “Spirit,” we could say, albeit at the risk of some theological anachronism, that the capacity for believers to live righteously in their present bodily life is ultimately the creation of the Trinity within them; see Brendan Byrne, *Galatians and Romans* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010) 118. This complements the trinitarian vision of the divine action in creation expressed so attractively in the concluding paragraphs of *Laudato Si’* (LS 238–40).

(“creation” [vv. 19–22]; “ourselves” [vv. 23–25]; the Spirit [vv. 26–27]) as an index of hope in the face of the sufferings of the present time.<sup>38</sup> Verse 18 introduces the theme of the entire section down to v. 30: “For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared to the glory that is destined to be revealed in us.” The section on creation then follows:

<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons (and daughters) of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation was subjected to futility—not of its own will but on account of the one who subjected it—in the hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that creation as a whole has been groaning in labor pains until now. (author’s translation)

Though other suggestions have been made, it is now widely accepted that by “creation” (*ktisis*) here Paul means the “other-than-human” (henceforth “nonhuman”) created world.<sup>39</sup> His appeal to “creation” in this sense, though unprecedented elsewhere in his letters,<sup>40</sup> becomes less surprising when we recall how prominently his characteristic view of human life as “life in the body”—whether in the service of sin (Rom 6:12–13a; 7:5, 24) or of righteousness (6:13b; 7:6; 8:10–11, 13b)—has featured in the letter. Existence in the body necessarily connotes relationship to material creation, a point insisted upon in *Laudato Si'*: “It is enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings” (*LS* 155). In the present passage, Paul is drawing upon a biblical and postbiblical Jewish tradition that sees the nonhuman created world to be intimately bound up with the fate of human beings. “Creation” progresses when the human race progresses; it suffers a fall when human beings fall. In brief, both share a “common fate.” The tradition presumably has its origins in the biblical accounts of creation where human beings, bearing the image of God, are given dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26–28; 2:4b–9, 15; also Ps 8:6–8). A more immediate background to the present text is Genesis 3:17–19 where the earth is cursed because of Adam’s sin and, as a result, yields its fruits only grudgingly, requiring toil and sweat. As the encyclical notes (*LS* 66),

. . . refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitation . . . distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), to “till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17–19).

38. See Byrne, *Romans* 255.

39. The outstanding discussion remains that of C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979) 1:411–12; see Byrne, *Romans* 255–56; more recently, Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012) 345–47.

40. Setting aside the reference to human failure to discern God’s “eternal power and deity” through the things “(God) has made” in Rom 1:20.

Correspondingly, on the same “common fate” principle but in a reverse direction, there is the sense that a coming salvation of human beings (usually Israel) will redound positively upon creation as well. Creation will both share in and testify to the final restoration, encompassing a renewal that is cosmic in scale (Isa 11:6–9; 43:19–21; 55:12–13; Ezek 34:25–31; Hos 2:18; Zech 8:12; 1 *Enoch* 45:4–5; 51:4–5; 4 *Ezra* 8:51–54; 2 *Baruch* 29:1–8).<sup>41</sup>

In line with this tradition, as providing the first grounds for hope, Paul points to an “eager expectation” on the part of creation (v. 19), manifested as a “groaning in labor pains even until now” (vv. 22). The intervening sentences (vv. 19–21) serve to explain the reason creation cherishes this expectation. When human beings, in the person of Adam, fell from favor with God, creation also took a “fall”: the earth was cursed because of Adam’s sin and transformed from being a garden to being an object of hard, unremitting labor.

Paul describes this fall on the part of creation in terms of its being “subjected to futility.” The Greek word translated “futility” (*mataiotētēs*) occurs frequently in the LXX (in Psalms, Proverbs, and notably in Ecclesiastes), where it means “nothingness” or “meaninglessness.”<sup>42</sup> With reference to the nonhuman creation it would seem to have the sense of “frustration” or “inability to fulfill purpose,” the antithesis of the “goodness” that the Creator discerned in all that had been made (Gen 1:4–31).<sup>43</sup> It is not fanciful to find in the term an expression of that degradation of the environment as a result of human exploitation that Pope Francis describes again and again in the encyclical: in the introduction, citing the laments of Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew (*LS* 2–8); in the early part of chapter 1, “What is Happening to Our Common Home” (*LS* 20–42); and frequently when insisting upon the interrelatedness of all things in chapter four, “Integral Ecology” (*LS* 137–62).<sup>44</sup>

Paul pictures personified creation as undergoing subjection to futility in this sense “unwillingly,” that is, not of its own accord (*ouk hekousa*), “but because of “the one who subjected it” (*alla dia ton hypotaxanta*). Hence, because it was not itself an agent but rather an unwilling victim of the “subjection” (like a person taken hostage in a bank robbery or terrorist attack), creation has ever since cherished the hope, displayed in the groaning (v. 22), that it would be set free from its slavery to decay in order to enjoy the freedom associated with the glory of the children of God (vv. 19–20).

41. See further Brendan Byrne, “An Ecological Reading of Rom. 8:19–22: Possibilities and Hesitations,” in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. David G. Horrell et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2010) 82–93 at 88. For a wider survey in Jewish literature see Harry Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Nature in Romans 8:19–22 and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Library of New Testament Studies 336 (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

42. See Kruse, *Romans* 343.

43. See Douglas Moo, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 1996) 515.

44. See also Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007) 513.

Almost every detail in this explanation of the hope held by creation is open to a variety of interpretations. For our purpose, much depends upon the identification of the “subjecting” agent (*ton hypotaxanta*). Most interpreters see here a reference to God, who is in fact the one who curses the earth in Genesis 3:17–19. Such a reference, however, runs against the predominant sense of the Greek prepositional construction, *dia* plus the accusative, which normally indicates the grounds or cause upon which something comes about. Granted an allusion here to the lapse of Adam, it is more natural to read the expression as pointing to his behavior as the cause of the subjection to futility, rather than to the action of God. It is true that God was the agent of the subduing—as expressed in the aorist passive form of the main verb in the sentence: *hypetagē*.<sup>45</sup> Following this initial reference to subjection, however, it seems otiose to describe God as “the subduer,” and to do so contrary to grammatical usage when a simple “by God” would suffice. Moreover, aside from the grammatical issue, the adversative *alla* (“but”) suggests a strong measure of contrast between the party dubbed *ouk hekousa* (that is, the creation) on the one hand, and the *hypotaxanta*, on the other. Yet in the run of the passage overall the contrast is not between creation and God but between creation and Adam/humanity. In light of the significance of the motif of “subjection” (*hypotassein*) that we have seen elsewhere in Paul, especially where Psalm 8 is cited or alluded to in connection with the messianic rule of Christ, it is far more natural to relate “the subduer” here to Adam, the patriarch of the old creation whose fatal role, both for humanity and the wider creation, Christ as “last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45) was destined to reverse.<sup>46</sup>

It may well be that Paul does not name Adam explicitly because by “the subduer” he has in mind, not only Adam as an individual, but also those who Adam represents: namely, all humanity acting inappropriately in relation to God and also, in light of Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 8:6, inappropriately in relation to the nonhuman created world. This representative understanding of “the subduer” allows us to find in the text an allusion not just to the sin of Adam in the remote past but to ongoing exploitative behavior on the part of human beings in regard to the environment. Because all human

45. It is also maintained in support of the reference to God that only God could subject creation “in hope” (*epi’ elpidi*); so, for example, Jewett, *Romans* 514n68. It is more natural, however, to relate the expression of hope to the main verb *hypetagē*, with the preposition *epi* plus the dative expressing attendant circumstances, rather than directly to the participle *hypotaxanta*, with the entire phrase *ouk hekousa alla dia ton hypotaxanta* taken then as a parenthesis, as in the punctuation in Nestlé–Aland NTG 28.

46. Reference of the *hypotaxanta* to Adam/humanity was favored by Chrysostom and by a significant number of commentators of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Theodor Zahn; Frédéric L. Godet; Werner Foerster; Oscar Cullmann; Stanislas Lyonnet; André Viard; Hans Schlier; G. W. H. Lampe; Georg Dellinger; for references see Brendan Byrne, “Sons of God”—“Seed of Abraham”: *A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background*, AnBib 83 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979) 106n102; more recently, Horst R. Balz, *Heilsvorvertrauen und Welterfahrung: Strukturen der paulinischen Eschatologie nach Römer 8*, BEvT 59 (Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 40–41; Dieter Zeller,



life is life in the body, such destructive behavior, whether past, present, or future, is inevitably part of the “sin” story of the human race that Paul tells in Adam.<sup>47</sup>

But that is not the only story. In line with the more powerful “grace” story told in Christ (Rom 5:12–21) creation cherishes a hope that it be set free from slavery to decay (*phthora*) to share the “liberty” associated with the glory of the children of God (v. 21). “Decay” (*phthora*) occurs with respect to human mortality in 1 Cor 15:42, 50. Here it would seem to refer to the impermanence of nonhuman creation, an alternative to speaking of “death” in its regard. On the “common fate” principle, creation hopes to enjoy freedom from that condition along with the freedom—from sin and death—that human beings will enjoy when their status as “children of God” is publicly displayed in resurrection.<sup>48</sup>

The fact, however, that “resurrection” is not actually mentioned would seem to imply that the passage envisages the transformation of the present material world, rather its destruction and re-creation anew.<sup>49</sup> Such a view would also seem to be that of *Laudato Si'*, despite its reticence in the area of eschatology:

The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. (*LS* 83; see also *LS* 100)

On this eschatological note we are in a position to align the expression of hope emanating from Romans 8:18–22 with the reign of the risen Christ described in 1 Corinthians 15:23–28. As we saw in that connection, Paul presents the reign of the

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*Der Brief an die Römer*, RNT; (Regensburg: Pustet, 1985) 162. In many respects the discussion of Zahn (Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, KNT 6; 3 Aufl., Leipzig, Erlangen: Deichert, 1925] 403–4) remains the most convincing. For further discussion see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*; WBC 38a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988) 470–71 (favoring reference to God); Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 6–11)* (2 Aufl., EKK 6.2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987) 154 (inclining to reference to God but regarding the evidence as finely balanced).

47. A powerful biblical evocation of the devastation of the earth emerges from Jer 4:23–28, where the earth, personified as in Rom 8:18–22, “mourns” (v. 28). See Valerie M. Billingham, “The Earth Mourns/Dries Up in Jeremiah 4:23–28: A Literary Analysis Viewed through the Heuristic Lens of an Ecologically Oriented Symbiotic Relationship” (PhD diss., Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009). I am grateful to graduate student Justin Glyn, SJ, for alerting me to this reference.
48. “Paul’s thought is clearly that creation itself must be redeemed in order that redeemed man may have a fitting environment” (Dunn, *Romans 1–8* 471). Jewett goes further, seeing an active role for human beings: “Freedom must be responsibly embodied in the real world as the ‘new creation’ manifests itself in the lives and actions of believers” (*Romans* 515).
49. See Hahne, *Corruption and Redemption of Creation* 208; Byrne, “Creation Groaning” 201–2; Byrne, “Ecological Reading” 92–93.

risen Lord as a messianic fulfillment of the dignity and role of human beings in the world set out in Psalm 8. While the immediate concern in 1 Corinthians 15 is the “subjection” of death (“the last enemy”) as a prelude to general resurrection, interpretation of the text need not be confined to this single point alone. The messianic reign of the “last Adam” may involve the “subjection” of forces hostile to God; by the same token, in more positive mode, it means replaying the role of Adam as instrument, not of sin, but of divine grace. This positive reign of the risen Lord fulfills the true “subduing” role vis-à-vis creation envisaged by God for humanity (Gen 1:26–28; Ps 8:6; Isa 45:23; Phil 2:9–11) when, through the power of the Spirit, those “in Christ” allow their life in the body to be likewise instruments of grace rather than sin (Rom 6:12–13)—when, that is, a benign rather than a “tyrannical” anthropocentrism (*LS* 68) prevails.<sup>50</sup>

### **Conclusion: Adding Paul to the Scriptural Background of *Laudato Si'***

The Pauline passages we have considered here, especially Romans 8:18–22, are highly mythological in language and tone, appealing more to the imagination rather than to strict theological reasoning. Nonetheless, they have some contribution to make to the ecological concern set out by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. Paul’s vision evokes and builds upon the creation texts of Genesis 1–3 where human beings are given responsibility for the rest of creation and where, as a consequence, the “fates” of both are inevitably intertwined—for good and for ill. In light of the extended Adam–Christ schema in Romans 5:12–21, the “subjection” of creation to futility and decay referred to in 8:20 may be seen an allusion to the “sin” story of the human race told in Adam. It is not fanciful to see exploitative and destructive human pollution of the environment as part of that “sin” story in complete coherence with Pope Francis’s reading of the Genesis creation stories:

They (the stories) suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), to “till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual. (*LS* 66)

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50. See Brendan Byrne, “Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8.18–22,” in *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth: The Earth Bible I*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000) 193–203 at 198; Christopher Southgate, “The Call of Humanity,” in *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008) 98–115.

But also present in the Pauline passage (8:20) is the hint of the “grace” story told in the “last Adam,” Christ. It is the “much more” powerful nature of the grace story over the “sin” story that forms the basis for hope (Rom 5:15–17, 20). If creation has suffered and continues to suffer from the ravages of human sin, there is hope that it may also benefit when and where the “grace” story prevails. Christ, has faithfully and successfully replayed Adam’s “subduing” role in true obedience (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8). As risen Lord he continues to play that role in his messianic “reign” until the end of time (1 Cor 15:23–28). If and when human beings align themselves with that “grace” story, if we take a “contemplative” rather than an exploitative attitude toward the wider nonhuman world,<sup>51</sup> then hope on a cosmic as well as a human scale may prevail, as again Pope Francis states:

Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. . . . No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to his grace at work deep in our hearts. (*LS* 205; see also *LS* 79, 200)

Francis’s appeal to Scripture in fact ends on a thoroughly Pauline note, when having cited the conclusion (vv. 19–20) of the Christ-hymn in Colossians 1:15–20, he continues,

This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to every one” (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them toward fullness as their end. (*LS* 84)

It is hard to think of a more fitting expression of the realization in the “last Adam” of the divine mandate to human beings in Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 8:6–8.

The interpretation of Paul that I have developed in this study in the interests of supporting the ecological concern set out by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* is frankly anthropocentric, originating ultimately from the anthropocentric pattern set out in Genesis 1–3. It is inescapable that human beings, for good and for ill, do call the shots in our world—an anthropocentric view that the encyclical presumes from beginning to end.<sup>52</sup> Setting aside catastrophic destruction on a global scale, it is highly unlikely that that pattern of determination will change or notably recede in the foreseeable future. The key point surely, as the encyclical itself insists (see *LS* 116), is to ensure that a benign rather than an exploitative anthropocentrism prevail. To this end, as I have attempted

51. The call for a contemplative approach to creation recurs over and over again in *Laudato Si’*: see *LS* 12, 85, 100, 112, 125, 127, 214, 222, 225–26, 233, 237, 238.

52. See especially *LS* 66–69, 115–19 (part of the section entitled “The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism”). See also the (somewhat hesitant) recognition of “a certain anthropocentrism in Rom”: in Hunt, Horrell, and Southgate, “An Environmental Mantra” 547–75.

to show in this study, the writings of Paul merit a substantial place among the Scripture cited to promote “care for our common home.”

### **Author biography**

Brendan Byrne, SJ, has taught New Testament at Jesuit Theological College, Parkville (Melbourne), Australia, since returning from doctoral studies (DPhil) at Oxford in 1977. He is the author of *Romans* in the *Sacra Pagina* series (1996) and has published more popular works on all four Gospels, the last being *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel* (Collegeville, 2014). He was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1990–1995, and President of the Melbourne College of Divinity, 2000–2001. In 1999 he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and is currently an Emeritus Professor of the University of Divinity (Melbourne).