

Freedom “from” and Freedom “for”  
in the Apostle Paul: *Romans* 6-8: a contribution  
to the discovery of the meaning of Baptism  
in 21<sup>st</sup> century theology\*

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Proclusion

We live in a age, in which one is not born but becomes a Christian, i.e., people “intersect” their life into "before Christ" and "after Christ" (actually "along with Christ"), just as it was the case in the early years of Christianity with those who first read or rather actively heard (through the “hearing faith”) the Epistles of Paul (P.). This obedience of faith did not happen privately but among communities, which, gathered in the houses of the most prosperous, as only those who could offer hospitality in antiquity, provided their members with the unique experience of communion, of belonging organically and cooperating in one Body – one Family (= "seed of Abraham") and even of a Messiah crucified. Today we find that the occasion of the baptism of a child is for the true Parish (which might well function also as an Exile<sup>1</sup>) the only

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opportunity for its parents and godparents to be effectively re-baptized in the streams of the apostolic faith and life, so that they may be delivered from the fear of suffering, guilt and death, which in the time of the pandemic proved to be present in human existence from the moment of birth. Nowadays, the opportunity of baptism and chrismation of an infant is coupled with the active “catechism” of his adult relatives, so that they too may consciously join the family of the Messiah Lord Jesus and taste the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in which true joy (instead of momentary pleasure) prevails. That is why in the following we will focus

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Ecclesiastical Academy of Athens, on May 22-23, 2019 on the topic: "The Human Future and Existence as Surprise" ([https://www.aeea.gr/view\\_cat.php?cat\\_id=453](https://www.aeea.gr/view_cat.php?cat_id=453)). In several points the vividness of the orality has been preserved. The present article is dedicated to Professor George Patronos, who, at the time of writing these lines, at dawn of the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Sunday 2021 (!), reposed in the arms of the Lord, apparently through the intercession of His Mother, whom he so respected. He was the man who truly liberated the writer and many fellow students of generation from the “shadow” of a “Christianity”, which was centered on "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (*Col. 2:21*) as well as from the personal worship, and eventually led them to a Christianity of grace, which does not seek to escape from the world, so as to join God somewhere in the hereafter – high in Heaven, but to transform the world, so that the Lord may dwell among us. It was indeed a revelation for us, his students, that in *1 Cor. 7:1*: "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: (“)It is good for a man not to touch a woman(”)”; two quotation marks [which concern the relationship of the two sexes in marriage and the interpretive possibility that the phrase they contain is not the position of P., who also in *Col. 2:21* ("do not handle, do not taste, do not touch") rails against an ill-intentioned asceticism; a false humility (*2:18*) but the question of the Corinthians] can serve as “extracts” from the weight of many misunderstandings and incriminations: He was himself truly graceful and therefore free, since he was a person of (a) essential forgiveness, (b) thanksgiving, but also (c) moreover a man of love and not in love: he did not expect "crowns" from others, but he knew through his smile and his testimony to transmit to the "other" his faith – his devotion exclusively to the Lord Jesus: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (*2 Cor. 3:17*). Or elsewhere, as the *Gospel of John* remarks: "To the Jews (!) who had believed him, Jesus said: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth (= you will come to share in the Truth, which in Christianity is a Person) and the truth will set you free”" (*John 8:31-32*).

1. In the sense that it does not confine one to its boundaries, but is open to the "other", to the world, to fulfillment and to the reality of the final Eschata, instead of often seeking to revive an idealized “Byzantine” past.

on the apostolic reading, which is heard in the Orthodox Church at the end of the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation, immediately after the joyful dance around the "Baptismal Font". Yet we are examining this particular passage and the crucial issue of freedom<sup>2</sup>, offered by the incorporation with a particular Person, not in an individual way, but in the broader context of an epistle of P., a very important one, which is not usually analysed sufficiently in the communities of the East. And yet in it, the deeper question of not the "presence of the Jew" in us (as Kaeseman claimed), but of "Adam", as it (the question) is related to the challenge of desire, is addressed. The same elderly Paul, in *Rom.* 7, does not hesitate to identify himself with the foremother Eve, whom already since the 1st century many circles have targeted and downgraded as the generator of evil *par excellence*, since she succumbed to the basic problem of human existence, desire [see. *Life of Adam and Eve* (3rd century AD,

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2. In an earlier article we had already attempted to discuss the meaning of P.'s exhortation to obey the political authorities. It is the famous passage, which has been exploited by tyrannical regimes to justify their arbitrariness and seems to be inconsistent with John's call in *Revelation* to resist unto death to whatever authority is self-divinised. See, «Χριστιανισμός και Πολιτική έξουσία: Η Έρμηνεία του Ψωμ. 13, 1-7», in A. and S. Despotis (ed.), *Άνθρώπινο Πρόσωπο και Ήθος στην Καινή Διαθήκη. Η Καινή Διαθήκη στον 21ο αι.*, Vol. II, [Βιβλικές Μελέτες στη Βιβλική Ήθική], Athens: Athos 2008, ad loc. On the issue of P.'s treatment of slavery, see. S. Despotis, *Πρός Φιλήμονα: Μία Θεραπευτική και ποιμαντική ανάγνωση. 78. Σπουδή στην Παύλεια Θεολογία*, Athens: Ennoia 2017, ad loc. It should be noted that the misinterpretation of the Pauline passages on slavery had made the apostle to the Gentiles hateful in South American Negro circles. See, Th. N. Papathanasiou, *Βασιλιάς και θερμοστάτης. Τò οίκουμενικό Όραμα του Μάρτιν Λουθηρ Κίνγκ, ή πανουργία τής δουλείας κι ένας θεολογικός Έμφύλιος*, Athens: Manifesto 2019, pp. 77-80, 87- 89. Cf. also Ch. Atmatzidis, «Ό άπ. Παύλος και τò ζήτημα τής δουλείας (Α΄ Κορ. 7, 20-21)» in Idem (ed.), *Κριτικές Άναγνώσεις τών Βιβλικών Κειμένων. Έρευναιικές επισκέψεις σέ βιβλικά Τοπία*, vol. II, Thessaloniki: Pournaras 2010, pp. 105-160. Chr. Karagounis demonstrates convincingly that P.'s famous exhortation to the slaves in *1 Cor.* 7:20-21 is about making use of, and not denying, the opportunity for liberation, if it is offered to them. See Did Paul encourage slavery?: <https://chrys-caragounis.com/research/studies.html> [date retrieved 06.09.20 (applicable to all linked sites)]. After a meticulous grammatical and syntactical analysis, he translates the verse as follows: "Were you a servant when you believed in Christ? Never mind; but if [also] you can obtain your freedom, by all means do so, and use it as much as you can to serve God".

echoing traditions of the 1st century AD)<sup>3</sup>; Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* [*On the Adornment of Women*] 1.2: "Woman, you are the devil's door to the world!"<sup>4</sup>). It should be noted that especially in the *Rom.* there is no mention of the devil, who "hires" in various narratives (such as the aforementioned *Life of Adam and Eve*) the "body" of the serpent, to tempt out of jealousy and to destroy the man, who, created in the image of God, is superior to the angels.

## Introduction

1. *Romans* (*Rom.*) was written in cosmopolitan and multicultural Corinth around the 1st century<sup>5</sup>. It is the only letter of the apostle of the Gentiles to a *Church* (the term is not found in *Romans*) that was not founded by him or one of his disciples. More precisely, from the

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3. S. Agouridis, *Τὰ Ἀπόκρυφα τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης*, vol. II, Athens 1979, pp. 163-204. On p. 248, on the occasion of the commentary on *Ezra IV* (7.92), a text of 80 A.D., reference is made to the Yetzer ha-ra (< *Genesis* 6, 5), man's inherent evil thinking/ inclination towards evil, which is located in the very core of his existence, together with the spirit of truth. J. Spitzer (*The Birth of the Good Inclination*: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-birth-of-the-good-inclination/>) claims that in the Jewish tradition man is born with the evil inclination and only when he comes of age as a child through the bar mitzvah (= child of the Law) ritual, becoming a full member of the Israelite Community (at the age of 13) does the good inclination arise, so that through the application of the commandments, desire (which is expressed primarily through the sexual impulses of adolescence) is also combated. In fact, this view goes exactly the opposite of what P. says in *Rom.* 7, where the awareness of the Law stimulates the inner battle even more; it is a point that is not developed in the various commentaries of the *Romans*.

4. A. Eleutheriadis (ed.), *Οἱ Μεταποστολικοὶ Πατέρες (140-260 μ.Χ.). Τερτυλλιανός*, vol. I: *Πλήρης Ὁδηγὸς Μελέτης*, Athens: Oros p. 287.

5. It should be noted that the term "Church" is not used at all in an Epistle addressed to a city, where the "monarchic" Pope is until today point of reference, as the successor of Peter, who (Peter) is also "ignored" in *Rom.* Another of the paradoxes of history is that in the Roman Catholic Church celibacy is imposed on all clergy, while Cephas-Petros, like the brothers of the Lord, were accompanied by their wives on their missionary tours (*1 Cor.* 9:5).

selective catalogue of greetings it can be deduced that the recipients of the *Rom.* were the six or seven ordinary Churches of the Eternal City<sup>6</sup>. These consisted of Gentile Christians and Judeo-Christians. The latter had recently returned to the Eternal City after the death of Claudius (54 A.D.), who in 49 A.D. had launched a pogrom because of the strife that had broken out within the Synagogue over Christ (Chrestus; *Suetonius, Claudius* 25, 4), hence the presence of the pair of Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth (*Acts* 18:2). The words of P. presuppose a rivalry between the two "factions" due to differences in "what we eat" and "when we celebrate" (chap. 14-15). Especially the Gentile Christians, who were not "displaced", probably after the return of the Jewish brothers, expressed feelings of superiority, since they felt that as "strong" they were "above" all those subtle regulations about clean (kosher) and unclean, which were also applied by the Jewish Christians after their conversion. But the question, which is already raised in *1 Corinthians*, is this: Am I, after my baptism, absolutely free from all the "conventionalities" of this century? Do I have the "right" to belittle (to "snub") and scandalize my weaker brother? Does such a freedom suit the new "attitude" (= political term) and the image of the crucified Messiah/Son of David, which was indelibly engraved in my existence with my baptism and the new (not just current) reality, which results from my *adoption* by the almighty God Abba, which freely (as a grace, a gift) took place<sup>7</sup>? Especially in *1 Cor. 9*,

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6. This effectively means that the letter that Phoebe carried to the Eternal City was reproduced in copies, a fact that is perhaps important for its interpretation, since we know from the criticism of the text the influence that variations (of the text) can have on it (the interpretation). And the parallel to *Rom.*, *Letter to Galatians* is addressed to many churches in the province of Galatia, which also means copying and preserving this particular "codex" or scroll in the "library" of the community. Note that in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is also associated with Rome and was the third most popular Christian reading of the first three centuries of the Church, a woman –the head of the Community– is also ordered to copy and preserve the Vision.

7. In *Gal.* (4, 3-5), P. notes that when the fullness of time, the time of maturity-adulthood (and not only the completion of the God-ordained period of centuries) has come, we no longer need a slave pedagogue to guide us towards wisdom, using the rod of law, and we are no longer slaves to the elements of the World: "when we were children, were in

the apostle of the Gentiles, after an “exemplary” argument in favour of the compensation of those who work, on the basis of secular individual ethics (v. 7: soldier, vinedresser, shepherd), of the Holy Scriptures (v. 9), and of the *collective* ethics of the priests (v. 13: priesthood) and the very word of the Lord (v. 14), he concludes with the great reversal for the *hierarchical* standards of his time, declaring that he, refusing any compensation, became a *slave* of all in order to gain the most (he means for Christ: *For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them* [9, 19])<sup>8</sup>.

2. It should be noted that in the imperial period, while the ideal for the world was to ascend the pyramid of power (*cursus honorum*), and indeed in this period we have cases of slaves, who through an unprecedented “mobility” on many levels emerge as “new men” (*novus homo*), for the Stoics, only the wise man is absolutely free and therefore noble, who is apathetic, possesses the *power of self-practice* and lives by *confession* (i.e. in harmony with Nature and reason): that is, he is free from false assessments of things and is not influenced by what is happening around him. But this fifth-essential stage of evolution of the human being (Cicero, *De finibus* III, 20-21) is ideal and is not enacted even by Socrates, the “saint” of Greco-Roman times. Chrysippus himself confesses that he *becomes wicked*, just as every man, though being good by nature, is influenced by *the deceitfulness of external engagements and the conditioning of those he associates with*, already from the painful manner of his birth, which leaves its mark with the scar from the incision of

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bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law". By "the elements of the world" in this passage is not meant the four elements of the Universe (cf. the sprites [στοιχειά] in modern Greek), but probably the planets (sun and moon) which also determined the Jewish calendar. In any case, in the Jewish tradition the elements of the world were associated with corresponding spirits.

8. Excellent is the analysis by R. Zimmermann in an article highlighting the value of narrative Ethics over other forms of it, entitled: "Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ. Entwurf einer impliziten Ethik des Paulus am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefes", *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 132 (2007), pp. 260-284; here p. 280: (open access: [http://www.thlz.com/artikel/13734/?inhalt=heft%3D2007\\_3%23r28](http://www.thlz.com/artikel/13734/?inhalt=heft%3D2007_3%23r28)).

the umbilical cord<sup>9</sup>. According to Panayotis Kontos<sup>10</sup>, already the tragic Euripides, who was particularly beloved in the long Hellenistic era (as the period from Alexander to Hadrian is identified by Angelos Chaniotis), in contrast to Socrates, especially through the artist of evil, Medea, exalts that the fundamental evil is multilevel, functioning as a vicious circle with no visible “genealogy” (an *original* or rather *primaternal* sin as a starting point). The human being is a contradictory creature and lacks an enlightened centre (the reason-mind), which can tame the arm of the soul and especially the unruly black horse of desire<sup>11</sup>. Passion and reason work together to achieve evil. High ideals and values are not a safe way to avoid evil, and no one can hope to remain free from it (evil), as the triangle “perpetrator - victim - spectator” works much more blurred than we usually think. *Hebrews* extremely succinctly notes that people “through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (*Heb. 2:15*; cf. *9,22: without shedding of blood there is no remission*).

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9. The present report was drawn from the lessons on the platform MATHESIS (open access to the public after registration) by P. Kontos, *Τὸ Κακὸν: Μαθήματα Ἠθικῆς Φιλοσοφίας. Στωικοὶ – Τὸ Κακὸν μέσα μας*, <https://mathesis.cup.gr/courses/>. The visitor can discover valuable material on the basis of an anthology of texts. Cf. also Palmer Tom - Skouras Alexandros, *Οἱ ρίζες τῆς ἐλευθερίας στὴν ἀρχαία Ἑλλάδα* (e-Masterclass): <https://www.blod.gr/>.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Cf. the valuable work by Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*. In this work, where one can also discern factual evidence about the types and condition of slavery in the 1st century A.D. [which should not be confused with the setting of “Uncle’s Tom cabin” of later times (see next footnote)], the Essenes are presented as a model of free men, in parallel with the Indian gymnosophists (= Brahmins). Let us not forget the contribution of slaves to the culture of imperial times, since it was a former slave (Libius Andronicus) who first translated Homer’s works into Latin. Lame Epictetus, with his famous “medical” school in Nicopolis, also had the same status, while slaves played an important role in the spread of Christianity (e.g. in Iceland or among the Goths). The above information was taken from the introduction of K. Vlassopoulos, *Δούλοι στὴν ἀρχαιότητα*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_p1jEzVigNg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_p1jEzVigNg), as this researcher is closely involved in this phenomenon. Cf. also the excellent article by Klaus Vibe, “Freedom from Necessity in Philo of Alexandria’s Ethical Thought”, *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 17 (2021), pp. 9-37.

3. Certainly in *Rom.* (and especially in chapters 9-11) are recorded the feelings of superiority, which the Judaeans, as "members of a chosen nation", had for centuries, towards the "others", the gentiles - the goyim (as they are still called today). It should be noted that P., despite his constant mobility, did not have the luxury of explaining in detail to the Churches, which he founded, what exactly the consequences in the way of life and thinking were of this universal "change of software" of Existence and its "restart" as a consequence of "obedience of Faith", where by Faith is meant the marital devotion to a Messiah, the Son of God, who died in the most horrible way because of his unconditional and endless love for his enemies<sup>12</sup>.

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12. N. T. Wright, *Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος: Ἡ Ζωή καὶ τὸ Ἔργο*, trans. S. Despotis in collaboration with Io. Gregorakis, Athens: Ouranos 2019, p. 516. According to Wright, *Rom.* 6-8 is a miniature of the events of the Israelites' Exodus through water (ch. 6: baptism) through the wilderness and the giving up of the Torah (ch. 7) to the Inheritance-the Promised Land (ch. 8). He also notes of P.'s attitude toward slavery: "Slavery is of course repugnant. We know this. We are well aware of the terrible ways in which slavery developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, until brave militants abolished it, often against the harsh reaction of the opposition, which, among other things, claimed to be based on the Bible. *In particular, we associate slavery with racism.* And we know that, despite abolition, the practice has returned in the modern world. We wish Paul had stated: "Free them all! Slavery is an evil practice!" But that would be a futile gesture. Slavery in the ancient world did no more or less what we do in our world with oil, gas or electricity; what we achieve with our technology. *To denounce slavery would be like denouncing electricity and the internal combustion engine today.* We must remember that slavery in Paul's world had nothing to do with nationality. You became a slave simply by being with the losers in battle or even by failing in business. Of course, slaves were often exploited, abused, treated like trash. But they could also be the object of respect and love, as well as being valued members of a family. Cicero's slave Tiro was his right-hand man. Paul knew that the God of Israel had in fact identified himself as the God who frees slaves. This is what the story of the *Exodus* was referring to. Paul believed (and he believed that God believed) in absolute freedom, the freedom of creation itself from "slavery to decay," a freedom that would mean resurrection life for all of God's children (*Rom.* 8:21). As always, Paul's challenge was to bring this cosmic vision into the real world of those who were in compromise and embarrassment. And he implemented a plan to make Philemon and Onesimus a micro working model of what freedom based on the Messiah might look like" (pp. 347-348).



Besides, in the introduction of the section of *Rom.* (i.e. ch. 12 sq.), which deals with the practical consequences in the lives of believers of what he mentions earlier, Paul does not offer ready-made recipes for ethics, but speaks of constant transformation-reformation, vigilance and testing/discernment of what is actually the good and pleasing will in each individual situation: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed *by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (12:2)<sup>13</sup>.

4. Perhaps even to humiliate the arrogance of the powerful, P. sent this elaborate Text (*Romans*), which to this day makes it extremely difficult for interpreters and commentators, with a woman: the deaconess of Kechrees [the port of Corinth dedicated to the "mighty" Isis Pelagia, where the Metamorphoses of Apuleius were held in March (2nd century AD)] and patron of the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he himself notes, Phoebe [< Phoebus = Apollo (god of divination, music, pestilence, healing), *Rom.* 16, 1]. Certainly, this "sister of ours" (as she is called above by P. himself), who retained her heathen name even after her baptism, did not simply carry this particular Epistle, but at the same time interpreted it to the 5-7 house-churches of Rome, to which it is addressed. These were composed mainly of slaves and freedmen (as their names suggest) and probably lived in the districts of Transtiberium/Trastevere and Porta Cobena<sup>14</sup>. In this respect, let us take into account

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13. The italics in the texts of the sources belong to the author of this article.

14. As is clear from the text, everyone (including the Gentiles) knew perfectly the Scriptures and the Prophets (cf. 1, 2; 15, 7-12). In *1 Cor.*, and especially in chap. 7-10, P. explains that, while the "neither Jew nor Greek" of the baptismal paeon is perfectly valid, the distinction between male and female still exists, as well as the distinction between free and slave. It is the familiar pattern "already" but "not yet", which practically means that the genuine Christian is experiencing a particular kind of "jet-lag", while understanding the here and now, already anticipating the final Eschata, which are not identified with the flight from the world to heaven, but with the salvation of the world, the coexistence of heaven and earth and the dwelling of the Lord among us. See, Wright, *op.cit.*, p. 281: "The disciple of Jesus, then, must get used to living in a form of theological jet-lag. The whole world is still in darkness, but we have set our clocks to a different time zone. It is already daytime on the clock of our world's vision and we must live as daytime people.

the art of *performance*, which was required then (and is still required today) for the “publication”-recitation of such a complex Text, such as this one, signed d by the teacher of the Gentiles and "servant/child of the Lord" (i.e. by Paul), so that the worshipping assembly could be attentive for an hour or so and comprehend its message. In his most systematized letter, P. himself points out with an emphatic way that it is written by a slave (as his name Tertius indicates), who "dares" and intervenes in the text itself with his "I", noting his "voice" (16, 22)<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, at the end of it, P. calls "apostle" (and not just "isapostle"! ) a woman, his relative Junia (16,7: apparently freed from a nobleman belonging to the gens Junia<sup>16</sup>), a fact so “amazing” (shocking) to the Middle Ages so that the

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This is one of the greatest challenges Paul faced: how to teach people who had *never thought eschatologically* that time was being directed somewhere, to learn how to reset their clocks, how to teach the Jews who had thought that the absolute kingdom was going to come at once, that the kingdom with Jesus had already risen in world history but that it was not yet fully present and would not be until his return and the renewal of all things". Of course, in the Communities around the common table, this reality of the non-discrimination of people according to "social criteria" was already felt and experienced by everyone with the kiss that they exchanged. Therefore, and in view of the expectation of the End, P. notes the difficult to interpret imperative: "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it" (1 Cor. 7, 20-21). 15. Tertius, whose name signifies the third, "No. 3", followed after Erastus, the city treasurer. Next comes Quartus, who also, though a slave (= No. 4), is called a brother in the Lord, that is like the slave Onesimus after his conversion in *Philemon* (v. 16). Presumably both were slaves of the host Gaius, that is the one who hosted Paul and the whole Church of Corinth, which implies an exceptionally spacious dwelling, where the Community, although the factions, acquired a sense of unity! It should be noted that only once in ancient Greek literature is there evidence of a secretary speaking with "I" in a correspondence of "nobleman". (See, Cicero, *Att.* 5.20.9. Cf. L. H. Blumell, "Scribes and Ancient Letters: Implications for the Pauline Epistles". Scribes and Ancient Letters: Implications for the Pauline Epistles | Religious Studies Center. [scholarsarchive.byu.edu > cgi > viewcontent](http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent)). It is also noteworthy the testimony of Aristides (*Apology* 15, 6) that Christians persuade slaves to become Christians and then indiscriminately call them "brothers".

16. As for the status of the freedmen-libertines, who were multiplied under Octavian Augustus, see E. Koops, "Masters and Freedmen: Junian Latins and the Struggle for Citizenship", *Integration in Rome and in the Roman World. Proceedings of the Tenth Workshop*

“successors of Peter”, changed her gender: they considered her to be an “apostle”, namely that she was a man<sup>17</sup>.

5. In the more than two thousand years of Christianity and European history, *Rom.* has influenced leading figures such as Augustine and Luther (who both experienced conversion through it), causing literal “page-turns” in European history and Western civilization. And in the 20th century, the “red” Swiss pastor of Safenwil, Karl Barth (1886-1968), with his voluminous *Commentary* in the same letter, introduces immediately after the tragedy of the Great World War new currents both in theology (dialectical theology) and in philosophy and Western thought in general. Consequently, *Romans* is a text which can cause a creative shock in any existence or community that is immersed in it.

Unfortunately in the East the first Letter of the Pauline corpus did not attract interest in contemporary times. Indicatively, the first complete Greek Commentary to the Epistle was written recently<sup>18</sup>, more or less the same time when also the *Commentary* of Barth was translated (after a century from this first publication!)<sup>19</sup>. The interest of contemporary

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*of the International Network Impact of Empire (Lille, June 23-25, 2011)* Gerda de Kleijn, Stéphane Benoist Brill, Leiden-London 2014, pp. 105-126.

17. In general, the “greetings” of all the Epistles and of *Rom.* especially to women “brothers” contain “undiscovered treasures”. Cf. the last commentary on this chapter by M. Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*. Teilband 2: *Röm.* 9-16. [EKK: Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament], Patmos Verlag 2019.

18. Ch. Voulgaris, *Ἑρμηνευτικὸν Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολὴν τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου*, Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia 2015. This *Commentary* follows mainly the hermeneutic principles of St. John Chrysostom. V. Tsakonas had published in 1993 a *Commentary on Romans* concerning the first three chapters of the Epistle (consulting much more earlier Commentaries). Unfortunately, the late professor did not have time to complete the effort. Important publications in Greek literature are the following: Ch. Karakolis, *Ἄμαρτία - Βάπτισμα - Χάρις (Ῥωμ. 6, 1-14). Συμβολὴ στὴν παύλεια Σωτηριολογία*, Thessaloniki: Pournaras 2002. J. Khalil, *Δικαίωση - Καταλλαγὴ - Τελικὴ Κρίσις στὴν Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολή. Συμβολὴ στὴν Παύλεια Σωτηριολογία*, Thessaloniki: Pournaras 2004. Cf. O.-M. Lamprousi, *Ἡ ἔννοια τοῦ πνεύματος στὸ Ἡ κεφάλαιο τῆς Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολῆς (Ἱστορικὴ καὶ ἐρμηνευτικὴ προσέγγιση)*, Athens 2003. D. Mpouras, *Θέσεις καὶ ἀκεραιότης τοῦ 16ου κεφαλαίου τῆς Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολῆς τοῦ Ἀπόστολου Παύλου*, Athens 2005.

19. Quite recently was released the Greek translation by Giorgos Vlantis (Athens: Artos

Orthodox theologians is *selectively* focused on the views expressed in *Romans* on homosexuality (ch. 1), baptism (ch. 6), ecology (ch. 8) and the relationship with political authority (ch. 13)<sup>20</sup>. One of the reasons for the “marginalization” of *Rom.*, as well as of the “related” *Epistle to Galatians*, is probably the following: it was considered that its main subject was no longer of concern to the ecclesiastical body. P’s arguments concerning the Law were translated in the East as a polemic against the *Pentateuch* or *Torah* (a term, which actually means “Guidance” and not Law, as it was translated by the LXX in the 2nd century A.D. in Alexandria). In particular, it was considered that *Rom.*, as well as the “concise” *Gal.*, mainly concerned the cultic provisions of the OT (especially in *Leviticus*), which, it should be noted, have also intruded into the liturgical practices of Orthodox Christians after the Ottoman occupation<sup>21</sup>. Only recently through the New Pauline Perspective<sup>22</sup> has it been realized that P.’s polemic against

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Zois 2015). Barth wrote his *Commentary to the Romans* after the bloody Great War, when religiosity was also booming in the West. Mozart’s admirer introduced a revolutionary twist to theology: For him, the historical-critical method is simply a prelude to the true purpose of a theologian: spiritual explanation in order to accept the voice of God, who works beyond human reason. When this *Commentary* was translated into Greek a century later, during the period in which Greece was going through the zenith of the “crisis”, it also caused some “turbulences” which were fruitful in the thinking of our country, such as publications which were published on the occasion of this translation and which concern the relationship between theology and culture. Cf. also D. Mpathrellos, «Ὁ Παῦλος, ὁ Μπάρτ. ἡ Θεολογία καὶ ὁ Πολιτισμός. Σχόλια στὴ Σχέση Θεολογίας καὶ Πολιτισμοῦ μὲ ἀφορμὴ τὴν Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Κάρολ Μπάρτ», *Deltio Vivlikon Meleton* 31 (2016) 71-95.

20. P. Vassiliadis, ‘Ἡ Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους στὴ Νεώτερη Βιβλικὴ Ἐπιστήμη, in his page on academia.edu/ (accessed on 14.04.2020).

21. In this context, however, it should be noted that P., using the important phrase “be straightforward in the truth” (*Gal.* 2:14), does not connect truth with a doctrinal issue, as a modern theologian would do, but with the shared table, with the extent to which we commune with “one another” (!) during the Eucharistic Supper.

22. On the New Perspective from an Orthodox point of view, see A. Despotis, *Die “New Perspective on Paul” und die griechisch-orthodoxe Paulusinterpretation*, St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag 2014. Cf. Idem (ed.), *Participation, Justification, and Conversion: Eastern Orthodox Interpretation of Paul and the Debate between “Old and New Perspectives on Paul”*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

the Judeo-Christians concerns the criticism of those who put forward their ethnic identity against the Faith/devotion to the crucified Lord Jesus<sup>23</sup>. In simple words, it was realized that the apostle of the Gentiles Saul, who never, according to Luke, changed his name or renounced his Jewish identity, is arguing against those who, especially nowadays, in the context of ethno-racialism, ardently desire first to be descendants of an "Abraham" (a "petrified emperor" or a "Kolokotronis") and then to be believers in the Lord Jesus.

6. Certainly, it is not entirely accurate that *Rom.* constitutes the "Dogmatics" or the "Gospel of the Apostle Paul (P.)". It does not constitute a complete exposition of the teaching of the apostle of the Gentiles, since references to the basic axes of his theological thought, such as the Eucharist and the common table, are absent, while at a first reading some "incompatibilities" in the development of his reasoning are also present<sup>24</sup>. As a matter of fact, and unlike *Galatians* (which, though older, is indeed "concise", a fact that contributes to its interpretation and understanding), *Romans* was composed in an environment of tranquility, without the author feeling any challenges that would shake his work to the core. This is why, indeed, in this letter one can clearly discern the reasoning of the apostle of the Gentiles. What is the case with *Rom.* is that in its four major sections (chap. 1-3, 4-8, 9-11, 12-16), Paul, having completed a missionary "cycle" in view of his two great journeys, first to "mother Zion" (Jerusalem) and then to the West [from Rome to Latin-speaking Spain (Tarragona, Catalonia?)], clarifies

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23. It should be noted that in Rome already in the 2nd century, the Pontic (by origin) shipowner Marcion, who donated a large amount of money (200,000 sestertii) to the ecclesiastical community of the Eternal City and in any case exercised for a long period of time a great influence on Churches throughout the Mediterranean, would "demonized" the OT. He was perhaps the first to establish a kind of canon.

24. These "incompatibilities" in his discourse, which, as we have noted, appear on a "first" reading, are the following: the Gentiles, who while in chap. 2 have law in their conscience, in chap. 3, they ultimately remain without salvation. While everyone is without excuse before God, the Jews are finally proved in chap. 9-11 that they have a kind of "election" against the Gentiles, as they will finally be saved, as long as they too believe in Jesus Christ.

Christianity's response to the great "outstanding issue" that pervades the whole narrative of the Bible. This "outstanding" is concentrated in the first three chapters of *Genesis* and developed throughout the *Pentateuch*, culminating in its epilogue (*Deuteronomy*, chapters 28-34). Both the mortal-Adam and the *holy nation* did not finally "find" the Promised Land. Israel did not accomplish the purpose for which it was "chosen" as a *kingdom of priests*: this purpose was through Israel and its witness to bless all the nations, so that they would "return" to "Eden" and their Creator and the whole of the Creation would operate according to its reason for existence. Despite the occasional "returns" to Jerusalem, the fulfillment of the Lord's Promises<sup>25</sup> for many observant Israelites of the 1st century A.D. was pending. In this sense the 70 years of slavery in *Jeremiah* are transformed in *Daniel* (ch. 9: cf. *Jubilees*) into 7 seventies of years (7x70=490 years)<sup>26</sup>. For P. the Crucifixion and Resurrection

25. Al. McNicol, *The Persistence of God's Endangered Promises. The Bible as Unified Story*, London: Bloomsbury 2018, *ad loc.*

26. M. Walzer (*Exodus and Revolution*, Greek transl. by V. Kargoudis, Athens: Artos Athens 2015) points out the difference between emancipation (*manumissio*) and freedom/redemption from the land of pleasure and exploitation, which Israel experienced in a progressive way (hence the adventurous march into the desert) and should always keep alive in memory and behave accordingly towards the subjugated people. He also describes how *Exodus* influenced the great revolutions of modern times. Cf. the lemme "freedom" in the open-access publication on the Internet, by P. Vassiliadis, *Θέματα Βιβλικῆς Θεολογίας*, Thessaloniki 2012, pp. 71-78. It should be noted that until today in every family literally revives (Sikkaron = living sacred memory) the experience of the *Exodus* with the Passover dinner (Seder) and especially the four Cups of Wine (those which, according to *Ex.* 6, 6-7 are called Wehozejt/I brought you out, Wehizalti/I saved you, Wegaalti ethchem/I redeemed you, WelakachtI ethcem/I received you). At the last cup, which was connected with the people's repentance and God's wrath against the nations persisting in sin (Schephoch Chamathcha < *Ps.* 79 [80], 8), the Lord Jesus gave His own self-sacrificial interpretation, which is heard to this day in the Eucharist. There is to this day also the tradition of drinking a fifth cup in honor of Elijah, which they await before the coming of Yahweh. Also important in the revival of deliverance to this day is the dialogue of the father-host with four different types of his children: the wise (cf. Peter), the wicked (cf. Judas), the simple and the one who does not yet know how to ask questions (cf. the Lord's dialogues in *John* 14). Finally, it should be noted that in the Last Supper (also called the Secret Supper) of Jesus, women disciples do not participate (as is the case in the Passover Supper of the Jews) and the Evangelists do not mention

of the suffering Son, the before Creation existent Lord Jesus and the going along with Him both through Baptism and new ethos, which He experienced and taught, "ends" (completes) in a paradoxical way the great narrative of the Scriptures and fulfills the Promises of the OT.

Three things must be emphasized before we develop our theme, as they do not receive due attention by interpreters, with implications in the Commentaries:

1. *Romans* is a profoundly Eucharistic Epistle, although it does not mention the Eucharist at all: What is characteristic of this work is that the four major pillars of its theme move in a doxological context, while at key points in the argumentation, outstanding praises to the Lord and God are placed ("Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" 8:35; "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" 11:33; "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" 5:5). P., who in the Introduction presents himself as an authoritative "servant of Christ Jesus" (1:1) and in the Epilogue (15:26) he "signs" as a "priest-minister" (since he preaches the Gospel in various ways, so that the nations/goyim report their own existence as "offering"<sup>27</sup>, already at the beginning of the extended preface, as a "bridge of communication" with the recipients (Judeo-Christians and Gentile-Christians) he uses a Christological Confession of Faith (*Credo*)<sup>28</sup>, which

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the eating of the Passover lamb. Moreover, it is well known that the Evangelists disagree, not only about the exact founding words of the Eucharist, but also about whether it was celebrated on Friday or Thursday evening with leavened or unleavened bread. It should be noted that in the Jewish Passover to this day there are also three breads (Mazoth) in honor of the priests, the temple cantors-the Levites (in this we have a break) and finally the entire people. Also in the Jewish Passover the hands of the Host (who is considered a king in the whole ritual) are washed, while in the case of Jesus, it is he, the one who washes the hands and even the feet of his disciples. Sch. Ben-Chorin, *Bruder Jesus. Der Nazarener in juedischer Sicht*, München: Deutsche Taschenbuch 1988, p. 137-140. At the end of the meal a piece of bread is eaten called afikoman (perhaps from the Greek term *ἐπιχώμιον* = festal procession), which refers to "ἀφίχομαι", i.e. the Coming One.

27. 15:16 "that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit".

28. 1:2-4, "which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the

was apparently in use in worship. And in the Epilogue (not only of the whole book but also of the first part of the Epistle) he quotes a crescendo of doxologies. The fundamental-primordial sin of mankind is that, while the mortals tasted a kind of revelation, "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened"<sup>29</sup>. It should be noted that in this context *δοξάζω* (= to glorify) means, also, *to think, to consider, to perceive* (from the verb *δοκέω/-ῶ*)<sup>30</sup>.

2. *Romans* can be understood better if one reads it again "counterclockwise" (from the end to the beginning), as is the case with the *Hebrew* and especially with the plan - the economy (or the "management") of God for us, the mortal creatures. One of the modern conclusions of the research, which will prove to be an extremely important tool, is the following: the last seven chapters of the Epistle, which deal with the salvation of the Jews and the "ethos"/habits of the early audience in the Churches of Rome, are not mere epigrams/additions, but essential structural elements of the content and thus of the message<sup>31</sup>. Finally, it is on the basis of the aforementioned that the whole Epistle is interpreted and understood, which is to be recognized as a single Symphony (= Concerto)<sup>32</sup> consisting of four parts and a chorus, through our Lord Jesus Christ / in Christ Jesus. The fact that the ethos/habits of Christians

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flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead". For a discussion on this confession, see my article «*Ἡ Ἀρχέγονη Χριστολογία*», *ΕΕΘΣΠΘ* 12. *Τιμητικὸ Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Ὁμότιμο Καθηγητὴ Νικ. Ματσούκα* (2002), pp. 79-91. Contained in the collective volume: S. Despotis (ed.), *Βιβλικὲς Μελέτες. Ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη στὸν 21ο αἶ.*, vol. I, Athens: Athos 2005, *ad loc.* 29. *Rom.* 1:21 // *Wisdom* 13.

30. And the *Rom.* 1:23 "and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things" is interpreted as follows: "they replaced the image of the immortal God with the likeness of the image of mortal man". See, N. Sotiropoulos, *Ἑρμηνεῖα Δυσκόλων Χωρίων τῆς Γραφῆς*, vol. II, Athens 1985, pp. 166-167.

31. N. T. Wright, *op.cit.*, pp. 392-415 (especially pp. 407-410).

32. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, London/Minneapolis: SPCK/Fortress 2013, p. 1012.



and the kind of freedom in Christ is a key concern of the epistle is also evident below in the analysis of chapters (5-7).

3. *Romans*, the first in the Pauline corpus, has been interpreted mainly with special emphasis either on chs. 1-3 (Luther<sup>33</sup>) or on chs. 9-11 (New Pauline Perspective). In the Orthodox East, the Greek Fathers already approached it on the basis of chs. 5-8<sup>34</sup>. Consequently, the following analysis<sup>35</sup> is of particular importance for the understanding of the whole text, which, as already noted, was not only transmitted but also interpreted by a woman, the deaconess Phoebe from Kechrees.

### The *Rom.* 5-6<sup>36</sup>

These chapters, as has already been pointed out, are partly known to the members of the Church, since this section contains the apostolic

33. Βλ. S Despotis, «Συμβολή στη “Νέα Προοπτική του Λουθήρου” κατά τον 21ο αιώνα. Στον Ὀρθόδοξο Χώρο (Παρατηρήσεις στη Μετάφραση του Ῥωμ. 9-11)» in *Ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ Θεολογία ἀπὸ τὸν 19ο στὸν 21ο αἰῶνα*, Athens: Ennoia 2019, pp. 505-514. Cf. *Πρακτικὰ Ἐπιστημονικῆς Ἡμερίδας «Μεταρρύθμιση καὶ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία: Διάλογος καὶ ἀντίλογος πέντε αἰῶνων»*, School of Theology, Dean’s Office, Athens 2019, pp. 17-23. It is an accessible online article: <http://deantheol.uoa.gr/probolik-dilwshs/praktika-episthmonikis-hmeridas-metarrythmish-kai-or8odo3h-ekklhsia-dialogos-kai-antilogos-pente-aionwn-dhmosia-hlektroniki-ekdosih.html>

34. The credit for this remark is given to my brother Athanasios Despotis. By all means, it is not entirely accurate to assume that P. in chaps. 1-3 thinks in forensic terms, while in 5-8 he thinks in communion-participation terms. In fact, as N. T. Wright has shown, throughout his entire work P thinks in Covenant terms.

35. For the patristic interpretation, see the monograph by P. Andriopoulos, *Ὁ Ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τῆς χάριτος κατὰ τὸν Ἀπόστολον Παῦλον*, Athens 1969. Ch. Voulgaris, *Ἑρμηνευτικὸν Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους Ἐπιστολὴν τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου*, op.cit. The frequent references to Wolter, who has published the most recent Commentary on the *Romans* are due to the fact that the present study is essentially the result of the cooperation with him in the context of a fellowship given to the author by the DAAD.

36. With regard to chap. 6 and the relevant bibliography see the monograph by Ch. Karakolis, *Ἄμαρτία - Βάπτισμα - Χάρις (Ῥωμ. 6,1-14)*, op.cit. On the relevant literature in the last decade see the work in the following footnote.

reading which follows the Baptism and the Chrismation. It should be noted that Baptism, according to most Orthodox (but not the patristic tradition), removes original sin, which was “inherited” through Adam to every human being. Indeed, in chap. 5, which probably stands as the introduction to this section, Adam is compared to the Lord Jesus<sup>37</sup> and in chapters 5 and 6 “sin” is used as a term to render what the Gospels call “Kingdom - Dominion of Satan” / Baal Zebub (in the Synoptics) and/or “World” (in *Jn*). This concept of sin is strongly connected with death: “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law” (*1 Cor* 15:56). This came after the fall of Adam and essentially constitutes the “setting” in which every creature is born and “tastes the death” even before the Torah was given on the burning Mount Sinai (430 years after Abraham, according to *Gal* 3:17): “When P. reflects on sin, he does so in relation to the Law (cf. *Rom.* 5:12-14, 20; 7:7-25; *Gal.* 3:21-22). But he does not equate sin with the transgression of the Law. He constantly emphasizes that sin exists independently of the Law and existed already in the world before the Law, i.e. since Adam. The Law has existed since Moses. In *Rom.* 5, 12-14, P. makes a distinction between sin and a special form of sin, the transgression of a commandment: *sin prevailed between Adam and Moses, that is at the time when there was no commandment which one could break*. This can be understood from the death that was also prevalent at this time. P. therefore assumes that there was a form of sin, which is not the same as breaking a commandment. This was the form of sin in the case of Adam and again after the Law was delivered to Moses”<sup>38</sup>.

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37. N. Meyer, *Adam’s Dust and Adam’s Glory: Rethinking Anthropogony and Theology in the Hodayot and the Letters of Paul*, Boston: Brill 2016.

38. M. Wolter, *Ἡ Ἄμαρτία σύμφωνα με τὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη. Συζητώντας με τὸν Απόστολο τῶν Ἑθνῶν Παῦλο καὶ τον René Girard*, Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religions, Athens 2019, *ad loc* (open access article, as well as other tributes to P.). The same author has written a thesis on: *Rechtfertigung und zukünftiges Heil. Untersuchungen zu Röm 5, 1-11* (= BZNW 43), Berlin/New York: de Gruyter 1978. Recently his monograph was published: *Paulus. Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2011 (and in English translation: *Paul. An Outline of his Theology*, translated by R. L. Brawley, Waco, TX 2015) and a Commentary on Romans: *Der Brief an die Römer*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014-2019. The second volume is dedicated to the

But this does not mean that people are considered by P. to be irresponsible. Already in the introduction to *Rom.* the people (plural) did not voluntarily glorify or thank God (1:21), even though they have the Law written in their hearts (2:15), while on the contrary Abraham, after the "fall", succeeded by faith in becoming His "friend" (ch. 4).

By chap. 6-8, Saul primarily wants to answer the misinterpretation of his sermon, that is by "abolishing" the Law he introduces the ethos of "unbridled" freedom (beyond all barriers)<sup>39</sup>. Thus, this specific section in the heart of *Rom.* is articulated in a poetic-harmonious way through questions, which have as their answer the strong "far it be" (= the opposite of "amen"). There is always a verb, which is related to the knowledge of the recipients, who despite the disease of the flesh, are able to possess that (knowledge):

*Rom.* 6:1-3:

A. *What shall we say then?*

*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*

*Certainly not!*

*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

<sup>3</sup> Or do you not know [...]

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39. Ath. Despotis, *Ἡ θεολογικὴ ἐρμηνεία τῆς ἔννοιᾶς ἐλευθερίας στὸ Ῥωμ. 6-8. Ἀνθρώπινο Πρόσωπο καὶ ἦθος στὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη. Ἡ Κ.Δ. στὸν 21ο αἰ.,* vol. II: *Βιβλικὲς Μελέτες στὴ Βιβλικὴ Ἠθική.* Athens: Athos 2008, pp. 397-413: Paul's comment in 6:1 "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound" could be a rhetorical question, which simply fits the style and structure of the literary genre of the thesis. But already in *Rom.* 3:8 Paul had referred to the fact that some slandered him under the pretext of teaching a moral liberty "And why not say, Let us do evil that good may come? as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just". Obviously, starting from this occasion, he tries to prove in the beginning of *Rom.* 6 that in the baptized or converts to the new faith there must not be any contradiction between their new existential condition and their behavior in matters of daily life and morality. To be baptized and to enjoy the good of righteousness in Christ is to depart from the condition of an alienated man from God and to bear the Spirit of God.

Rom. 6:15-16:

B. <sup>15</sup> What then?

Shall we sin because *we are not under law but under grace?*

Certainly not!

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to  
obey,

[I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh]

Rom. 7:7-8:

C. Or do you not know, brethren, for I speak to those who know the  
law, [...]

What shall we say then?

Is the law sin?

Certainly not!

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the  
flesh*

<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die;

but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will  
live.

A striking element in the above passage is the use of the motif of *voluntary death*<sup>40</sup>, an event that has already happened once and for all in the past through heartfelt obedience to the form of doctrine (6:17) and the “turning of the page” in the believers’ curriculum vitae. Typical in this regard is the use of indefinite verbs in the first two chapters. 5-6: the believers – “those of Christ Jesus” (*Gal. 5:16*), through the

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40. Wolter, *op.cit.*, p. 70: “P. combines these two presuppositions by stating: the death that the baptized symbolically experienced as a participation in the death of Jesus is precisely the death of the sinner which sin requires! From this it follows that sin’s demand for the death of the sinner is fulfilled, and at the same time sin itself, taking what it deserves (the death of the sinner), no longer has any right to those who have been baptized into Jesus Christ. This is exactly what P. means in v. 7: “for he who has died is justified from sin”. The baptized person is no longer under the dominion of sin, but can start a new life.

immersion in water, the symbol of "Chaos", proclaimed in all directions that the worldly Ego with its passions, desires and arrogance (i.e. the "flesh") died and were even crucified ("breathed out" with the most painful death) and drawn up. It should be noted that even if most of the verbs are not in active voice, the will of man even after his fall is proven that not only has it not been invalidated due to "heredity", but it remains decisive for the choice of this kind of voluntary death, which is completely different from the one that accompanies sin, since it is the precursor of regeneration and ultimately of incorruption.

This fact is underlined (a) directly in the heart of the section, that is the 6:17 ("But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered") and (b) indirectly by the repeated "you know" in the aforementioned text.

2. Consequently, P. emphasizes that his audience consciously and voluntarily chose to change their lives in order to share first and foremost through baptism the humiliating and painful death of their Lord, so that the "rascal Self" (the "flesh") would be finally and irrevocably nailed to the wood<sup>41</sup>. In this way, however, they did not become "free"- emancipated (in the modern sense of the term), but slaves of another master, who is now the Lord Jesus, the incarnate and humiliated Yahweh. On the contrary<sup>42</sup> their resurrection is primarily a matter of a future *eschatic*<sup>43</sup> realization. Hence the use of future together with that of the indefinite.

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41. Cf. *Gal.* 5, 24-26: "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another"; *ibid.*, 6:14, 17: "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world [...] From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus".

42. The opposite seems to be the case with *Col.* 2:11-12: "in Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead".

43. This term is chosen instead of the term *eschatological* in order to better denote the final eschaton.

Even the baptismal phrase "you have put on Christ" in *Gal.* 3:27, that is the epistle which, as already noted, represents a "draft" of *Romans*, in the latter it becomes a request for the future (13:14)<sup>44</sup>.

3. The imperatives of P., which in chap. 6, follow the definite voice in the second plural now, refer mainly to Gentile Christians, who have been converted from a realm of darkness and corruption to an "alternative" one already but not yet. These "imperatives" are due to the fact that man still "carries" the body of mortality, the disease of the flesh. Although the baptized person is thus freed from the state/dominion of sin, sin as such has not been banished from the world, since it still exists and tries to subjugate people: "There is a danger, thus, even for the baptized, for this simple reason: the reality of the removal of sin at baptism is related to faith and not to physical existence: The baptized do not die physically, but at the level of physicality they live exactly as before. In this respect there is, therefore, a continuity between then and now, and this is precisely the position which, according to P., causes the baptized person to be in danger of being subjected to the state of sin again (this only changes when, at the resurrection from the dead, he will be freed from his body). Thus Christians, according to P., are in an open state: they are freed from the dynasty of sin but not from the danger of falling under its dominion again"<sup>45</sup>.

4. Thus, the preceding voluntary death implies through the "therefore" (*οὖν*) of 6:12 a new ethos/habit in the present. Believers ought to operate-"walk" with the sense that their members are "presented" as weapons of "righteousness"-virtue to bring forth life. This life will not be enjoyed in the "here and now", since the characteristic idiom of P. and of all Christians is to proclaim in the present the "necrosis" for the sake of "others" (both the weak in the Church and those who are "outside") – the humiliation of Christ, i.e. the Jewish Messiah, since P. does not use the term (Christ) merely as a name, but literally (*Gal.*

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44. "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts".

45. Wolter, *op.cit.*, p. 70

6:17)<sup>46</sup>: P., "by employing the rhetorical tradition and the techniques of public speaking<sup>47</sup>, he develops his doctrine along two axes-directions: on the one hand in an incentive way, by exhorting the recipients of his letter to demonstrate a certain behaviour in relation to themselves and to the world, so that their newly acquired identity, their new existence, may be felt; that is, that they are no longer dominated by sin. Correspondingly, in a dissuasive way, the recipients are deterred and encouraged to no longer perform/act under the state of sin. The factual purpose of both is identical, in that it is to develop and apply the consequences of baptism to the existence of the baptized. The reference to sin in 6:12-23 is functionally interpreted as a post-baptismal reminder/theology. It is rhetorically emphatic and intended to emphasize the necessity of the achieved change being "translated" into life. P. does not mention in which concrete way this will be demonstrated. He presents the life of the baptized as a realm free from the influence and power of sin. *The goal for Christians is never to be removed from this realm*"<sup>48</sup>.

5. It is striking in this regard that P. uses military terminology to encourage his audience to be alert for battle, in order to offer to "others"

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46. Cf. *2 Cor.* 4:7-8: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair"; *ibid.*, 5:1-5: "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee"; *Phil.* 3:10-11, 21: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead [...] who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself".

47. Regarding the rather inappropriate use of the term *δημηγορία* (=public speech) in current commentaries (as well as the terms "Greco-Roman" culture and "Koine" Greek), see the article by Chr. Karagounis, Greco Roman: <https://chrys-caragounis.com/research/studies.html>.

48. Wolter, *op.cit.*

spiritual "fruits" (i.e. actions that naturally flow from the new state they are experiencing, having been overwhelmed by the Spirit of God) and not to show off "deeds". The fact that the word *παραστήσωμεν* acquires in *Rom. 6* the "polemical" connotation that in Modern Greek the verb *παρα-σταίνω* has, signifying, among other things, the daily "demonstration" of the weapons (which in this case are the members of the flesh) as a "symbol of readiness"<sup>49</sup>, it is also proved by the parallel passage again from *Rom. 13:11-14*: "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts"<sup>50</sup>. And in *Gal. 5:16-23*, as in *Rom. 7:23*<sup>51</sup> P. alludes to a battle waged within the human existence: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, [...] just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love [...]" . Probably even the phrase "[they] will not inherit the kingdom of God", which is also found in the baptismal *1 Cor. 6:9-11*, was paralleled by

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49. Perhaps P. is influenced by the use of the verb *παρίστημι* as indicating the presence before the Lord (*Luk 2:22*; Cf. *Acts 27:23-24*. Xenoph. *Anab.* 6.1.22)

50. In fact, *Rom 6:12* is also parallel to the heading of the "practical" section, i.e. *12:1-2*: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

51. And in *Rom. 7:23* he will talk about: "another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members".



some among the audience of the epistle with the "inheritance" of land and property from those who were being discharged and were given the right to settle in a "colony", copy of Rome. Besides, the term *ὀψώνια* (wages) in 6:23 (whereas before in 6:21 it speaks of "the end") refers to the salary of soldiers and is placed in contrast to the "gift of God" which is *life eternal*.

### The Rom. 7-8

A new subsection is constituted by chs. 7-8, where P. does not place the focus of his discussion on *the sting of death*, that is the sin, but on the Law, which paradoxically constitutes its power – its source (1 Cor. 15:55-56). The apostle of the Gentiles explains how the Law eventually multiplies sin, even though it is surprisingly not a negative quantity, but the exact opposite: "spiritual, good, holy" (7:12)<sup>52</sup>. In this case P. does not use "we" and baptism, but "I" and marriage. Bringing the example of the death of one spouse and the fidelity to another, he does not seek to proclaim as much the "end" of the first spouse, i.e. the "Law"<sup>53</sup>, and the union of the second (i.e. Christ), who has already tasted death and is called "risen" from the dead. P. seeks to declare the change of "status" of the own Self. In this section death, which in the previous chapter was combined with voluntary baptism and especially con-crucifixion, now, since again the representative sacrifice of Christ is highlighted, as it is stated in v. 7:4 with the "paradoxical" term "body"<sup>54</sup>, it is progressively

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52. John Chrysostom reacts to those who think that the natural law or the law of heaven is implied here: «Ὡστε ὁ νόμος ἅγιος, καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἀγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθή. Ἄλλ' εἰ βούλεσθε, καὶ τῶν παραποιοῦντων τὰς ἐξηγήσεις ταύτας εἰς μέσον τὸν λόγον ἀγάγωμεν· οὕτω γὰρ σαφέστερα ἔσται τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν λεγόμενα. Τινὲς γὰρ ἐνταῦθα οὐ περὶ τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως αὐτόν φασὶ λέγειν τὰ λεγόμενα, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν περὶ τοῦ φυσικοῦ, οἱ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἐντολῆς τῆς ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ δοθείσης» (PG 60.502).

53. In the above, John Chrysostom comments that we have two deaths: both of the first spouse and of the carnal ego. Surely, the term "flesh" in this context means the corresponding attitude.

54. "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body

(7:10-11) connected with the insidious “murder” which sin operates. This murder is realized through the commandment, to whomever seeks to fulfill *de profundis* the Law, and even the comprehensive eschatological commandment of the Decalogue (i.e. "you shall not desire"), which is already valid since Edem and was confirmed by the Lord Jesus (*Mt.* 5:28). Indeed, in the “parable” used by P. at the beginning of chap. 7, the following paradox occurs: while the “parable” is talking about the death of the husband, without which every “affair” of a married woman is considered adultery (and of certainty punishable by stoning), then, when it comes to the application of the example, P. refers to the death of the “wife”, and even through the same Law, since even the breaking of a commandment in the Mosaic Torah draws death<sup>55</sup>.

Whereas in *Galatians*, P. presents the Law as a pedagogue, as a slave who with his punishing “stick” leads the child to Wisdom throughout childhood, until the child comes of age and accepts adoption at the age of 13-16 (when he wore the white toga<sup>56</sup>), in this case it presupposes an age of innocence during childhood, which is identical to the age of mankind before the Law was delivered (the 430 years between Abraham and the Law). *Then the sin was there, but it was creeping*<sup>57</sup>. "Eve", i.e. P.

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of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God".

55. *Gal.* 3:10-12: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written: cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (*Deut.* 27:26) But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith". Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them".

56. Βλ. S. Despotis, «Τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Μιὰ ἐρμηνευτικὴ πρόταση ἀναφορικὰ μὲ τὸ χριστιανικὸ πολίτευμα στὸ *Φιλ.* 3, 20-21», *Theologia* 85 (2014) 177-205.

57. Wolter, *op.cit.*, p. 67. This is exactly what he argues: "According to *Rom.* 7:8 "for apart from the law sin was dead" the sin always exists in human beings. But without the law it is harmless. According to *Rom.* 7:9: "when the commandment came, sin revived". How P. understands this process is deduced from vs. 7-8: lust, which is known in Hellenistic Judaism as the mother of all sins, was awakened by the commandment *You shall not desire*. Thus the law-giving, which was aimed at well-being and good-living (cf. *Rom.* 7:12), tragically causes the exact opposite effect: the rapid multiplication of vices. Adam broke only one commandment and brought sin into the world. Six hundred thirteen

himself<sup>58</sup>, while experiencing a period of innocence, when upon coming of age [when he became a "son of the Law" [bar mitzvah] he undertook the obligation to fully implement the most comprehensive commandment of both Edem and the Decalogue, and he eventually realized the following: (a) in this way the generation of desires was multiplied, and (b) he himself is a "miserable" existence (7:24), i.e. a tragic figure<sup>59</sup>. This tragic nature of human being is not due to the fact that the dominant reason (the mind, the intellect,) cannot be imposed on anger and desire, something that Paedeia-Education could correct functioning as *ψυχαγωγία*. The tragedy lies in the fact that he who elsewhere confesses that he is immutable according to the Law (*Phil.* 3:6)<sup>60</sup>, while knowing

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(613) commandments are contained in the Torah of Sinai, and this naturally leads to the multiplication of iniquity, as proclaimed in *Rom.* 5:20: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound".

58. The "I" in *Rom* 7:7-11 is not identified with that of Adam's, but Eve's. Cf. St. Krauter, "Eva in Rom 7", *ZNW* 99 (2008) 1-17.

59. Very aptly, John Chrysostom was very precise giving an anatomy of tragedy: «Πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Μετὰ γὰρ τοῦ θανάτου, φησί, καὶ ὁ τῶν παθῶν ἐπεισῆλθεν ὄχλος. Ὅτε γὰρ θνητὸν ἐγένετο τὸ σῶμα, ἐδέξατο καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν ἀναγκαιῶς λοιπόν, καὶ ὀργὴν καὶ λύπην καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα, ἃ πολλῆς ἐδεῖτο φιλοσοφίας, ἵνα μὴ πλημμύραντα ἐν ἡμῖν καταποντίσῃ τὸν λογισμὸν εἰς τὸν τῆς ἁμαρτίας βυθόν. Αὐτὰ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἦν ἁμαρτία· ἡ δὲ ἀμετρία αὐτῶν μὴ χαλινουμένη, τοῦτο εἰργάζετο. Οἶον, ἴν' ὡς ἐπὶ ὑποδείγματος ἐν αὐτῶν μεταχειρίσας εἶπω, ἡ ἐπιθυμία ἁμαρτία μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅταν δὲ εἰς ἀμετρίαν ἐκπέσῃ, εἴσω τῶν τοῦ νόμου γάμων οὐκ ἐθέλουσα μένειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀλλοτρίαις ἐπιπηδῶσα γυναιξί, τότε λοιπὸν μοιχεία τὸ πρᾶγμα γίνεται, ἀλλ' οὐ παρὰ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν ταύτης πλεονεξίαν. Καὶ σκόπει σοφίαν Παύλου. Ἐγκωμιάσας γὰρ τὸν νόμον, ἐπὶ τὸν ἀνωτέρω χρόνον ἔδραμεν εὐθέως, ἵνα δείξας πῶς καὶ τότε τὸ γένος διέκειτο τὸ ἡμέτερον καὶ ἡνίκα τὸν νόμον ἔλαβεν, ἀποφῆνῃ τῆς χάριτος ἀναγκαιῶν οὐσαν τὴν περιουσίαν· ὅπερ πανταχοῦ κατασκευάσαι ἐσπούδακε. Τὸ γὰρ, Πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ὅταν λέγῃ, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λέγει μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πρὸ τοῦ νόμου βεβιωκότων, καὶ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς γενομένων ἀνθρώπων. Εἶτα καὶ τὸν τρόπον λέγει τῆς πράσεως, καὶ τῆς ἐκδόσεως» (*PG* 60, 507-508).

60. As aptly noted by G. Theissen, "Die Bekehrung des Paulus und seine Entwicklung vom Fundamentalisten zum Universalisten", *Evangelische Theologie* 70 (2010), pp. 10-24: *Phil.* 3 describes the consciousness of the "pre-Christian" P., who would emphatically deny any conflict with the Law. However, this fact does not exclude an unconscious conflict, which came to light during his conversion and it is a characteristic feature of every "zealot". By persecuting Christians, P. was suppressing doubts within himself.

and appreciating the good, finally does the opposite, since in the battle of the inner man/"law of the mind" against the members/"law of sin", it is always the second "gladiator" who triumphs, probably through egoism-narcissism, which is magnified by the "primordial" fear of death and the awareness of perishability (cf. *Heb.* 2:15)<sup>61</sup>. It is striking that in this case the apostle of the Gentiles avoids to speak of the imposition of the "start of evil" serpent and "the rulers of this age" (*1 Cor.* 2:8). In any case, the apostle of the Gentiles proves to possess the extraordinary *γνώθι σαυτόν* ["know yourself"] by Thales and Socrates, as well as to be through predestination a master of oneself, as proclaimed by the Stoics.

The same experience of the tragic nature of human existence is reflected in Plato's *Laws*. In section 875a-c he argues for the need for laws in the city in the following words: "The reason thereof is this, - that no man's nature is naturally able both to perceive what is of benefit to the civic life of men and, perceiving it, to be alike able and willing to practice what is best. For, in the first place, it is difficult to perceive that a true civic art necessarily cares for the public, not the private, interest, -for the public interest bind States together, whereas the private interest rends them asunder- and to perceive also that it benefits both public and private interests alike when the public interest, rather than the private, is well enacted. And, secondly, even if a man fully grasps the truth of this as a principle of art, should he afterwards get control of the State and become an irresponsible autocrat, he would never prove able to abide by this view and to continue always fostering the public interest in the State as the object of first importance, to which the private interest is but secondary; rather, his mortal nature will always urge him on to grasping and self-interested action, irrationally avoiding pain and pursuing pleasure; both these objects it will prefer above justice and goodness, and by causing darkness within itself it will fill to the uttermost both

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When someone does not fully fulfill the Law, he acts aggressively against him (see, Joseph, *Antiquitates Judaice* 4:141-145 regarding Zimri and mixed marriages; cf. also *Gal.* 3:2-3; *Rom.* 6:12-23; 7:6) or oppressively, disparaging himself (*IV Esdras* 8:35-36; cf. *Rom.* 7:14-24).

61. Cf. 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

itself and the whole State with all manner of evils"<sup>62</sup>. Also in the genre of romance, which was particularly popular in imperial age and praises the virtue of virginity, the conflict between the eyes of the body and the eyes of the soul, due primarily to erotic desire, is vividly depicted<sup>63</sup>.

The "wretched" of P. (7:24) certainly refers primarily to the Hebrew (that is why the basic commandment of the *Pentateuch* is chosen<sup>64</sup>), but we believe that the Greek<sup>65</sup> is also implied, who, according to chap. 2,

62. It continues as follows: "Yet if ever there should arise a man competent by nature and by a birthright of divine grace to assume such an office, he would have no need of rulers over him; for no law or ordinance is mightier than Knowledge, nor is it right for Reason to be subject or in thrall to anything, but to be lord of all things, if it is really true to its name and free in its inner nature. But at present such a nature exists nowhere at all, except in small degree; wherefore we must choose what is second best, namely, ordinance and law, which see and discern the general principle, but are unable to see every instance in detail. This declaration has been made for the sake of what follows: now we shall ordain what the man who has wounded, or in some way injured, another must suffer or pay. And here, of course, it is open to anyone, in regard to any case, to interrupt us, and quite properly, with the question –“What wounds has the man you speak of inflicted, and on whom, and how and when? For cases of wounding are countless in their variety, and they differ vastly from one another.” So it is impossible for us either to commit all these cases to the law courts for trial, or to commit none of them".  
63. Cf. Heliodorus, *Aethiopica or Theagenes and Charicles*, Book 2, 25, 3, where the intentional error is distinguished from the actual (error) with the Self as the very judge (cf. *Rom.* 2:15)

64. John Chrysostom, *PG* 60, 509: «"Ο οὐ θέλω, οὐ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἀνείλε. Τί οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ, "Ο οὐ θέλω;"'. "Ο μὴ ἐπαινῶ, ὃ μὴ ἀποδέχομαι, ὃ μὴ φιλῶ· οὐ πρὸς ἀντιδιαστολὴν καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς ἐπήγαγεν εἰπών· "Ἄλλ' ὃ μισῶ, τοῦτο ποιῶ. Εἰ δὲ ὃ οὐ θέλω, τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός". β. Ὁρᾷς τέως τὴν διάνοιαν οὐ διεφθαρμένην, ἀλλὰ ἐν τῇ πράξει τὴν οἰκείαν διατηροῦσαν εὐγένειαν; Εἰ γὰρ καὶ μετέρχεται τὴν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ μισοῦσα μετέρχεται, ὃ καὶ τοῦ φυσικοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ γραπτοῦ μέγιστον ἐγκώμιον ἂν εἶη. Ὅτι γὰρ καλὸς ὁ νόμος, φησί, δῆλον ἐξ ὧν ἑμαυτοῦ κατηγορῶ, παρακούων τοῦ νόμου καὶ μισῶν τὸ γεγενημένον».

65. In Rome, even in the 1st century AD, was still famous the visit in 155 BC of the three Greek philosophers, representatives of the preeminent schools of philosophy in Athens: the academic Carneades, the stoic Diogenes and the peripatetic Cretolaos. In particular, Carneades delivered two contradictory lectures on the Law, which are also preserved by Cicero in the first two chapters of *De Legibus*, proving how much the subject of *Rom.* (which was oriented towards *πρακτέον*, i.e. the political art) was of interest to the Eternal City. In the former he demonstrated the harmonization of law with natural law and in the latter the exact opposite position of the sceptics (cf. the tragedy of *Antigone*).

possesses the law written in his heart and -as is known already from antiquity- considered greed as a mortal sin as a hubris. That is why in this case the author of *Rom.* is not only inspired by the commandment of Eden "you shall not desire"<sup>66</sup>, but also enlists the ego, since he himself, as a son of Tarsus and a zealous Pharisee, who previously used all the tools of rhetoric, can testify "representatively" for all (Jews and Greeks) to the tragedy of human existence and how it is captured by the "law of sin which is in its members" (7:23). Besides, in *Rom.* the author is in the habit of using key terms (such as *righteousness*, *law*) in many ways<sup>67</sup>.

Immediately afterwards, P. addresses each of his liberated audience individually in the second person (8:2), essentially recapitulating what he said about death, sin and the law in chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively. That is why, moreover, he recalls in 8:3 the thrilling event of the incarnation and the cross, "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" [8:4: (1st plural)]. He will then speak in 2nd plural: "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (8:9).

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This ability of philosophy and rhetoric to relativize everything was considered extremely dangerous for the education of the young by the conservative Cato, as delivered in his biography by Plutarch. In *De Officiis* Cicero proves that in the State (*Res Publica*) the Law is also the beneficial one. The content of this footnote is influenced by the lecture of Professor Pericles Vallianos on the Greekness of Roman culture in the SKAI radio series entitled "From the Big Bang to the history of Europe (18.07.2021)", [https:// www.skairadio.gr/apo-to-big-bang-pros-tin-istoria-tis-eyropis/episode-2021-07-18](https://www.skairadio.gr/apo-to-big-bang-pros-tin-istoria-tis-eyropis/episode-2021-07-18).

66. By choosing the tenth commandment "You shall not desire", he does not link the problem of tragedy only to the Jews but to every "Adam". That is why already at the beginning of chap. 7 he does not use the term "law" in the narrow sense of the Torah. Thus the human existence of every earthly Adam, after a state of innocence, enters a period of servitude to a master-god, called "sin-death". Then the law, though good, multiplies the guilt-sins and murders the existence. But this human existence possesses the possibility, if it will, though being dead, to enter into another marriage with a risen Lord and join a family of members. They now carry the form of the Crucified One par excellence.

67. Cf. the meaning of the term *Law* in 7:21, where the term denotes the status of humanity in general, God's command and the status of the members of the body. This remark, as well as the reference to the Platonic *Laws* belong to M. Brumlik, "Paulus - ein Grieche? Ein Grieche", *BiKi* 65 (2010), pp. 165-168.

Wolter remarks<sup>68</sup>: "P. understands sin as a power that is within men and constrains them to sin. *It is a force that preexists the Law, and man comes into contact with the Law always and only as a sinner.* Just as in mathematics, whatever is multiplied by zero results in zero. This means: because man only relates to the Law as a sinner, he can do nothing but produce new sins. In *Rom. 7:7-25* P. depicts this anthropological tendency to sin, the possibility of producing always and only sin by the transference of the flesh. Not only the so-called sins of the flesh are meant, of course. P. uses this category as an illustration of the inevitability of sin: just as no human existence is conceived without flesh, so sin belongs to (fallen) human existence. In *Rom 7:14* he presents sin as a master under which men are alienated from the freedom of action: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin". In the following verses, P. further describes the internal division of man: by his reason he knows that the Law is right and good, and yet one acts against the Law – as if he were possessed by an alien force that compels him to do something he does not wish to do: "But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me". In this respect, P. formulates his anthropology, that is he speaks mainly in *Rom. 7* about the creatureliness of man as such, or more precisely about the man who attempts to impose himself on sin with the help of the Law. It is clearly demonstrated that this attempt is doomed to failure, because sin is a force that has trapped man in a deadly fate, from which it is impossible for man alone to escape. Therefore, salvation comes only from outside - naturally through Jesus Christ our Lord, as stated in *Rom 7:25*. How P. explains to his readers this deliverance from the dominion of sin belongs to the most impressive theological texts of the NT".

Essentially in ch. 8, and more specifically in the aforementioned v. 9, it returns to the themes of chap. 6, but adding with extraordinary emphasis the "here and now" presence of the Holy Spirit as a *betrothal* (= guarantee) and especially *His dwelling among believers*. Once more the emphasis is on the future resurrection (8:11-12), since the same Person (= glory of

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68. *Op.cit.*, p. 68

the Father; 6:4) has already raised the body of Jesus in the past. Now they have to put to death the "deeds of the body" in order to live (in the future)! They have already received the *spirit of adoption*, which does not abolish our spirit, but testifies that we are (plural from v. 8:16 [!]) *adopted* children of God, who have cast off the fear (i.e. of sin empowered by the Law). Thus, we will also become *inheritors of God* in the future - *heirs of Christ*. For the present "if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (in the future! 8:17).

And in this regard, for the consolation of those who voluntarily suffer from the "sufferings of the present time", despite the fact that, having the *status* of the Son, they *cry out* (!) with directness to God the Abba/Father, accepting the redemption of their body, P. assures that the whole Creation suffers with us, but at the same time having the gifts of childbirth (in contrast to *Jer.* 12:4, where it simply mourns).

It is not by chance, certainly, the use of verbs starting with the prefix *συν-* [8:22: *συστενάζει και συνωδίνει* (groans and labours with birth pangs)], as well as the strong name *ἀποκαραδοκία* (=earnest expectation) in combination with *ἀπεκδέχεται* (=eagerly wait) for the Creation (and not nature), having as object the phrase "revealing of the Sons of God". And we also *ἀπεκδεχόμεθα* [accept] (long for) "the redemption" of our bodies (i.e. from corruption). This is the "freedom of the glory of the children of God" (8:21; cf. the "oversight" of the righteous martyrs in *Wisdom* 3:7), which even exceeds the pre-fallen state of Adam and Eve, since it is implied that they now bear the Image of the firstborn Son.

In this case, P. simultaneously casts doubt on the propaganda of Rome, which was also depicted on the Altar of Peace on the Field of Mars, that the Earth is going through the Golden Age, which has already risen with the empire of the new Apollo, Octavian Augustus. This doubt will also be expressed in chap. 13, immediately after the exhortation to discipline the authorities and powers, when he will point out that what we are living in is night-darkness and we are waiting for the Day (i.e., of the Lord) to rise. In 8:20-22 he invokes the groanings of the Creation, recalling to the audience the Fall, and in particular the curse that only



the Mother Earth received after the fall of Adam, the blood of Abel and the immorality that infected her causing the Flood, which (immorality) P. "paints" in relief in chap. 1, referring to the "works and days" of the imperial oikos of Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius, emperors who by their lives "tarnished" the title of Augustus. With the comprehensive passage 1:17-18, he alludes to *Is.* 51:5-869.

Apart from the Creation which groans, the consolation for the sons by grace comes from the Holy Spirit, who as the Comforter works powerfully within the existence and "makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (8:26; cf. v. 26: *helps*; v. 27: *makes intercession*). According to *Romans*, the sufferings of the present age must not sow in the hearts of the believers of the Eternal City doubt about the fact of adoption and hope (8:24), the future gift of all things (8:32). Evidently some recipients of the epistle, through trials, they had lost the ontological hope of the resurrection of all things, hence the "glorified" (in the past tense for the adopted sons of faith) in 8:31, while the absolute justification in the whole section of chap. 5-8 is expected in the future with the coming of our Lord Jesus.

In the end P. invokes as a husband in love (cf. 7:1) the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, from which nothing can separate us, not even angels or the important for Christianity things to come. He thus arouses the "passion of the audience". Besides, it must not be forgotten that already in chap. 1, the non-glorification of God implies the alienation of the body into *vanity* and *flesh*, which consumes everything as objects of self-indulgence and finally consumes the body itself. And while the cries and shouts prevail in ch. 8, coming both from the Self, the Creation<sup>70</sup> and the Spirit, in ch. 9, P. expresses his own *great sorrow* and unceasing anguish in his heart for the salvation of Israel, which will be achieved for those who believe in the coming of from Zion Jesus as Lord!

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69. M. Mayordomo, "Ambivalente Gerechtigkeit. Der Roemerbrief als offener Text", *BiKi* 65 (2010), pp. 148-153, 151.

70. Perhaps P. is referring to an earthquake or other "natural" phenomena, which since the 50s AD have been emitting signals.

## Conclusions

1. In chaps. 6-8, P. uses the images of death, battle and marriage, alternating between the 1st and 2nd plural and 1st singular persons encouraging to a cruciferous ethos. It is therefore wrong to divide *Rom.* into theoretical and practical parts and to underestimate especially chap. 14-16. In fact the author uses initial verbs in simple past to indicate the contraction with Christ through baptism once for ever. The glorification is expected in the future. In the present, a battle is being fought, not for trophies, but for the fruits of love that will provide life. The recipients of *Romans*, from being slaves to sin, which is enabled by the law and has death as its sting, did not become independent. They became servants of another Lord. In no way are they passively "vessels of election". Now they can in the Spirit truly choose the challenge with which the Torah –the *Deuteronomy*– is concluded: life or death.

2. In chaps. 5-8, P. addresses people of two categories: (a) those who misunderstood the Pauline preaching with "all things are lawful for me" and (b) those who, because of tribulations, temptations, had lost hope<sup>71</sup>. The formers are addressed especially in chap. 6 and to the latter in ch. 8, where he emphasizes that the Creation also suffers with us, not just uttering cries (as when corruption prevails), but the pains of childbirth (a fact that implies rebirth) and the Spirit groans with unuttered groans within us. We have already been adopted, as the Spirit combined with our spirit calls and even "cries out" to God with the words *Abba-Father*, which denote "intimacy", kinship with both Him and the Son.

3. The above proves how comprehensively it is worthwhile to study the biblical passages. Thus, (a) if one isolates the "that I will to do, I do not do" in *Rom.* 7 or the *vessels of election* in *Rom.* 9-10, one will conclude that in the post-apocalyptic world there is no possibility of choice. But Baptism, as already noted, is a product of verbs in active voice. Certainly,

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71. Cf. S. Despotis, «Τὸ ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν στὸ *Ρωμ.* 1, 17», *ΕΕΘΣΙΑ* 45 (2010), pp. 237-265 and in the collective volume *Σπουδὴ στὴν Παύλεια Θεολογία*, Athens: Ennoia 2017.

perhaps P. would have objections to the bright white robe worn for centuries by the baptized and anointed one, since for this reason the Christian in the present century must have over him the figure of the *Crucified Jesus*, i.e. the absolutely humbled and consecrated one for the salvation of the world. And indeed the revival of Baptismal theology today, if it were to be experienced in this "quality", could contribute substantially to the true repentance of existence and the transformation of the World.

(b) The same misinterpretation occurs if one isolates the fact that God in ch. 8 subdues creation to vanity-corruption/death, but also in ch. 9 he creates vessels of "election".

(c) On the other hand, when studying these very important chapters, the polysemy of key terms, such as *law*, must be taken into account, which is appropriate in order for the sender of *Romans* to address both Jewish and Greek audience in the 5-7 house churches of Rome.

4. Finally, as *Rom.* 8 proves, the Son was not forced to become flesh to restore Adam to his merely primordial state, but to raise the Adam-made of earth in *Gen. 2* to the true Image of God in *Gen. 1*, which is identified with the coming of the Lord Jesus from Zion, the "end of the Law". In this way, *Rom.* 5-8 "depict" in relief how the "great unfinished task" is fulfilled, which remains open and with the narrative of the Proto-history and the entire Torah/Law, the "conquest" of the true Promised Land.

It follows from the above that to the great challenge of the human condition, called "desire" and presented as the measure of experiencing freedom in *Rom.* 7, while it is now acknowledged by modern psychoanalysis that we are possessed and do not possess it, for P. the answer is not its extinction, but the *love* relationship with the great Other, Christ (the original of our Image). From this fact the glorious outburst in *Rom.* 8 is justified, as well as the wording already in *Gal.* 2, 20: "I live not myself, but Christ in me", which was also found in the vocabulary of lovers in imperial times.