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Brett David Burrowes

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Brett David Burrowes

From Letter to Spirit:  
The Transformation of Torah in Paul's Symbolic World  
as reflected in his Letter to the Romans

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)

University of Durham

Department of Theology

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13 JUL 2004

## Abstract

In this thesis the transformation of Paul's thought regarding Torah is analyzed. A combination of theological and sociological approaches are used in the attempt to discern what sociological factors underlie the change in his theological perspective on the law, sin, the Spirit, and Christ as expressed in Romans 1 and 7:1-8:13. Toward this end, a method derived from Peter Berger's sociological theory of religion in *The Sacred Canopy* is applied to these chapters. In Berger's view, religion is viewed as a forming a symbolic social universe that exists perpetually in a state of uncertainty and threat and which therefore requires legitimation. Although Romans 7-8 was written long after Paul's conversion, it is my contention that certain sociological threats to his Jewish symbolic universe underlie his writing here. Paul experienced a greater degree of resolution to these threats in his vision of Christ than he did in his life under Torah. Specifically, these threats are not only Gentile cultural and political oppression, but also the deeper threat of Israel's sin which has brought about this oppression. In his vision, Paul experienced not only a personal transformation through the indwelling spirit of Christ, the law itself underwent a transformation from letter to Spirit. I argue that that this transformation is to be understood on the basis of a Hellenistic kingship ideology which contrasts the written law as lifeless letter with the king as the living embodiment of the law. For Paul, Christ is the exalted king, the embodiment of righteousness and divine law. So the law is no longer merely an external set of commands written on stone, but is identified with the Spirit of the exalted and enthroned Christ. Christ himself is the living embodiment of the law, who now dwells within his people by his Spirit to live the divine law out through them. In this way, the exalted Christ answers the threat of Israel's sin to his Jewish symbolic universe.

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

Overview of Recent Approaches to Paul and the Law	1
Krister Stendahl and Werner Georg Kümmel	1
E. P. Sanders	2
Lloyd Gaston and Stanley K. Stowers	4
James D. G. Dunn	4
N. T. Wright	6
Stephen Westerholm	7
Frank Thielman	8
Paul's Symbolic Universe and the Sociology of Knowledge: Berger and Luckmann	9
Conversion and the transformation of a symbolic universe	16
The transformation of Torah from letter to Spirit in Romans 7-8	17

### Chapter 1 The Christological basis of Paul's transformation of Torah in Romans 1:1-17

1.1	Introduction	23
1.2	Romans 1:3-4 as a confession	24
1.2.1	The extent of traditional material in the confession	24
1.2.2	Paul's use of the confession and his relationship to prior Christian preaching	30
1.3	The meaning of the resurrection and exaltation for the early Christians	31
1.3.1	Exaltation of the martyrs in early Judaism and the apostolic proclamation	32
1.4	Paul and the apostolic preaching of Jesus as Son of God	33
1.4.1	The Son of God and early Christian devotion	35
1.5	Paul's persecution of the early Christian community	40
1.5.1	Paul's persecution and the precariousness of his pre-conversion symbolic universe	47
1.5.2	The distinctiveness of Paul's vision of Christ as opposed to other resurrection appearances	52
1.6	The confession of Romans 1:3-4 modified by Paul's vision of Christ	53
1.6.1	The flesh/Spirit contrast and Paul's vision of Christ	54
1.7	The confession in the context of Paul's call to the Gentiles	58
1.8	The Gospel of the Exalted Son and the Eschatological Righteousness of God	63
1.9	The Sociological Meaning of Paul's Apocalyptic Vision of the Exalted Son	67

### Chapter 2 From Letter to Spirit: Dying to Torah and Rising with Christ in Romans 7:1-6

2.1	The Law, Sin, and Death in Romans 2-6	70
2.2	Dying to the Torah	71
2.2.1	The meaning of νόμος in Romans 7:1-6	72
2.2.2	The rhetorical context of Romans 7:1-6: "those who know the law"	74
2.2.3	The marriage analogy	75
2.2.3.1	Is the analogy a hopeless morass of self-contradiction?	75

2.2.3.2	The identity of the persons in the analogy	76
2.3	Being put to death to the Torah	80
2.4	Put to death through the body of Christ	81
2.4.1	The social and communal implications of being put to death to Torah	82
2.5	Rising with Christ: marriage to a new covenant lord and husband	84
2.5.1	Christ's assumption of divine prerogatives in marrying Yahweh's bride	84
2.5.2	Adultery in the analogy: Paul's pre-conversion convictions	86
2.6	Romans 7:5-6: From the Oldness of the Letter to the Newness of Spirit	90
2.6.1	Existence "in the flesh"	91
2.6.2	The letter/Spirit contrast: OT and Jewish backgrounds	92
2.6.3	The Hellenistic background of the letter/Spirit contrast: lifeless written letter/king as living law	96
2.6.4	Paul's distinctive combination of Jewish and Hellenistic concepts	99
2.7	The Sociological Meaning of the Letter/Spirit Transformation	99
<b>Chapter 3 The Plight under Torah: Romans 7:7-25</b>		<b>103</b>
3.1	The Identity of the "I"	104
3.1.1	Autobiographical Approaches	104
3.1.2	The fictive rhetorical "I"	107
3.1.2.1	"I" as "every person"--the interpretation of Kümmel	107
3.1.2.2	The redemptive-historical "I"	110
3.1.2.3	The Gentile "I"	111
3.1.3	The personal and paradigmatic "I"	113
3.2	Paul's Rhetorical Purpose in Romans 7	114
3.2.1	Romans 7 as representing Christian existence or existence under the Jewish Torah?	114
3.2.2	<i>Akrasia</i> and existence under Torah	120
3.3	Romans 7:7-12, The Seduction of Eve/Israel and Captivity to sin	124
3.3.1	The seduction/deception of Eve/Israel	124
3.3.2	Wrath, Curse, and Captivity	126
3.4	The Nature of the Plight: The Identity of "Sin" in Romans 7:7-25	130
3.4.1	Sin as a personified abstraction	131
3.4.2	Sin as a psychological principle	132
3.4.2.1	Sin as the evil inclination	133
3.4.2.2	Sin as an evil root or seed in the heart	135
3.4.2.3	Sin as evil desire	136
3.4.2.4	The language of external power: rhetorical exaggeration?	137
3.4.2.6	Sin as a corruption of human nature: the view of Augustine	140
3.4.2.5.1	Sin as habit ( <i>consuetudo</i> )--the early Augustine	140
3.4.2.5.2	Sin as <i>concupiscentia</i>	141
3.4.2.5.3	Augustine's reaction against Manichaeism and rejection of a cosmological view of sin	142
3.4.2.5.4	Augustine's redefinition of sin and the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being	144
3.4.2.5.5	Augustine's transformation of Paul and suppression of Pauline cosmology	146
3.4.2.5.6	Sarx as corrupted human nature?	148

3.4.2.5.7	Paul and Augustine's Differing Ideologies of the Body	149
3.4.2.5.8	Sin, the body, and the etiology of disease	149
3.4.2.5.8.1	The etiology of disease and social context	152
3.4.3	Paul and invasion etiology: sin as a cosmological invader	156
3.4.3.1	Paul's apocalyptic Jewish context: cosmic dualism	156
3.4.3.2	Sin and Satan/Belial in Jewish literature	157
3.4.3.3	Sin, Satan, and Romans 7 in the pre-Augustinian church Fathers	159
3.4.3.4	Objections to a cosmological view of sin in Romans 7	160
3.4.3.5	Sin and cosmological beings in Paul	165
3.4.3.6	Sin as a hypostatization of a Satanic attribute	167
3.4.3.7	Sin as a deified abstraction	169
3.4.4	Sin as both cosmological and psychological	169
3.4.4.1	Sin and the psychological component of guilt: the cycle of iniquity	170
3.4.4.2	Sin and the body	172
3.4.4.3	Sin as a cosmological law structuring human bodily nature	173
3.4.4.4	Sin as a defiling spirit invading the porous body	175
3.4.4.5	Sociological analysis of the body invaded by sin	177
3.5	The Weakness of the Letter: the failure of Torah in the sphere of the flesh	179
3.6	From Plight to Solution: The Sociological Basis of Paul's Distinctive View of Torah in Romans 7	185
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>From the Letter to the Life-giving Law of the Spirit of Christ</b>	<b>196</b>
4.1	Romans 8:1-4 The transformation of Torah in the death and resurrection of Christ	196
4.1.1	The transformed Torah and eschatological justification	196
4.1.2	The identity of the two laws in 8:2	198
4.1.3	The Torah, the Spirit and the exalted Christ	202
4.1.4	The Inclusion of Believers in the Death and Resurrection of Christ	204
4.1.4.1	Christ's body as a microcosm of the world	206
4.1.5	The weakness of the Torah and the sending of the Son	207
4.1.6	In the likeness of sinful flesh	210
4.1.7	Christ's death as a <i>περὶ ἁμαρτίας</i>	212
4.1.7.1	Christ's body and the macrocosmic body of sin	214
4.1.8	The fulfillment of the righteous requirement of Torah	215
4.1.8.1	Fulfillment of Torah and Walking <i>κατὰ πνεῦμα</i>	217
4.1.8.2	Walking <i>κατὰ πνεῦμα</i> as visionary ascent	219
4.2	In the Flesh and in the Spirit: Rom 8:5-13	221
4.2.1	The Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ: Christ as the indwelling Torah	222
4.2.2	"Christ in you": Christ living the Torah in believers	224
4.2.3	The replacement of the "I" in believers by Christ	225
4.2.4	Consequences of Christ's indwelling: the deadness of the body and the life of the Spirit	227
4.2.5	The conditional nature of participation in eschatological resurrection/justification	229
4.3	The present process of transformation	230
4.4	Conclusion	232
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>234</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>239</b>

## Introduction

In this thesis, I will examine how and why the conception of Torah is transformed in Paul's symbolic universe, especially as this comes to expression in Paul's letter to the Romans. Prior approaches to this question have tended either to focus on one dimension of this relationship to the exclusion of others or to be insensitive to the cultural context of Paul and Judaism. In addition, Romans 7:1-8:13, with its description of human powerlessness against sin under the law, particularly appears to have been dismissed to the periphery of Paul's thought by recent approaches. In the introduction, I intend to discuss briefly why prior approaches appear to be inadequate, to discuss how the use of various sociological and social anthropological models may help to overcome these problems, and finally to work toward a hypothesis concerning how and why Torah has been transformed in Paul's thought.

### Overview of Recent Approaches to Paul and the Law

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Krister Stendahl's article "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," has profoundly altered the role which Romans 7 has played within contemporary scholarship. Stendahl argues that Romans 7 has been misinterpreted in light of the guilty conscience of Augustine and Luther who imposed upon the text of Scripture their concern with how they could find a merciful God.<sup>1</sup> Paul, however, had a very robust conscience (Phil. 3:6),<sup>2</sup> and Stendahl remarks that "it is also striking to note that Paul never urges Jews to find in Christ the answer to the anguish of a plagued conscience."<sup>3</sup> Instead Stendahl argues that "Paul's references to the impossibility of fulfilling the Law are part of a theological and theoretical scriptural argument about the relation between Jew and Gentiles."<sup>4</sup> Paul is engaged in a defense of the Law's holiness and goodness,<sup>5</sup> which is supported by the fact that Paul distinguishes "I" from sin and the flesh and acquits the ego rather than

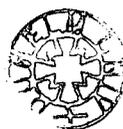
<sup>1</sup> Krister Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.



condemning it along with sin and flesh.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of Paul is not to demonstrate the “human predicament” as such, but to defend the Law against the charge that it is something sinful (7:7). Stendahl’s conclusions are based upon the earlier work of Werner Kümmel,<sup>7</sup> who argued that Romans 7:7-25 was not an autobiographical description of either Paul’s pre-Christian or Christian experience, and certainly could not be used as evidence of Paul’s struggle to keep the law prior to his conversion. Instead, Romans 7 should be regarded as a post-conversion perspective of life under the law. Thus in Kümmel’s and Stendahl’s view, Romans 7:7-25 can say nothing about the transformation of the law in Paul’s symbolic world.

E. P. Sanders also dismissed the relevance of Romans 7:1-8:13 for Paul’s relationship to Judaism in his works *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), and *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983). When the former book was published in 1977, one might say that it inaugurated a search for the historical Paul. The problem of relating Paul to his Jewish background came sharply into focus. Sanders was reacting against a traditional Protestant paradigm in which Judaism was misrepresented as a legalistic religion of meritorious works as opposed to Paul’s religion of pure grace. Instead, in Jewish religion, the covenant had been established by God, so that Torah, far from being opposed to God’s grace, was in fact a manifestation of God’s grace to Israel, his covenant people through his gracious election of them. Moreover, Torah itself was seen as a means of grace, since through it the people of God could maintain their covenant relationship with God. In no case did the Jews regard their relationship with God or election as dependent upon their works or initiative. Sanders describes Jewish religion as “covenantal nomism.” According to Sanders, Paul rejected the law or covenantal nomism for two reasons. First of all, Paul held to an exclusivist soteriology in which salvation came through Christ alone, and therefore *ipso facto*, it could not come through the law.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, since God’s purposes were universal in scope and the Gentiles could enter on the same basis as the Jews, therefore “the Jewish law as such was

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>7</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus*, (Leipzig: J. G. Hinrichs, 1929), reprinted in *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament*, (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 17, 47. Referred to as *PLJP* henceforth.

excluded as a means of entry.”<sup>9</sup> But even though Sanders successfully vindicated Judaism from the charge of gross legalism, he drove a wedge between Paul and his Jewish heritage. In *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Sanders compares Paul and Judaism on the basis of different “patterns of religion,”<sup>10</sup> but this conception merely juxtaposes Paul and Judaism without relating the two constructively and showing how Paul’s thought developed from and in reaction to his Jewish background. Paul rejected Judaism “because it was not Christianity.” Thus in Sanders’ view there is no necessary relationship of Paul to Judaism, since his conversion constituted a sharp change from one religion to another.

In his subsequent book, Sanders argues that human inability to keep the law was not the basis for Paul’s critique of the Law.<sup>11</sup> Therefore Romans 7:1-8:13 cannot be viewed as fundamental to Paul’s critique of the Law, but merely as the theological implication of Paul’s presupposition that Christ is the only way of salvation. Since Christ came as Savior, the conviction follows that “such a saviour must have been needed.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore Paul argues from solution to plight rather than from plight to solution, so that Paul’s thought does not spring “from an analysis of the human condition and of the place of the law in the human condition.”<sup>13</sup> Instead, Paul, in claiming that salvation is only through Christ, was involved in a dilemma of trying to hold together both the belief that God had given the law and the conviction that the law was ineffective for salvation.<sup>14</sup> Romans 7 amounts to Paul’s justification for the Law in God’s plan: “How could God, who all along intended to save on the basis of faith, have given a law which does not save, which first produces and then condemns sin, or which at best does not help?”<sup>15</sup> Thus Sanders argues that it was “an acute theological problem” rather than “an analysis of the human plight” which drove Paul to such passionate expression.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, although Sanders admits that Romans 7:1-8:13 does present a view of human inability, he does not believe it to be central to Pauline

<sup>9</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 47.

<sup>10</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1977), 12-18. Referred to as *PPJ* henceforth.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 21-25.

<sup>12</sup> Sanders, *PPJ*, 443.

<sup>13</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 151.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

theology, since it is a unique presentation of this view.<sup>17</sup>

Because of the arbitrariness of Sanders' portrait of Paul, most scholars have since tried to relate Paul more constructively to his Jewish heritage. Like Sanders, Lloyd Gaston and others<sup>18</sup> argue that Paul intended to create a new religion, but only for the Gentiles. Paul's gospel was not meant for the Jews, who possessed their own legitimate relationship to God through the Torah. But these approaches ignore the fact that Paul explicitly states that his gospel is "to the Jew first" (Rom 1:16), and that the righteousness apart from the Law is for all who believe, since there is no distinction (between Jew and Gentile), for all have sinned and lack the glory of God (Rom 3:22). In addition, the anguish of Paul over Israel's failure to believe his gospel and so receive God's salvation would be overdrawn and melodramatic if Paul's final conclusion were that God had created a separate covenant for the Gentiles. Finally, if Paul were creating a new religion for Gentiles, why does he seem to anguish over the problem of Torah? Stanley Stowers argues that Torah was not meant to be the way to God for the Gentiles, since the passions created by their involvement with idolatry made self-mastery over the flesh an impossible task.<sup>19</sup> For him Romans 7:1-8:13 therefore refers exclusively to Gentiles who attempt to observe the Torah as a means of attaining self-mastery. But *contra* Stowers, there is no indication in the immediate context that Paul has restricted the argument in Romans 7:1-8:13 to Gentiles. In Romans 2-3, Paul takes pains to demonstrate that despite their advantages with regard to possessing Torah, the Jews are in fact no better off than the Gentiles. The argument that Paul is referring only to a Jewish teacher of the Gentiles does not hold weight, since there is nothing in 2:17-20 that demands that it be interpreted as anything other than the attitude of the typical Diaspora Jew. Thus neither Stowers nor Gaston adequately resolve Paul's relationship to Judaism; nor do they adequately explain the role of Romans 7:1-8:13 in this relationship.

James D. G. Dunn, on the other hand, argues that Paul is attacking a basic

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>18</sup> Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 1987; Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994; John Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, Oxford University Press, 2002; Markus Barth, *The People of God*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1983; Paul Van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 1987; Mary Ann Getty, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A Perspective on Romans 9-11." *CBQ* 50 (1988): 456-469.

<sup>19</sup> Stowers, 273-284.

“Jewish self-understanding” that “God’s acknowledgment of covenant status is bound up with, even dependent upon observance” of particular requirements of the law such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws that functioned as badges that identified them as members of the covenant and as God’s people.<sup>20</sup> Dunn concludes that “the devout Jew of Paul’s day would regard observance of the laws on clean and unclean foods as a basic expression of covenant loyalty.”<sup>21</sup> The issues of circumcision, food laws and sabbath “had become crucial test cases for covenant loyalty and for maintaining Jewish identity as the people chosen by God for himself alone.”<sup>22</sup> Now that the eschatological “time of fulfillment had come,” the covenant and the grace of God “broadened out as God originally intended” and “separated from national restriction,” so that Gentiles as well as Jews could enjoy the grace of God on an equal basis.<sup>23</sup> Thus in Dunn’s perspective, Paul’s fundamental critique is that the Jews have misinterpreted the law in nationalistic terms and have understood these boundary markers in racial or ethnic terms that served their own ethnic pride rather than understanding them in their proper social function.<sup>24</sup> This rightly brings to the fore the Jew/Gentile issue with which Paul and emerging Christianity wrestled, but which is almost entirely neglected by interpreters in the Augustinian tradition.

But it seems that Paul’s critique of the Jews in Romans 2-3 does not focus upon ethnic pride, but rather upon their pride in possessing the Law despite the fact that they do not keep it, and that God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles for this reason.<sup>25</sup> The reason that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile is not simply because God wishes to broaden out the covenant to include the Gentiles. There is no distinction because the Jews in their disobedience are as sinful as the Gentiles and for that reason Torah has failed to set them apart as God’s holy people. The problem, therefore, is not ethnic nationalism, but sin. I suggest that the real flaw in Dunn’s approach is his failure to carry through his insight that the works of the law functioned as sociological

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<sup>20</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 191-194.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

<sup>25</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 134; Byrne, *Romans*, 97; L. Thuren, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 171.

boundary-markers identifying the people of God in contrast to the nations. Dunn does not recognize that the fundamental purpose of such boundary markers is neither ethnocentric nor nationalistic, but to safeguard the holiness of God's people against sin. Specifically, Dunn fails to recognize the significance of his insight for Romans 7: that the Torah-defined boundaries that mark out the people of God have failed in their intended function: the sin which characterizes the Gentiles (Gal 2:15) has not been kept out. Thus the relationship that Paul draws between Torah and sin in Romans 7:1-8:13 does not figure prominently in Dunn's understanding of Paul's relationship to Torah. The fact that Dunn interprets Romans 7:14-25 in neo-Augustinian fashion to refer to present Christian experience supports this conclusion.<sup>26</sup> Once again, the law's subversion by sin is sidelined in the debate over Paul and the law.

N. T. Wright agrees with Dunn regarding the function of the works of the law, and the problem of Jewish ethnocentrism which turns these works into nationalistic badges. He thus partakes of both the strengths and some of the weaknesses of Dunn's perspective. Wright, however, rejects Dunn's neo-Augustinian approach to Romans 7, which he views as concerned with the plight of Israel under Torah. Wright's most distinctive contribution, however, is the idea that Israel conceived of itself as still being in a state of exile because of its disobedience to the covenant.<sup>27</sup> Thus in contrast to Sanders, Wright holds that Paul (and Judaism generally) did have a pre-conversion plight, namely that the nation lay in a continuing state of exile because of its sin, and awaited the fulfillment of the prophecies of God's deliverance.<sup>28</sup> In the meantime they suffered under the cultural and political oppression of the nations, especially Rome. In Wright's scheme, Paul moves from plight to solution to a radicalized understanding of that plight, a scheme with which I am in general agreement.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, whether the pre-conversion Paul viewed Israel as being in a continuing state of exile cannot be demonstrated one way or the other, even if some Jews can be shown to have

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<sup>26</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC, (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 374-413.

<sup>27</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 140-156. See also James M. Scott, ed. *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997) and *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 268-279.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Climax*, 251. The reasons for my agreement with Wright on this point will be explained below in section 3.6.

held this conception (e.g. Bar 3:6-8, Tob 14:5-7). It cannot even be shown that the pre-conversion Paul held that Israel was in captivity to sin in the way that the Essenes viewed the majority of Israel in captivity to Belial (e.g. 1QS 1:18). The most that may be supposed is that Paul was distressed over the disobedience of Israel to Torah (Rom 2:17-2:29, 3:9-20), though he appears to have had a high view of his own ability to keep the Torah (Phil 3:6).

Stephen Westerholm, on the other hand, seeks to redeem Luther and Augustine and their understanding of Paul's gospel.<sup>30</sup> Recognizing that the portrayal of Judaism as a legalistic system of works-righteousness is grossly inaccurate, Westerholm nevertheless argues that Luther accurately understood Paul. Beginning with Romans 7:10, he makes a case that the Law was intended to provide for eschatological life or salvation;<sup>31</sup> however, he maintains that human inability to keep the works that the Sinai covenant required<sup>32</sup> prevented the Law from fulfilling its intended function. But even if Paul argues as Westerholm claims he does, he most certainly did not arrive at his perspective out of any dissatisfaction with the Torah. After all, Paul says that he kept the law flawlessly (Phil. 3:6). The problem cannot be limited to human inability to keep the law, for Paul would then be his own best argument against himself. *Contra* Westerholm, the problem appears to be something deeper and more insidious. Moreover, if "works of the law" refer to all the requirements of the Sinai covenant, why is it that circumcision, food, sabbath and calendar laws are the *foci* of his debates with other early Christians? It seems that Dunn's explanation of the works of the law as boundary marking is far more plausible. And if Paul's debates with his opponents are focused more upon the boundary marking function of the Torah, then can one really argue that Paul was opposing the attainment of salvation through meritorious good works? Finally, even if the picture of Judaism as a burdensome religion of legalistic works-righteousness is rejected, how is Paul's relationship to Judaism really any different than that of traditional Lutheran interpreters, except that the language has been cleaned up and the pejorative remarks removed? It strikes me as an odd dichotomy to retain Luther's interpretation of Paul but reject his view of Judaism, as Westerholm

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1988.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145-147.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

does, for the two are inextricably related.

Also arguing against Sanders, Frank Thielman maintains that Paul does in fact argue from plight to solution, and that his argument is based upon a prior eschatological pattern found in certain early Jewish writings.<sup>33</sup> Thielman finds this pattern of plight to eschatological solution within the Old Testament itself, particularly in the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>34</sup> Thielman also claims to find this pattern in 1QH 1:21-32; 3:21-22; 11:10-14; 11:19-27; 17:13-16; 1QS 4:2-18; CD 3; *1 En.* 10:20-21, *Jub.* 1:22-25; 5:12; *Pss. Sol.* 17, 4 *Ez.* 8:53-59; the *T. Levi* 18:9-12; *T. Dan* 5:5, 11 and the *Palestinian Targum* on *Lev.* 26.<sup>35</sup> Although I agree that the pattern of spiritual plight to eschatological solution is found within the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, I cannot agree that it is found in the writings of early Judaism. Although early Jewish writers were aware of a problem with sin and disobedience to the law and although they hoped for an eschatological deliverance or purification from sin, nevertheless none of these writers perceived the situation of Israel to be so hopeless as to require a solution outside the law altogether. The Qumran community in particular believes that the eschatological purification of the new covenant is through the law itself, the result of adherence to their interpretation of the law (1QS 1:12-13; 3:6-12; see CD 7:5-6). Thus although Thielman correctly discerns a pattern of plight to eschatological solution in the prophets and in Second Temple Judaism, he does not demonstrate that Paul himself reasoned in this fashion or that Sanders' idea that Paul reasoned from solution to plight is incorrect. It could be that Paul reasoned from solution to plight and then found an existing paradigm in the prophets and in Judaism. Gager's comment is apropos here: "it is not enough to explain Pauline theology by pointing to parallels in Philo, the Rabbis or Jewish apocalyptic. For parallels are just that--parallels. Left to themselves, they never meet. What one needs is an explanation of Paul's affinity for these particular ideas rather than others."<sup>36</sup> Thus prior attempts to explain the nature and origin of Paul's view of Torah have not altogether succeeded. A new approach is necessary.

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<sup>33</sup> Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-36.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-45.

<sup>36</sup> John Gager, "Some Notes on Paul's Conversion." *NTS* 27 (1981), 704.

## Paul's Symbolic Universe and the Sociology of Knowledge

As stated previously, it is not sufficient to list historical antecedents to Romans 7-8 in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. The mere existence of such antecedents does not explain how or why Paul's thought regarding the Torah was transformed or why he came to view Torah as subverted by sin.<sup>37</sup> A sociological model is needed that will enable an understanding of how and why Paul's thought-world was transformed. In this regard, Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge and conception of a symbolic universe are most helpful.<sup>38</sup> Their model is based upon the ideas that reality itself is a socially constructed phenomenon and that the sociology of knowledge analyzes "the processes in which this occurs."<sup>39</sup> He defines "reality" as those social phenomena that "we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away') and "knowledge" as "the certainty that [these social] phenomena are real and that they possess certain characteristics."<sup>40</sup> Thus a sociology of knowledge "must concern itself with whatever passes for knowledge" in a society.<sup>41</sup> Thus Berger's sociology of knowledge is particularly appropriate in the analysis of theological statements which provide the grammar of a given religious community. These statements provide "the scaffolding of the thought" of a particular community or even an entire society, becoming "propositions which have the status or function of the words 'It is written . . .'" Within particular communities they have become virtually unquestioned or even unquestionable axioms; they function as a foundation for research and action."<sup>42</sup> The sociology of knowledge seeks to question how and why such statements became fixed axioms and what purpose they now serve as an inevitable part of reality for those within the community. Howard Clark Kee defends the necessity of such an approach, arguing that one "must seek to enter the symbolic universe of the

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<sup>37</sup> See John Gager, "Body-Symbols and Social Reality: Resurrection, Incarnation and Asceticism in Early Christianity," *Religion* 12 (1982), 345-363.

<sup>38</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (Doubleday: Garden City, NY), 1966.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 392.

community . . . and to identify both what the shared assumptions were as well as what explicit claims and norms were declared by the group."<sup>43</sup> Otherwise one is in danger of imposing one's own cultural assumptions and values uncritically on the text in a form of "guileless cultural imperialism."<sup>44</sup>

But what justification is there for using sociological models such as Berger's?<sup>45</sup> In other words, how does one know that a modern theory is not simply being imposed upon an ancient text? After all, Berger lives in a socio-cultural context two thousand years removed from the New Testament. Thus would it not be anachronistic to use his theory to understand the function of religion in Jewish and Greco-Roman society? Perhaps so, but the greater danger would be to have no consciously articulated sociological model, and therefore to impose this unarticulated "theory" upon the text. Only by clearly expressing a model of how religion functions sociologically can one be self-critical in the use of it. The danger of anachronistic imposition of models upon the text will always be present; nevertheless to some degree the text itself and the religious and cultural forms of the time can act as controls to modify or even subvert sociological models if we permit them to do so and do not allow them to determine the exegesis of the text so completely that we fail to recognize data that does not conform to our models.

According to Berger, "religion is a humanly constructed universe of meaning, and this construction is undertaken by linguistic means."<sup>46</sup> In other words, religion is a social enterprise undertaken within a community for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the community in the face of chaos and meaninglessness.<sup>47</sup> But there is a serious danger of reductionism in Berger's dependence upon Durkheim's functionalist

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<sup>43</sup> Howard Clark Kee, *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 53.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> For discussion of the use of sociological and social anthropological models in the study of the New Testament, see S. Stowers, "The Social Sciences and the Study of Early Christianity," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism, Vol. V, Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context*, (ed. William Scott Green, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1985), 149-181; Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament," *NTS* 26 (1980), 164-179; John Gager, "Shall We Marry Our Enemies? Sociology and the New Testament," *Int* 36 (1982), 256-265; Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 13-15; D. G. Horrell, *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 11; Stephen Barton, "Social-Scientific Approaches to Paul" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967, 175.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-28.

definition of religion.<sup>48</sup> Functionalism presupposes that social life should not be explained by the reasons and purposes given by those who participate in that culture, but by deeper underlying causes unperceived by the participants.<sup>49</sup> In other words, a functionalist looks at how a religion functions to establish and maintain the social order, even if the participants believe that they are relating to the realm of sacred. Human beliefs about their purpose in religious activity are then seen as masking the true function of such religious belief and practice in society. Durkheim, however, is not in fact offering an “objective” explanation of human religious behavior, but translating religious experience, belief, and practice into terms acceptable to a modern secular world view. This worldview has no place for supernatural agency and little room for purposive human agency. This world view is then labeled “scientific” and “objective” and in this manner becomes as absolute as the divinely ordained worlds of the ancients. Instead of constructing a sacred canopy, the secular worldview presupposed by Durkheim and Berger constructs a protective canopy for itself using the language of “scientific objectivity.”

Nevertheless it is possible to speak of how religious activity functions in society without Durkheim’s reductionistic assumptions. First, the concepts of function, purpose, and causality need to be related adequately to each other. “Purpose” describes the conscious aims of those who participate in such religious activity. Such purpose cannot be excluded from sociological description without the peril of reductionism. The language of causality is inappropriate in the description of religion because it is not impersonal forces that are being described but persons in social relationships. Function refers not to the causes of human behavior, nor to those purposes intended by the participants, but to the effects, intended or not, of social or religious behavior. Religious activity may have the unintended or unconscious function of creating social cohesion, but social cohesion is neither the fundamental cause nor the purpose of such activity (unless the participants in fact believe social cohesion to be its aim). Function, therefore, need not contradict the conscious purposes of the participants, though it may. For example, Paul’s vision of a new community that united and transcended Jews and

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the issues concerning functionalism vs. intentionalism, see S. Stowers, “The Social Sciences and the Study of Early Christianity,” 152-168.

<sup>49</sup> A paraphrase of a statement of Emile Durkheim, in a review of “*Essais sur la conception materialiste de l’histoire*” by A. Labriola in *Revue Philosophique* (Dec. 1897), and quoted by Stowers, “The Social Sciences and the Study of Early Christianity,” p. 152.

Gentiles may have had the unintended effect or function of dividing Jew from Gentile, the church from the Jewish people, though this was contrary to Paul's intended purpose. Human purposes, however, do not "mask" the real function of a religious or social activity, as if human beings were engaging in a process of self-deception. Although the actions of human participants may have unintended effects that function in a manner that contradicts their aims, nevertheless human understandings of their own purposes remain a valid part of sociological description.<sup>50</sup>

As stated above, the sociological interpretation of religion that Berger espouses is itself a product of contemporary secular society.<sup>51</sup> It is necessary, therefore, to apply the sociology of knowledge to Berger's theory itself. According to his theory, religion is the human projection of meaning onto the universe: "whatever else the constellations of the sacred may be "ultimately," empirically they are products of human activity and human signification--that is, they are human projections."<sup>52</sup> He argues that religion conceals from its adherents the human origin of their beliefs: "Whatever may be the "ultimate merits" of religious explanations of the universe at large, their empirical tendency has been to falsify man's consciousness of that part of the universe shaped by his own activity, namely the socio-cultural world. This falsification may also be described as mystification."<sup>53</sup> He later calls it "metaphysical legerdemain."<sup>54</sup> Although Berger wishes to leave open the possibility that religious claims may in fact have truth value, his method will not allow this. At the beginning of his book, *The Sacred Canopy*, he makes the claim that society "is a human product, and nothing but a human product . . . It has no other being except that which is bestowed upon it by human activity and consciousness."<sup>55</sup> One might say that this belief is common to the fields of sociology and cultural anthropology generally. But this presupposition is entirely at odds with what the authors of the New Testament say about Israel and the community formed around Jesus Christ. To them, Israel and the church are formed by divine redemptive

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<sup>50</sup> One should not assume, however, that this is normally the case. Normally the "function" of religion in society will complement and deepen the conscious human purposes in such activity, and only when it is clear that the effects of the actions of the participants contradict their conscious aims should one conclude otherwise.

<sup>51</sup> A point also made by Stephen Barton, 895.

<sup>52</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

action, whatever human participation in that process might be. The question therefore arises of the applicability of sociological method to the study of Scripture and early Jewish and Christian literature generally. Is such use inevitably reductionistic?<sup>56</sup> More specifically, Berger's method presupposes the secular and empiricist perspective that the cosmos is not sacred, one that is not pervaded by supernatural forces. In his methodological agnosticism Berger simply assumes his perspective to be objective and scientific. In fact, however, he "mystifies" the cultural origin of his own presuppositions with the term "scientific," concealing the fact that he is reinterpreting and re-explaining the religious beliefs of other cultures in terms acceptable to a society that no longer believes in a sacred cosmos. In other words Berger's model as he understands it passes for knowledge only in a secularized society; a society based upon religious claims would reject the extreme nature of Berger's claims that such claims are merely human projections. Thus Berger's method as he uses it is reductionistic; although he ostensibly leaves open the possibility of the truth of religious claims, in fact he re-explains all religious claims as human projections.

A sociological method, therefore, can only present a partial picture. Berger is correct in insisting that society is a human product, but wrong in assuming that it is nothing but a human product--a metaphysical assumption which he cannot verify. Sociology can portray the human aspects of the processes at work in society and in religion, but cannot tell us if that is all there is at work. Sociological explanation is therefore inherently incomplete and cannot make the kind of totalizing statements that Berger would like. Human beliefs therefore cannot be reduced to mere projections onto the universe, even if such projection may be involved. Most of all, the claim that religion falsifies its human origin should be rejected, since it is grounded in a prior assumption that divine revelation does not and cannot occur. On the other hand, to admit that religion is a human social construction does not necessarily imply the denial of divine revelation. Revelation, if real, may occur within and through the normal human processes of constructing a social reality.<sup>57</sup> In fact Robin Scroggs and Stephen Barton warn of a "theological docetism" or a "tendency to abstract . . . doctrines from their

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<sup>56</sup> For discussion of the issue of reductionism in the use of sociological models, see Holmberg, 149-150; Scroggs, 166-167; Barton, 894.

<sup>57</sup> For discussions about the relationship of sociology to theology, see Holmberg, 148-53; Horrell, 12.

concrete historical, social and cultural setting in the lives of Paul and his fellow believers.”<sup>58</sup> Scroggs argues that a sociological approach to early Christianity is not an “attempt to limit reductionistically the reality of Christianity to social dynamic; rather it should be seen as an effort to guard against a reductionism from the other extreme, a limitation of the reality of Christianity to an inner-spiritual, or objective-cognitive system.” Sociological approaches therefore can help guard against an a-cultural, a-historical approach to Christian theology.

Moreover, to regard religious activity as functioning to produce social cohesion or to create meaning in lives of people does not have to contradict the more conscious theological purposes of the participants. In fact speaking of such functions can complement and deepen our understanding of the aims of such participants. Even if religion cannot be reduced to a mechanism which maintains society in the face of chaos, religion does in fact create a meaningful order in which human beings find purpose in which to understand and conduct their lives: “The cosmos posited by religion thus both transcends and includes man. The sacred cosmos is confronted by man as an immensely powerful reality other than himself. Yet this reality addresses itself to him and locates his life in an ultimately meaningful order.”<sup>59</sup> Religion creates for its members a symbolic universe of meaning in the face of chaos and meaninglessness, creating a sacred canopy which protects humanity from these ultimate threats.<sup>60</sup>

But such social worlds are inherently precarious: “every socially constructed world or symbolic universe is an edifice erected in the face of the potent and alien forces of chaos. This chaos must be kept at bay at all cost.”<sup>61</sup> Various factors continually act to disrupt the socially constructed world and to lead the individual to question its plausibility. Berger refers to these factors as “marginal situations,” among which death is paramount: “Death presents society with a formidable problem not only because of its obvious threat to the continuity of human relationships, but because it threatens the basic assumptions of order on which society rests.”<sup>62</sup>

One of the most powerful threats to a social order, however, comes from the

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<sup>58</sup> Barton, 893; Scroggs, 165-166.

<sup>59</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-28.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

existence of other equally or more plausible socially constructed realities that operate as competition. This threat is particularly acute in a pluralistic society for small minorities like the Jews or early Christians in the Roman Empire. In the face of precariousness, such communities must establish a means for maintaining “reality” of its symbolic universe against the threats that marginal situations pose. Such threats challenge the facticity or objective reality of the social order; therefore, in order to preserve itself and maintain its plausibility, a society must act to neutralize the threat. In other words, a social order must provide legitimation that explains and justifies the social order in the face of the threat of marginal situations and the challenge of competing socially constructed realities.<sup>63</sup>

Legitimations exist on a variety of levels, from “simple traditional affirmations” such as “this is how things are done” to “highly theoretical constructions by which the nomos of a society is legitimated *in toto* and in which all less-than-total legitimations are theoretically integrated in an all-embracing *Weltanschauung*.”<sup>64</sup> This “*Weltanschauung*” constitutes a symbolic universe, an all-embracing “matrix of *all* socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings,” such that “*all* human experience can now be conceived of as taking place within it.”<sup>65</sup> A symbolic universe is “an overarching universe of meaning”<sup>66</sup> which provides the individual and community the means to explain all the marginal situations which threaten to undermine them and expose them to the powers of chaos, whatever form they might take: “Within the symbolic universe these detached realms of reality are integrated within a meaningful totality that ‘explains,’ perhaps also justifies them.”<sup>67</sup> Thus Berger and Luckmann explain that a symbolic universe has a “nomic function” in that it provides an all-encompassing order within which every threatening circumstance can be explained and ultimately absorbed, the danger neutralized. Religion has been one of the most effective forms of legitimating “social institutions, by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of

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<sup>63</sup> Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 29.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 96.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

reference.”<sup>68</sup> As a result, the precarious social order is grounded in the eternal realm of the divine with all the permanence, durability, security, and inevitability that such an identification entails.<sup>69</sup>

### Conversion and the Transformation of a Symbolic Universe

Precarious symbolic worlds are not always able to maintain their plausibility in the minds of their adherents. The divine legitimation of these symbolic *cosmoi* breaks down or else the symbolic universe is no longer seen to be undergirded by divine legitimation, creating an opportunity ripe for conversion to other symbolic worlds, or at least to a transformed version of the current symbolic world. Berger deals to some degree with the issue of conversion to a different symbolic world or of transformation of an existing symbolic world, describing conversion as resocialization:

the individual who wishes to convert, and (more importantly) to stay converted must engineer his social life in accordance with this purpose. Thus he must dissociate himself from those individuals or groups that constituted the plausibility structure of his past religious reality, and associate himself all the more intensively and (if possible) exclusively with those who serve to maintain his new one.<sup>70</sup>

Berger acknowledges that some like the Apostle Paul are converted outside a community, but insists that if the conversion is to be maintained, that is, if the plausibility of the reinterpreted symbolic universe is to remain plausible, then involvement in a religious community is essential.<sup>71</sup> Paul's conversion,<sup>72</sup> however, did not take place wholly outside the Christian community, even if his actual vision of Christ did. The process of resocialization began for him as soon as he became aware of the early Christian community and reacted against it.<sup>73</sup> This might not seem to be resocialization,

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<sup>68</sup> Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>71</sup> Berger and Luckmann specifically address the case of Paul, 158.

<sup>72</sup> Stendahl, in his book *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, asserts that Paul was not converted, in the sense of converting to another religion, but given a call to preach to the Gentiles. Segal, however, effectively answers Stendahl in his book, *Paul the Convert*, 5-7

<sup>73</sup> Hence there is no need to suppose with Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 117, that Paul was resocialized in a Gentile Christian community (!), which hardly could have existed prior to Paul's conversion.

but it gave him the raw material by which to interpret the significance of his vision.

Paul's conversion represented a fundamental transformation of his symbolic universe. But Paul did not reject everything from his past and convert to another set of religious beliefs entirely that had nothing to do whatever with his past. He converted from one form of Jewish religion, Pharisaism, to another, emerging Christian messianism, but both were fundamentally Jewish in their symbolic worlds. Thus, as Alan Segal notes, "the convert changes a few key concepts, revaluing everything accordingly. Old doctrines often remain intact, but are completely changed in significance through the imposition of a new structure."<sup>74</sup> In other words, Paul's symbolic world of Pharisaism is changed into a Christian symbolic world, but one in which Paul's prior beliefs have been incorporated in a transformed way. Paul's symbolic world was transformed by the replacement of Torah by the risen exalted Christ as the central organizing symbol. Hence Paul is not simply the recipient of a ready made alternate symbolic universe provided by the early Christians *in toto*, but actively transforms his own symbolic universe in light of his past, the Christian preaching he encountered, as well as the visionary event of his conversion. All these resulted in the distinctive form of the Christian message he preached and in his distinctive view of Torah.

### **The transformation of Torah from letter to Spirit in Romans 7-8**

This dissertation focuses upon a specific aspect of the transformation of Paul's symbolic world, specifically the transformation of Torah as it is expressed in Romans 7-8. Given that Torah was the central defining symbol of his Pharisaic life, how did the risen Christ come to displace it? How did Paul move from the self-confident righteousness according to Torah in Philippians 3:3-6 to the conception that Torah has been subverted by sin, which uses the law to produce death (Rom 7)? Does Torah continue to play a role within Paul's symbolic universe after his conversion?

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<sup>74</sup> Segal, 75. The "imposition of a new structure" may also be called the adoption of a master attribution scheme, which offers the convert an interpretive causal scheme in which to interpret the whole of reality. See David A. Snow and Richard Machalek, "The Convert as Social Type" *Sociological Theory*, 1 (1983): 259-89, especially pages 269-273; also Nicholas Taylor, "The Social Nature of Conversion in the early Christian World" in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler, (London: Routledge, 1995), 128-36.

As noted above, modern scholarship has for the most part rejected the notion that Paul was deeply troubled over his inability to keep the Torah, a point made most pointedly by Stendahl (“The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” see above). Philippians 3:6 clearly indicates that Paul had no personal struggle in keeping Torah. Moreover, psychological analysis of the causes of Paul’s conversion must, as Gager remarks, “remain inaccessible to all inquiry.”<sup>75</sup> But this fact does not preclude sociological inquiry into the reasons for the transformation of the law in Paul’s symbolic universe.

If frustration over failure to do the law did not lead Paul to believe in Christ and formulate his distinctive view of Torah, perhaps the portrayal of sin and the law in Romans 7 is only part of a rhetorical and sociological strategy, as T. L. Carter suggests.<sup>76</sup> He argues that Paul “develops” his ideas of sin and the law in Romans 7 “as a specific part of his strategy to safeguard and legitimize the position of law-free Gentiles within the eschatological community of the church.”<sup>77</sup> Carter seems to confuse sociological function with Paul’s intended purpose: he leaves the impression that Paul is disingenuous, that he “invents” the plight described in Romans 7 to serve a sociological function, and that the ideas of sin and Torah expressed there do not actually represent Paul’s deeply held beliefs. If, however, such ideas do represent convictions held prior to Romans (for example, 1 Cor 15:56-58),<sup>78</sup> then it must be asked how Paul became convinced that the Torah community was pervaded by indwelling sin. Romans 7-8 appear to testify to a prior transformation in Paul himself, even if these chapters do

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<sup>75</sup> Gager, “Notes,” 698.

<sup>76</sup> T. L. Carter, *Paul and the Power of Sin: Redefining ‘Beyond the Pale’*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 18. I remain unconvinced, however, that Paul’s primary concern in Romans 7 is to safeguard and legitimize the position of Gentiles. Jew and Gentile as categories completely disappear in Romans 5-8. Paul, having established that there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile since all are under sin (3:9, 23), no longer needs to address that issue. Moreover, since Paul is addressing “those who know the law” (7:1), it seems as if he is writing in Romans 7 either to Jewish Christians, Torah observant Gentile Christians, or both. Even if it is only Gentiles who are being addressed, Paul is trying to convert them to his point of view regarding Torah, not to safeguard their position in the church.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Carter, 3, dismisses 1 Cor 15:56 as a gloss, a position for which there is no textual evidence.

not actually describe that transformation.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, perhaps Romans 7 reflects an “acute” theological issue that arose because of Paul’s new faith in Christ. Sanders asserts that Paul has reasoned from solution to plight, and that Romans 7 is the result of “an acute theological problem” rather than an “analysis of the human plight,” and that it “comes at the end of repeated attempts to explain the purpose of the law in God’s plan,” given that Christ had come to save all apart from the law.<sup>80</sup> But this analysis fails to explain why there was a conflict in Paul’s mind between Christ and Torah in the first place. Other early Christians did not perceive any such conflict; in fact they opposed Paul on precisely this point. Thus any analysis of how and why Torah was transformed in Paul’s symbolic universe should begin with that question: why did the pre-conversion Paul perceive a conflict in the first place?

This pre-conversion perception of a conflict between Christ and Torah demonstrates that at some level, Paul’s symbolic universe was threatened. As stated above, symbolic worlds are inherently precarious: external forces, pressures and circumstances continually threaten to undermine and subvert it. That Paul’s own pre-

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<sup>79</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that Carter is correct that Romans 7-8 is part of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in relation to the Roman believers, even though I understand that strategy differently than Carter. Paul’s audience was largely, but not entirely Gentile (*contra* Stowers, 21-36). The distinction between Jew and Gentile is only one dimension of the early Christian communities at Rome. Another is the distinction between strong and weak discussed in Romans 14, a distinction which is by no means identical with the Jew/Gentile distinction. More specifically, the weak include Torah-observant Christians (who may have been circumcised, and who practice the food and Sabbath laws required by the Torah). The weak may also include Roman believers who observe regulations regarding food and days other than what is required by the Torah (see the view of Reasoner discussed below on pages 74-75 and 119n72 for further clarification). The strong, on the other hand are those who, in common with Paul, do not see themselves as bound by Torah’s requirements regarding circumcision, food and Sabbath laws. They are probably of higher socioeconomic status and tend to look down upon the weak as “superstitious” (see note 153n175 below). The strong are probably almost exclusively Gentile and look down upon the Jewish heritage of the Christian community, even to the point of despising the Jews who do not believe in Jesus as Messiah (Rom 11:19-22). Thus Paul’s audience has a multifaceted character that cannot be reduced to a simple Jew/Gentile distinction. Thus there are four general groupings of believers at Rome: the strong Gentiles who did not observe Torah, but who despised unbelieving Israel; second, the weak Gentiles who viewed continued Torah-observance as required by God and who were probably already circumcised (hence the discussion of circumcision in Rom 2-4); third the strong Jews, who were in agreement with Paul and perhaps his followers, but did not despise their Jewish heritage; and fourth, weak Jews, who also viewed Torah-observance as necessary for believers, though did not appear to require circumcision of the Gentile believers. In Romans 7, Paul is specifically addressing the second and fourth groups. His rhetorical strategy is to convince the weak Torah-observant believers that, although the law is holy, it is unable to provide them with the self-mastery to overcome sinful passions, since Torah has been subverted by the cosmological power of sin operating in the flesh.

<sup>80</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 79.

conversion symbolic universe was being threatened is indicated by the very fact of his zeal and his attempt to destroy the early Christian community (Gal 1:13). But the very existence of a threat that needs to be destroyed testifies to the fact that all was not well in Paul's Torah-centered symbolic universe. In fact, it is likely that Paul's pre-conversion symbolic world (like that of many Jews) was threatened in three interconnected ways, which might also be described as sociological "plights." These three threats were Roman imperial domination and political oppression of Israel,<sup>81</sup> Gentile cultural influence (Hellenism), and the possibility of Israel's impurity and faithlessness to Torah in such an environment. The first two plights are demonstrated by Paul's use of the term Ἰουδαϊσμός, a term which first originated in the struggle against Hellenization and the threat that Seleucid rule posed to Jewish religion and national identity (see 2 Macc 4:13).<sup>82</sup> This struggle in Maccabean times to remain faithful to the Jewish way of life despite pressures to conform to the surrounding Greek culture quickly developed into a movement for independence from all foreign rulers, and the loss of that independence to the Romans in the previous century was keenly felt by many Jews. Thus the concept of "Judaism" expresses not only a religious commitment to the God of Israel, but also expresses a desire for the freedom to practice their way of life without interference, which was difficult at best under foreign rule.

This Ἰουδαϊσμός took the form of a Torah-centered symbolic universe in which Jews, the righteous insiders, were distinguished from "Gentile sinners" on the outside (Gal 2:15). But because of Roman rule, and the presence of large numbers of Gentiles within Israel, such a distinction was hard to maintain in practice: inevitably the politically powerful Greco-Roman world kept intruding upon the symbolic universe of the Jews, threatening to delegitimize it, or, in other words, threatening the purity of that world. The ultimate threat, however, would be the intrusion of Gentile sin into the Jewish community, resulting in faithlessness to the divinely-given covenant.

So the early Christian community posed a threat to the purity of Israel in some way that provoked Paul's zealous attempts to destroy that community. Thus Paul's pre-conversion plight was not psychological but sociological. Paul was not concerned with

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<sup>81</sup> See Wright, *NTPG*, 269-272. Wright refers to these plights under the rubric of "exile," since even though the Israelites had returned to the land, they were still oppressed by foreign rulers.

<sup>82</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 347-48.

his own ability to keep Torah, after all he far outstripped his contemporaries in his own opinion (Gal 1:14). But he was deeply passionate about the possibility of Israel's faithlessness to the Torah. Thus the plight represented by Romans 7 is deeply rooted in an unresolved tension within Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe. This tension was between the divine ideal of a righteous community formed around the Torah, holy to God and distinct from "Gentile sinners" (Gal 2:15) and the continual threat that disobedience and impurity posed to that ideal. His zeal to destroy the church testifies to the threatened nature of his symbolic world and to the danger that sin posed to Israel.

I suggest that Romans 7 represents a transformation and radicalization of this plight of sin. Of course, in its present form this chapter represents the developed and mature thought of the apostle. Although the "solution" of Christ certainly shaped Paul's portrayal of humanity's plight under sin in this chapter, this portrayal is rooted in Paul's own distress over the disobedience and failure of Israel to keep the Torah adequately. The pre-conversion Paul most likely did not perceive sin's subversion and misuse of the law as represented in Romans 7. Nevertheless the plight of Romans 7 is not radically discontinuous with the apostle's past convictions. Rather, along with Romans 8:1-13, this chapter testifies to a transformation of Torah within Paul's symbolic universe.

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the nature and origin of this transformation, which may be best summarized in Romans 7:6, where Paul contrasts the oldness of the letter with the newness of the Spirit. In 7:4, the readers are portrayed as having died to Torah through the body of Christ so that they may be joined to another, namely the risen Christ. Their allegiance to Torah is to be replaced by their spiritual union with Christ who reigns in heaven as the enthroned son of God in power (Rom 1:3-4). Since Christ himself has undergone a cosmological transformation through his resurrection from flesh to Spirit, those who are in Christ undergo the same transformation, albeit proleptically ("You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," 8:9). This transformation of Christ in Romans 1:3-4 also heralds a cosmological, christological, and pneumatological transformation of Torah itself from letter into Spirit of Christ in Romans 7:1-8:13, which will be the focus of this investigation.

The following five chapters will explore this transformation. The first chapter will discuss the christological basis of this transformation, as portrayed in Romans 1:3-

4, in which Jesus himself is transformed from flesh to spirit in his resurrection/exaltation as Son of God in power. Romans 7:1-6 will be the subject of the second chapter, in which Paul asserts that his readers have been put to death to the Torah through Christ's bodily crucifixion and because of this they are now free to serve God in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. I shall also argue that this contrast is grounded both in Jewish apocalyptic cosmology as well as the Hellenistic contrast between the written law as lifeless letter and the king as living law. The third chapter will explore the nature of the Torah's subversion by the cosmological power of sin in Romans 7:7-25, and how it was weakened by the flesh (8:3), as well as discussing the root of these ideas in Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe and the transformation brought about by his vision of Christ. In the final chapter, I will explore how Paul transforms Torah from letter into the Spirit of Christ, who now, as living law and life-giving Spirit, fulfills the law in and through believers as they walk according to that Spirit.

**Chapter 1**  
**Romans 1:3-4 and the Christological Basis of**  
**Paul's Transformation of Torah**

**1.1 Introduction**

In his book, *Paul and the Gentiles*, Terence Donaldson asks: "What is there about Christ that displaces the law from the role it plays within covenantal nomism?"<sup>1</sup> Paul's christology is central to his transformation of the Torah and therefore it is appropriate to begin the investigation with an analysis of the confession contained in Romans 1:3-4. Although christology is not a central matter of debate within Romans, nevertheless the christological statement in 1:3-4 has programmatic significance.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the letter may be regarded as a working out of the implications of 1:3-4, because his gospel is the power of God for the salvation for all who believe (1:16-17, usually taken as the theme of the letter), a power which derives from the appointment of Jesus as Son of God in power.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, 1:1-5 introduces several important contrasts: most notably those between flesh and spirit, death and resurrection, but also the implied opposition between crucifixion and exaltation, weakness and power, profane and sacred, Jew and Gentile. By analyzing how these interconnected contrasts are developed in Romans, one may understand how Torah has been transformed within the symbolic universe Paul inherited from Judaism.

Thus more than a simple exegesis of this passage is necessary to discern the layers beneath Romans 1:3-4 so as to perceive the manner in which Paul's thought as a Pharisee has been transformed by his encounter with Christ and the Christian proclamation. Therefore I shall investigate, as far as possible, the nature of his pre-conversion convictions, and the reasons why he persecuted the early Christian community. In this chapter I first attempt to distinguish the traditional elements from the Pauline additions in 1:1-7, then discuss both Paul's initial reaction and later

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<sup>1</sup> Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles, Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997), 165-6. Hereafter referred to as *PG*.

<sup>2</sup> Nygren, *Romans*, 51, states that v. 4 "contains the whole message of the epistle in a nutshell", and Schreiner, 38, views vv. 3-4 as containing "the substance of the gospel that Paul preached." See also G. Bornkamm, "Paul's Christology", *Pittsburgh Perspective* 4 (1963): 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 50-51; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 28.

indebtedness to the early tradition of preaching, and finally, how Paul transformed this tradition by means of his own vision and call to preach to the Gentiles.

## 1.2 Romans 1:3-4 as a confession

It is virtually a consensus in the scholarly community that Romans 1:3-4 contains a traditional confessional formula.<sup>4</sup> The text is:

περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ  
τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα,  
τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει  
κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν,  
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν,

It is often presupposed that this passage is not critical for understanding Paul's thought, presumably because of the reference to Davidic Messianism. Such an assumption, however, is unwarranted. Paul's first encounter with Christ was through his proclamation by the earliest church and it would have been through that proclamation that he interpreted the significance of his vision. Paul's perception of his own distinctiveness (Gal 1:13-16) should not be allowed to distort his indebtedness to the early Christian preaching. If one focuses only on what is uniquely Pauline, his theology may be distorted in an idiosyncratic direction.

### 1.2.1 The extent of traditional material in the confession

*ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.*

There is little agreement, however, as to the extent of the confession and the extent to which Paul has modified the confession.<sup>5</sup> By what means is this traditional

<sup>4</sup> Vern Poythress, "Is Romans 1:3-4 a Pauline Confession After All?", *ExpT* 87 (1975-76): 180-83, contends that Rom 1:3-4 is a Pauline free composition in which he used traditional expressions rather than an adaptation of an existing confession.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher G. Whitsett, "Son of God, Seed of David: Paul's Messianic Exegesis in Romans 2:3-4 (*sic*)", *JBL* 119 (2000): 663. Whitsett remarks: "The attribution of every element beyond the basic dual structure of parallel participles-- 'born of the seed of David, appointed son of God' --is contested."

material to be discerned? Paul insists that he did not receive (παρέλαβον) his gospel from human beings, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ (δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Gal 1:12) or of the Son of God (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, Gal 1:16). Thus an important criterion for determining the presence of traditional material in Paul is the use of characteristic introductory words such as the ὁμολογέω, παραδίδωμι, and παραλαμβάνω word groups.<sup>6</sup> While Paul does not use any of these words in Romans 1:3-4, observing what Paul attributes to tradition elsewhere may help to determine with some precision the traditional material in 1:3-4. Paul uses these words when referring to the confession “Jesus is Lord” (Rom 10:9) or “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11), or when citing traditional material about the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26) and the traditions concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-7). Thus it seems likely that the phrase “by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1:4b) is part of a traditional confession rather than Pauline in origin.

It is often argued that the presence of poetic parallelism in 1:3-4 indicates he used traditional confessional material.<sup>7</sup> But poetic parallelism by itself indicates nothing about the presence of a confession or creed, nor does it suggest anything about the Pauline or pre-Pauline origin of the material, as Paul was fully capable of composing two lines in poetic parallelism.<sup>8</sup> Others have made theological arguments in favor of the presence of a confession here, specifically that Paul does not mention the cross and does not refer to the Davidic origin of Jesus elsewhere. But Paul is quite capable of referring to the resurrection of Jesus without referring to his death, as in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 1 Corinthians 6:14. Moreover, the exaltation of Jesus implies his crucifixion, since in Jewish tradition resurrection and exaltation represent divine vindication of the righteous dead, especially those who have been martyred (e.g., *T. Mos.* 10:9, *4 Macc.*

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<sup>6</sup> Vernon Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, (Brill: Leiden, 1963), 50-51.

<sup>7</sup> It is asserted that the parallel forms of the participles at the beginning of subordinate clauses indicate the presence of confessional material, as well as the parallelism between ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ and ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, and the parallelism of κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα. See Robert Jewett, “The Redaction and Use of an Early Christian Confession in Romans 1:3-4”, in *The Living Text, Essays in Honor of Ernest W. Saunders*, (ed. by Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 100-101.

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion of James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992), 229-232, about the use of parallel participial clauses as an unreliable indicator of tradition. On page 232, he also notes that “parallelism is a hallmark of Pauline style”, and that “the chiasmic structure of Rom 1:3-4 is common elsewhere in Paul,” 232n43, and refers to Joachim Jeremias, “Chiasmus in den Paulusbriefen”, *ZNW* 49 (1958): 145-51.

17:18).<sup>9</sup> Huie-Jolly writes: “In conventional social terms, crucifixion and enthronement are opposites . . . . Death by crucifixion would ordinarily define Jesus as a man who had publicly and finally been shamed. . . . The claim ‘Jesus is enthroned’ vindicates his honor: it refutes the shame conventionally linked to one worthy of death by public execution.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus’ enthronement thus implies his crucifixion, so that it need not be mentioned, just as if Paul had spoken of the vindication of Jesus, it would necessarily imply that he had been shamed or humiliated.

*περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα.*

Although it is true that Paul does not refer to the Davidic origin of Jesus elsewhere, he mentions David in Romans 4:6 and 11, and relates a Davidic prophecy (Isa 11:10) with regard to Jesus in 15:12. Since Paul declares his desire to evangelize the Romans in 1:15, the mention of Jesus’ descent may have been a part of Paul’s initial preaching of the gospel, particularly if he was preaching in Jewish synagogues in the Diaspora. Presumably Paul presupposed that the readers of his other letters know his basic teaching about Jesus, and so he may never have had the occasion to mention it in those contexts. Moreover, the fact that Paul refers to Jesus as Davidic Messiah at the beginning and near the end of the letter (15:12), effectively framing the letter, may indicate that Davidic messianism was of greater importance to Paul’s thought than previously recognized.<sup>11</sup> More compelling, however, is the fact that the precise form of the reference to David, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ, never occurs in LXX tradition, but only

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<sup>9</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), 40, 93-111; Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 68n93; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (London: SPCK, 2003), 150-3, 205.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Huie-Jolly, “Threats Answered by Enthronement: Death/Resurrection and the Divine Warrior Myth in John 5.17-29, Psalm 2 and Daniel 7”, in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, (ed. Craig Evans and James A. Sanders, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 191-217.

<sup>11</sup> James M. Scott, *Adoption*, 233, correctly concludes: “even if Paul does not explicitly mention the Davidic sonship of Jesus elsewhere, it still plays a significant role in his theology.” Wright as well questions the received wisdom that “Jesus’ messiahship played little or no role in Paul’s thinking”, and states that at the heart of Paul’s gospel is the Davidic messiahship of Jesus, “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire”, in *Paul and Politics*, (ed. R. Horsley, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 166-167.

in 2 Timothy 2:8 and John 7:41.<sup>12</sup> The fact that the writer of the Fourth Gospel is independent of Paul and would use the exact same expression points to an origin in common tradition. In addition, 2 Timothy 2:8 places the phrase in a clearly confessional context: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David according to my gospel.” Although the author may have obtained this from reading Romans 1:3-4, he uses ἐγείρω instead of ἀναστάσις. The clauses concerning his birth and resurrection are in reverse order, and the material concerning the appointment of Jesus as Son of God in power and the phrases κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα are excluded. It thus seems more likely that 2 Timothy is quoting the confession which Paul himself had used in Romans 1:3-4.<sup>13</sup> Thus γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ probably originates from an early confession.

*τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει.*

Language not characteristically used by Paul or words used in a sense not characteristic of Paul has also been put forward as a criterion for determining the presence of a pre-Pauline confession. Ὅρίζω in the sense of an appointment of a person to a role or task is used only in Acts 10:42 and 17:31, where Luke refers to Jesus being appointed to the role of Judge.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Paul uses the compound form προόρίζω in 8:29-30, where he states that those whom God foreknew, he also

<sup>12</sup> Of course the allusion is to 2 Sam 7:12 (see 2 Sam 22:51=Psa 18:50 (17:51); 4QPB 4; 4QFlor. 1:10f; *Pss. Sol.* 17:4), but the words Paul uses appear nowhere in the Scriptures or Jewish tradition.

<sup>13</sup> *Contra* Scott, *Adoption*, 236, who argues that “both passages describe the content of Paul’s εὐαγγέλιον, and are thus literarily related.” But three factors must be considered: First, 2 Timothy is not considered Pauline according to the majority of Pauline scholars today, secondly, the Pastoral epistles are full of quotations or faithful sayings (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8), μνημόνευε, (1 Tim 2:8), thirdly, 2 Tim 2:8 excludes all that is distinctive in Paul’s theology that is preserved in Rom 1:3-4. If 2 Tim 2:8 is based upon Rom 1:3-4, it represents a flattening of Paul’s theology. Although the author of 2 Tim 2:8 describes Jesus’ being born from the seed of David and being raised from the dead as εὐαγγέλιον μου, there is nothing distinctively Pauline present here. Paul only speaks of “my gospel” when he is emphasizing aspects distinctive to the gospel that he preaches (Rom 2:16; 16:25; Gal 1:11). It is more likely that the author is simply quoting tradition.

<sup>14</sup> It is sometimes argued that this phrase points to an adoptionistic christology, but such terminology is anachronistic here, reflecting the christological debates of future centuries. Both Dunn, *Romans*, (Dallas: Word, 1988), 14, and Scott, *Adoption*, 234-5, reject an adoptionistic interpretation here. For the history of this debate, see H. Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, (New York, 1964), 209, 338-339.

predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. There is a certain parallelism between the appointment of Jesus as Son of God, and the pre-appointment of believers to be conformed to the image of that Son. On the other hand, since the title “Son of God” is by no means exclusively Pauline,<sup>15</sup> the idea that he was appointed Son of God may not be Pauline either. And although in the New Testament Paul alone clearly uses ἐν δυνάμει with reference to the resurrection (1 Cor 15:43), Mark 9:1 refers to those who will not taste death until they see the coming of the kingdom of God in power, which refers to the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Thus ἐν δυνάμει is probably also part of the tradition Paul received.<sup>16</sup>

κατὰ σάρκα, . . . κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

The troublesome phrases κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα appear as a contrast only in Paul. This fact makes it *a priori* unlikely that they are part of the pre-Pauline confession,<sup>17</sup> even if used in an apparently different sense. The contrast of πνεῦμα and σάρξ does occur outside Paul,<sup>18</sup> but the κατὰ σάρκα / κατὰ πνεῦμα contrast is distinctively Pauline (Rom 8:4-5, 12-13; Gal 4:29; 5:17).<sup>19</sup> Κατὰ σάρκα in a pejorative sense appears in John 8:15, but not in contrast to κατὰ πνεῦμα, and κατὰ πνεῦμα does appear in Matthew 12:32, but in the sense of “against the Spirit.” 1 Timothy 3:16 contains a confession in which it is stated that Jesus was revealed in the

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<sup>15</sup> The confession that Jesus is the Son of God is ubiquitous in the New Testament. See, e.g., Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 5:7; Luke 1:35; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 5:5; Rev 2:18 etc.

<sup>16</sup> So also Marinus de Jonge, “Jesus, Son of David and Son of God” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in honour of Bas van Iersel*, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989), 102.

<sup>17</sup> *Contra* e.g., E. Schweizer, “Röm 1,3f. und der Gegensatz von Fleisch und Geist vor und bei Paulus”, *EvTh* 15 (1955): 563-71.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 26:41=Mark 14:38, Luke 24:39; John 3:6; 6:63; Heb 12:9; 1 Pet 3:18, 4:6; 1 John 4:2.

<sup>19</sup> R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms, A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings*, (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 137-138, proposes a three stage development of the confession. The basic confession looks much the same as I have argued, but the phrases κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα were added in a second state by Hellenistic Christians with pneumatic and gnostic leanings who deprecated the flesh in favor of the spirit, and in the third stage Paul added ἁγιωσύνης as a corrective to the “Hellenistic pneumatic christology.” But the Hellenistic contrast of matter and spirit is no longer viewed as the background of the flesh/spirit antithesis (see Jörg Frey’s recent critique of a Hellenistic-Jewish background for the contrast, “Die paulinische Antithese von ‘Fleisch’ und ‘Geist’ und die palästinische-jüdische Weisheitstradition, *ZNW*, 90 (1999): 45-77, esp. 48-53.)

flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, but this confession is probably post-Pauline and may reflect Pauline influence. 1 Peter 3:18 states that Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, but here the contrast is between his death and his resurrection, not between his birth and resurrection/enthronement. The letter also appears to reflect Pauline influence and is probably post-Pauline. Πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is viewed as un-Pauline because it is a Semitism<sup>20</sup> and because Paul ordinarily uses πνεῦμα ἅγιον. But Paul is the *only* writer in the New Testament to use ἁγιωσύνη in any context (1 Thess 3:13; 2 Cor 7:1), and because these two references were written fairly early in Paul's career or may even be pre-Pauline (2 Cor 7:1), perhaps he added the word to the confession at an early stage.

In summary then the original confession, or the part that can be recovered, would have looked something like this:

γενομένος ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ  
 ἐγγεγερμένος ἐκ νεκρῶν  
 ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει  
 Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς κυρίως ἡμῶν

Paul changed the participle ἐγγεγερμένος ἐκ νεκρῶν to ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, so that being appointed (ὀρισθέντος)<sup>21</sup> the Son of God in power is now directly

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<sup>20</sup> Πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης is found on a Jewish amulet (see Erik Peterson, "Das Amulet von Acre", in *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchungen* (Rome: Herder, 1959), 356-59). It also occurs in *T. Levi* 18:11, but *T. Levi* 18 is almost certainly Christian in its present form, and thus cannot be used as a genuine background to Rom 1:4. As de Jonge notes, "In view of the heavy Christian redaction in this chapter, it is probable that the diction of *T. Levi* 18:11 was influenced by that of Rom 1:4 and not the other way around" ("Light on Paul from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs?*" in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, [eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 108.) In their present form the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* are early Christian writings from the second century C.E., but still may reflect earlier Jewish traditions. H. W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge have argued that the texts are Christian, and that if there were Jewish originals, they are inaccessible to us. In their present form, the *Testaments* date from 150-200 C.E. (*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 82-85. The most that can be argued is that the Christian author used Jewish sources, perhaps the various versions of Aramaic Levi (see Robert A. Kugler, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 31). For the view that the *Testaments* are Jewish with Christian interpolations, see Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der Zwölf Patriarchen* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), and H. C. Kee, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (ed. James Charlesworth, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 775-781.

<sup>21</sup> As Scott, *Adoption*, 242n77, notes, the interpretation of ὀρίζω in the sense of "declare" or "reveal" "does not seem to be substantiated lexically."

associated with his resurrection and heavenly enthronement.<sup>22</sup> Paul also may have made this change because ἀνίστημι can be used of the raising up of the Davidic heir on his accession to the throne (2 Sam 7:12, see 23:10; Isa 11:10; Jer 23:5; 30(37):9; 4QFlor. 11-12; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21, 42). Allen is correct in his assertion that ὀρισθέντος is an allusion to Psa 2:7, where Yahweh issues his coronation decree (רַפִּי): “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”<sup>23</sup> Thus Jesus’ resurrection is understood as his enthronement and accession to heavenly power as the exalted Messiah.<sup>24</sup> Paul has added only the contrast of κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.2 Paul’s use of the confession and his relationship to prior Christian preaching

This confession could characterize any writer of the New Testament or any Christian group of the mid first century, but that is precisely the function of common confessions. The presence of *hapax legomena* or other rarely used words and phrases does not point toward a confession, but rather away from one. At the same time, Paul’s use of a confession shows how deeply he was indebted to the early Christian tradition before him,<sup>26</sup> despite his protest to have received his gospel by revelation from

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Hengel and H. Schlier take a similar view of the earliest form of the confession, except they do not think ἐν δυνάμει is original and they retain ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν as original. (Martin Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’ The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1” in *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 375; H. Schlier, “Zu Rö 1, 3f”, in *Neues Testament und Geschichte*, (eds. H. Baltensweiler and Bo Reicke, Zürich, 1972), 213.

<sup>23</sup> Leslie C. Allen, “The Old Testament Background of (ΠΙΠΟ) ΟΡΙΖΕΙΝ in the New Testament”, *NTS* 17 (1957): 104-8.

<sup>24</sup> So also Schreiner, 39.

<sup>25</sup> So also R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 49; Nils A. Dahl, “Die Messianität Jesu bei Paulus”, in *Studia Paulina in honorem Johannis de Zwaan Septuagenarii*, (ed. by J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik, Haarlem, 1953), 83-95, esp. 90.

<sup>26</sup> As P. Menoud notes, “revelation and tradition are intimately united in Paul’s thought”, “Revelation and Tradition: The Influence of Paul’s Conversion on his Theology,” *Int* 7 (1953): 131-141.

God (Gal 1:11-17). In fact it is likely that he first interpreted the significance of his vision in terms of the preaching of Jesus as exalted Son of God and Messiah, which surely he must have heard in order to persecute the early Christian community.

Nils Dahl, however, comments on how curious it is that the title “Messiah” would ever be applied to Jesus in the first place: “Rarely has it been made clear how strange it is that precisely the title Messiah was applied to Jesus and became his name. The title stems from that figure in Jewish eschatology that has almost nothing at all in common with the New Testament picture of Christ.”<sup>27</sup> After all, Jesus did not fulfill current expectations concerning the Davidic Messiah: he did not overthrow Rome and free Israel from all oppressors, bring about Israel’s political and cultural domination of the world, and either destroy or subjugate the nations under her yoke.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, he was crucified in humiliation by the very people he was supposed to overthrow and destroy as the enemies of Israel. The claim that Jesus was the Messiah must have preceded his crucifixion, since it is incomprehensible that the disciples would make the claim for someone who had been crucified unless they already fervently believed it was so.

### 1.3 The meaning of the resurrection and exaltation for the early Christians

So it is natural that these followers would have claimed that Jesus had been exalted not only because of the resurrection appearances (1 Cor 15:3-5), but also for reasons of theodicy.<sup>29</sup> Even if Jesus had not really been exalted or raised from the dead, one might expect that a community would have constructed a story of his exaltation to heavenly power both in order to justify their original belief in him as Messiah and to

<sup>27</sup> Nils Dahl, “The Crucified Messiah” in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974, 27.

<sup>28</sup> See 4QFlor 7, 10-13; 4Q161 fg. 8, lines 11-25; 4QGen<sup>a</sup> Col. V; 4Q285, and especially *Pss. Sol.* 17. Recent studies of the Davidic Messiah in early Judaism include: Kenneth E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998; Antti Laato, *A Star is Rising*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, New York: Doubleday, 1995; Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Theodicy is similar to the social psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, but theodicy reflects the perspective of an insider, cognitive dissonance the perspective of an outsider. See L. Festinger, H. W. Riecken, and S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

alleviate the experience of powerlessness and despair that the crucifixion must have produced. They had placed all their hopes in Jesus as the Messiah and he was supposed to have overthrown the Romans, not be crucified by them. But of course the disciples did not have to construct a story: a pattern was already available to them in Israel's cultural narrative in which the patriarchs and righteous martyrs were resurrected (cf. below, 1.3.1) and/or exalted to a place in God's heavenly court and given the status of angels or even the status of chief angel. According to Larry Hurtado, the exaltation of a patriarchal figure

to the role of God's chief agent would have signified that . . . the Jewish tradition represented the highest, the most authentic revelation of God's purposes--indeed the only genuinely valid tradition. Although this supremacy might not be demonstrable in the earthly realm, ancient Jews would have seen the heavenly exaltation of their representative as signifying that in the highest realm of reality, ultimate reality, their religious tradition had been given prominence.<sup>30</sup>

In the same way, the heavenly exaltation of Jesus represented the vindication of their belief in Him as the Messiah of Israel, despite the disbelief and ridicule of other Jews.

### **1.3.1 Exaltation of the martyrs in early Judaism and the apostolic proclamation**

The belief in the exaltation of the martyrs first appears in the Jewish conflict with Antiochus Epiphanes, who sought to force Hellenistic worship practices upon Israel (1 Macc 1:41-50; 2:17-22). Many Jews would rather have died than submit to Antiochus (2 Macc 7:2; 4 Macc.; *T. Mos.* 9:6), and it was believed that they would receive a reward of eternal life and exaltation to angelic status for their loyalty to the Torah. Many of the dead would rise to eternal life, and the wise would shine like the stars of heaven (Dan 12:1-3), i.e., be raised to the status of angels (cf. *1 En.* 104:2-3). *The Testament of Moses* 10:9 makes the same claim for the whole of Israel: "and God will exalt you and make you abide in heaven above the stars in their dwelling place."<sup>31</sup> In *4 Maccabees* 17:18, because of their faithful endurance to the point of death, the martyrs now "stand

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<sup>30</sup> Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord, Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 65-6.

<sup>31</sup> See also *1 Enoch* 39:5; 104:2-6; 2 *Bar.* 51:10, 12; 1QH 3:19-23.

before the divine throne and live the life of eternal blessedness.”<sup>32</sup> In all three cases the exaltation of the righteous dead constitutes their vindication from a death inflicted upon them unjustly by the enemies of Israel.<sup>33</sup> Martin Hengel argues that exaltation of the martyrs is not the background for Jesus’ exaltation because the martyr “shares this place of honour with many other perfect righteous and pious ones who also ‘throned’ in proximity to God. A unique eschatological function or a granting of power was not associated with it.”<sup>34</sup> But it is the distinctive combination of martyrdom and messianic motifs that created the picture of the heavenly exaltation and enthronement of Jesus. “The unique eschatological function” and “granting of power” derive from the messianic concept; heavenly exaltation derives from the Jewish concept of martyrdom. Thus it was natural for the early Christians to apply this pattern of humiliation and exaltation to their crucified Messiah. Jesus had been exalted to God’s right hand,<sup>35</sup> and had been enthroned as Messiah in heaven rather than upon earth! Thus the pre-Pauline Christian community had already merged the images of Davidic Messiah and exalted righteous martyr.<sup>36</sup>

#### 1.4 Paul and the apostolic preaching of Jesus as Son of God

Thus, when Paul experienced his vision of the crucified and exalted Christ, he was already aware of the claims being made for Jesus as Son of God, since the title is

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<sup>32</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, 166, remarks that “‘Standing’ is an angelic position and function. ‘Standing by God’ can imply an even more exalted status.”

<sup>33</sup> See also *Jub.* 23:30-31; *2 Macc* 6-7; *4 Macc.* 7:3; 9:22; 14:5-6; 15:3; 16:13; 17:12. Also, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Hengel, “Sit at My Right Hand!”, 217.

<sup>35</sup> Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25 (alluding to Psa 110:1). Allusions or quotation of Psalm 110 are made throughout early Christian tradition: Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1Pet 3:22. Paul is the earliest witness to the use of Psa 110, but because Paul assumes the Romans (whom he does not know) will immediately understand his allusion in 8:34 (Hengel, “Sit at My Right Hand!”, 172), and because it is used throughout the NT, it probably reflects the earliest levels of Christian tradition, perhaps even going “back to the Jerusalem congregation” (Hengel, 173).

<sup>36</sup> So also Alan Segal, “The Risen Christ and the Angelic Mediator Figures in Light of Qumran” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, (New York, London: Doubleday, 1992), 306.

well attested in the gospel traditions.<sup>37</sup> Although the title “Son of God” as such never appears as a Davidic or Messianic title in the LXX or early Jewish literature,<sup>38</sup> the original allusion is probably to the adoption formulas of Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14.<sup>39</sup> It is highly unlikely that any reference to Jesus as second or eschatological Adam is present here, since Adam is never described as a son of God in Jewish literature, and only once in the genealogy of Luke 3:38, which is later than Paul and most likely a Lukan invention. It is probable that this title was one of the earliest in Pauline christology, since in describing his vision he remarks that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to me” (Gal 1:16), and Luke describes Paul’s initial preaching after his vision as characterized by the proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). Thus Paul’s vision was of the enthroned Son of God in heavenly glory and power. But this description goes beyond the enthronement of a Davidic Messiah: the earthly Messiah has now been exalted to a heavenly throne. When Paul saw the glorious figure in his vision, he may have thought he was seeing a heavenly figure, or one “like a son of God” (see Dan 3:25 MT).<sup>40</sup> The plural “sons of God” may refer to angels (Gen 6:2,4; Deut 32:43; Psa 29(28):1; 82(81):6; 89(88):7), or to Israel (Hos 11:10; Esth Add 8:12θ; see Exod 4:22). In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the boundary between angels and the children of Israel becomes blurred, as Joseph is described as a “firstborn son of God” (21:4; see 23:10; 6:3, 5) and Aseneth is filled with great fear at the sight of Joseph, as if she were viewing an angel (6:1). And when the angelic “chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High” visits Aseneth in her chambers, he is described as looking like Joseph! (14:8-9). Joseph is thus the earthly counterpart to the chief archangel in heaven.<sup>41</sup> In the *Prayer of Joseph*, the patriarch

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<sup>37</sup> See Mark 1:1; 3:11, 5:7; 15:39; Matt 4:3, 6; 5:9; 8:29; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40; Luke 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41, 8:28; 20:36; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Hengel, *The Son of God*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976, 63. On this basis, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 235, incorrectly argues that “Son of God” is “not being used in a messianic sense.” On the basis of the allusion to Psa 2:7, Paul’s use of the title has at least this sense, but probably has heavenly or divine overtones as well. See note 40 below on 4Q246.

<sup>39</sup> Psa 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14 refer to the Davidic heir or king as “my son”, but he is never called “Son of God.” This is also true in 4 Ezra 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9; 4QFlor 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> Abel is portrayed in *T. Abr.* 12:3 as “a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like a son of God”, during Abraham’s tour of heaven. But Abel is not actually called or counted as a son of God or angel; he only has the appearance of a “son of God” or angel.

<sup>41</sup> At Qumran, the community seems to have perceived itself as the earthly counterpart to the angels in heaven (IQS 11:8, 22; 1QHa 11:22, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*), though the phrase “sons of God” does not occur.

Jacob is portrayed as God's chief angel Israel, a ruling spirit, firstborn of all living, archangel of God's power, and chief captain of the sons of God and as bearing God's inextinguishable name, presumably YHWH.<sup>42</sup> But in Romans 1:4 Jesus is no mere counterpart to an angel but is enthroned in heaven as *the* Son of God, which implies a unique and unparalleled status above the angels.<sup>43</sup> Thus it is likely that the title Son of God has the connotation of a being with divine status, particularly in the context of heavenly enthronement.<sup>44</sup>

#### 1.4.1 The Son of God and early Christian devotion

But it is also true that “there is no clear evidence of a purely angelic figure like Michael permanently seated by God. In fact, there is something about the honor bestowed upon exemplary humans that seems to be more important. Though angelic-like transformation comes with the seating, it is who the honoree originally was that is a key part of why they are exalted.”<sup>45</sup> If the righteous martyrs were exalted to the heavens and joined their counterparts, the angelic sons of God, in heaven, how much more would a crucified Messiah, the heir to David's throne, be “super-exalted” (ὑπερύψωσεν, Phil 2:9) and be enthroned in heaven as *the* Son of God in power. If Christ uniquely bears the divine name and glory, he has also become the sole theophanic manifestation of divine power, as 1 Corinthians 1:24 claims: “Christ, the Power of

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<sup>42</sup> Philo, *Conf.* 146 describes the *Logos* in very similar terms and implicitly calls it the Son of God: “And even if there be not as yet anyone who is worthy to be called a son of God, nevertheless let him eagerly rule himself according to his firstborn *Logos*, the eldest of his angels, an archangel as it were; called by many names, the Power (ἀρχή) and the Name of God and the *Logos* and man according to God's image, and He who sees, that is, Israel.” Since the reader is to strive to be son of God patterned after the *Logos*, it follows that the *Logos* is considered to be the archetypal Son of God. It also appears that Philo identifies the *Logos* with the heavenly Adam. Given that the *Logos* is also called Israel as in the *Prayer of Joseph*, and given the probable Egyptian provenance of the *Prayer of Joseph*, perhaps Philo and the writer of the *Prayer* were drawing from similar traditions.

<sup>43</sup> Although “son of God” may refer to a righteous man or a Jew who is faithful to Torah (Wis 5:5, see Sir 24:10), it is unlikely that Paul is merely referring to Jesus as a righteous man.

<sup>44</sup> In 4Q246 a figure called the “Son of God” and “Son of the Most High” is mentioned, but due to the fragmentary nature of the document, its identity cannot be ascertained. There are no less than five theories as to its identity: as the Seleucid king Alexander Balas (Milik), as an eschatological “Antichrist” figure (Flusser), as a messianic figure (Fitzmyer), as Israel collectively (Hengel), as an angelic figure (Garcia-Martinez, Collins, Laato). See the overviews by Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 154-72 and by Oegema, 122-27.

<sup>45</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 172.

God.”<sup>46</sup> To be exalted to such a position implies that Jesus now acts as God’s vice-regent ruling over the cosmos, subjecting all the enemies of God by the heavenly power and authority bestowed upon him (see 1 Cor 15:24-28).<sup>47</sup> It is this same power by which God redeemed Israel from Egypt (Exod 15:6-7, 1 Cor 10:1-4), and the enthronement of the messianic Son is the means by which the cultural narrative of Israel will reach its intended climax in their adoption as sons and heirs of the divine glory (Rom 8:14-17, 29-30). Thus the image of the exalted Son of God in power becomes the fountainhead from which the rest of the epistle flows. It is this power which is now the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (Rom 1:16), by which sin and death will be conquered (Rom 5-8) and by which he will command the obedience of the nations and bring them spiritually into subjection to himself (Rom 1:5; see Phil 3:21). For he is no mere earthly Messiah who subjugates the nations through superior military force, but the Son of God enthroned in heaven over all the spiritual powers which hold the nations in bondage. All nations were to serve and do homage to the anointed king of Israel, the “Messiah”, (Psa 72 (73):11; *Pss. Sol.* 17:30). The Messiah as such was rarely if ever the recipient of devotion in early Judaism (but see *1 En.* 48:5; 62:9).<sup>48</sup> But once Jesus was perceived as being exalted to the highest position in heaven at God’s right hand as bearer of the divine name and glory, the early Christian community began to include Jesus within their devotion to the one God of Israel.<sup>49</sup>

As the enthroned Son, Jesus receives the name of κύριος. Dunn remarks that the title itself “at the very least . . . denoted an asserted or acknowledged dominance and right of disposal of superior over inferior -- whether simply as a master over slave, king over subject, or by extension, god over worshipper”, so that to confess Jesus as Lord

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<sup>46</sup> For the close association of power with glory and theophanic manifestation, see 2 Cor 4:4-7; Exod 15:6; Psa 63:2 (62:3); 84:7 (83:8); Matt 24:30 = Mark 13:26 = Luke 21:27; Matt 26:64 = Mark 14:62 = Luke 22:69; IQM 14:16-17; 18:10-11; IQS 11:7; IQH<sup>a</sup> 7:20; *1 En.* 1:4.

<sup>47</sup> So also Byrne, *Romans*, 40; see Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 246.

<sup>48</sup> For the worship of the Messiah in the *Similitudes*, see R. Bauckham, “The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus”, in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, (ed. Carey C. Newman et. al., Leiden: Brill, 1999), 57-60. But Hurtado argues that such devotion to the Messiah is reserved for the eschatological future and therefore does not represent an existing cult to such a figure, (“The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship”, (in the same volume), 193-194).

<sup>49</sup> See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 95-123; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, (London: SCM, 1998).

expressed “subserviency” and “devotion” to him.<sup>50</sup> The confession that Jesus is Lord is among the earliest of confessions, as Dunn notes: “the formula may go back to the earliest days of the new movement, or at least is a very early expression of the new faith.”<sup>51</sup> Because Jesus is exalted to God’s right hand as heavenly Lord of the cosmos (see Rom 14:9, where the risen Jesus is Lord of both the dead and the living, and Phil 2:10, where every knee bends in heaven, earth, and under the earth), His lordship extends beyond any mere earthly lordship. The ascription of cosmic lordship to Jesus was likely understood in direct contrast to Caesar’s lordship, at least by Paul and the early Christians themselves.<sup>52</sup> Thus Dunn incorrectly asserts that “the sharp antithesis” between the lordship of Caesar and that of Christ found in *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8.2 has not yet appeared.<sup>53</sup> Dunn himself asserts the confession of Jesus’ lordship at baptism indicates “a transfer of allegiance and change in acknowledged ownership.”<sup>54</sup> However, this transfer of allegiance was not merely a religious act, but a political act as well, for the two spheres were not entirely distinguishable in the ancient Mediterranean. Thus the confession of Jesus as Lord could be viewed as a subversive act. It is simply that the early Christian’s subtle subversion of Roman imperial claims had not yet been perceived by the Romans and therefore had not yet brought persecution down upon them. Neil Elliott, drawing on the work of Karl Donfried, argues that Paul “preempts Roman imperial claims” and that “Paul’s proclamation as *kyrios*, the ‘lord of God’s empire,’ relied heavily on Roman political concepts, and “could easily be understood as violating the ‘decrees of Caesar in the most blatant manner.”<sup>55</sup> In fact in Philippians 3:20 Paul refers to the fact the Christian *πολίτευμα* is not earthly but heavenly, a term which is overtly political and which challenges the authenticity of Caesar’s claims as

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<sup>50</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 247.

<sup>51</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 607; *Theology*, 246. Also Ziesler, 262; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 591. On the other hand, as Dunn also notes (*Romans*, 607), there is no evidence of the confession “Jesus is Lord” outside of Paul; nevertheless the early application of Psa 110 to the risen Jesus demonstrates that it is characteristic of the earliest Christian community.

<sup>52</sup> Of course Roman authorities may not yet have perceived the conflict since there many divine beings or “lords” who were the recipients of a cultus and yet posed no threat to Roman authority. (See 1 Cor 8:5, Dunn, *Theology* 247).

<sup>53</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 247.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 247.

<sup>55</sup> Neil Elliott, “Paul and the Politics of Empire: Problems and Prospects”, in *Paul and Politics*, (ed. R. Horsley, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 25. He is drawing on the work of Karl Donfried, “The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence”, *NTS* 31 (1985): 336-56. See also John White, *The Apostle of God*, 173-205.

lord and savior. Jesus is the true Lord and Savior, not Caesar.<sup>56</sup> Instead of paying homage to Caesar, the nations were to serve Israel's Messiah.

At the same time, the rule of Caesar and the oppression of God's people were only symptoms of a larger threat to Paul's symbolic world, the problem of Israel's sin and disobedience which had led her to this present plight.<sup>57</sup> The triumph of Jesus as κύριος in his resurrection and exaltation meant that Yahweh had dealt decisively with the problem of Israel's sin and that the time of restoration had been inaugurated. Jesus is appointed Son of God in power . . . by the resurrection of the dead, not from the dead, indicating that his resurrection is the beginning of the general resurrection of God's people and constitutes that resurrection *in nuce*.<sup>58</sup>

It is likely that the early Christians understood the title κύριος as implying some kind of identification with Yahweh, since Jesus is given the name above every name, the name κύριος or *YHWH* (Phil 2:9).<sup>59, 60</sup> N. T. Wright asserts that Philippians 2:5-11 depicts "a view of Jesus that claims for him nothing less than equality with, and thereby identity with the one God of Jewish monotheism."<sup>61</sup> Fitzmyer, on the other hand, objects to the term identification and prefers the idea that the "early Christians regarded Jesus as somehow participating in the transcendence of Yahweh, that he was somehow on a par with him. This, however, is not meant in an egalitarian sense, since Jesus is

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<sup>56</sup> So Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire", 173-4.

<sup>57</sup> Wright, *NTPG*, 272-273.

<sup>58</sup> Fitzmyer, 237; Dunn, *Romans*, 15; Nygren, 50-52.

<sup>59</sup> It appears that Jesus has been exalted to the position of the angel of the Lord, who bears the name of YHWH in himself (Exod 23:21). In Zech 12:8, the house of David will be like the angel of YHWH before the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is not to say that the early Christians understood Jesus to have become an angel or that they held to some kind of "angel-christology", but rather that Jewish conceptions of chief angels "assisted early Christians in coming to terms theologically with the exalted Christ" (Hurtado, 74). See also Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: a study in early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995); Charles A. Gieschen, cited above; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology, and Soteriology*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997).

<sup>60</sup> For Jesus' reception of the name *YHWH* in Phil 2:9-11, see D. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck), 1992, 159; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 62; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 94; Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 245; Larry J. Kreitzer, "When He at Last is First," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 119; Richard J. Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11," *Where Christology Began*, 131.

<sup>61</sup> N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire", 182.

never hailed as  $\kappa\upsilon\omicron\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ . It involved a *Gleichsetzung*, but not an *Identifizierung*.<sup>62</sup> But even later Christianity never asserted an absolute identity with the Father, so in what sense is Jesus put on a par with God? On the other hand, Dunn notes that the very use of the title  $\kappa\upsilon\omicron\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$  for Jesus “in itself suggests that veneration was indeed offered to the exalted Lord in earliest Christian worship”,<sup>63</sup> but in his view veneration is to be distinguished from the full worship or adoration to be given to God.<sup>64</sup> But even Fitzmyer admits that in Philippians 2:5-11, “ $\kappa\upsilon\omicron\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$  is used of Jesus precisely as the super-exalted one who is worthy of the same adoration as Yahweh himself as the allusion to Isa 45:23 suggests,” concluding that “this pre-Pauline, cultic, usage, applying the absolute title to Jesus, . . . is significant.”<sup>65</sup> And yet it is still remarkable that Jesus is mentioned at all in the context of worship even if only as the mediator of worship, thanksgiving, and prayer (Rom 1:8, 15:30). Moreover, God the Father is worshipped by the whole cosmos bending the knee in submission and confessing Jesus Christ as Lord (Phil 2:9-11). Jesus has been raised to an unparalleled exalted status above the entire cosmos, whether human, angel, or otherwise. If Paul had not meant Jesus to be worshipped, he hardly made the distinction clear. Dunn notes that  $\delta\omicron\zeta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  (Rom 1:21, 15:5, 9, 1 Cor 6:20),  $\lambda\alpha\tau\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$  or  $\lambda\alpha\tau\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$  (Rom 1:9, 25; 12:1), and  $\pi\omicron\sigma\kappa\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  (1 Cor 14:25) are used only with reference to God and not to Christ.<sup>66</sup> Yet there are only a handful of references to worship of any kind. Do they mean that Paul intended a careful distinction between veneration and full worship? Dunn is correct that some sort of distinction is intended, but what it is, is not clear. Perhaps it was not clear for the early Christians or for Paul, who had not yet worked out the implications of their developing theology. What is clear, however, is that, as Lord Jesus is given and wields sovereignty in God’s name over the cosmos and receives the cosmic adoration that is due to Yahweh alone (Phil 2:10-11). If Philippians 2: 5-11 is pre-Pauline, as most interpreters assert, then this devotion to the risen Jesus as cosmic Lord most likely predates Paul. In fact, the very lack of clarity regarding the precise relationship of Christ

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<sup>62</sup> J. Fitzmyer, “The New Testament Kyrios-Title”, in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979), 130.

<sup>63</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 257.

<sup>64</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 258-260.

<sup>65</sup> Fitzmyer, *Kyrios*, 128.

<sup>66</sup>  $\text{E}\pi\alpha\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , however, can be given to Christ (15:11-12).

to God in the pre-Pauline community may have constituted a fundamental obstacle to the pre-conversion Paul, a point which will be addressed below.

But what did such an ascription of cosmic lordship mean sociologically for the early Christian community? In other words, how did it legitimate their symbolic world? First of all, the heavenly exaltation of Jesus to cosmic lordship dealt with the most immediate threat to the plausibility of their symbolic world by asserting that not only had he risen from the dead but he was now Lord over the realm of the dead and the living (Rom 14:9). What at first had threatened to undo everything for which they had hoped, namely the humiliating crucifixion of the one they had hoped would be God's Messiah, now became the main supporting beam of the sacred canopy protecting their worldview. Death could not defeat Jesus; it was the mere passage to a more exalted throne, a heavenly throne beyond the reach of all earthly threats and vicissitudes. Even if the Romans continued to oppress the people of Israel and the early Christians for the time being, ultimate victory was assured since Jesus now sits at God's right hand (Rom 8:34, Psa 110), having been victorious not only over the mere earthly Romans, but over death itself. By conquering death, the ultimate threat to any symbolic world, Jesus has shown himself to be invincible, thereby shielding the early Jewish Christian symbolic universe from any lesser threats. It is this superior legitimation of the Jewish symbolic universe that made early Christian Judaism attractive. It is not that God would soon act, but rather that God had already acted in raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus' resurrection constituted *in nuce* the final resurrection of God's people. It is not surprising, then that some later Christians would so willingly lay down their lives in martyrdom given such a powerful legitimation for their symbolic world in the resurrection and cosmic lordship of Jesus.

### **1.5 Paul's persecution of the early Christian community**

Paul heard this crucified and risen Messiah being proclaimed as the exalted Lord of the cosmos, witnessed the growing devotion of the early Christians to Jesus prior to his vision and persecuted them for it (Gal 1:13). Although Paul never states explicitly the reason for his persecution, the question must be addressed if one is to understand how Torah was transformed in Paul's symbolic world. Several reasons have been

proposed, all of which are clearly inadequate. First, it is unlikely that laxity in the observance of the Torah provoked Paul's attempt to destroy the Christian community,<sup>67</sup> for one wonders why Paul would single them out: there were probably many Jews who were lax in observance of Torah, and of course to a strict Pharisee, most Jews were lax. Moreover, it is unlikely that Paul persecuted the community for admitting Gentiles since many Diaspora synagogues admitted Gentile godfearers and proselytes. It is even less likely that the Hellenists were preaching that circumcision was unnecessary, a "pre-Pauline" Pauline gospel as it were.<sup>68</sup> The suggestion by Donaldson that Paul perceived in Christ and Torah rival boundary markers for the people of God<sup>69</sup> founders on this point, for unless the Christian community were admitting Gentiles as full members without requiring circumcision and observance of Torah, there is no reason why Paul would perceive a conflict. The conflict over the works of the law as boundary markers is a *consequence* of the transformation of Paul's thought, not the *cause* of his persecution of the early Christians.<sup>70</sup> Thirdly, it is also quite unlikely that Paul persecuted the Christian community because they preached a crucified Messiah; this would have provoked ridicule rather than persecution.<sup>71</sup> After all, a Messiah was to deliver them from Rome's power, not be crucified by them. The cross might be a stumbling block for Jews in believing the gospel (1 Cor 1:23), but it would not have provoked an attempt to destroy them (Gal 1:13). Others, on the basis of Luke's report of the preaching and martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6-7), have suggested that the Hellenist critique of the temple was the basis of Paul's persecution.<sup>72</sup> But many Jews were critical of the temple, and in any case Stephen's (or, more probably, Luke's) words about the temple are

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<sup>67</sup> So Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and the Torah: Collected Essays*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 16; J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 143; Jürgen Becker, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr., Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 65-66.

<sup>68</sup> So also Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions and the Retrospective Self", *JTS* 37 (1986). *Contra*, however, Räisänen, in *Jesus, Paul and the Torah*, 16; also in "Paul's Conversion and the Development of his View of the Law", *NTS* 33 (1987): 406.

<sup>69</sup> Donaldson, *PG*, 204-7.

<sup>70</sup> So also Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 144.

<sup>71</sup> *Contra* Hengel, "Christos in Paul", in *Between Jesus and Paul*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 71. See Fredriksen, 10-12, who argues that "the spiritual status of the deceased cannot be inferred from the disposition of his body", Donaldson, *PG*, 170-1.

<sup>72</sup> So Seyoon Kim, 45; Hengel, *The Atonement: the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, (trans. John Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 44; Stuhlmacher, *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle*, 45; Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1991), 118-119.

hardly sufficient to provoke persecution, as he was simply paraphrasing Trito-Isaiah (Isa 66:1; Acts 7:48-49). There is no evidence of Torah laxity among the Hellenists and there is no indication in Acts that the Hellenists had a distinctive theology.<sup>73</sup> In addition, Elliott notes that Luke clearly considers the charges that Stephen spoke against law and temple to be false (Acts 6:9-14).

Perhaps politics was the reason that Paul might have persecuted the early Christians. According to Fredriksen, "open dissemination of a messianic message put the entire Jewish community at risk."<sup>74</sup> Fredriksen's proposal is unlikely, however, for several reasons. Messianism as such was not contrary to Torah except perhaps in the case of the Sadducees who may have had an interest in preserving the status quo vis-à-vis the Romans. Fredriksen presents a very good reason why the *Sadducees* would be motivated to persecute the Christian community. In fact, according to all four gospel writers, one of the reasons that the high priest and his followers participated in Jesus' persecution was the Messianic claims made on his behalf and fear of the Romans (see Matt 26:63-65; 27:41-43; Mark 14:61-64; 15:31-32; Luke 22:66-23:2; John 11:48-53; 19:15, 21). Moreover, Fredriksen's argument would also only work if the Christians followed a Messiah who was physically living and planning to lead an armed revolt against the Romans. Although the Romans clearly knew about Jewish messianic movements, there is no historical record indicating that the early Christians were persecuted by the Romans for preaching a crucified Messiah. What threat would a crucified Messiah be to the Romans? The idea would have been laughable, meriting only scorn from them.

Furthermore, Fredriksen writes that "a vision of the approaching end *preached also to Gentiles* (her emphasis)" would have been dangerous because "news of an impending Messianic kingdom, originating from Palestine, might trickle out via the *ekklesia's* Gentiles to the larger urban population."<sup>75</sup> There are several difficulties with this statement. First of all, the number of Gentiles in the *ekklesia* must have been very small, if there were any at all, since Luke gives no evidence of any prior to Paul's vision. In Acts Peter's visit to Cornelius (Acts 10) takes place after Paul's conversion (Acts 9).

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<sup>73</sup> Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 144.

<sup>74</sup> Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of the Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2", *JTS* 42.2 (1991), 547.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

So this possibility only became real after Paul began preaching extensively to Gentiles. The very agreement between the Jerusalem leaders that their mission was to the Jews and Paul's mission was to the Gentiles in Galatians 2 shows that the Gentile mission was not a priority for these leaders of the pre-Pauline Christian community. My question of Fredriksen is this: Which Gentiles? What real danger was there that the message of an impending messianic kingdom might leak out to Gentiles? Moreover, why would someone such as Paul feel so threatened by this extremely hypothetical possibility that he would try to destroy the community? It seems more likely that Paul might persecute a group of Jews preaching armed revolt against Rome for the reasons Fredriksen gives, but there is no indication that the early Christians ever preached such a message. The reverse, however, appears to be true, the early Christians seem to have taken a rather pacifistic position, waiting for the *parousia*. If Paul had any intimate contact with the Christian community, he would have known this.

Moreover, as a Pharisee Paul would have sympathized with hostility to the Romans, even if he might have opposed armed revolt. Their belief in some form of eschatological resurrection (Acts 23:6, 8; see Josephus *AJ* 18.14-15)<sup>76</sup>, indicates that they hoped for the divine restoration of Israel to a place of prominence in the world. According to N. T. Wright, a belief in resurrection is "bound up with the struggle to maintain obedience to Israel's ancestral laws in the face of persecution" and is "the divine reward for martyrs."<sup>77</sup> But not only martyrs would participate but the whole of Israel. Resurrection was nothing less than the "restoration of Israel by her covenant God" and represents both salvation from oppression by the Greeks and Romans (exile) and, at the same time, vindication of her claim to be God's chosen covenant people. Paul's Pharisaic belief in resurrection meant that he eagerly looked forward to the eschatological deliverance of God's people, of which the resurrection was but one part. It is noteworthy that those who wished to preserve the status quo also did not believe in the resurrection, namely the Sadducees.

Instead Paul implies that his zeal for Torah caused him to persecute the

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<sup>76</sup> Whether this resurrection was bodily (as implied by Acts) or spiritual (as implied by Josephus) is difficult to say. Josephus writes: "ἀθάνατόν τε ἰσχύον ταις ψυχαῖς πίστις αὐτοῖς εἶναι καὶ ὑπὸ χθονὸς δικαιώσεις τε καὶ τιμὰς οἷς ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας ἐπιτήδευσις ἐν τῷ βίῳ γέγονεν, καὶ ταις μὲν εἰργμὸν αἰδίων προτίθεσθαι, ταις δὲ ῥαστώνην τοῦ ἀναβιοῦν" (*AJ* 18.14-15).

<sup>77</sup> Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 331.

community (Phil 3:6; Gal 1:13-14). Thus it is clear that in some way Paul perceived the Christian community to be violating the Torah. Believing in a Messiah crucified by the Romans would have been worthy of scorn by a Pharisee like Paul, but would hardly have provoked him to accuse them of flagrantly violating Torah. It is unlikely at this stage that the early Christians allowed uncircumcised Gentiles into their midst as full members or that they were flagrantly violating the moral code of Torah. In fact the very difficulty that Peter is presented as having in eating unclean food in Acts 10 shows that even the author of Acts knew that the early Christian community was observant of the requirements of Torah.

Exactly how, then, could Paul have perceived the Christian community to be violating Torah? The reason that Paul persecuted the church is to be found in the nature of his pre-Christian symbolic universe, especially as he describes it in Galatians 1:11-17 and Philippians 3:4-6.<sup>78</sup> He was socialized among the Pharisees (Phil 3:5), who were noted for their strictness of their adherence to Torah (Acts 22:3, 26:5; Josephus, *Vita* 191; *War* II, 162). In fact, one of Paul's boasts was that he was *κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος*, implying that the Pharisees were more devoted to Torah than most other Jews. Moreover, Paul was so devoted to Torah that he says that he was advancing beyond many of his contemporaries, being extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers (Gal 1:14). Foremost in the Pharisaic interpretation of Torah was a commitment to the ritual purity required by the Torah, although their specific halakhic rulings regarding ritual purity cannot be ascertained. The Pharisees were more strict than other forms of Judaism in that they believed that all Jews were to live as if they were priests

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<sup>78</sup> Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* ns 37 (1986): 33-34, argues that autobiographical accounts of converts cannot be relied upon to provide useful information about their past history because of the apologetic purposes of such accounts and because of the anachronistic manner in which converts reconstruct and reconceive their past on the basis of their new commitments in the present. But Donaldson, 274, argues that Paul's accounts in Gal 1 and Phil 3 contain information that was "in the public domain, so to speak." L. Hurtado argues that "it may be a category mistake to apply to Paul generalizations about conversion narratives based on studies of 'typical' converts to modern established and tightly-controlled religious groups", and that "Paul is hardly to be approached as a 'typical' convert" ("Convert, apostate or apostle to the nations: The 'conversion' of Paul in recent scholarship", *SR* 22/3 1993, 280-1). C. Newman suggests that Fredriksen "neglects the tradition-historical context which would have encouraged the immediate 'content-filled' reflection", and that "she assumes that Paul refers to his christophany only on Gal 1 and 1 Cor 15, thereby impoverishing any attempt to derive interpretive implications from his christophany" (*Paul's Glory-Christology*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992], 181n39).

serving in the temple.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps they derived this self-conception from the command to Israel to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6).<sup>80</sup> Thus it is likely that they viewed the people of Israel as metaphorically constituting a temple in the midst of whom God dwelt.<sup>81</sup> Conceiving of themselves as a holy temple, the Pharisees distinguished or separated themselves<sup>82</sup> from those Jews who did not observe the Torah with the degree of purity they deemed necessary to maintain Israel's holy status and for God to remain in her midst.<sup>83</sup> Thus the purity of Israel was of fundamental concern to Paul and any threat to that purity would be dealt with in utmost seriousness. Paul's saying "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him" (1 Cor 3:17) was perhaps already part of his Pharisaic conception of Israel, providing the motivation to persecute the Christians. Paul perceived them to be threatening not simply the physical temple of Jerusalem, but the metaphorical temple of Israel who was to keep herself holy and observe Torah meticulously if she expected God to intervene in a great show of power and overthrow her oppressors.

As God's holy nation and temple, Israel was to maintain her distinction from the nations in their manner of life and the way that they worshipped the one true God. Paul describes this lifestyle as *Ιουδαϊσμός*, a term used only in 2 and 4 *Maccabees* to refer to the Jewish way of life according to Torah which made them God's holy people (2 Macc 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc. 4:26).<sup>84</sup> The term *Ιουδαϊσμός* should be understood in opposition to *Ἑλληνισμός* in the context of the Maccabean conflict (2 Macc 4:13-

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<sup>79</sup> Jacob Neusner, "Pharisaic Law in New Testament Times", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 26 (1971): 331-40; see also *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

<sup>80</sup> So also D. R. de Lacey, "οἵτινές ἐστε ὑμεῖς: The Function of a Metaphor in Paul", in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple presented to Ernst Bammel*, JSNTSup 48, (ed. William Horbury, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 399.

<sup>81</sup> This of course does not mean that they denied the efficacy of the Jerusalem temple. It is likely, however, that this Pharisaic belief was the source of Paul's convictions about the Christian community as a metaphorical temple in 1 Cor 3:17 (see 6:19), rather than any Essene influence. In fact recent research questions whether the Qumran community conceived of themselves as a metaphorical temple; in this regard see John R. Lanci, *A New Temple for Corinth*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 13-18; Philip R. Davies, *Sects and Scrolls: Essays on Qumran and Related Topics*, (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 45-60, esp. 46-49; J. Coppens, "The Spiritual Temple in the Pauline Letters and its Background", *Studia Evangelica* 6, (ed. E. Livingstone, Berlin, 1973), 59-60.

<sup>82</sup> "Pharisee" perhaps derives from the Aramaic *perushim*, which means "separated ones."

<sup>83</sup> This perspective is preserved in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, which also presents the Christian community as a temple in the midst of whom God dwells.

<sup>84</sup> See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, (trans. John Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, London: SCM Press, 1974), 1:1-2.

17). Ἑλληνισμός does not merely refer to Hellenistic cultural influences, but to the pressure to give up the distinctive Jewish way of life, and especially to the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to impose a pagan lifestyle and worship upon the Jews. Thus Ιουδαϊσμός refers to the distinctiveness of the Jewish people from the godless nations around them, particularly with regard to the cultic purity of their worship. It is therefore not the same thing as what is meant by “Judaism” today. Many Jews felt that Hellenistic culture posed a deep threat to their traditional way of life, and Ιουδαϊσμός represented an attempt to preserve that way of life from being absorbed into that cultural milieu. It thus does not simply refer to Jewish religion as such. The experience of a being a minority culture, which was politically dominated by Rome and culturally dominated by Hellenism, profoundly shaped the Judaism of the time. By using the term Ιουδαϊσμός, Paul indicates that he had been socialized into this mindset, perceiving on all sides threats to the purity of Israel, ever on the guard from encroachments and intrusions of Hellenistic cultic influences upon Israel’s worship. Thus it is likely that Paul perceived the Christian message to threaten the purity of Israel’s worship in some way. Fredriksen is correct that there was a political element in Paul’s persecution of the community: Paul perceived them as accommodating to Greco-Roman practices and saw this as a betrayal of Israel, a political betrayal no less than a religious one (though the distinction between political and religious is itself anachronistic.)

That Paul perceived the Christian community and its preaching to be a threat is indicated by his use of the term ζήλος in reference to his persecuting activity. Zeal had a long tradition within Israel’s cultural narrative. Ζηλωτής was even a name for God, and referred to the jealousy of God against the worship of any other god than himself (Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15). God’s jealousy demanded the exclusive devotion of the Israelites to himself like a jealous husband who will allow no other man near his wife, so zealous was he to guard her purity. In fact the suspected defilement of adultery provokes jealousy of the husband (see Num 5:14-15, 18, 25, 29-30). This zeal on God’s part called forth a corresponding zeal on Israel’s part to be devoted exclusively to the worship of her husband Yahweh (Psa 69:9; 68:10 LXX). Phinehas killed a man who was involved in worshipping Baal-Peor with a Midianite woman; Elijah was zealous to preserve the purity of Israel’s worship from idolatry (1 Kgs 19:10, 14), and Mattathias

was zealous to preserve Israel's worship from the taint of pagan idolatry forced upon them by Antiochus Epiphanes, for which he was willing to kill a priest who was going to offer sacrifice according to the pagan rite (1 Macc 2:24-27; 2:50-54). So zeal referred to a willingness to go to any lengths, including killing those involved, to preserve the purity of Israel's worship. Hengel remarks that "zeal meant a passionate giving of oneself to God's cause that was associated with a readiness to avenge every form of sacrilege."<sup>85</sup>

Paul refers to his own zeal in his attempt to "destroy" (πορθέω) the assembly of God (ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, Gal 1:13). The ἐκκλησία refers to Israel as the people of God (Neh 13:1, see 1QM 4:10, לְהַקְדֵּשׁ). Obviously before his conversion Paul did not perceive himself to be persecuting God's people; rather he perceived the Christians as defiling the purity of the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. His vision of Christ transformed his conception of the people of God so that the very people he had perceived as defiling were now the people of God.

### 1.5.1 Paul's persecution and the precariousness of his pre-conversion symbolic universe

The fact that Paul perceived the early Christian proclamation as a threat indicates the precariousness of his symbolic universe and its inability to establish itself as "objective reality"<sup>86</sup> in his mind. The social vision which Paul perceived in the Torah could not simply be taken as a given. In other words, Paul already had a "plight" which called forth his zeal in attempting to "destroy" those whom he perceived as a dire threat. That plight was the threat of the impurity and sin within Israel. Otherwise the passion and zeal with which Paul responded to the Christian message is inexplicable. Since Phinehas, Elijah, and the Maccabees all sought to defend the purity of Israel's

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<sup>85</sup> M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.*, (trans. by David Smith, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 177.

<sup>86</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 60; Berger, *Sacred Canopy* 10-12. Part of the social process of creating a socially constructed reality is the objectivation of that social world, so that it becomes an objective reality in the eyes of the human community as a whole: "Culture is objective in that it confronts man as an assemblage of objects in the real world existing outside his own consciousness. Culture is *there*. But culture is also objective in that it may be experienced and apprehended, as it were, in company. Culture is *there for everybody*" (*Sacred Canopy*, 10). The objective nature of the social world consists in its ability to impose itself on individuals as reality, particularly through the medium of language (*Sacred Canopy*, 12).

worship from idolatry, it is likely that Paul thought that the early Christian veneration of Jesus as the Son of God<sup>87</sup> and exaltation to God's right hand compromised the oneness of God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One" (Deut 6:4) and therefore the early Christians were guilty of blasphemy.<sup>88</sup> This is the charge made against Jesus (Matt 9:3=Mark 2:7=Luke 5:21; Matt 26:65=Mark 14:64; John 10:33, 36) and against Stephen (Acts 6:11; see 7:56-57).<sup>89</sup> Perhaps Paul perceived the early Christian exaltation of Jesus as the Son of God in terms of the deification of Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors or at least thought that the early Christian community had crossed that line. Alexander the Great was called the son of the god Ammon by the Ammon oracle, a title equivalent to the Greek "son of Zeus."<sup>90</sup> Moreover the Ptolemaic kings claimed to be son of the god Helios,<sup>91</sup> to which the third *Sibylline Oracle* alludes: "Then God will send a king from the sun" (3: 652). The emperor Augustus received the title *Divi Filius*, or Son of God.<sup>92</sup> The title "Son of God", therefore had strong overtones of deification which would have been offensive to most Jews.

Given the reticence of ancient Jews to use the title *Son of God* with reference to any king or even to a messianic figure,<sup>93</sup> when Christians proclaimed an exalted Messiah who was now enthroned as heavenly Son of God and Lord, it is likely that Paul perceived it as threat to the purity of Israel as God's worshipping people. Perhaps he

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<sup>87</sup> Whether the early Christians actually worshipped Jesus together with God or merely rendered homage and veneration short of cultic devotion cannot be discussed here. See L. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, especially 93-124. What matters is that Paul *perceived* such veneration as threatening Israel's purity. Hurtado, pp. 2, 13, 122, likewise views the exaltation of Jesus by Christians as at least in part the source of offense to Paul.

<sup>88</sup> *Contra* Dunn, who emphasizes that exalted christology was not the issue in the earliest Christian community or to the pre-conversion Paul ("How Controversial was Paul's Christology?" in *From Jesus to John*, [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 148-167).

<sup>89</sup> Whether or not the charges made against Jesus and Stephen are historically accurate is not relevant here: the fact is that the early Christian community perceived that such charges were being leveled against them. It is therefore historically plausible that Paul also charged the Christians with blasphemy.

<sup>90</sup> P. W. Von Martitz, *TDNT*, VIII, 336. See also John L. White, *The Apostle of God: Paul and the Promise of Abraham*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), xxviii, 102-9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 337. Given that the Roman emperor was now called "Son of God", it is likely then that the title in Rom 1:3 has implicitly political overtones: Jesus is the true Son of God in heaven as opposed to the Roman emperor. Perhaps it always had this connotation, since the Roman procurator had crucified Jesus in the name of the emperor.

<sup>93</sup> Although in Jewish texts God may refer to Messiah as "my son" (e.g. Psa 2:72; Sam 7:14; 4 Ezra 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9; 4QFlor 10-11), son of God seems to be avoided except in 4Q246, whose identity is uncertain. See notes 34, 40 above.

understood the Christians' devotion to the exalted Christ to be an example of "worshipping the creature (namely Jesus) rather than the Creator" (Rom 1:25) and "exchanging the glory of the immortal God for an image of a mortal man" (Rom 1:23). To Paul, the devotion to Christ represented a defiling intrusion of Hellenistic worship practices into the worship of Israel. So Paul reacted in zeal because he believed that the blasphemy of the early Christians threatened to bring the wrath of God down upon Israel unless he, like Phinehas, intervened to stop the blasphemy: "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them on my behalf that in my jealousy I did not consume the Israelites" (Num 25:11).<sup>94</sup> The fact that Paul attempted to destroy the community (Gal 1:14) indicates that he perceived in the message of the exalted Christ a threat that could only be expunged by wiping out the movement altogether.<sup>95</sup>

Dunn, however, disputes the claim that "already by the time of Paul the claims made for Christ by the first generation Christians were highly controversial and made a breach with Judaism unavoidable."<sup>96</sup> He argues that the Christian proclamation of the risen Jesus in Acts is not "a make-or-break issue," but rather the Hellenists' attack upon the temple as recorded in the story of Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 6-7, esp 6:13-14). But that same story also records that Stephen was stoned when he related his vision of the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, after which the crowd covers their ears to avoid hearing such blasphemy (7:56-57). Thus Dunn does not relate the entire account.<sup>97</sup>

Dunn also argues that Paul did not persecute the church "out of disdain for the church's christology, but out of 'zeal' for the law." But this is a false dichotomy,

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<sup>94</sup> If so, then Paul anticipated the Rabbinic critique of Christianity and Gnosticism that there were "two powers in heaven." See Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, SJLA 25 Leiden: Brill 1977.

<sup>95</sup> Although Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 25 and 47n23 and 24, is correct that *πορθέω* (destroy) does not require the meaning of physical violence, it is clear that Paul wished to destroy the Christians as an influence within the Jewish community by whatever means necessary, which may have included physical violence as in the martyrdom of Stephen. The verb *πορθέω* is used in *4 Macc.* 4:23 and 11:4 to refer to Antiochus Epiphanes' attempt to destroy the Jewish community culturally, which involved physical violence in the torture of the martyrs, but obviously not the death of all Jews.

<sup>96</sup> Dunn, "How Controversial," 148-167.

<sup>97</sup> Both Dunn and I are here assuming the essential historicity of the account. If, however, the story is not historical, then not only is the vision of Stephen and the charge of blasphemy unhistorical, the temple-critique must also be taken as unhistorical.

especially if the early church's christology was perceived to be in conflict with the Torah. The christology of the exalted and enthroned son of God and a veneration of him by the early Christians could very well have been viewed by Paul as threatening the worship of the one true God of Israel<sup>98</sup> and thus aroused his zeal for Torah.

Moreover, the fact that "subsequently in Paul's own mission and writings the crucial issue vis-à-vis the parent faith (Judaism) seems uniformly to have been the law", misses the target, since Paul's dispute in his letters concerning the works of the law is not with unbelieving Jews but with the Judaizers, that is, with Jews who believe in Christ and yet require such works of Gentiles. Since the Judaizers already believed in Christ, one would not expect christology to be a matter of dispute and discussion in Paul's letters.<sup>99</sup> Thus the issue of whether Paul's christology was controversial within the early Christian movement and the issue of whether early Christian christology was controversial within Judaism are entirely separate issues. Yet Dunn confuses these issues as if they were identical. Dunn argues admirably that Paul's christology was not controversial within the church, but does not establish that the early church's christology

<sup>98</sup> Paul reflects on the *Shema* in 1 Cor 8:6: ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ. Thus Paul distinguishes the one Lord in the *Shema* from the One God, and at the same time includes Christ within the identity of God as the Lord of Israel and all creation. Even if κύριος and θεός are clearly distinguished by Paul, the fact that Paul could include Jesus within the framework of the *Shema* is extraordinary: the boundaries of Jewish monotheism are stretched here. Dunn, remarks that "8:6b is not in fact a departure from Jewish monotheism" because Christ is identified with God's wisdom here (*Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 182). This is true, but an identification with divine Wisdom is quite unusual. No angelic being or patriarch was ever so fully identified as the divine Wisdom nor, even more significantly, included within the confession of the *Shema* as the One Lord.

Moreover, Christ appears to be included as the agent of creation: "through whom all things are", and if so, then he existed prior to his earthly existence as Jesus of Nazareth. Murphy O'Connor, however, points out that the phrase "through whom all things are and we through him" is not a cosmological reference to the first creation but a soteriological reference to the new creation ("1 Cor. VIII.6: Cosmology or Soteriology? *RB* 85 (1978): 253-67). Christ is the agent of the new creation. Murphy O'Connor is correct, since Paul shared the early Christian community the view that Jesus became Lord at his resurrection (Phil 2:9-11; Rom 1:4). Dunn, *Christology*, 182, also denies that a reference to pre-existence is present here; rather, Christ is identified "with the creative power and action of God." Dunn is also correct that Wisdom language is being used here, since Christ is identified with the Wisdom of God in 1 Cor 1:30, but the Wisdom with which Christ is identified is God's redemptive Wisdom rather than the Wisdom in the original act of creation (as in Prov. 8:22-31; Col 1:16). Nevertheless, once Christ was identified with the redemptive Wisdom of God and as the agent of God in the new creation "through whom all things are", it was perhaps inevitable that Christ would soon become the agent of God in the first creation (Col 1:16).

<sup>99</sup> The same is true for the Corinthian correspondence: Paul is not debating unbelieving Jews in those contexts, nor is it his fundamental purpose to correct their understanding of Christ, so Christology does not arise as a matter of central debate.

was not controversial with unbelieving Jews such as the pre-conversion Paul.

Thus prior to his conversion, Paul perceived an irreconcilable conflict between the exalted Lord and his Pharisaic understanding of the Torah. If Paul persecuted the Christian community for their devotion to the exalted Christ, then this may give a partial explanation as to why a Pharisee such as Paul would have a vision of Son of God (Gal 1:16; 2 Cor 4:4-6), a question which Segal claims cannot be answered.<sup>100</sup>

Even more puzzling is why he would be convinced by such a vision. The religious explanation that God gave Paul a vision, even if true, is not helpful here, since there is no reason that Paul the Pharisee should interpret the vision as coming from God, even if the figure he saw claimed to be Jesus. In fact it is more likely that he would have interpreted such a vision as Satan masquerading as an angel of light trying to seduce him with idolatrous worship (2 Cor 11:14).<sup>101</sup> The Christian proclamation of the exalted Christ was being presented to Paul as a rival interpretation of the Jewish symbolic universe, an interpretation which threatened his own. Paul's zealous determination to destroy this threat indicates the degree to which the plausibility of his own symbolic universe was being called into question. The message of the exalted Son produced in Paul a profound struggle. Initially, the struggle manifested itself in the persecution of those who believed in the option he rejected, the exalted Christ. But his struggle was resolved only when the plausibility of his former symbolic universe weakened and lost

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<sup>100</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 37.

<sup>101</sup> The closest parallel to Satan appearing as an angel of light is the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* 9:1, where Satan transforms himself "into the brightness of the angels" and appears to Eve. In the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*, Satan comes in the form of an angel, singing hymns to God with the angels and proceeds to tempt Eve (17:2-3). The history of the Adam and Eve Literature is complex and it is difficult to discern an original document underlying all the different versions. It is difficult to say whether they are Jewish or Christian, even if they contain little that is distinctively Christian. See M. de Jonge and J. Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), who date them to the 2nd to 4th centuries (77). See also Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). Levison views the traditions contained in them as most similar to the Adam traditions in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, and therefore originating in the same time period (*Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1988), 163-90. Whether they are ultimately Jewish or Christian, they appear to contain older Jewish traditions, which, as in the cases mentioned above, appear to be the only parallels to Paul's thought.

its grip over him.<sup>102</sup> If Acts is to be trusted, then it is not surprising that Paul's vision took place on the road to Damascus, away from the Pharisaic community of which he was a part. Lacking the crucial support that such a community would have offered him, his isolation from his colleagues formed another precondition for his reception of the vision,<sup>103</sup> since communal support is essential to maintaining the plausibility of a symbolic world.<sup>104</sup> Thus the christophany was not entirely a bolt from the blue, though Paul perhaps experienced it in that manner.

### 1.5.2 The distinctiveness of Paul's vision of Christ as opposed to other resurrection appearances

Because of his prior zeal against the message of the exalted Christ, Paul's visionary experience functioned for him in a fundamentally different way than the resurrection appearances did for the other disciples. The disciples lamented the crucifixion of Jesus and were crushed with despair at their loss. So for them the appearances functioned to *confirm* what they wanted to believe: that the crucifixion was not the defeat it appeared to be, but in fact a victory over the enemies of God's people. For them, there was no conflict between Torah and Jesus, who was the interpreter of the Torah for them. Paul, on the other hand, had no need for an exalted heavenly Messiah and perceived the preaching of the disciples in this regard to be a threat to the purity of Israel's worship. For him, his vision of the resurrected Christ constituted a *disconfirmation* of what he already believed. In other words, precisely because he had

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<sup>102</sup> John Gager, on the basis of William Sargent's work, *Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brainwashing*, 215 suggests that the stress experiences such as intense anger "function as antecedents to conversion by interfering with one's normal rationality, by thus increasing one's suggestibility and in general creating a situation in which old value systems give way to new ones." Gager also argues that stress experiences of anger "create an intense emotional bond--albeit a negative one--between the subject and the object of the anger. ("Some Notes on Paul's Conversion, *NTS*, 1980, 699). Paul's own anger and persecution of the Christian community may be the key to understanding why his view of Torah was so distinct from other early Christian Jews. In any case Gager, 700, rightly concludes that "Christians were very much a part of his emotional commitments prior to his conversion."

<sup>103</sup> Segal, 58, remarks that "rabbinic stories interpreting the *merkabah* experience often take place while traveling through the wilderness from city to city" and compares this with Luke's description of Paul's experience on the Damascus Road. Segal's point and that of the rabbis is that such mystical doctrines and experiences were not meant for public knowledge, but perhaps social isolation was essential to such experiences as well.

<sup>104</sup> Berger, 50-51.

not been a follower of Jesus before the crucifixion, and because he had persecuted the early church and accused them of blasphemy, his symbolic universe underwent a far more dramatic upheaval than that experienced by the other disciples.

At the same time one must recognize the importance of the tradition for Paul's interpretation of his vision. It is unlikely that the christophany was entirely self-interpreting, as if Jesus simply told him everything in the vision. Nor is it likely, as Segal proposes, that he learned to interpret his vision by being re-socialized in an early Gentile Christian community.<sup>105</sup> It is quite improbable that such a categorically non-Jewish Christian community would have existed at this time only a few years after the death of Jesus. Nevertheless Segal is correct that Paul learned to interpret his vision at least partly through resocialization, except his re-socialization began the moment that he first heard the Christian message. Technically Paul may be correct that he did not receive post-conversion instruction (Gal 1:12, 17), but by the time of his vision he would already have had knowledge of the early tradition about Christ. So Paul learned to interpret his vision both through his prior knowledge of Jewish apocalypticism, and through his knowledge of the church's preaching of the exalted Christ. Although Paul emphasizes that he did not receive his gospel by or through human beings, but only through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12), nevertheless this is probably polemical overstatement on his part, since in another context Paul easily admitted what he had received by tradition (1 Cor 15:3). In his vision he recognized that Jesus had in fact been as highly exalted as the followers of Jesus had claimed in their preaching. At the same time, his thought developed in ways that could not have been predicted on the basis of that proclamation. Paul's contact with the tradition, his zealous persecution of the early community, his vision of Christ and consequent reflection upon that vision in terms of that tradition as well as Jewish apocalypticism all combined to transform his Jewish symbolic universe, and, more specifically, the Torah itself within that symbolic universe.

### **1.6 The confession of Romans 1:3-4 modified by Paul's vision of Christ**

So Paul presents this early tradition of proclamation in Romans 1:3-4, albeit

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<sup>105</sup> Segal, 37, 74-75, 117, 143, 148.

revised in light of his own vision of Christ. That this confession represents the early tradition can hardly be doubted, for Paul wrote Romans a mere twenty-five years or so after the death of Jesus.<sup>106</sup> To be identifiable as a confession which Paul could expect the Romans to know, it must have been circulating for quite some time before the letter was written. So, while Paul interpreted his vision in terms of what he had already heard from the preaching of the early disciples, his experience of Christ in the vision at the same time acted back upon and transformed what he had received through the tradition. After all, how could one whose convictions were fundamentally transformed by an apocalypse of the risen Christ<sup>107</sup> leave a christological confession relatively unmarked by his own experience? Because Paul is deeply sensitive to charges that he received his gospel by human agency (Gal 1:1, 11-12), it is *a priori* likely that he would have modified such a confession to reflect his own visionary experience of the Son of God (Gal 1:15-16). Paul is not simply quoting a confession; he is describing what he has seen, albeit through the words of an early confession. Thus Romans 1:3-4 bears Paul's own personal stamp, especially since Paul has bracketed these verses with descriptions of his deeply personal apostolic call to preach the gospel of God to the Gentiles (1:1, 5).

### 1.6.1 The flesh/Spirit contrast and Paul's vision of Christ

But Paul's vision of Christ has also acted back upon the confession, transforming what he had received. In Romans 1:3-4, Paul contrasts the descent of Jesus from David *κατὰ σάρκα* with his heavenly enthronement in power as Son of God *κατὰ πνεῦμα*. An older view is that the contrast is between Jesus' human and divine natures, though few if any argue for this perspective any longer. Others have argued that Paul's use of this contrast here is fundamentally different than his use of the contrast elsewhere, e.g. Romans 7-8. Fitzmyer, for example, argues that the christological use of the contrast here differs from his more usual anthropological and

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<sup>106</sup> I am dating the death of Jesus at C.E. 30/33. Most scholars date the letter to the Romans between C.E. 54 and 59 (cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 12), though see G. Lüdemann, who dates Romans as early as 51/52 or 54/55 (*Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology*, (trans. F. S. Jones, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, 263). Fitzmyer dates the letter to C.E. 57-58 (*Romans*, 87), as does Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 2 and Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, xiii, and Black, *Romans*, 20.

<sup>107</sup> See Segal, *Paul the Convert*; C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*; and S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*.

ethical use of the contrast.<sup>108</sup> This contrast does not represent an anthropological dualism which contrasts the body with the spirit,<sup>109</sup> since Paul describes the resurrection body as a *σῶμα πνευματικόν* which is contrasted with the *σῶμα ψυχικόν* (1 Cor 15:44) and with flesh and blood (15:50), and is parallel to the earthly/ heavenly (*χοϊκός* or *ἐπίγειος/ἐπουράνιος*) contrast (15:40, 47). In his crucifixion Jesus put off the body of flesh (Col 2:11),<sup>110</sup> and in his resurrection he becomes a life-giving spirit (*πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*, 1 Cor 15:45). Others have argued that this contrast represents a redemptive-historical contrast of the two ages or creations, the first dominated by sin and death, and the new creation characterized by the eternal life and the eschatological gift of the Spirit.<sup>111</sup> Although the Spirit is the power which establishes the new aeon and new creation, the domain of heavenly glory and the Spirit already existed prior to this time. The redemptive event in Christ does not *establish* the contrast; rather it only provides the means for believers to cross the boundary from one sphere to the other. Thus it is only in experience of believers that the contrast is redemptive-historical.

Paul's use of the contrast is not primarily christological, anthropological, ethical, or redemptive-historical, but cosmological. The conception presupposed here is that reality is composed of parallel spheres of life, the earthly world in which mortal humans live and the spiritual world of God's heavenly throne.<sup>112</sup> According to the Septuagint version of Numbers 16:22 and 27:16, the Lord is described as "the God of the spirits *and* of all flesh."<sup>113</sup> The LXX translator thus distinguishes between the heavenly world of the angelic spirits and the earthly realm of all flesh, i.e. mortal humanity. In the same way, the Enochic *Book of the Watchers* contrasts the angels who are "holy, spiritual,

<sup>108</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 234.

<sup>109</sup> As appears to be the case in Matt:26:41=Mark 14:38; Luke 24:39. See also 2 Cor 7:1; *1QM* 7:5.

<sup>110</sup> In my opinion Colossians is Pauline, but my argument does not depend upon the references to Colossians here or elsewhere in the thesis.

<sup>111</sup> So Moo, 49-50; G. Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 103-5; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 64-68; Schreiner, *Romans*, 43.

<sup>112</sup> So also Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 18; Stuhlmacher notes: "In the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, perishable, earthly, existence in the body, and eschatological, heavenly glory appear in opposition to one another (cf. 1 Enoch 108:7-15; Also E. Schweizer, "σάρξ" *TDNT* VII, 126; see also John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death", *CBQ* 36 (1974): 21-43.

<sup>113</sup> The Masoretic text omits "and", so that the Lord is the God of the spirits of all flesh---the spirits in question are therefore human and not angelic.

(possessing) eternal life” and whose dwelling is in heaven, with the women who are “the blood of the flesh, which die and perish” (*1 En.* 15:4-7).<sup>114</sup> In the *Testament of Abraham* (Rec. B), Death appears as an angel of light and Abraham proclaims that he is unworthy to be near him, since “you are a high spirit, while I am flesh and blood, and therefore I cannot bear your glory” (13:7). The Qumran writings also contrast those who belong to fleshly humanity and the holy congregation of the angels (*1QS* 11:6-8; *1QH* 5:3). In 4Q491 f lli:14-15 the speaker declares: “I am reckoned with the gods and I am accounted a dwelling place in the holy congregation. Not according to the flesh (כבשר) is [my] desire, and all that is precious to me is in the glory of the holy dwelling place” (my translation). The speaker has been exalted to participate in the heavenly worship of God by the angels and therefore does not desire the things which mortal humanity (=flesh) desires. Thus in Romans 1:3-4, the contrast is between Jesus’ identity as a descendant of the house of David in the earthly realm of the flesh, and his exaltation as son of God to the heavenly realm of the spirit.<sup>115</sup> Paul is not referring here to the Spirit as a messianic endowment.<sup>116</sup> The preposition κατὰ here means something like “in the sphere of” and refers to participation in a mode of existence.<sup>117</sup> But the identity of Jesus κατὰ σάρκα is insufficient to qualify him as the Messiah--

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<sup>114</sup> See also *1 En.* 15:8-12; 16:1; 106:17; *1QH* 5:3; f45:6. Although the terms בשר, and חיה, σάρξ and πνεῦμα are found throughout the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Second Temple Jewish literature, they are rarely found in direct contrast to each other.

<sup>115</sup> Frey, on the other hand, asserts that the contrast in Romans 1:3-4 cannot be Pauline because “the usage in this early christological confession differs significantly from the usage of the antithesis by Paul himself”, which in Frey’s view includes a necessary linkage with sin (“Flesh and Spirit in the Palestinian Jewish Sapiential Tradition and in the Qumran Texts: An Inquiry into the Background of Pauline Usage” in *The Wisdom Text from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*. [eds. C. Hempel, A. Lange, and H. Lichtenberger, Leuven: Peeters, 2002], 368, 368n5, 369n6). See also his article “Die paulinische Antithese von “Fleisch” und “Geist” und die palästinisch-jüdische Weisheitstradition.” *ZNW* 90 (1999): 45-77. Frey, however, appears to confuse a connotation of σάρξ in some contexts with its meaning generally. Simply because in other contexts σάρξ has a sinful connotation in contrast to Spirit does not mean that the contrast in Romans 1:3-4 cannot be Pauline because it lacks that connotation. Since Paul can use σάρξ with a neutral connotation even in Romans (4:1; 9:3, 5; 11:14) to connote earthly relationships, he can certainly use it in contrast with the Spirit in Romans 1:3-4 to refer to Jesus’ earthly state as opposed to his resurrected state. At other times in Paul the earthly sphere of humanity acquires an evil connotation when it is in rebellion against God (as in Romans 7-8), but the basic meaning of the earthly sphere of mortal humanity remains the same.

<sup>116</sup> As in Isa 11; Acts 2:33; *Pss. Sol.* 17:37; see 1 Sam 16:13.

<sup>117</sup> *Contra* Scott, *Adoption*, 240, the use of κατὰ with πνεῦμα does not represent an instrumental use of the preposition, as if the Spirit were the means by which Jesus was raised from the dead, despite the apparent parallel of 1 Pet. 3:18.

after all, in the flesh he was crucified in weakness (1 Cor 13:4), and therefore Paul the Pharisee judged him according to the flesh as a weak and ineffective Messiah (see 2 Cor 5:16).<sup>118</sup> His fleshly descent from David qualifies him to inherit the throne<sup>119</sup>, but does not endow upon him the power and authority necessary to complete the task, but as πνεῦμα he possesses the divine power necessary to ascend the heavenly throne and rule over the nations.<sup>120</sup> The christological application of this cosmological contrast of σάρξ/πνεῦμα is grounded in his original vision of the exalted Son.<sup>121</sup> Whereas once Paul had viewed him κατὰ σάρκα, now Paul perceived the exalted Son in divine glory in his heavenly mode of existence (κατὰ πνεῦμα).<sup>122</sup> The dramatic reversal of his perspective as a result of his vision led Paul to see this contrast more sharply than other early Christians. This cosmological contrast will prove to be particularly important in understanding the transformation of the role of Torah in Paul's symbolic universe in Romans 7-8.

But the flesh/spirit contrast is not merely cosmological, but a cultic contrast as well, since πνεῦμα is identified as the πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης (spirit of holiness). This phrase occurs elsewhere only in *T. Levi* 18:11<sup>123</sup> and on an amulet (see note 22 above). It is a literal translation of שְׁדֵרָה קִיָּה, which appears three times in the Masoretic text to refer to the divine presence (Psa 51:11; 63:10, 11). The Hebrew phrase is quite common in the Qumran writings however, referring twice to the sanctified spirit of the community members (CD 5:11; 7:4), but in most other cases to God's Spirit, and a few times to angels in the plural (1QH<sup>a</sup> 16:12; 4Q403f1ii:7-8; 4Q405 f20ii 22:10; f23ii:6).<sup>124</sup>

<sup>118</sup> See also H. Räisänen, "Paul's Call Experience and His Later View of the Law" in *Jesus, Paul, and Torah*, 42.

<sup>119</sup> See Scott, *Adoption*, 239.

<sup>120</sup> Although it is true that what is κατὰ σάρκα is generally devalued or of lesser significance than that which is κατὰ πνεῦμα, the contrast here is ultimately climactic rather than antithetical (Scott, *Adoption*, 239). *Contra* J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus--Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans 1.3-4" *JTS*, n.s. 24 (1973): 44, Paul is *not* contrasting the role of Davidic Messiah with that of Son of God in power, since it is the birth of Jesus that is κατὰ σάρκα, not his role as Messiah.

<sup>121</sup> Also Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 71; see also his article "Paul's Thinking about Resurrection in its Jewish Context", *NTS* 44 (1998), 401; Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 157; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 78, 118.

<sup>122</sup> Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 60.

<sup>123</sup> See note 20 above concerning the Christian origin of *T. Levi* 18.

<sup>124</sup> See Arthur Everett Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

The term ἁγιωσύνη itself is quite rare, occurring only five times in the LXX, two other times in the NT (2 Cor 7:1, 1 Thess 3:13). Ἅγιωσύνη is used to describe the sanctity of God's name (Psa 29:5; 96:12), presence (Psa 144:5) or temple (2 Macc 3:12; Psa 95:6), or the holiness required to enter into the divine presence (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thess 3:13; *T. Levi* 18:11). In all cases, the term implies a clear distinction or boundary between the spheres of the sacred realm of the divine presence and the profane world of humanity. Thus for Paul, Jesus' appointment as the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness refers to Jesus' entry by his resurrection into the sacred realm of the divine presence, into the heavenly temple as it were. He has crossed the boundary separating the sacred from the profane, the realm of the spirit from the flesh and has obtained for the people of God the sanctification necessary to enter into the divine presence<sup>125</sup> and there worship God by the Spirit (Rom 1:9, 2:28-29; 5:1; 7:6; 12:1; 15:16, see Phil 3:3). Thus it is through the exaltation of Jesus as Son of God rather than through Torah that the sons of God (Israel) attain their cultic destiny as the worshipping people of God (see Exod 4:22, "Let my son go that he may worship me"). Because Torah is the means by which Israel worships her God, a transformation of Israel's cultic destiny necessarily involves a transformation of Torah within her symbolic universe as Paul understood it.

### **1.7 The confession in the context of Paul's call to the Gentiles**

An additional factor in this transformation must also be considered: Paul places this modified confession in the context of his description of his apostolic call to preach to the Gentiles.<sup>126</sup> Several questions must be asked here: What is the conceptual origin of his call and to what degree is the call itself responsible for the transformation of Paul's symbolic universe? The conceptual origin of his call is to be found in Davidic

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<sup>125</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 11, notes concerning ἁγιωσύνη: "What is meant is not moral holiness (Kuss) but originally cultic, and then (as often) holiness transposed into the eschatological sphere . . . which finally overcomes what is profane and secular and opens up access to God."

<sup>126</sup> I am distinguishing here between the effect upon him of his vision of Christ and his call to preach to the Gentiles, even though as events they occurred simultaneously.

Messianism and the homage the nations were to pay him.<sup>127</sup> When Paul refers to Jesus as born of the seed of David, the implication is clear that Jesus is identified as the Davidic Messiah. This idea, however, has generally not been seen as significant for Pauline christology, and even less has it been connected to Paul's mission to the Gentiles. It is usually recognized that 1:3-4 contains allusions to 2 Samuel 7:12 and Psalm 2:7, but rarely are these allusions connected with the obedience of faith in 1:5 and the theme of Davidic subjugation of the nations. Dunn recognizes the possibility that Psalm 2:8, in which the Davidic heir is given the nations as his inheritance by God, may have influenced Paul in describing his call to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles, but passes over this possibility in favor of an allusion to Israel's covenantal obligation of obedience.<sup>128</sup>

However, Paul rarely mentions the covenant within his letters, and within Romans, the term is used exclusively in relation to Israel (9:4; 11:27). Paul simply never portrays the Gentiles as entering into the covenantal obligations of Israel; on the contrary, Israel has been released from her covenantal obligations through the death of her Messiah (7:1-6). The obedience of the nations (and Israel) is of a different kind: it is submission to one who has subdued them. Also, given the allusion to Psalm 2:7 in verse four, it seems more likely that Paul is alluding to the subjugation of the nations by the Davidic heir in Psalm 2:8. This tradition is widespread within Israel's cultural narrative. A ruler to come from Judah, obviously David, will receive the tribute (of nations) and "the obedience of the peoples shall be his" (Gen 49:10).<sup>129</sup> The Davidic

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<sup>127</sup> The homage and obeisance of the nations to the Davidic Messiah is not to be confused with the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to Zion in order to learn the Torah (Isa 2:1-5; Mic 4:2-3) nor with the conversion of the nations at the end-time restoration of Israel (Tob 14:6; *T. Zeb.* 9:8). Thus the arguments of Donaldson (*PG*, 188-197) against an eschatological pilgrimage background for Paul's call to preach to the Gentiles do not apply here. Since Donaldson deals quite effectively with other theories of the origin of Paul's convictions concerning the Gentiles, I will not deal with them here.

<sup>128</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 18; also Byrne, *Romans*, 40. D. B. Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith*: (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991), 233, follows Dunn in this regard: "faith's obedience is the appropriate response of Israel, the covenant partner, to the election, grace, and mercy of God", or, in other words, "'the obedience of faith,' then, is another way of saying 'covenantal nomism.'" (233n2) Although Garlington amasses a great deal of evidence from Jewish literature to interpret the phrase "the obedience of faith" in this manner, he fails to show why the obedience of the nations ought to be interpreted in *Israel's* covenantal context, particularly when he acknowledges the influence upon Paul in Rom 1:5 of Psa 2:8 and other traditions within Israel's cultural narrative such as Gen 49:10 and Amos 9:11-12 (236-237).

<sup>129</sup> Only in the MT. The LXX, of course, has προσδοκία instead of ὑπακοή.

heir will be a “leader and commander of the peoples” (Isa 55:4). In Psalm 18:43-44, God made David the head of nations; and made people David had not known serve him, and as soon as these nations heard of him, they obeyed him. Paul quotes Psalm 18:49 in Romans 15:9: “I will confess you among the nations and sing praise to your name.” David confesses God among the nations precisely because it is by the power of God that he was able to subdue the nations (Psa 18:47-48; see 47:3; 144:2). The obedience of the nations to David and his heirs signifies the triumph and vindication of Israel over against the nations.<sup>130</sup> The Davidic heir will execute vengeance upon the nations which do not obey him (εἰσακούω, Mic 5:15). In Romans 15:12, Paul quotes Isaiah 11:10 LXX: “the root of Jesse will come; and the one who rises to rule the Gentiles, in him the Gentiles will put their hope” (ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἔθνῶν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν). The Gentiles are clearly portrayed in a submissive role toward Israel’s Davidic Messiah even if he is a source of hope for them. Thus the fact that the Davidic Messiah has been enthroned in power and now commands the obedience of the nations is the basis of Paul’s call to preach to the Gentiles.

In Romans 1:5, Paul claims authority over the Roman Gentile believers by stating his call as an apostle for the preaching the good news of his enthronement to the Gentiles who are to respond appropriately with loyal obedience. Paul appears to have interpreted his apostolic call in terms of a collage of texts from Isaiah 49:1-6; 52:7-11; and 61:1-6. Although the noun is not found in the LXX, the verb ἀποστέλλω occurs quite frequently. Moses is sent by God to Pharaoh to obtain the release of the Hebrew slaves (Exod 3:10, 13-15; 7:16). The title apostle basically refers to a messenger or delegate sent on behalf of someone else, particularly the bearer of a royal message (see 1 Sam 19:11-20; 2 Sam 5:11; 10:2; etc.). More significantly, in Isaiah 61:1-2 the Lord sends (ἀποστέλλω) a messenger to bring good news (εὐαγγελίζω) to the poor. In Isaiah 52:7 and 60:6, this good news concerns the salvation which the Lord is working on behalf of his people (see Rom 1:16). In the NT, the title of apostle acquires the more specific sense of one who had seen and been commissioned personally by the risen Christ to bear the εὐαγγέλιον (1 Cor 9:1; 15:3-8).<sup>131</sup> Dunn is certainly correct when

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<sup>130</sup> One should also consider here *Pss. Sol.* 17:29-30, 34 and the homage of the nations to the Son of Man figure in Dan 7:14 and *1 En.* 46:5; 48:4-5; 52:4; 62:3, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 9.

he argues that εὐαγγέλιον “was derived from the earliest recollection of Jesus’ own ministry in which the verb form was already firmly established in direct dependence on Isaiah 61:1-2 (Matt 11:5 = Luke 7:22; Acts 10:36). Its prominence in the second half of Isaiah (40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1) was certainly influential in Jewish thinking in the period leading up to Jesus (*Pss. Sol.* 11.1; 1QH 18.14; 11QMelch 18).”<sup>132</sup> At the same time, it should be recognized that εὐαγγέλιον also referred to the good news of the proclamation of a new Roman emperor, as the inscription from Priene attests.<sup>133</sup> The gospel of God’s Son therefore represents a challenge to the pretensions of the Roman emperor. Horsley points out that “Paul explicitly articulated the anti-imperial political implications of Christ’s heavenly enthronement as the true Lord or ‘emperor’ of the world” in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 and Philippians 3:20.<sup>134</sup> These anti-imperial implications are present in Romans 1:1-17 as well, as Wright’s article ably discusses.<sup>135</sup> It is likely, then, that Paul saw himself as a royal emissary sent to the Gentiles to bear the subversive good news that the Messianic Son had been enthroned and that they were to submit to his authority through the obedience of faith (Rom 1:3-5).<sup>136</sup>

But there is nothing in this self-conception as apostle to the Gentiles which necessitates a radical transformation of the role Torah plays within Paul’s symbolic universe such as appears in the letter to the Romans (esp. chapters 7-8; see below). On the basis of this call, Paul could have preached a gospel to the Gentiles which included submission to the Jewish Torah including circumcision. *Contra* Krister Stendahl, a mere call to preach to Gentiles was not in itself the primary factor in transforming Paul’s understanding of Torah.<sup>137</sup> Given that he had been a committed Pharisee zealous for the Torah and Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries (Gal 1:13-14), it is

<sup>132</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 10.

<sup>133</sup> W. Dittenberger, ed., *Orientalis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1903-5), vol. 2, no. 458, lines 30-52, cited by N. T. Wright, “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire”, 165.

<sup>134</sup> R. A. Horsley, “Rhetoric and Empire--and 1 Corinthians,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, (ed. R. Horsley, Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 92.

<sup>135</sup> Wright, “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire.”

<sup>136</sup> Scott, *Adoption*, 227, sees in *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* a reference to the Damascus Road christophany.

<sup>137</sup> Krister Stendahl, “Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West” in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 84, says that it was Paul’s “grappling with the question about the place of the Gentiles in the Church and in the plan of God and with the problem of Jews/Gentiles or Jewish Christians/Gentile Christians, which had driven him to that interpretation of the Law which was to become his in a unique way.”

unlikely that he would have relaxed the demands of Torah for Gentiles simply for social convenience, that is, to make it easier for Gentiles to convert.<sup>138</sup> On the contrary, Paul's perception of a conflict between Christ and Torah prior to his call is more likely the source of Paul's radical transformation of his Pharisaic symbolic universe.<sup>139</sup>

Although the call is not the precipitating cause of this transformation, it nevertheless has an important role to play. For without that call, it is unlikely that Paul would have drawn the implications for Jews and Gentiles out of his christological transformation of Torah. In Romans 1:1-7 Paul has woven together three versions of Israel's cultural destiny concerning her vindication over the nations: the restoration and redemption of Israel described in Isaiah, the exaltation of the righteous martyrs as angels in the heavenly realm as described in apocalyptic literature, and the theme of Davidic messianism and the obeisance of the nations. But at the moment of Israel's greatest triumph, the exaltation of her Messiah to a position of unparalleled authority over the nations and over the cosmos, Paul subversively includes the Gentiles within the special relationship with God that had previously belonged only to Israel. First, he describes them as "summoned by Jesus Christ" (κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1:6). This recalls the statement by the Lord to Israel in Deutero-Isaiah: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (43:1; see 42:6; 45:3; 54:6; 1QM 3:2; 4:10-11; CD 4:3-4) In other words, the Lord summoned Israel by name in order to identify her as his own people. The calling of the Lord marked out Israel from all other nations as His holy nation and treasured possession (Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6; 14:2). But now Paul includes Gentiles within Israel's holy calling. In other words, Paul is engaged in redrawing the cultic boundaries that had formerly defined the people of Israel.<sup>140</sup>

Paul describes these Roman Gentiles as κλητοὶ ἅγιοι. Holiness is preeminently a cultic term which marks out the boundary between that which is set apart for God, and that which is merely for common or profane use. The call of Israel to be holy, or set apart for God from the nations around her was an essential aspect of Jewish

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<sup>138</sup> *Contra* Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 34.

<sup>139</sup> *Contra* Dunn, "'A Light to the Gentiles': The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul", 255, 263.

<sup>140</sup> So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 45.

cultural identity, and she was to be marked out by certain cultic and moral practices (Exod 19:5-6; 22:31; Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:22-26; 21:6; Num 15:40). Trito-Isaiah, speaking about the nation which has returned from exile, says: “the holy people (λαὸν ἅγιον), redeemed by the Lord, you shall be called” (κληθήσῃ, Isa 62:12 LXX). But now, because the Son has been enthroned in the heaven, the Gentiles have been consecrated and included among those whom God has called as his holy people. Finally, Paul speaks of the Romans as those “beloved of God” (ἀγαπητοὶ θεοῦ), which is used to describe the special love that God had for Israel in choosing her for Himself: “Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen” (Isa 44:2; see Psa 60:5, 108:6). The inclusion of Gentiles within Israel constitutes a major redefinition of her cultural destiny and therefore has a profound effect upon the role Torah plays within her cultural narrative. Israel had always defined herself through the Torah as God’s holy people over against the idolatrous and lawless nations; now the Gentiles were entering into Israel as fellow participants in the promises made to her. Thus Donaldson rightly argues that Paul conceives of the Gentiles as proselytes to a reconfigured Israel.<sup>141</sup> But *contra* Donaldson, this redefinition of Israel’s boundaries and identity is not the *basis* of the transformation of Paul’s symbolic universe, but a *consequence* of a prior transformation of Torah in his symbolic universe at his conversion.

## 1.8 The Gospel of the Exalted Son and the Eschatological Righteousness of God

The gospel that Paul preaches to Jew and Gentile alike is “the power of God for salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and then to the Gentile, for in it the righteousness of God is being revealed” (Rom 1:16-17). In these two verses there is a complex of mutually defining terms (δύναμις, σωτηρία, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), which occur together not only here, but in the Exodus account, Psalms and Isaiah. The earliest reference to God’s righteousness is Miriam’s Song in Exodus 15, which forms part of the larger narrative of God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery at the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Here, speaking for Israel collectively she proclaims that God is her

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<sup>141</sup> Donaldson, *PG*, 172 and *passim*.

helper and defender and that he has become her salvation (σωτηρία). In the previous chapter, Moses had said to the people at the shore of the Red Sea: “Be brave, stand and see the salvation of God which he accomplishes for you today” (14:13). In addition, in 15:13, Miriam proclaims: “By your righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) you led the people whom you redeemed, having comforted them by your might (ἰσχύς = δύναμις), to your holy abode.” The Exodus is the defining event of Israel’s story, the event in her cultural narrative in which she is constituted a people by a divine act of salvation/deliverance. The event also functions as a paradigm for later acts of God in delivering his people from their oppressors. Therefore, when concepts of salvation, divine righteousness, and divine power appear together in Paul in a statement of the main theme of his letter, it is likely that a reader versed in the LXX would recall from the Exodus account the mighty acts of God in saving the people and leading them to the promised land by his righteousness.

In the Psalms the Exodus becomes the paradigm for God’s dealings with his people generally. Just as Miriam sang “By your righteousness you led the people whom you redeemed” (ὠδήγησας τῇ δικαιοσύνη σου τὸν λαόν σου, Exod 15:13), so now the psalmist prays: “Lead me, O Lord in your righteousness on account of my enemies (κύριε ὠδήγησόν με ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνη σου, Psa 5:9 LXX). On the one hand, God’s righteousness in the Psalms, as in Exodus, is closely associated with the deliverance and salvation of his people: the psalmist essentially prays for God to reveal himself again in righteousness to save them from their enemies as he did at the time of their original deliverance from Egypt (Psa 21:32; 30:2; 34:24, 28; 35:11; 39:10-11; 50:16; 70:2, 15, 16, 18, 24; 118:123; 142:1, 11; 144:7 LXX). God’s righteousness and salvation are thus a display of divine power: “Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate (κρίνω) me by your power” (Psa 53:3; see 19:7; 21:1; 70:16, 18; 105:8; 117:15; 139:8). On the other hand, God’s righteousness is intimately connected with divine judgment: “The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge” (49:6; see 9:9; 88:15; 95:13; 97:9; 118:75). These are not contradictory emphases, for it is precisely in judging the enemies of Israel that God saves and delivers his people. In addition, God’s righteousness and salvation are closely connected with his faithfulness or truth: “I have not hidden your righteousness (δικαιοσύνη); I have spoken of your

faithfulness (ἀλήθεια) and your salvation (σωτηρία); I have not hidden your mercy (ἔλεος) and your faithfulness (ἀλήθεια) from the great congregation” (Psa 39:11, see 44:5; 84:11-12, 15; 88:15; 95:13; 118:75, 138; 142:1). And when God does act mightily on his people’s behalf, they proclaim the good news (εὐαγγελίζομαι) of his mighty deeds on their behalf (Psa 39:10; 67:12) and proclaim (ἀναγγέλλω) it to the great congregation (Psa 9:12; 21:31-32; 43:2; 64:9; 92:2; 96:3). Thus God’s righteousness in the Psalms is God acting in judgment to save his people from their enemies in faithfulness to his covenantal promises often despite Israel’s own faithlessness.<sup>142</sup>

This same complex of ideas is found in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, which view Israel’s return from the exile as a new exodus. This new exodus will be accomplished by the Lord’s mighty arm (Isa 40:10; 44:12; 48:14; 50:2; 51:5, 9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:1, 16; 62:8; 63:5; 63:12), just as the first exodus was accomplished “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (Exod 6:6; 15:16; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8). Here it is the prophet who proclaims the good news of Israel’s coming redemption from the power of her enemies: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’ (Isa 52:7, see 40:9; 60:6; 61:1). As in the Psalms, God’s righteousness is closely connected to the salvation he is working on behalf of his people, to deliver them from exile among the nations: “I will bring near my righteousness and my salvation I will not delay; I will give salvation in Zion for glorification” (Isa 46:13; see 51:5-6, 8; 56:1; 63:7). This righteousness is also associated with his justice: “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head, and put on garments of vengeance as a cloak” (59:17; see 41:1; 42:1-4; 43:26; 49:4; 50:8; 51:22; 59:11; 63:1). As in the Psalms, God’s righteousness, power, and salvation are fundamental concepts in Israel’s cultural narrative. When these terms occur together as a complex of ideas in the same context, they recall the mighty acts of judgment which God has wrought on Israel’s behalf to deliver her from her oppressors. Thus God’s righteousness is his judgment in favor of his people as displayed in his action to save them from their plight in faithfulness to the covenantal

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<sup>142</sup> See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 342.

promises which He has made to them. In Romans 3:20, Paul has just alluded to Psalm 143:2 in which the psalmist asks the Lord not to enter into judgment with his servant since no one living will be justified before him. Despairing of his own righteousness before God, the psalmist appeals to God's righteousness to deliver him from his enemies (143:11). Israel and the nations are enmired in the same plight under sin and now "God's saving righteousness for which the psalmist had hoped . . . has at last appeared!"<sup>143</sup>

But the righteousness of God refers not only to his righteous deliverance of Israel, but also to God's restoration of his just rule over creation. Righteousness should not be "understood narrowly as a legal matter, but as universal world-order, as comprehensive salvation."<sup>144</sup> In Isaiah 42:5-6, God, identifying himself as the Creator of heaven and earth, now calls his servant in righteousness and makes him to be a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, the means by which God's salvation will reach to the ends of the earth (49:6). Thus the power by which God redeems Israel and brings righteousness to the nations is the power he exercised in creating the cosmos (42:1, 3-5). God's righteousness involves nothing less than a new creation of the heavens and the earth, a total restoration of the cosmic order. (65:17).<sup>145</sup> Thus the

<sup>143</sup> Richard B. Hays, "Psalm 143 and the Logic of Romans 3", *JBL* 99 (1980): 114.

<sup>144</sup> H. H. Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness and Salvation", in *Creation in the Old Testament*, (ed. B.W. Anderson, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 107.

<sup>145</sup> Based upon the background of this phrase in the Septuagint, God's righteousness is not merely imputed to humanity. Luther's conception of the righteousness that is valid before God, that is, the righteousness that God imputes to humanity as a gift on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, can no longer be sustained. Williams, "Righteousness of God in Romans", *JBL*, 258-259, summarizes the main arguments against understanding δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in this manner. First of all, Paul creates a "deliberate parallelism" between δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in 1:17 and ὀργή θεοῦ in 1:18, so that both are subjective genitives of quality. Secondly, Williams rightly asks whether one can submit to a gift when Paul speaks of Israel failing to submit to God's righteousness in 10:3. One more naturally submits to a power, to an authority, or to the judgment of one in authority. Thirdly nowhere does Paul speak of receiving or giving the righteousness of God to people in Romans. Finally, in order to interpret righteousness as a gift from God, one must make no "fundamental distinction between *dikaiosyne theou* and *dikaiosyne* in Romans."

H. Cremer, as early as 1900 in his *Die Paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhang ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen*, interpreted δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a subjective genitive on the basis of the OT conception of righteousness as covenant-faithfulness. In 1961, Käsemann also challenged the traditional interpretation of this phrase and argued that God's righteousness instead referred to God's saving power and activity: "δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is for Paul God's sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus." But the righteousness of God is not identified with the saving power of the gospel in Rom 1:16-17, rather the gospel is the saving power of God precisely because the righteousness of God is revealed in it, as Williams aptly points out. For a discussion of God's righteousness since Käsemann, see Manfred T. Brauch's "Perspectives on "God's Righteousness in recent German discussion" in E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1978, 523-542.

righteousness of God is the manifestation of his creative power to restore the cosmic order disrupted by human sin. It is nothing less than the restoration of God's righteous rule over the cosmos and the enthronement of the risen Jesus as the exalted Son of God in power is the means by which God re-extends that rule.

This righteousness is an eschatological apocalypse of divine power. It is no mistake that in Romans 1:17 Paul refers to the *apocalypsis* of God's righteousness; in Romans 1:3-4 he refers to the exaltation of the Son of God in power, and elsewhere he refers to his initial vision as an apocalypse of the Son of God (Gal 1:12, 16). There is a deep interconnection between the revelation of the exalted Son to Paul and the revelation of God's righteousness in his gospel. This interconnection suggests that Paul's initial understanding of the gospel he was to preach to the Gentiles involved the preaching of the Son as the new Lord of the cosmos, the restoration of God's righteous rule, and the call for Gentiles to submit to that rule in loyal obedience through belief in the message of Paul, the divinely appointed herald of God's righteous rule.

### **1.9 The Sociological Meaning of Paul's Apocalyptic Vision of the Exalted Son**

It is necessary to understand how his initial apocalypse of the exalted Son of God would have functioned sociologically. How and why did this vision affect his symbolic world, bolstering it in certain respects and transforming it in others? In other words sociologically what did Paul gain by this apocalyptic experience which Torah could not afford him? I have suggested that Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe was threatened sociologically in three primary ways: first of all by the Gentiles which oppressed Israel politically, and secondly, by Gentile cultural domination. Torah distinguished Jew from Gentile, thereby creating and maintaining a fundamental threat to the stability and plausibility of Paul's symbolic universe. Torah could not eliminate these threats because by its very creation of a distinction it maintained these threats. Thirdly, Paul's perception of Israel's disobedience and faithlessness to Torah threatened Paul's pre-conversion symbolic world sociologically. Thus, at another level, Torah did not distinguish Jew from Gentile, at least as far as sin was concerned. The revelation of the Son of God enthroned in power answered both these sociological

plights. The call to preach to the Gentiles meant that they would be included within the people of God if they submitted to Israel's Messiah in loyal obedience, thereby eliminating the distinction that maintained the Gentiles as a threat. As king, the risen Jesus not only vindicated Israel over her enemies, but re-established the cosmic order under his autocratic rule. As Blumenfeld remarks, "Submission to perfect autocracy appears to be the best insurance against anarchy."<sup>146</sup> An autocratic king is the symbol of a completely unified social order in which all opposition has been suppressed or annihilated. Society and the cosmos are united in this one autocratic lord who by his very exaltation eliminates all threats and resolves all problems of theodicy. Paul's thought is undergirded by the ancient notion of divine kingship, but without the threat of the death of the monarch,<sup>147</sup> since Jesus has already overcome death through his resurrection. Moreover, by demanding submission of the Gentiles to Jesus as Lord, Paul was attempting to legitimate the symbolic universe of Judaism through absorbing the Gentile believers into the people of God, thereby eliminating them as a threat. And because Jesus was exalted as heavenly lord of the cosmos, his kingship was established beyond all earthly threat or competition.

Second, as the decisive eschatological manifestation of God's righteous rule, Jesus as exalted king became the source of righteousness for Israel which Torah apparently had not been able to provide. Thus far from undermining Judaism, Paul perceived that the exalted risen Christ was the only way to establish the symbolic universe of Judaism beyond all possible threat due to Israel's disobedience to Torah. The risen Christ became for Paul the ultimate and unassailable legitimation of his symbolic world because the risen Christ had become life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:17) and would now dwell in his people to cause them to fulfill God's law (Rom 8:2, Gal 2:20). How Paul perceived the exalted Son as accomplishing this second goal is the subject of Romans 7-8 and will be the focus of this dissertation.

In summary, the transformation of Paul's symbolic universe is the result of a complex of factors: (a) the fragility or precariousness of his pre-conversion symbolic universe, threatened as it was by the early Christian preaching; (b) his contact with the Christian tradition of proclamation as represented by the confession in Romans 1:3-4;

<sup>146</sup> Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework*, JSNTSup 210, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 218.

<sup>147</sup> Berger and Luckmann, 103.

(c) his prior convictions as a Pharisaic Jew and adherent of Ιουδαϊσμός; (d) his zeal to preserve the purity of Israel's worship in his persecution of the early community for their devotion to the exalted Messiah; (e) his vision of Jesus as the exalted Son and consequent reflection upon that vision in terms of the tradition and Jewish apocalyptic categories; (f) and his commission to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles to this exalted Messiah. All of these combined to transform his understanding of Torah. Although Paul does not yet mention the law in 1:1-7, this passage provides the christological basis for his transformation of the role of Torah and introduces several contrasts, cosmological, cultic, and cultural, which are crucial to understanding the nature of this transformation. The heavenly exaltation of Christ as heavenly king and Son of God in power and his transformation from flesh to Spirit all form the basis of the transformation of Torah from letter to Spirit which appears in Romans 7-8.

## Chapter 2

### From Letter to Spirit: Dying to Torah and Rising with Christ

In the previous chapter it was asserted that the exaltation and transformation of Christ in his resurrection constituted the christological basis of Paul's transformation of Torah. In this chapter, the emphasis will shift to the Torah, and to the consequences that Paul's revelation of Christ had for his view of Torah, specifically as reflected in the idea of being put to death to the Torah through the body of Christ and the letter/spirit contrast in Romans 7:1-6.

#### 2.1 The Law, Sin, and Death in Romans 2-6

From the second chapter through the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul has hinted at a fundamental problem with the Torah, a problem which is not fully addressed until Romans 7. In 2:17-29, he discusses Israel's failure to keep the Torah, which has caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God because of it (2:17-24) and also why circumcision of the flesh and mere possession of the Torah in written form will not suffice to shield Israel at final judgment (2:25-29). Nevertheless, Israel's faithlessness will not nullify the faithfulness of God (3:3), even if that faithfulness (the righteousness of God) must now take a form apart from the Torah (3:21). This very fact, however, indicates that something is seriously wrong with Torah in Paul's view. In 3:20 Paul asserted that by the works of the Law, all flesh will not be justified before God, so that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles with regard to sin (3:23). All are under sin's power, and far from being able to provide eschatological justification at final judgment, the law is only able to produce the knowledge of sin (3:20), a concept that Paul does not explore until Romans 7.

Further indication that all is not well with the Torah is found in 4:15, where Paul states without explanation that the law works wrath. Torah does not bring about positive consequences for the people of God, and it is to be assumed that this is so because of the law's implied connection with sin in 3:20. In 5:20, Paul says that the law entered in,

with the result that the trespass multiplied, but again Paul does not explain himself, only suggesting a connection. And in 6:14-15 Paul states to the Romans that they shall not sin since they are not under law but under grace, which implies that existence under the law results in inevitable sinning, whereas existence under the grace to be found in Christ means release from such sinning to serve a new master. Thus up until Romans 7 Paul has hinted at a connection between law, sin and death (or wrath) which he has not yet explained. Because he asserts that the righteousness of God is to be manifested apart from Torah, Paul must explain why Torah failed.

## 2.2 Dying to the Torah

If in Romans 3:21 Paul asserted that the righteousness of God was being revealed apart from the Torah, in Romans 7:4 Paul makes the even more radical claim that his readers have actually died to the law through the body of Christ. It is one thing to claim that Torah is ineffective or insufficient for the task of revealing God's righteousness, but it is quite another to assert that one must be put to death with respect to the law. Paul's language of dying to the law marks a fundamental discontinuity with God's prior dealings with Israel through the Torah. More specifically, through the marriage analogy, or perhaps allegory, in Romans 7:1-4 Paul wishes to demonstrate to his readers that the death of Christ has ended their participation in the Sinai covenant and in the community defined by it so that they are freed to be devoted to Christ as their new husband in the community of the new creation.

The very idea of being put to death to Torah would have sounded blasphemous to the Jew. Torah was perceived to be divine in origin (Wis 18:9; Sir 33:3; 2 Macc 6:23; 4 Macc. 5:16), and therefore eternal (Bar 4:1; Wis 18:4; 4 Ez. 9:37; 2 Bar. 77:15; Philo, *Mos.* 2:3) and inherently life-giving (Sir 17:11-12; 45:5; 2 Bar. 38:2; 46:3). Providing imperishable light, it was identified with wisdom (Wis 18:4; Sir 21:11; 45:17; 38:2). Torah was the supreme manifestation of God's grace to Israel, that she and she alone was chosen out of all the nations (2 Bar. 48:22-24; 77:3). Torah sanctified Israel as God's holy people, and functioned to set her apart and to preserve her cultic and moral purity from the pollution of the nations. Why would one die to a covenant that

was conceived to be the perfect revelation of God that produced spiritual life for those who were within its bounds? According to *4 Ezra*, the law was given that the people might bear fruit to God (*4 Ez.* 3:19),<sup>1</sup> but Paul argues that it is only by dying to the law that believers bear fruit to God (7:4) since Torah produces the occasion for sinful passions to bear fruit for death, not for God (7:5).

### 2.2.1 The meaning of νόμος in Romans 7:1-6

Of course it must be asked whether Paul is referring to the Jewish Torah in Romans 7,<sup>2</sup> rather than to Roman law<sup>3</sup> or to a concept of law generally.<sup>4</sup> Several contextual clues make it likely that Paul is referring to the Jewish Torah in Romans 7:1-6. In Romans 5-8, Paul writes of the fact that sin was in the world before (the introduction of) the law (5:13); he clarifies and supports this statement with the idea that death reigned from Adam until Moses (5:14). The law, therefore, in 5:13 is the Jewish Torah, Mosaic covenant with its stipulations and sanctions. In 5:20 as well, Paul speaks of a time when the law “slipped in” (παρέρχομαι). The entrance of the Torah into the world of human history at Sinai, Paul claims, resulted in the multiplication of human transgressions. In 6:14, Paul asserts that sin shall no longer have authority over the Romans, since they are no longer under the law’s authority, but under the authority of grace. The law’s authority began at Sinai and ended with the death and resurrection of Christ. There is no indication contextually that Paul has shifted to refer to some other law than the Jewish Torah or to law generically. Moreover, as Dunn points out, the illustration from the law of the husband makes sense in a Jewish context rather than in a Roman or generic context, since only the man possessed the right to divorce (Deut

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<sup>1</sup> Although in that context Israel has failed to bear fruit for God.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Barrett, *Romans*, 135; Byrne, *Romans*, 213; Cranfield, 333; Dunn, *Romans*, 359; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 456; Leenhardt, *Romans*, 177; Moo, *Romans*, 412; Schreiner, *Romans*, 346; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 103; Ziesler, *Romans*, 173.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of Paul*, (London: MacMacmillan, 1895), 300.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Käsemann, *Romans*, 187; Sanday and Headlam, 172; Morris, *Romans*, 270; F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, 145.

24:1).<sup>5</sup> But in Roman law, “marriage could be brought to an end by the free will of either partner; and indeed by the time of the later republic divorce by common consent or at the wish of one had become common.”<sup>6</sup> In addition, a Roman wife was not freed from her marriage by the death of her husband, being obligated to mourn and remain unmarried for twelve months, or else she would forfeit her inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the word *μοιχαλῖς*, adulteress, is not found in non-Jewish Greek, but only in the NT, LXX and the Greek *Testament of Levi* 14:6,<sup>8</sup> clearly reflecting a Jewish context and understanding of marriage.<sup>9</sup> The very reference to *γράφμα* in verse six clearly indicates that Paul is discussing the Mosaic Torah, since in the two other contexts in which the term *γράφμα* is used the reference is almost certainly the Torah (Rom 2:28-29; 2 Cor 3:6-7). On the other hand, the fact that Paul is generally referring to the Mosaic covenant in Romans 7-8 does not mean that every occurrence of *νόμος* refers to the Torah. The law of the husband (7:2), for example is not specifically a reference to the Torah, although it plays a role analogous to the Torah (compare 7:2c and 7:6a). Generally, however, Paul is referring to the Jewish Torah in Romans 7, and thus his reference to being put to death to the law does not imply the ending of the authority of all law(s), but to the cessation of the authority of the Mosaic covenant over those in Israel who believe in Christ.<sup>10</sup> This identification of *νόμος* as the Mosaic covenant is quite significant for my understanding of the marriage analogy in 7:2-4. After all, this covenant between Israel and Yahweh was often conceived as a marriage covenant by the OT prophets (cf. discussion below in 2.2.3.2).

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<sup>5</sup> Josephus observes that “It is only the man who is permitted by us [to initiate a divorce], and even a divorced woman may not marry again on her own initiative unless her former husband consents” (*AJ* 15.259), as quoted in Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 143. The rabbis too, held to this principle (*mYeb.* 14:1, cf. *tKet.* 12:3).

<sup>6</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 360, referring to N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 650, and J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 95-96.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Dunn here refers to P. E. Corbett, *The Roman Law of Marriage*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1930, repr. 1969), 249.

<sup>8</sup> *T. Levi* 14:6 is not in a section marked by Christian interpolation and would appear to represent Jewish custom.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 458.

<sup>10</sup> Moo, 414; Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 295n11.

### 2.2.2 The rhetorical context of Romans 7:1-6: “those who know the law”

But before the marriage analogy itself is analyzed, it is important to grasp the rhetorical context of the chapter. Paul specifically addresses “those who know the law,” a phrase which does not refer to a mere passing acquaintance with the law, but to those who are loyal to and observe the Torah. In Job 34:27, the wicked have turned aside from the law of God and “have not known his ordinances” (δικαιώματα δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν, 34:27 LXX; see *Sib. Or.* 3:686). Not “knowing” God’s law thus amounts to a deliberate turning away from and refusal to acknowledge that law. In Baruch 4:13, the Israelites did not know his ordinances nor walked in the ways of God’s commandments (δικαιώματα δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οὐδὲ ἐπορεύθησαν ὁδοῖς ἐντολῶν θεοῦ). The author is not claiming that Israel was ignorant of God’s ordinances, but that it failed to acknowledge God’s law, i.e. to live by and keep those ordinances. In the Gospel of John, when a crowd of people believes in Jesus, the Pharisees respond: Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law (ὁ ὄχλος οὗτος ὁ μὴ γινώσκων τὸν νόμον)—they are accursed” (7:48-49). The crowd is accursed not simply for lack of acquaintance with the law, but for their failure to keep it. Thus when Paul speaks to those who know the law (Rom 7:1), he is addressing those who follow and practice the Jewish Torah, whether they are born Jewish or are Gentile proselytes. Those “who know the law” perhaps are to be identified with those of the weak in Romans 14 who observe the Jewish food laws. According to Mark Reasoner, in ancient Rome, “strong” and “weak” are primarily indicators of social status, power and influence.<sup>11</sup> The “strong” are “Roman citizens or foreign-born residents who display a proclivity toward things Roman,”<sup>12</sup> whereas the weak “sympathize with foreign religions and cultures.”<sup>13</sup> Weakness is “a quality that can be associated with the

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1-15.13 in Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45-47.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

practice of a foreign religion.”<sup>14</sup> Since this might be any foreign religion, the weak cannot be limited to Jews, as Reasoner notes (p. 63).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, Paul’s use of *κοινός* in reference to foods in Romans 14:14 indicates that a primarily Jewish context is in mind.<sup>16</sup> Those who “know the law” would also include Torah observant Gentiles who have been circumcised.

### 2.2.3 The marriage analogy

#### 2.2.3.1 Is the analogy a hopeless morass of self-contradiction?

In verse 1, Paul states a general principle that the law is binding over a person only as long as one lives. He then illustrates this principle with an analogy, which, as Westerholm notes, is not the most perspicuous. Dodd, however, probably goes too far when he claims that Paul “lacks the gift for sustained illustration of ideas through concrete images (though he is capable of a brief, illuminating metaphor). It is probably a defect of imagination.”<sup>17</sup> Räisänen describes the analogy as a “tortured allegory, the application of which is lost in internal contradictions.”<sup>18</sup> When one presses the analogy and attempts to identify the characters, it appears to break down. On one side of the analogy, it is the husband who dies, whereas on the other side of the analogy it appears to be the wife, i.e. believers, who die to the law (7:4a),<sup>19</sup> a “seemingly irreconcilable shift in the subject who is freed.”<sup>20</sup> Many, despairing of any solution, have claimed that the analogy has a single point: to illustrate the principle announced in verse 1, that a death

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<sup>14</sup> Reasoner, 54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 818 states that the use of *κοινός* “is almost indisputable proof that the discussion moves within the context of distinctively Jewish concerns and sensitivities.” This use of *κοινός* is unparalleled in non-Jewish Greek literature, though it is found in the LXX (Lev 10:10; 11:4-8; Deut 14:7-10; Judg 13:4; Hos 9:3; Ezek 22:26; 44:23, see also 1 Macc 1:47, 62).

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 103.

<sup>18</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> A position held by Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 455; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 196; Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 197.

<sup>20</sup> Joyce Little, “Paul’s Use of Analogy: A Structural Analysis of Romans 7:1-6, *CBQ*, 46 (1984): 84.

is necessary to end one's obligation to the law.<sup>21</sup> But if this is so, one wonders why Paul bothered to include the analogy at all. It adds nothing to the principle stated in verse 1 and verse 4 follows quite nicely after verse 1: the believer's participation in the death of Christ ends his or her obligation to the Mosaic Torah. Far from adding anything significant, it appears to detract from the principle stated in verse 1. The discussion of marriages and second marriages and adultery seems unnecessarily complicated. Why then did Paul include this analogy, unless a specific point beyond the general principle in verse one was to be made? Moreover, Paul states that believers died to the law through the body of Christ in order that they may be married to another (7:4). The phrase "εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμῶς ἑτέρω" implies that believers were married to a first husband and that Paul meant for there to be a one-to-one correspondence in the analogy. It is clear, then, that at least Paul thought the analogy made sense at a deeper level than the mere principle that a death is required to end one's obligation to the law.

### 2.2.3.2 The identity of the persons in the analogy

It is fairly clear that the law of the husband and the Torah play analogous roles. The law of the husband is what binds or obligates the wife to her husband, an obligation that ends only with the death of one of the partners. At the point the wife is discharged from the law of the husband (κατήργηται ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός).<sup>22</sup> In the same way, believers are discharged from the law (κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου) through the death of Christ (7:4a, 6a). So the first husband is certainly not the Torah itself,<sup>23</sup> for Torah does not die. Instead Torah is analogous to the law of the husband from which the wife must be released if she is to marry another. On the other hand, Wright and Thielman have argued that the first husband is Adam, the old humanity, or

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. Nygren, 270; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 455; Byrne, 210; Käsemann, *Romans*, 187; Schreiner, *Romans*, 348; Cranfield, 333; and Dunn, *Romans*, 361.

<sup>22</sup> The "law of the husband" should be understood as an objective genitive ("the law about the husband") and not as an exegetical genitive ("the law which is the husband"). See James H. Moulton and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of NT Greek*, Vol. III, *Syntax*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 212.

<sup>23</sup> *Contra* Cranfield, 334. D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, 166; Richard A. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery*, Leiden: Brill, 1971, 17; Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8*, (Louvain: Peeters Press; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1992), 20.

the flesh.<sup>24</sup> This is certainly an attractive hypothesis. After all, in Romans 5:12 and 19, Paul has argued that the many were made sinners and were subject to death by the disobedience of one man, and by the one man Jesus Christ, justification and life were bestowed upon many. Conceivably Paul could portray humanity as married to Adam, the old humanity, who was crucified in Christ (Rom 6:6). The wife, that is the rest of humanity, would then be free to be given in marriage to the risen Christ, the eschatological Adam. This interpretation would also make sense of the fruit-bearing analogy in 7:5-6, since Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:27).

There are, however, serious objections to this interpretation. In Paul's view, neither Adam nor all of humanity were under Torah's authority (5:13, 20). Even if some Gentiles had the work of the law written on their heart (2:14), they were not under the law and thus not covenantally obligated to God through the Torah. Nor did the Torah bind Israel to Adam, as Wright claims,<sup>25</sup> a notion unsupported elsewhere in Paul, the OT, or early Jewish literature. Nowhere is Adam presented as the husband of Israel, nor is Israel portrayed as having any covenantal obligation to Adam, the flesh, or to sin. On the contrary, Israel had a covenantal obligation *not* to sin or disobey God. Involvement with sin would instead be perceived as an adulterous violation of her covenant with Yahweh, and not as imposing obligations from which she needed to be released.

The second husband is clearly the risen Christ, to whom believers are now joined (7:4b). Implicitly, then, the readers are portrayed as the bride or wife of Christ. But the wife is not to be understood as the individual believer, but as encompassing the whole of the covenant people. Thus the wife ought to be identified as Israel, since it is precisely Israel who had been bound or obligated by the Torah. At the same time, it is clear that all believers (and only believers) are included in the second marriage, even if some who are now believers were never members of the Sinai covenant people (*i.e.* uncircumcised Gentile believers). The fact that there is only one wife in the analogy and not two wives

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<sup>24</sup> Wright, *Climax*, 196; Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 197; S. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995, repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 177.

<sup>25</sup> N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology, Vol. III, Romans*, (eds. David B. Hay and Elizabeth E. Johnson, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 49-50.

indicates that Paul did not regard the ἐκκλησία as a new people of God but as continuous with Israel, the people of the old covenant. Only now, however, the covenant people has been expanded to include Gentiles.

Once this identification of the wife with Israel/ἐκκλησία is made and that the law is the Sinai covenant, the tradition-historical background of the analogy in the marriage covenant of Israel with Yahweh becomes clear. If this understanding of the background is correct, then it naturally follows that the first husband is Yahweh. The OT prophets portray Israel as the bride of Yahweh on quite a number of occasions (Isa 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Jer 2:2; 31(38):34; 49:18; 61:10; 62:4-5; Hos 2:19-20). On the other hand, of course, Yahweh cannot die, as the first husband clearly does. But this is not an insuperable objection for, as will be argued below, Christ represents Yahweh in his death. Earnshaw has suggested that the first husband is the earthly Christ, on the basis of Romans 7:4, that believers have died to the law through the body of Christ.<sup>26</sup> It is true that the crucified body of Christ corresponds to the first husband's death, but an identification of the first husband with the earthly Christ does not stand. To whom were those under the law married before Jesus was born? Moreover, nowhere else is it suggested that Israel or believers were married to the earthly Christ, as Schreiner notes.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless the analogy between the first husband's death and the crucified body of Christ cannot be overlooked. But whereas both the first husband and the body of Christ undergo death, Yahweh himself as the living God cannot die but lives forever (see Jer 10:10; Dan 6:26; Tob 13:1). Perhaps 2 Corinthians 5:19 is relevant here: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ). In a peculiar sense, then, the death of the human Jesus Christ was the action of God, and not so much an action performed by Jesus to God, as for example in a propitiatory sacrifice in which the priest acts to appease a god who is the passive recipient of the sacrificial action. In this context of 2 Corinthians 5:19, it is God who is the initiator and actor in the death of Christ, just as in Romans 3:24, in which God sets forth Christ as ἱλαστήριον in his blood. Thus in some manner

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<sup>26</sup> John D. Earnshaw, "Reconsidering Paul's Marriage Analogy in Romans 7:1-4," *NTS* 40 (1994): 68-88.

<sup>27</sup> T. Schreiner, *Romans*, 348.

Yahweh is represented by the crucified body of Christ. At the same time, it must be admitted that this is not a very palatable idea. Even to suggest that Yahweh was associated in anyway with death or to suggest that Israel was released from its covenantal obligations in this way could undermine Paul's argument, and so for this reason Paul left unmentioned the identity of the first husband. But in doing so Paul created an ambiguity in his argument that has puzzled interpreters to this day.

Because of the verb θανατόω in 7:4, it is unclear which of the covenant partners actually dies in this verse, the husband or the wife or perhaps both? The fact that "we" are put to death to the law certainly makes it appear that it is the wife who dies and that there really is "an irreconcilable shift" in the one who dies.<sup>28</sup> Earnshaw suggests that believers do not actually die, it is Christ who undergoes the experience of death, and believers participate *in the effects of* Christ's death and resurrection (as in Romans 6:2-11).<sup>29</sup> In both cases it is the husband who dies, and as a result the wife is freed from obligation to the law which binds her to her husband. Only the body of Christ actually dies; but his death effects a separation of believers from the old marriage covenant with Yahweh, so that they "die" to the continuing authority of that covenant. To "die to" something does not necessarily require physical death; it simply implies that one has left the sphere in which its influence or authority was operative. Despite the appeal of this solution, one cannot escape the force of the verb θανατόω: it is, after all, believers who are put to death and participate in Christ's crucifixion. Thus, in a sense it is both Christ and those who believe who are put to death. It seems that Paul has gotten ahead of himself here and has not completed the analogy before drawing his conclusion from it. He should have stated first "in the same way, we are freed from the law through the death of Christ," and then, having finished the analogy, stated that believers were in fact put to death to the law through the body of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Little is correct after all, that "the defect Paul suffers from in the writing of the passage is, if anything, an excess

<sup>28</sup> Little, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Earnshaw, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Paul fails to complete analogies elsewhere, for example, in Romans 5:12-13, where he never completes the comparison "just as sin entered the world through one man, and death came through sin." Presumably he would have said: "So righteousness came into the world through one man, and life through righteousness." Thus Cranfield, 335 is correct that ὥστε in verse four implies a conclusion rather than a comparison, but wrong that Paul did not intend any comparison or analogy. Paul simply did not complete the comparison.

of imagination which propels him through the above-noted succession of ideas so rapidly that he has neither the time nor the opportunity to bring his images to completion.”<sup>31</sup> Paul wished to say more than his analogy was leading him to say, and the introduction of a new idea, that of being put to death through the body of Christ, had the effect of confusing the analogy.

### 2.3 Being put to death to the Torah

In using the verb θανατόω, Paul is not simply making the point about how dying from any cause effectually ends one’s commitments in life. This verb means “to be put to death,” clearly implying that the death of Christ constitutes a judgment for sin, for serious transgression of the covenant that demands the consequence of death. Murderers,<sup>32</sup> adulterers and those who commit various acts of sexual immorality,<sup>33</sup> those who profane the sabbath,<sup>34</sup> those who lead Israel astray to worship idols,<sup>35</sup> those who blaspheme God’s name<sup>36</sup> are all to be put to death (θανατόω). Being put to death then indicates that Christ’s death is a judgment for Israel’s rebellion, an application of the curse sanction of the covenant upon those who have flagrantly broken its stipulations: Paul has already charged Israel of causing God’s name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom 2:24). Israel as a whole has failed to do all the things written in the book of the law (Gal 3:10; Deut 27:26), and as a result has incurred wrath (see Romans 4:15), and therefore is worthy of the death prescribed in the Torah. So Christ is not put to death for his own sins, but for the sins of Israel. Paul uses the passive form of the verb θανατόω rather than ἀποθνήσκω to emphasize on the one hand, that Christ has absorbed the covenant judgment that should rightly fall upon those under the Torah, and on the other hand that it is God’s action<sup>37</sup> that decisively ends the obligation

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<sup>31</sup> Little, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Exod 21:12, 14; Lev 24:17, 21; Num 35:16-18, 21, 31. Those who strike their parents or curse them are also to be put to death (Exod 21:15; Lev 20:9).

<sup>33</sup> Lev 20:10-16.

<sup>34</sup> Exod 31:14-15.

<sup>35</sup> Deut 17:7; Mediums and wizards (Lev 20:27), as well as those who offer children to Molech (Lev 20:2) are also to be put to death.

<sup>36</sup> Lev 24:16.

<sup>37</sup> Cranfield, 336; Dunn, *Romans*, 361; Ziesler, *Romans*, 175; Schreiner, *Romans*, 350.

of those believers who are bound by the Sinai covenant.

But it is not enough to say that those under the Torah have died to the condemnation or curse of the law.<sup>38</sup> The point of the marriage analogy is that believers have died not only to the sanctions of the covenant, but also to the obligations which the covenant of marriage with Yahweh has imposed upon Israel, just as the woman was no longer required to be faithful to her husband (to observe “the law of the husband”) once her husband was dead. To escape the sanctions of the covenant, those under the yoke of the Torah must leave the sphere of its covenantal administration altogether.

#### **2.4 Put to death through the body of Christ**

Paul describes this dying to the Torah as taking place through the body of Christ. But how specifically is the crucified body of Christ the instrument through which one dies to the law? In a parallel construction in Galatians 2:19, Paul says “through the law I die to the law, that I might live to God.” Dying to the Torah, then, takes place both through the law and through the crucified body of Christ. In Galatians 3:13, Paul states that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” Since in Galatians 3:10, Paul has already quoted Deuteronomy 27:26, it is likely that this curse is nothing other than the curse sanction of the Sinai covenant (Deut 28:15-68). Paul supports this remark in Galatians 3:10 with a quotation from Deut 21:23: “for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” In this verse it is precisely the corpse or body (σῶμα) of the criminal which is under Torah’s curse and the verse was applied to crucifixion in the first century C.E. (see Philo *Spec.* 3.152; *Post.* 61; *Somn.* 2.213; 11Q<sup>T</sup><sup>a</sup> 64:6-13). Paul writes of dying to the Torah through the body of Christ because it is precisely Christ’s crucified body which absorbs the curse of the Torah. More specifically, the crucified body of Christ becomes the body of sin which is destroyed upon the cross when the old humanity is crucified with him (Rom 6:6). This body of sin is the social body of the world into which sin entered and

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<sup>38</sup> E.g. Cranfield, 335.

enslaved humanity through the transgression of Adam (5:12).<sup>39</sup> And the ἐκκλησία is one body in Christ in which the Spirit dwells (Rom 12:5, 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27). Through his identification with the body of sin, “he who knew no sin became sin for us” (1 Cor 5:21). That is, he became temporarily “alive to sin” on the cross (Rom 6:10).<sup>40</sup> In his death on the cross, he died to sin, leaving the sphere of the flesh in which sin holds humanity captive. In other words, Paul understands the curse of the law to refer to one specific curse of Deuteronomy 28: captivity to a foreign power (28:41). In this case that “foreign” power is sin, as Galatians 3:22-23 implies and which Paul further develops in Romans 7:14-25. According to McLean, the “curse which is associated with sin must not be psychologised or spiritualised by modern interpreters” since “transgressors truly incur a deadly curse and are subject to its power.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, “sin is an active, menacing, independent power which physically clings to the human flesh as a hostile power (Rom 7.17, 20) and enslaves people (Rom 5:12-14; 6.6-23; 7.14).”<sup>42</sup> Thus McLean concludes that the phrases “under a curse” in Galatians 3.10, “under sin” in Galatians 3.22, Romans 3.9 are synonymous.<sup>43</sup> In Romans 4:15, the law works wrath, and in wrath against humanity, God hands people over to their passions of impurity and a debased mind (1:24, 26, 28). The curse of the law, the wrath of God, manifests itself in captivity to sin. But Christ bore the curse of captivity of sin in his own body by being put to death and undergoing the wages of sin (Rom 6:23) for his people.

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Gundry limits the meaning of σῶμα to the physical body, and therefore understands the “body of sin” (Rom 6:6) as the sin-dominated physical body of the individual. The word certainly has a physical reference in 6:6 and 7:4, since it is the physical body of Christ which is crucified, but the crucified body of Christ also incorporates sinful humanity into itself, so the “body of sin” in 6:6 has a corporate reference as well, *Soma in Biblical Theology, with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 58.

<sup>40</sup> Being “alive” to sin does not simply mean that one is open to temptation by sin, but refers instead to domination by sin, just as being “dead” to sin does not simply mean freedom from temptation, but freedom from sin’s domination.

<sup>41</sup> B. Hudson McLean, *The Cursed Christ: Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

#### 2.4.1 The social and communal implications of being put to death to Torah

But in so doing, Paul also effectively ends the relationship of those who believe in him to the community gathered around the Torah. Thus being put to death to the Torah had social implications as well. When Jesus was crucified, it was a profound experience of shame, humiliation, social exclusion from the Torah community.<sup>44</sup> As Ralph Martin has noted, death by Roman crucifixion “meant that the victim was outside the pale of Israel, and that he was under a ban of excommunication from God’s covenant,”<sup>45</sup> especially if Jesus was considered to have been guilty of a serious violation of Torah meriting death.<sup>46</sup> And those who followed and believed in Jesus bore these implications as well. Thus when Paul says that he has died to the Torah and has been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:19-20), he is not making a merely theological statement that he is no longer under the authority of the Mosaic covenant. Torah was a covenant between Israel and Yahweh and to be put to death to it was not only to be freed from its obligations but to be cut off from the community defined from the Torah. It is likely that the “weak” in Rome “who knew the Torah” would have understood these social implications of Paul’s words. Being put to death to the Torah and being “crucified with Christ” meant taking on all the shame and humiliation and risk of social exclusion that following a crucified and cursed Messiah entailed.

Being put to death to the law is a participation in Christ’s death to the Torah and therefore a participation in his exclusion from the Sinai covenant community. Just as baptism functions as an exit ritual from a world dominated by sin and as an entrance ritual into the domain of the Spirit, so participation in the body of Christ functions as an exit ritual from the community defined by the Torah (for those who had been under Torah’s authority) and as an entrance ritual into the community of the new covenant (1 Cor 11:23-27). Implicitly, then, one cannot maintain one’s status within both communities. In Galatians 5:4, Paul describes those who desire to be justified by the law by being circumcised have been cut off (καταργέω) from Christ. Thus for Gentile

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<sup>44</sup> See Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the ancient world and the folly of the message of the cross*, (London: SCM Press, 1977).

<sup>45</sup> Ralph Martin, *Philippians*, 107.

<sup>46</sup> See below, section 2.5.2.

believers to participate in the entrance ritual into the Sinai covenant community through circumcision is in fact to cut oneself off from Christ, to render Christ of no benefit to oneself, to cease being “in Christ.” So those who now participate in the body of Christ have been cut off (καταργέω) from the Torah (7:6)<sup>47</sup> and from the community gathered around the Torah.

## 2.5 Rising with Christ: marriage to a new covenant lord and husband

Of course, dying to the Torah is not an end in itself, believers have died to the Torah in order to be joined to another, to him who has risen from the dead (7:4). The motif of dying and rising with Christ clearly underlies Paul’s statement here.<sup>48</sup> As stated above, the people of God are implicitly described as the bride or wife of Christ. It is rarely noted, however, how extraordinary this portrayal is, since there is apparently no concept of a messianic bride in early Judaism.<sup>49</sup> The gospels refer to Jesus as a bridegroom (Matt 9:15 = Mark 2:19-20 = Luke 5:34-35; see Matt 25:1-10; John 3:29), but it is questionable whether the sayings are authentic, and if they are, whether Jesus was actually referring to himself as a bridegroom. In any case, even if Paul’s description of believers as the bride of Christ is rooted in a supposed self-conception of Jesus as a messianic bridegroom of Israel,<sup>50</sup> this only pushes the problem back to Jesus: what did Jesus mean and how did he come to assume the role of Yahweh in his marriage to God’s people?

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<sup>47</sup> The translation “discharged” is a rather weak one for καταργέω, which often has the much stronger sense of destroy (Rom 6:6) or abolish, nullify, or overthrow (Rom 3:31).

<sup>48</sup> Although Paul never actually states in the undisputed letters that believers have risen with Christ, a conception found only in Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:12-13, 3:1-3. For Paul full participation in the resurrection is in the future (Rom 6:5, 8; Phil 3:11; 2 Cor 4:14), although believers may participate in the power of his resurrection in the present (Phil 3:10), and thereby walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4, see 7:6). If Ephesians and Colossians are accepted as authentically Pauline, it is clear that they represent a development over his thought as expressed in the undisputed letters.

<sup>49</sup> Although Psa 45 describes the marriage of the Israelite king to his bride, and although this psalm may have been interpreted messianically by early Christians (see Psa 45(44):6-7 in Heb 1:8-9), there is no indication that that it was interpreted in this manner by Jews of that era.

<sup>50</sup> I am not arguing for this view here nor does my argument depend upon such being the case.

### 2.5.1 Christ's assumption of divine prerogatives in marrying the bride of Yahweh

Given the tradition-historical background in Yahweh's marriage-covenant to Israel, the question arises concerning how the crucified and risen Christ has managed to assume the place of Yahweh in his marriage to Israel. Since the goal is to bear fruit for God (7:4), an allusion to the command to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28) and given the prior reference to Adam in Romans 5:12, it is tempting to view Christ as the eschatological Adam who is now married to a new Eve, the people of God. But it has already been argued that the first husband cannot be the first Adam, which this reading of the analogy would seem to require. Israel was never conceived as being married to or as having covenantal obligations to Adam, no matter how exalted his position as God's grand vizier over creation. Nor is Paul portraying Christ as a new Adam in 7:4. Although the image of bearing fruit for God is certainly derived from the divine command to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28, the purpose is not to compare the marriage of Christ and the ἐκκλησία, or for that matter, the marriage of Yahweh and Israel to that of Adam and Eve. It is simply that Genesis 1:28 outlines God's purpose for the marriage union: to be fruitful and multiply. Adam and Eve, as the first marriage, simply provide the pattern. Just as Adam and Eve were to cleave to one another and so become one flesh (Gen 2:24), so also Yahweh and Israel, insofar as Israel was to cleave (κολλάω) to Yahweh (κύριος in the LXX) and worship him alone (Deut 6:13; 10:20). So also the ἐκκλησία and the believer cleave to the Lord, "For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.' But anyone joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἔστιν) (1 Cor 6:16-17). Κολλάω refers not only to the sexual union between the husband and wife, but metaphorically to the covenantal union and obligation to be exclusively devoted to one's partner. That believers could be joined to Christ would create an intolerable tension with the command to cleave to Yahweh alone unless Christ were assumed into or included within the divine identity as Bauckham claims.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*, (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1998), 4 and *passim*.

Given the reaction of Yahweh against Israel having metaphorical sexual relations with other gods, i.e. worshipping and serving them, how surprising it is then, that Paul can envisage those who have known the law, i.e. Israel, as married to Christ! How could the one whose name is Jealous (Exod 34:14) countenance another figure commanding the fidelity of his bride? Christ, therefore, cannot merely function as God's viceregent or grand-vizier.<sup>52</sup> For what grand vizier marries his sovereign's intended bride and begets children upon her, as Christ marries Yahweh's bride and through her bears fruit for God (Rom 7:4)? Since Israel's marriage-covenant to Yahweh precluded devotion to any other, the description of the people of God as married to Christ in 7:4 necessarily implies their exclusive devotion to Christ (see 2 Cor 11:2-3), though obviously not at the expense of Yahweh. As the recipient of the devotion that belongs exclusively to Yahweh, Christ has been assumed into the divine identity. It is difficult to specify further what this inclusion might mean, for it would be anachronistic that Paul conceived of the relationship between Christ and God in terms of the later Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds, and, on the other hand it is inconceivable that Paul views Christ as a second god, which would be in direct conflict with Paul's claim to worship the one God (Rom 3:30). At the same time, since dying to the law results in the marriage of the people of God to "another" (ἕτερος) in 7:4, another as distinct from the first husband, Yahweh, it is clear that Paul also distinguishes Christ from Yahweh. Since christology is not the main point of the section, Paul does not resolve this ambiguity here, if it is resolved anywhere in the NT. It is likely that just this sort of ambiguity led to the later christological and Trinitarian controversies in the centuries to come.

### **2.5.2 Adultery in the analogy: a window into Paul's pre-conversion convictions**

There is another curious element to the analogy: the mention of potential adultery in verse 3, which apparently adds nothing to it, particularly if the only point of the illustration is to show that a death is necessary to end the authority of the law. If the perception of Israel's marital covenant with Yahweh is the appropriate background to the analogy, then the mention of adultery might be referring to the faithlessness and harlotry

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<sup>52</sup> As, e.g., Dunn, *Theology*, 255.

of Israel (Hos 2:2; 3:1; 4:13-14; 7:4; Isa 57:3; Jer 3:8; 9:20; 13:27; 23:14; Ezek 16:32, 38; 23:37, 43, 45). This marriage covenant between Yahweh and Israel was broken because of her faithlessness, which made a new covenant necessary, to which there may be an allusion in 7:6. But verse 3 does not refer to actual adultery, but only to potential adultery if the wife were to be with another man. Paul may have intended a faint allusion to Israel's spiritual adultery, but that does not appear to be the primary referent of his words. Rather, the potential other man in the analogy can be none other than the risen Christ, the one to whom she is married once the first husband dies (7:4). It is apparent, then, that Paul perceived a conflict between the devotion of Israel to Yahweh in the Sinai covenant and devotion to Christ. One might say that Paul's pre-conversion perspective peeks through here, that he once considered the devotion of the early believers to Christ as spiritually adulterous, compromising their fidelity to Yahweh.

There is no other reason to mention the possibility of adultery here, since Paul is addressing those who already believe in Christ; hence there is no need to justify to the *Romans* why devotion to Christ is not a threat to the worship of the one God of Israel. It is more likely that the mention of potential adultery stems from Paul's pre-conversion perspective of the incompatibility of Torah and Christ-devotion, that somehow devotion to Christ was leading Israel astray, as I have already argued in Chapter One. Israel's exclusive covenant with Yahweh precluded devotion to anyone else and this fact created a conflict for the pre-conversion Paul between Christ-devotion and the devotion to Yahweh required by the Torah, a conflict resolved only by his vision of Christ as the image and glory of God (2 Cor 4:4-6). Early Christian devotion provoked a zeal in Paul to attempt to destroy their community (Gal 1:13-14), since it was defiling the worship of Israel. In the same way, Paul writes to the Corinthians that he is zealous with a divine jealousy on their behalf (ζηλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζήλω). He has betrothed them to Christ as their husband, and expresses the fear that just as the serpent seduced Eve, so the Corinthians' minds will be seduced from single-hearted devotion to Christ (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀπλότητος τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστόν) (2 Cor 11:2-3). I suggest that the same zeal for the purity of Israel's devotion to Yahweh motivated Paul's persecution of the early Christian community and is ultimately one of the main reasons why Paul perceives a conflict between Torah and Christ in a manner in which no other Christian Jew did.

Paul can now speak of dying to the Torah only because he perceived such an incompatibility between Torah and Christ-devotion even before his vision of Christ.

I also suggest that it was not simply the early Christians' devotion to their crucified Master that provoked such zeal in the pre-Christian Saul. Had he thought that Jesus was truly an innocent victim of the Romans, perhaps his view of their devotion might have been different. It is likely, then, that Paul viewed the crucified Jesus as truly cursed by the Torah, not for the mere fact of being crucified, but for a serious violation of the Torah that merited death. It is difficult to know what this violation might be, though it was perhaps blasphemy (Mark 2:7 = Matt 9:3 = Luke 5:21; Mark 14:64 = 26:65; John 10:33),<sup>53</sup> leading Israel astray,<sup>54</sup> or being a false prophet.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps he believed Jesus had threatened the sanctity of the temple or, perhaps less likely, had profaned the Sabbath (but see Mark 2:23-3:6 = Matt 12:1-14 = Luke 6:1-11; John 5:16-18), or was a magician.<sup>56</sup> All these were crimes punishable by death according to Torah and their corpse was to be hung on a tree, bringing a curse upon them. So it is likely that the pre-conversion Paul viewed the crucified Jesus as cursed by God for his transgression.<sup>57</sup> Bassler has already suggested that the statement "Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς" in 1 Corinthians 12:3 reflects Paul's pre-Christian Pharisaic convictions about Jesus.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps this is what Paul means when he wrote of viewing Jesus

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<sup>53</sup> *Contra* Sanders, who considers the charges of blasphemy to be inauthentic (*Jesus and Judaism*, [London: SCM, 1985], 298. Sanders argues that "it is only the subsequent Christian claim that Jesus himself was divine that clearly constitutes blasphemy." Sanders' limitation of blasphemy to a claim to be God may be too limiting, however. Threats to the sanctity of the temple could also be considered blasphemy. See now Jerry Truex, *The Problem of Blasphemy: The Fourth Gospel and Early Jewish Understandings*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Durham, 2001. Truex demonstrates from early Jewish evidence that blasphemy could be directed at God, at the temple as God's sanctuary (1 Macc 7:41-42), or even toward Israel's leadership as God's ordained representatives (see Exod 22:27). Perhaps the chief priests perceived blasphemy in Jesus' action in the temple and his apparent contempt for their leadership, and saw this as a rejection of divine authority. Sanders, 298, admits that speaking and acting against the Temple could be considered blasphemy, but states that "according to the Gospels that charge did not lead to a sentence of blasphemy." But the Gospel writers may not have been privy to the actual reasons for the charge of blasphemy.

<sup>54</sup> Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, (SCM Press, London, 1991), 83.

<sup>55</sup> Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 42.

<sup>56</sup> See Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978). Jesus may have been accused of being a magician because of his exorcisms, e.g. the accusation of casting out demons by Beelzeboul (Mark 3:22; Matt 10:25; 12:24-27; Luke 3:15-19).

<sup>57</sup> Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Jouette M. Bassler, "1 Cor 12:3--Curse and Confession in Context," *JBL* 101/3 (1982):

according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16) -- as a crucified, and therefore cursed Messiah. It seems likely, also, that Paul's application of Deuteronomy 21:23 to Jesus in Galatians 3:10 may have been part of his pre-conversion polemic against the early Christians.<sup>59</sup> I suggest that the perception of the "cursedness" of Jesus' crucifixion (as a Torah-violator) rather than the mere fact of his crucifixion is what constituted the true "scandal of the cross" (Gal 5:11).<sup>60</sup> In that context Paul relates that if he was still preaching circumcision, he would not be persecuted and the scandal of the cross would be removed. Thus, if he preached both about the death of the Messiah for our sins and circumcision for Gentiles, as the Judaizers did, there would be no scandal--which means that crucifixion alone is not the scandal, nor even the idea of a crucified Messiah. The scandal of the cross for the pre-conversion Paul was that Jesus was cursed by the Torah. And what was more scandalous was that Jesus' followers claimed that their Master had been exalted to God's right hand, even though, in Paul's view, he had been crucified and cursed by God for blasphemy. It is little wonder that he felt compelled to destroy the movement that would continue its founder's blasphemies and that threatened to lead Israel astray.

It is interesting that Paul alone speaks of Jesus' crucifixion as a *σκάνδαλον* (Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 5:11), except for 1 Peter 2:8, clearly within the Pauline orbit. Paul is also the only NT writer to speak of a curse in relationship to Jesus or his death. Other Jewish followers of Jesus do not seem to have spoken of a curse in relation to Jesus' crucified body. Early Jewish believers probably would have believed that Jesus was innocent of any crimes against the Torah, and therefore would have been unlikely to view Jesus' death in relation to the Torah at all, except perhaps as a prophetic fulfillment of the Scriptures. In their view, Jesus died for our sins (see 1 Cor 15:3--the tradition Paul received), but he never became a curse, nor did his death affect their relationship to Torah in any way. This fact is reflected in the Markan and Matthean words of institution: "This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). For these early Jewish believers, the blood of Jesus established

<sup>59</sup> Dunn suggests the same in *The Theology of Paul*, 209.

<sup>60</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross, the Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 11, remarks that Jesus not only "died by means of a punishment reserved exclusively for criminals, but also that he died as one cursed and forsaken by God." Unfortunately Cousar does not remark on Romans 7:4 in his book.

and reconfirmed the existing Sinai covenant. On the other hand, only in Paul and Luke does the word “new” appear: “This cup is the *new* covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). Only for Paul and those influenced by him, does Jesus’ blood establish a truly new covenant as opposed to a mere covenantal renewal or reestablishment.<sup>61</sup> Thus I suggest that Paul’s distinctive view of the Torah, particularly as expressed in the phrase “put to death to the Torah through the body of Christ,” is rooted in a distinctive pre-conversion perspective that Jesus was cursed by the Torah. And because Paul viewed Jesus as cursed by the Torah for serious transgression before his conversion, it is little wonder that he continued to view Jesus as cursed, not for his own transgression of the Torah, but cursed for the sins of Israel, indeed of all humanity. Paul’s application of the curse sanction of the Sinai covenant to Jesus meant that he was excommunicated from the covenant, that Jesus Himself was put to death to the Torah. When Paul combined this insight with his theological reflection about believers sharing in the crucified body of Christ, he came to the understanding that the believing community themselves have been excommunicated from the Sinai covenant and put to death to the Torah through their participation in the body of Christ.

## **2.6 Romans 7:5-6: From the Oldness of the Letter to the Newness of Spirit**

Romans 7:5-6 function as an introduction to 7:7-8:13. As Brendan Byrne notes, 7:5 introduces the plight of existence under the Torah described in 7:7-25, and 7:6 foreshadows Paul’s description of deliverance through the Spirit of Christ.<sup>62</sup> At the same time the particle γάρ in 7:5 indicates that the verses that follow provide the grounds for being put to death to the Torah through Christ: “when we were in the flesh sinful passions were at work in our members through the law” and caused us to bear fruit for death. Since 7:5 anticipates and summarizes the rest of the chapter, it is likely that both Romans 7:5 and 7:7-25 provide the reason that a death to the Torah is necessary. The imperfect tense in the initial clause of 7:5 clearly indicates a continuous

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<sup>61</sup> The term new covenant occurs only in Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8; 9:15; 12:24. Luke appears to be influenced by Pauline tradition, and Hebrews is clearly post-Pauline, perhaps reflecting Pauline influence.

<sup>62</sup> Byrne, *Romans*, 213.

state or condition in the past, a condition which pertains only to those who are “in the flesh” and who serve according to the oldness of the letter and not according to the newness of the Spirit (7:6).

### 2.6.1 Existence “in the flesh”

Paul appears to exclude his readers from the condition of being “in the flesh.” Since existence “in the flesh” describes a condition in the past, σάρξ can hardly refer to human nature as such, for it clearly makes no sense to speak of being “in human nature,” or of being “in human nature” in the past, but no longer. At the same time an anthropological element is certainly present, as Schreiner insists, since the passions of sin are at work in human beings.<sup>63</sup> Rather than forcing a choice between an anthropological and a cosmological sense, it is better to say that Paul’s theological anthropology is cosmological, that he always views human beings in terms of the wider cosmological context. In contemporary Western society, one is accustomed to view people as discrete individuals with firm boundaries between what is inside and what is outside the self; Paul, however, appears to view human beings as having porous boundaries: humanity always participates in and reflects a larger cosmological context (see section 3.4.4.4 below). So being in the flesh refers to participation in the larger, cosmological sphere of humanity descended from Adam, the body of sin (6:6) or the body of this death (7:24), spheres which are porous and open to non-human cosmological powers. This past condition of being “in the flesh” is associated with sinful passions which operate in the members of the body (7:5).

The association of flesh and sin is already found at Qumran. In the *Community Rule*, the spirit of wickedness dwells in the flesh (1QS 4:21) and the writer confesses that he belongs to evil humanity and the counsel of iniquitous flesh (1QS 11:9). The

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<sup>63</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 354.

*War Scroll* likewise speaks of iniquitous flesh (1QM 4:3).<sup>64</sup> Those who are in Christ, on the other hand, participate in his heavenly pneumatic body (1 Cor 15, see Rom 12; 1 Cor 12, 14) even though they have not yet left their bodies of flesh behind. This cosmological flesh/Spirit contrast shall prove crucial to a right understanding of Paul's thought concerning the law. I shall wait, however, to discuss the law in relation to the flesh/Spirit contrast until dealing with the plight of Romans 7:7-25 in detail.

## 2.6.2 The letter/Spirit contrast: OT and Jewish backgrounds

In 7:6, Paul states that "we have been discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the newness of Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." The contrast is not between the literal and the allegorical interpretations of Scripture,<sup>65</sup> as most interpreters now recognize, nor does the letter refer to a distorted

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<sup>64</sup> Jörg Frey asserts that the concept of sinful flesh is found in the pre-Essene Writing *4QInstruction* (4Q416-418, 423), "Flesh and Spirit in the Palestinian Jewish Sapiential Tradition and in the Qumran Texts: An Inquiry into the Background of Pauline Usage" in *The Wisdom Text from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, ed. C. Hempel, A. Lange, and H. Lichtenberger, (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 367-404. See also his previous article "Die paulinische Antithese von "Fleisch" und "Geist" und die palästinisch-jüdische Weisheitstradition," *ZNW* 90 (1999): 45-77. Frey argues against a Hellenistic background for the concept of σάρξ, against E. Brandenburger, *Fleisch und Geist: Paulus und die dualistische Weisheit*, (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968). Although Frey may be correct concerning the origin of the concept of sinful flesh in pre-Essene wisdom circles as represented by *4QInstruction*, he fails to note the association of the passions and desire with the flesh both in Paul (Rom 7:5, 7-12; 13:14; Gal 5:16-17, 24) and in Philo (*Leg.* II, 50; III, 157; *Migr.* 14; *Virt.* 78; *QG*, I, 9). This association does not occur in the DSS. Frey, "Flesh and Spirit," 376-77, denies that σάρξ is a significant concept in Philo, since he uses the word σῶμα ten times more than σάρξ. Nevertheless, Philo uses σάρξ in the singular at least 63 times, hardly insignificant. Moreover, Frey erroneously asserts flesh is considered neither to be the reason or occasion for sin in Philo, but see *QG* I, 99, where flesh is described as the cause of spiritual corruption since it is the seat of desire and the passions. See also *Abr.* 164 and *Virt.* 78, where Philo writes about slavery to the flesh and its passions, hardly a good thing.

<sup>65</sup> For a survey of the views of the early church fathers, see B. Schneider, "The Meaning of St. Paul's Antithesis 'The Letter and the Spirit'" *CBQ* 15 (1956): 163-207; Wai-Shing Chau, *The Letter and the Spirit: A History of Interpretation from Origen to Luther*, (New York, Bern: Peter Lang, 1992).

or inadequate understanding of Scripture.<sup>66</sup> The two stone tablets of covenant received by Moses were inscribed (γεγραμμένας) by the finger of God (Exod 31:18; Deut 9:10), and the prophecy of Jer 31:33 (38:33 LXX) looks forward to the day when God will write (γράψω) his laws on the hearts of the Israelites. Jeremiah intends an implicit contrast of merely written laws versus internalized laws, but Paul writes of the Sinai covenant as a whole as γράμμα. Jeremiah 31:33 is certainly in the background, but is not the sole or even primary background. Nowhere in the LXX is the law called γράμμα. There is also no statement that the law kills or condemns (as in 2 Cor 3), or that it has been subverted by sin in the flesh (as in Rom 7:7-25); nor is it necessary to be put to death to the law in order to receive the Spirit (as in 7:4-6). Paul's contrast is far stronger than Jeremiah's.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7 Paul refers to the ministry of the letter as "engraved on stone with letters" (ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις) and in the preceding four verses, Paul contrasts that which is inscribed on stone with the ministry of the new covenant engraved on human hearts. In Romans, the contrast first appears in 2:27-29, in which Paul claims that mere physical circumcision and mere possession of the written code will not protect the Jew from judgment who does not also have his heart circumcised by the Spirit. The letter therefore refers to the law in its external character as the written code of the law.

The letter/Spirit contrast in 2 Corinthians 3:6 appears to have a somewhat different emphasis than in Romans, since there the external letter written on stone kills and condemns in contrast to the Spirit, which gives life. Paul does not say here that the letter kills, only that the law is ineffective and weak, unable to accomplish its intended purpose. In this context it is sin which brings death through the law; the letter itself does not kill. It seems that Paul's language in Romans is more carefully nuanced than in 2 Corinthians 3, since he wishes to avoid the inference that the law itself is something

<sup>66</sup> As, e.g., E. Käsemann "The Spirit and the Letter," *Perspectives on Paul*, 138-66; and Cranfield, 339-340, maintain. Käsemann, 146-147, understands the letter as the law perverted by a "demand for good works;" Cranfield, 339, interprets the letter as the legalistic misinterpretation of the law, and Dunn "as an understanding of the law which stays at the level of the ritual act and outward deed," and in which Judaism was being "misunderstood by being too much understood in terms of physical characteristics and visible rituals which marked it out as Jewish." (*Romans*, 127, italics his). Westerholm deals effectively with this approach in his article, "Letter and Spirit: the Foundation of Pauline Ethics," *NTS* 30, 229-233.

sinful or the cause of death.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, Westerholm incorrectly understands the letter in all three passages (Rom 2:27-29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6) as “man’s *obligation* under the old dispensation to carry out the concrete demands of the law of God—a situation which in fact led to obvious sin and death.”<sup>68</sup> Westerholm thinks the new covenant for Paul consists of “freedom from such concrete commands and as obedience to a divine impulse within.”<sup>69</sup> But why should carrying out concrete demands necessarily lead to sin and death? After all, sin was present in the world prior to the introduction of concrete demands (Rom 5:13). Delivering humanity from concrete demands would not resolve humanity’s (or Israel’s) plight. It is not the fact that the law consisted of concrete demands that makes the law mere letter but the fact that it is written on stone, external to the human heart.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, one should perhaps not go so far as to see a reference to a contrast of old and new covenants, despite the parallel of 2 Corinthians 3:6.<sup>71</sup> It is questionable whether an allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-34 is intended here, as in 2 Corinthians 3. Paul does not mention covenants until Romans 9:4 and 11:27, and only in the context of God’s covenantal promises to Israel. The newness of the Spirit transcends the legal arrangement of the covenants, but in what sense will only become clear in Romans 8.

The contrast instead alludes primarily to Ezekiel 36:26-27, as commentators now recognize.<sup>72</sup> Ezekiel implicitly contrasts two eras: the *present* time of Israel’s disobedience to the Mosaic law and the *eschatological* time when God will place his spirit within them. Westerholm refers to letter and Spirit as “two epochs of salvation history”<sup>73</sup> and rightly states that letter and Spirit “mark different ways of rendering service which characterize the old and new dispensations respectively”<sup>74</sup> and also “the

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<sup>67</sup> The difference between Rom 7:6 and 2 Cor 3:6 is ultimately rhetorical rather than theological.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>70</sup> So also Moo, *Romans*, 421.

<sup>71</sup> *Contra* Schreiner, *Romans*, 353.

<sup>72</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 353; Dunn, *Romans*, 366; Byrne, *Romans*, 212, though these scholars think that an allusion to Jeremiah 31 is also present.

<sup>73</sup> Westerholm, 235. Also Moo, *Romans*, 421; Byrne, *Romans*, 212.

<sup>74</sup> Westerholm, 236.

kind of obedience (cf. δουλεύειν, v. 6) the Christian is called upon to render.”<sup>75</sup> In Philippians 3:3, Paul polemically proclaims it is believers who are the (true) circumcision, who worship by the Spirit. He uses the synonym λατρεύω, which Paul also uses in Romans 1:9 to refer to his service in his Spirit in the gospel of God’s Son. Two kinds of worship are being contrasted here: The letter is the written form of Torah, powerless in the domain of the flesh both in its cultic and moral aspects, unable to fulfill the intended function of the law to give life (7:10).

Even the background of the Spirit in Ezekiel 36-37, however, is insufficient to explain the letter/Spirit contrast, important as that background is. For Ezekiel, the Spirit represented “God’s creative, animating, energizing force,” and “the power of God at work among humankind,”<sup>76</sup> whereas for Paul the Spirit is christologically and cosmologically redefined.<sup>77</sup> It is through participating in the death and resurrection of Christ that one leaves the earthly domain of sin-dominated flesh and enters into the Spirit, and it is the character of Christ that the Spirit produces in believers as the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9-11; see Gal 2:20). Moreover, it is the exaltation of Christ to cosmic lordship and his transformation from flesh to Spirit (Rom 1:3-4) that results in the internalization of the law in believers, and not simply an outpouring of God’s Spirit. It is necessary, therefore to discern the relationship of Christ to the letter/Spirit contrast, and for that I turn to Hellenistic philosophical discussions concerning the contrast of written and unwritten law, and the king as unwritten animate law.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 239. In using δουλεύω in 7:6 Paul is not referring to being slaves to sin, despite Romans 6:15-23 and 7:14-25, but rather to the service of the God of Israel, whom Paul claims to serve with his mind in 7:25. The word δουλεύω has cultic connotations and alludes to the service or worship that Israel rendered to Yahweh as His covenant people (Judg 10:6; 1 Sam 7:3; 12:10, 14, 20, 23, 24; 2 Chr 30:8; 33:16; 34:33; Psa 2:11; 71:11; 99:2; 101:23; Job 21:15; Isa 56:6; Jer 2:20; Ezek 20:40; Zeph 3:9; Mal 3:14, 18; Tob 4:14; Sir 2:1; for the service/ worship of other gods, see Exod 23:33; Deut 28:64; 1 Kgs 9:9; 16:31; 22:53; 2 Kgs 10:18; 17:41; 21:3; 2 Chr 7:22; 24:18; 33:3, 22; Psa 105:36; Jer 5:19; 8:2; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11, 13; 22:9; 25:6; 42:15.

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *Rwh*” in the Book of Ezekiel,” *JETS* 32 (1989): 49.

<sup>77</sup> See Käsemann, “The Letter and the Spirit,” in *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. M. Kohl, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 147. Käsemann also asserts that the flesh/Spirit and letter/Spirit contrasts are the same (Romans, 191). I would prefer to say that the letter represents the ineffectiveness of the written law in the cosmological realm of the flesh. The two contrasts are closely associated, and this is not often appreciated.

### 2.6.3 The Hellenistic background of the letter/Spirit contrast: lifeless letter/king as living law

Paul's contrast of letter and Spirit should also be understood in the broader context of the Hellenistic debate about the written and unwritten law, a debate in which Diaspora Jews participated.<sup>78</sup> In fact the only references to Scripture or the Law as γράμμα in the singular occur in Philo. This fact is of great significance, for it underscores the Hellenistic element of the letter/Spirit contrast. Γράμμα in Philo may refer to Scripture itself (*Migr.* 85), the engraved word of Scripture (*Her.* 239) or to a specific written command of Scripture.<sup>79</sup> In a Greek fragment of his *Questions on Exodus* (II, 19), Philo speaks of "those who keep the holy writing (γράμμα) of the law." Although Philo does not use γράμμα in contrast with either the Spirit or with unwritten law, Philo does contrast written with the unwritten law implanted in the pre-Mosaic patriarchs (*Abr.* 5; 15; see *Decal.* 1). In the conclusion to his treatise *De Abrahamo*, Philo describes Abraham as the "unwritten law and justice of God" (276). For Philo, unwritten laws are clearly superior to written laws, because those who have the law "impressed in their soul," exhibit a "spontaneous and unconstrained virtue"

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<sup>78</sup> Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 125-126.

<sup>79</sup> *Deus* 7; *Conf.* 50; *Migr.* 139. Although an allegorical letter/spirit antithesis is present in Philo, he never uses γράμμα to refer to the literal as opposed to the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. When Philo intends this contrast he uses not γράμμα/πνεῦμα but ῥητόν/νοητόν (*Abr.* 217). Paul was not "motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One," as D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew, Paul and the Politics of Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7, suggests, nor by "a passionate concern for human unification, for the erasure of differences and hierarchies between human beings" (106). Paul's plight was not a conflict "between the universalism of the Torah's content and the particular ethnicity of its form" (29). And this concern for universality did not lead him to use an allegorical spiritualizing hermeneutic in which the fleshly "signifier" of the letter was replaced by the "signified," or the true spiritual essence (86, 105, 120). His portrayal of Paul seems very distant from the Paul of Romans, for whom the denial of a διαστολή is based upon the fact that both Jews and Gentiles have sinned (Rom 3:22), and not on the erasure of differences in pursuit of a unitary human essence. Boyarin appears to read philonic and platonic categories into Paul without recognizing the specific nature of Paul's argument. Moreover, the nature of the flesh/spirit contrast is not that between particular and universal, but rather is based upon a cosmological contrast between the earthly world of mortal humanity and the spiritual realm of God and His heavenly court. Consequently the letter/spirit contrast is not allegorical and hermeneutical in nature, as most interpreters recognize (see S. Westerholm, 229). For an excellent critique of Boyarin, see John M. G. Barclay, "Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Rom 2:25-29 in Social and Cultural Context," *NTS* 44 (1998): 536-556. For the older debate concerning the letter / spirit contrast as hermeneutical, see B. Schneider, *CBQ* 15 (1953) 163-207.

(*Spec.* 149-150). In fact, he describes Abraham and Moses as ἔμψυχοι νόμοι, as living or animate laws and as embodying the law in their persons, since they kept it spontaneously without written commands (*Abr.* 5; *Mos.* I, 162; II, 4).<sup>80</sup> Such virtue made them kings from God among humans (*Abr.* 261; *Mut.* 152; *Som.* II, 243-244; *Mos.* I, 158-159; II, 66; 187).<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps then Paul's letter/Spirit contrast should be understood in the context of the contrast of the written lifeless letter (ἀψυχή γράμμα) and the king as living, animate law (ἔμψυχος νόμος).<sup>82</sup> Blumenfeld notes that the distinction between animate and inanimate law is "a constant in Hellenistic Pythagoreanism," the political philosophy of which Blumenfeld sees as underlying much of Paul's thought regarding Christ.<sup>83</sup> The most important witness to this contrast is Pseudo-Archytas (ca. 200 B.C.E.), who wrote in his treatise, *Περὶ νόμου καὶ δικαιοσύνης*:

I say now that every society consists of ruler and ruled, and a third element the laws. Among these laws, however, there is the living law (ἔμψυχος νόμος) represented by the king, and the lifeless (ἀψυχή) letter (γράμμα). The law is in the first place, for the king is lawful (νόμιμος), the ruler who follows it, those who are ruled are free, and the whole society is happy.<sup>84</sup>

This passage contrasts the lifeless letter (written law) and the king as the living embodiment or manifestation of the law. E. R. Goodenough comments that the king is not simply bound by the law, nor even a moral example to follow. Instead, the "king . . . produces law for his subjects out of his own nature,"<sup>85</sup> since "the king is personally a representation and revelation of divine-natural law in the kingdom."<sup>86</sup> In a similar way,

<sup>80</sup> Paul may reflect such an idea when he describes some Gentiles as doing the law by nature, and they though they do not have the law, they are ἑαυτοῖς . . . νόμος (Rom 2:15).

<sup>81</sup> Philo refers only to Moses and Abraham as ἔμψυχοι νόμοι, which is significant since in Hellenistic thought only kings are described in that manner (cf. below).

<sup>82</sup> *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*, (eds. M. Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, Carsten Colpe, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 346. See also H. Kleinknecht, "νόμος," *TDNT*, IV, 1032-1035.

<sup>83</sup> Blumenfeld, 123, 127.

<sup>84</sup> The translation is a combination of two others, that of E. R. Goodenough in his article "The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship," *Yale Classical Studies*, 1 (1928): 59, and that found in *The Hellenistic Commentary to the NT*, 346.

<sup>85</sup> Goodenough, 61.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Christ is the revelation of divine righteousness in Romans 3:21-26. Blumenfeld remarks that for Pseudo-Ecphantus, the king is a mediator between the divine and the human and that “in both Ps.-Ecphantus and Paul, the king (Christ, in Paul), is himself pushed so far into the divine sphere that he is indistinguishable from God.”<sup>87</sup> Another Pythagorean philosopher, Diotogenes, is even more explicit: “Now the king bears the same relation to the state (πόλις) as God to the world; and . . . the king . . . has an absolute rulership, and is himself Animate Law, has been metamorphosed into a deity among men.”<sup>88</sup> Thus the concept of the king as the living embodiment of the law is bound up with the Hellenistic concept of the king as the manifestation of a god.<sup>89</sup>

The written letter for Paul, too, is lifeless, unable to give life (7:10), though perhaps in a different sense than that intended by Pseudo-Archytas, who apparently meant that the laws were not physically alive, as the king was. Paul, on the other hand, was referring to the inability of the Torah to provide eschatological life. For Paul, Christ has been taken up into the divine identity as the revelation of God’s righteousness (3:21), and has assumed the role as Israel’s new covenant lord and husband (7:4), so that Christ may now be seen as the living law, the embodiment of the divine will. Of course Paul does not say this directly in 7:4-6. But Blumenfeld argues that such a conception underlies Paul’s thought generally and specifically in 7:6: “Here, Christ unambiguously assumes the function that the Hellenistic Pythagoreans designated *nomos empsychos*.”<sup>90</sup> In this way, following Hellenistic and Roman political thought,<sup>91</sup> Paul “replaces” the written law with the personal authority of the king (Christ),<sup>92</sup> who wields his power through indwelling his people by his Spirit.

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<sup>87</sup> Blumenfeld, 192, 220.

<sup>88</sup> Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (1-2 C.E.), as cited in Stobaeus (IV C.E.), and as translated by Goodenough, 68. Goodenough also discusses quotes from Ecphantus, Musonius Rufus, Sthenidas, and Plutarch in relation to the idea of the king as the ἔμψυχος νόμος.

<sup>89</sup> H. Hübner, νόμος, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, (eds. H. Balz and G. Schneider, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), II, 473. See also Kleinknecht, νόμος, *TDNT*, IV, 1032.

<sup>90</sup> Blumenfeld, 353.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 288, argues that Paul’s thinking in Romans generally is “grounded in Greek political theory.”

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

#### **2.6.4 Paul's distinctive combination of Jewish and Hellenistic concepts**

Thus instead of directly stating that Christ is the living law, Paul writes of being joined to him who was raised from the dead (7:4), and of serving in newness of Spirit (7:6). Obligation to a written external law is replaced by a living person who personifies the law and to whom believers may be joined in covenantal union. They have become one spirit with Christ, just as a man and woman become one flesh (1 Cor 6:17), since the risen Lord is life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45; cf. 2 Cor 3:17). Since Paul is also alluding here to the prophecy of Ezekiel that God will give Israel a new spirit (Ezek 11:19; 36:26; cf. 18:31), Christ is identified with this spirit. In Ezekiel, this spirit is God's own Spirit (36:27), and the purpose of His Spirit is to cause them to walk in his laws, and so to renew the broken covenant relationship with Yahweh.<sup>93</sup> For Paul, however, it is Christ who has assumed the covenantal role of Yahweh in his relation to Israel, and so the Spirit of Yahweh is now the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9). To serve in newness of Spirit is to serve Christ by His Spirit (see Rom 14:18), since Christ is now covenant Lord and King. Christ now exalted as heavenly king is now also the life-giving Spirit in His people, the means of their fulfilling the law. Thus the letter/Spirit contrast not only has an Old Testament background but is also grounded in the contrast of lifeless letter and the king as living law found in the neo-Pythagorean philosophers. Only now Paul has combined that idea with the prophecy of Ezekiel and reinterpreted both christologically and eschatologically, since for Paul the time of eschatological fulfillment has already been inaugurated (νῦν δὲ in 7:6).

#### **2.7 The Sociological Meaning of the Letter/Spirit Transformation**

Paul thus transforms the Torah into Spirit of Christ who embodies the law as the exalted king and Lord of the cosmos (see chapter 1), whereas sin transforms Torah into lifeless letter, subverted by sin. Because the "letter" is a way of serving or worshipping God, the letter also represents the symbolic ritual world created and maintained by

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<sup>93</sup> Daniel Block, 39-41.

Torah.<sup>94</sup> In the priestly worldview, there is a correspondence between this ritual world and the cosmic order of creation, between the earthly and the heavenly.<sup>95</sup> This correspondence is maintained through the meticulous observance of Torah's requirements. The purpose of ritual action, Gorman notes, is to maintain a symbolic world.<sup>96</sup> According to C. Geertz, "religion's capacity to create meaning in life derives from its power to tune human actions to an envisioned cosmic order, then to project images of this cosmic order onto the plane of everyday human existence."<sup>97</sup> The creation of the world and the construction of the tabernacle are clearly described in parallel terms, so that the construction of the latter is a microcosm of the former.<sup>98</sup> Thus everyday human experience becomes charged with supernatural cosmic significance, and the mundane world of the flesh is exalted to the level of participation in the heavenly world of God. Torah's rituals were perceived as effective in this world-view because of a belief in their intrinsic effectiveness in relating ritual action to the cosmic order.<sup>99</sup> That is, there is a belief that ritual action has a real and tangible effect in maintaining and restoring the cosmic order. This does not mean they were believed to function "*ex opere operato*," but that there was a faith in their efficacy as the means by which Israel maintained its relationship to the cosmic order of God. This correspondence of the

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<sup>94</sup> See F. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSS 91, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. See also p. 29: "Rituals are thus means of holding back social confusion, indeterminacy, and chaos because they provide patterns for enacting an ordered existence. In this way, rituals regulate societal order by giving normative patterns for maintaining order and constructive patterns for restoring that order when it has been lost. As such, ritual is a performed and enacted system of meaning."

<sup>97</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (London: Fontana, 1993), 90.

<sup>98</sup> Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984): 286-87; Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple, and Enthronement of the Lord -- the Problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Melanges biblique et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 212, (ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981).

<sup>99</sup> According to Gorman, 44, "the world-view of the Priestly writers has as its framework three distinct orders of creation--the cosmological, the societal, and the cultic . . . these various orders are not independent of one another but are intricately connected."

earthly and the heavenly was a widespread view during the Second Temple period.<sup>100</sup> In some apocalyptic forms of Judaism Torah itself had a heavenly counterpart to which it corresponded. *Jubilees*, e.g., mentions the heavenly tablets of the Torah (*Jub.* 2:30-31; 30:14; 31:14). The earthly Torah written on stone has a counterpart in the heavenly Torah.

For Paul, however, this correspondence has become a contrast, which sociologically reflects a movement from a perception of a stable society (where heaven and earth correspond) to a society under attack or a threat with which it is *unable to cope* (where heaven and earth do not correspond). Some reality (in Paul's view the cosmic power of sin) has intervened so that earth is wildly out of sync with heaven, rendering the earthly counterpart to the heavenly Torah ineffective. There is now a painful rupture between the enacted ritual and the cosmic reality it is supposed to represent.<sup>101</sup> What ought to correspond, letter and Spirit, ritual world and cosmic order, has now become an unbridgeable chasm.

But why should this be so? What happened to Paul's symbolic world to effect such change in Paul's attitude to the Torah? As explained in Chapter One, his conversion and vision of Christ do not suffice as an explanation. I suggest that it was precisely the seriousness with which he viewed the sin and impurity of Israel prior to his conversion that ultimately led to his disaffection with Torah and its cultic vision. If he perceived Israel's disobedience and transgression as seriously as portrayed in Romans

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<sup>100</sup> See *Jub.* 2:30-31; 30:14; 31:14; *T. Levi* 3:4-5; Philo, *Spec.* 1. 66-67; *Somn.* 1, 215; Josephus, *AJ* III, 180-182; see *Wis* 9:8; *Sir* 24:10; *11QT* 29:8-10; *1 En.* 15. In the ancient Near East, temples were sometimes called "the bond of heaven and earth," (*Dur-an-ki*), as at Nippur, Larsa, Babylon, and probably Sippur as well (Eric Burrowes, "Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion," in *The Labyrinth*, (ed. S.H. Hooke, London: SPCK, 1935), p. 46; see also G. W. Ahlström, "Heaven on Earth -- At Hazor and Arad," in *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity*, (ed. B. A. Pearson Missoula: Scholars, 1975), 67-83). Ahlström argues that Syro-Palestinian temples were meant to represent heaven and earth. For a discussion of the earth/heaven correspondence of the temple worship in second Temple literature, see C. T. R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple, a Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, (London: Routledge, 1996), *idem.*, "Sacrifice and World Order: Some Observations on Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple Service," in *Sacrifice and Redemption, Durham Essays in Theology*, (ed. S. W. Sykes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22-34; Jon Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984): 275-298.

<sup>101</sup> This does not mean, however, that Paul is anti-ritual *per se*, nor does he think all rituals are ineffective and what matters is the interior of the heart, for he still mentions baptism as a means of entry into a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6). Rather it is the rituals of Torah which are ineffective; Paul is not expressing a philosophical position opposed to ritual as such, or as worthless or merely external, as in many forms of Protestantism.



2:17-24, then the ground was laid for Paul to question the efficacy of Torah. This in no way implies that Paul was disaffected *with Torah itself* prior to his conversion; on the contrary, he was fully convinced of its efficacy for himself and, potentially, all Israel. But he perceived Israel's impurity and sin to threaten God's continued presence in Israel's midst, and he was surpassingly zealous to prevent this and to defend the Torah. But that very zeal for Torah led him to perceive sin as far more threatening to Israel's destiny than perhaps many of his contemporaries did. The Christian proclamation and his vision of Christ operated as catalysts which exposed to him the inability of Torah to maintain its own symbolic world and thus a chasm opened between earthly letter and heavenly Spirit.

Thus at his conversion, the roles of Torah and Christ within his symbolic world were almost but not quite inverted. Torah, though never a source of sin or impurity, was perceived as ineffective in maintaining a boundary against them. Christ, by contrast, once thought to be a source of impurity and a threat to Torah and temple, was now perceived to be the means by which that symbolic world could be maintained. The following two chapters will explore how Paul developed his perception of Torah's failure in relation to sin (i.e. its failure to maintain its own symbolic world) and why the indwelling Spirit of Christ became the answer to his perceived plight.

## Chapter 3

### The Plight under Torah: Romans 7:7-25

In 7:7-25, Paul explains why it is necessary that those under Torah's authority must be put to death to the Torah and be released from the Sinai covenant with its stipulations and sanctions. Because of "sin" that dwells in human flesh, God's intention to bring life through the law (7:10) has been subverted so that now "sin" works death by means of the law, despite its holy and righteous character. Thus it is not until this section that Paul fully explains the connection of law, sin, flesh, and death. Romans 7:7-25 is an explication of Paul's statement in 7:5-6 concerning life in the flesh and in the oldness of the letter.<sup>1</sup> The Sinai Torah is mere letter because it has been subverted by the cosmological power of sin and misused to bring about spiritual and eschatological death instead of the life it was intended to bring.

Several questions of great importance for understanding Paul's thought will engage us here: Does the chapter primarily address Christian or pre-Christian engagement with sin? And what is the nature of sin that it is able to subvert the divine intention in giving Torah and to render Torah unable to attain its goal of giving spiritual life? What is the nature of the flesh/Spirit contrast and what significance does it have for the understanding of the letter/Spirit contrast? What is the origin of Paul's distinctive view of Torah in these verses? Did Paul have a pre-conversion plight or is Sanders correct in his assertion that Paul reasoned from solution to plight, that he encountered Christ as universal Savior, and only then struggled with a problem of theodicy: if salvation is through Christ, why then the law?

I hope to demonstrate in this chapter that Paul understood the Torah to have been subverted by the cosmological power of sin in the flesh, a power which entered humanity through Adam's transgression. The spirit of sin lies dormant, waiting for the opportunity to express itself in concrete transgressions of the divinely given Law, so that it may accomplish its death-dealing aim. The Torah has been fatally weakened, both cultically and morally, by the indwelling presence of sin in the flesh, and is unable to deliver humanity from its bodily condition of sin and death. Thus sin in the flesh has

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<sup>1</sup> G. Bornkamm, "Sin, Law and Death (Romans 7)," in *Early Christian Experience*, (London: SCM, 1969), 88.

turned the spiritual law into mere ineffective letter. The pre-conversion plight that guided the transformation of Paul's thought about the law was the threat that sin posed to Israel's covenant relationship with God, and consequently to Paul's Torah-centered symbolic universe. This threat formed the precondition which enabled his apocalypse of Christ to function as a catalyst to transform his understanding of the role of Torah.

### 3.1 The Identity of the "I"

#### 3.1.1 Autobiographical Approaches

The question that has engaged most interpreters of Romans 7:7-25 is the identity of ἐγώ. Until the work of W. G. Kümmel in 1929, the "I" was generally understood as autobiographical. The strongest argument for this position is the "highly passionate, personal style" with which Paul writes.<sup>2</sup> Dunn remarks that "the existential anguish and frustration of vv. 15ff. and 24 is too real, too sharply poignant to permit any reduction of the "I" to a mere figure of style. Whatever else this is, it is surely Paul speaking from the heart of his own experience."<sup>3</sup> Brian Dodd also notes that there are elements of Romans 7 that "express the deep feeling of an individual," and that "these statements are too pointed and even agonized to be concerned only with other people and not for oneself."<sup>4</sup> Proponents of this view insist that the chapters have specific identifiable references to events in Paul's life.

R. Gundry, for example, argues that when Paul is speaking of being "alive apart from the law in 7:9, he is referring to the period before his *bar mitzvah*, i.e. before the age of puberty when sexual desires become active.<sup>5</sup> But this requires that ἐπιθυμία be understood as sexual desire, which is not demanded by the context. Moreover, no reference to the *bar mitzvah* is present here, since the earliest evidence for such a

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<sup>2</sup> Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched 'I' and its Liberation*, (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1992), 78.

<sup>3</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "Rom 7.14-25 in the Theology of Paul," *TZ* 31 (1975): 260.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I': Personal Example as Literary Strategy*, *JSNTSup* 177, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 224. See also Robert H. Gundry, "The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7:7-25," in *Pauline Studies*, (ed. D. A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 229.

<sup>5</sup> Gundry, 233.

ceremony is medieval.<sup>6</sup>

A. Segal, on the other hand, argues that Romans 7:9-12 refers to a time when, as a Christian, Paul had given up Torah and then returned to it.<sup>7</sup> When he began to observe again the ceremonial laws of Torah, sin revived in him.<sup>8</sup> Although he finds doing the ceremonial Torah a joy, it in fact constitutes a “trap” for him, in that it creates in him covetous desires to depend “on fleshly marks for religious justification” rather than depending on Christ.<sup>9</sup> Paul is trying to compromise between two sociological groups of Christians: those who observe Torah and those who do not.<sup>10</sup> Thus Segal describes Romans 7 not as a “theological discussion of why humanity is unable to keep the law” but as “the confession of a man who could and did live as a Pharisee but finds ceremonial Torah a backsliding temptation after his transformation to a new spiritual body.”<sup>11</sup> The fundamental problem with this interpretation, as with most autobiographical interpretations, is that so much must be read into the text. It seems that Paul has deliberately excluded all personal information, despite the highly passionate style in which he writes.

M. Middendorf also interprets Romans 7 as entirely autobiographical. He understands Romans 7:7-12 to refer to Paul’s pre-Christian existence under Torah, and 7:13-25 to his Christian life. In 7:9, Paul was “alive apart from the law in that he “possessed physical life” and merely “thought he possessed spiritual life,” and was actually living a “‘fleshly’ existence under the lordship of the Law.”<sup>12</sup> On the Damascus road Paul realized that he had been “deceived by sin into living a life *without the full knowledge and awareness of what the Law actually says*” (italics his).<sup>13</sup> When a full understanding of sin and the Law’s true purpose dawned on him, “when he

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<sup>6</sup> W. G. Kümmel, 82, *Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus (Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 17)*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929; reprinted as *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament. Zwei Studien (Theologische Bucherei, 53)*. Munich: Kaiser, 1974, ix-160.

<sup>7</sup> Segal, 226-27, 242.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Paul Middendorf, *The “I” in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7*, (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997), 168.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

realized the Law's effect upon him as a sinful man, 'I died'."<sup>14</sup> What has died is "the notion that 'I' am able to utilize the Law's command as a means to life."<sup>15</sup> Ingenious as this application to Paul's life is, it is ultimately unconvincing. Paul's reference to being alive "apart from the Law" in 7:9 can hardly refer to his life as a Pharisee, even if he were deceived as to the true purpose and intent of the Law. The statement "I was once alive apart from the Law" does not refer to what Paul thought was the case or was deceived by sin into believing was the case, but is a statement of fact. Sin's deception consists in making desirable what God has forbidden, as the allusion to Genesis 3:13 makes clear. Moreover, when Paul says "when the commandment came . . . I died," it is not a notion or self-conception that dies, but rather an actual experience of spiritual death, of alienation from God due to sin. Finally, as with Segal and Gundry, the interpretation fails because too much must be read speculatively into the text to make the interpretation work.

On the other hand, rhetorical considerations suggest that the "I" cannot be purely, if at all, autobiographical. In Romans 7:4-6, Paul has written about how "we" have been put to death to the Torah, so that "we" may serve in the newness of the Spirit. The change to "I" is quite unexpected and a shift to a description of purely personal experience would be unwarranted.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the diatribal form with its leading questions leads one to expect a rhetorical "I" rather than autobiographical description.

The most decisive argument, however, against the purely autobiographical interpretation is the generic nature of the argument and the lack of truly autobiographical detail, such as in Galatians 1:13-17. It seems that Paul is trying to get the reader to read his own experience into the text and to identify with the "I" and for this reason has excluded all personal details. The description is generic enough and the force of this rhetorical device powerful enough that twenty centuries later Christians still read their

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<sup>14</sup> Middendorf, 168.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>16</sup> As Lambrecht, *The Wretched 'I'*, 61, notes.

experience into the text.<sup>17</sup> I suggest this is so because Paul meant his readers to do precisely that: read their experience into the text and identify with what Paul has written here.

### 3.1.2 The fictive rhetorical “I”

#### 3.1.2.1 “I” as “every person”--the interpretation of Kümmel

If the autobiographical interpretation is found wanting, then perhaps the “I” is purely fictive and does not refer to Paul’s life at all. According to Kümmel, “no one or everyone is [the] subject” of Romans 7. Paul “uses the first person for a portrayal of general human experiences.”<sup>18</sup> Thus the ἐγώ is a “rhetorical, fictive I” by which Paul presents the condition of humanity outside of Christ, not true of anyone in particular: “Paul employs the first person singular in order to speak from a Christian vantage point of unredeemed humanity in his objective relation to God.”<sup>19</sup> If Kümmel is correct, then nothing in Romans 7 can be used to reconstruct a psychological plight under the law from which Paul sought to escape and to which he found an answer in Christ. Paul was not a frustrated Jew and did not experience inner anguish over his inability to keep the Law, before or after his conversion.

Kümmel argues that any attempt “to understand and to employ Romans 7:7-24 as a biographical text of Paul” must be given up because the details of Romans 7:7-13 and 14-25 do not fit Paul’s characterization of his own life either as a Pharisee or as a Christian (see Philippians 3:3-6).<sup>20</sup> Romans 7:7-13 does not fit Paul’s life as a Christian for he certainly did not encounter the law against coveting as a Christian. But neither does Romans 7:7-13 fit Paul before his conversion. Kümmel insists that when Paul says that he was alive apart from the Law, this must refer to true and full spiritual life, not to the relative innocence of childhood.<sup>21</sup> Also, how could Paul as a Jew ever

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<sup>17</sup> Of course Paul was not aware that millions of Christians generations afterward would be reading the text as God’s eternal Word. As I will suggest below, Paul only meant for his original readers, Torah-observant believers, to read their experience into the text, not for all Christians to do so. But the rhetorical “I” has proven so powerful that the text has assumed a life of its own beyond the intentions of its author.

<sup>18</sup> Kümmel, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Middendorf, 145, writing about Kümmel’s view.

<sup>20</sup> Kümmel, 117

<sup>21</sup> Kümmel, 52.

claim to have lived apart from the Law? And how can Paul speak of a time “when the commandment came”? He surely cannot be referring to the seven days between his birth and his entry into the Sinai covenant by circumcision on the eighth day (Phil 3:5). Nonetheless Kümmel overstates his case when he insists that 7:9 must refer to full spiritual life and not to the relative innocence of childhood. If “alive” refers to true spiritual life apart from the law, then only Adam, Eve, and Jesus before he was circumcised fit the category as Kümmel understands it. Paul is obviously not referring to Jesus, and for reasons discussed below, he is not referring to Adam and Eve either. It seems far more likely that “alive apart from the law” is meant in a relative sense--Paul is speaking of a time before the force of the commandment was felt in his and other Jews’ personal experience.

Kümmel also argues that the ἐγώ in Romans 7:7-13 must refer to the same person as in 7:14-25. But the latter passage does not appear to describe Paul’s life before or after his conversion. Elsewhere, Paul describes his righteousness according to the law, prior to Christ, as blameless (Phil. 3:6). That Paul nowhere represents his Pharisaic past of one of despair over sin constitutes a major objection to all purely autobiographical views.<sup>22</sup> As a Christian Paul says that “he is not aware of anything against himself,” but is not thereby acquitted before God (1 Cor 4:4). Although there may be sin in Paul’s life as an apostle, he is not aware of it -- a far cry from the despair of the wretched man in 7:14-25 who does the evil he does not want to do and does not do the good that he wants. Dunn, on the other hand, asserts that “we must not make the mistake of taking Phil 3,6 out of its polemical context and erecting it into a dogmatic statement about Paul’s pre-Christian past.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, a claim of comparative blamelessness may be made without implying absolute sinlessness, as Thielman argues.<sup>24</sup> He observes how Asa is portrayed as blameless in 2 Chronicles 15:17, but notes that Asa’s sins are listed in the next chapter. In Philippians 3:6 Paul describes “his pre-Christian experience from his *then Jewish* standpoint in language that would most impress the Jewish mind.”<sup>25</sup> Romans 7 on the other hand, describes “his pre-

<sup>22</sup> Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> Dunn, Rom 7.14-25,” 261. See also J. M. Espy, “Paul’s ‘Robust Conscience’ Re-Examined,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 161-88.

<sup>24</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn, “Rom 7.14-25,” 261.

Christian experience from his now Christian standpoint.”<sup>26</sup> The contrast with Philippians 3:6 is not absolutely decisive, since the descriptions of Philippians 3 and Romans 7 serve different rhetorical purposes.

There are several additional problems with Kümmel’s perspective. In 7:25, Paul emphatically includes himself in the plight of the “I” in 7:7-24: “So then, I myself (αὐτὸς ἐγώ) in my mind am a slave to the law of God but in the flesh a slave to sin.” Whenever αὐτός is used with a personal pronoun in the GNT,<sup>27</sup> LXX<sup>28</sup> or the Pseudepigrapha in Greek,<sup>29</sup> it always denotes an emphatic self-reference and includes the one speaking.<sup>30</sup> Paul uses αὐτὸς ἐγώ three times in Romans, always to refer to himself emphatically. It is therefore unlikely that Paul is to be excluded from the description of Romans 7. In addition, this understanding of αὐτὸς ἐγώ resolves the problem of the location of 7:25b, which appears to be in an awkward position following the description of deliverance in 7:24-25a, and which Bultmann has described as a gloss.<sup>31</sup> Why would Paul describe himself as a slave of sin in 7:25b if he had already been delivered? Those who argue for a Christian referent for the ἐγώ insist that 7:25b summarizes the chapters and demonstrates that Paul is describing the Christian life here. But it seems more likely that from 7:7 to 25a Paul has been speaking paradigmatically about existence in the flesh, and that in 25b he is personally including his own past in that description.

Finally, Kümmel’s portrayal of the “I” as a reference to everyone and no one in particular fails because, as Dunn notes, it is “a rather convoluted process of reasoning which argues both that the “I” does not denote Paul’s personal experience but that it does denote the experience of every person -- every person except Paul!”<sup>32</sup> It is more

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, “Rom 7.14-25,” 261. Dunn would limit the description of Paul’s pre-Christian past to 7:7-13.

<sup>27</sup> Matt 20:12; Mark 6:31; Luke 2:5; John 3:28; 6:40; Acts 10:26; 20:30; Rom 9:3; 15:14; 16:2; 1 Cor 5:13; 7:35; 11:13; 2 Cor 12:13; 2 Thess 1:4

<sup>28</sup> Gen 47:24; Exod 5:11; 20:23; 30:37; 33:15; Lev 26:1; Num 11:16; 16:6; 32:24; 34:7, 10; 35:11; Deut 4:14, 37; 10:15; Josh 4:3; 6:18; 2 Chr 20:15; Ezra 4:3; Neh 5:8; 1 Esdr 8:58; Dan 14:11.

<sup>29</sup> e.g., *Sol.* 17:1; *3 Macc* 3:13; 6:24.

<sup>30</sup> Gundry, 229, also notes that αὐτὸς ἐγώ in 7:25b is an emphatic self-reference. See also Ronald Y. K. Fung, “The Impotence of the Law: Toward a Fresh Understanding of Romans 7:14-25,” in *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation*, (eds. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> R. Bultmann, “Glossen im Römerbrief,” *Exegetica*, (Tübingen: Mohr), 1967, 278-79; Käsemann, *Romans*, 211-212.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

likely, then, that Paul is using his own experience paradigmatically and typically, but excluding all specific autobiographical details so that his readers can identify with the experience he describes.

Käsemann argues that the “I” in these verses is Adam, since “there is nothing in the passage which does not fit Adam, and everything fits Adam alone.”<sup>33</sup> The strength of this interpretation lies in verse 9: “I once was alive apart from the law.” Unless the seven days of life before circumcision is counted, there is no time in which a Jew can be understood as being “alive apart from the law.” And although humanity existed apart from the law from Adam until Moses (5:13), death exercised dominion over humanity during that time (5:14). Only Adam (and Eve) were spiritually alive apart from the law. Moreover, there is an allusion to the serpent’s deception of Eve (Gen 3:13) in Romans 7:11, where Paul writes: “sin deceived me.” That Paul is alluding to the serpent’s deception of Eve is clear, but that does not mean that the “I” is Adam. An allusion does not constitute a historical reference. Moreover, Paul clearly presupposes that the Law was not given until Sinai (Rom 5:13). Furthermore, the command, “Do not covet” was not given until Sinai,<sup>34</sup> and is different from the command given in the garden not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:17). Finally, it is difficult to consistently interpret the “I” in Romans 7:14-25 as referring to Adam.<sup>35</sup> One must suppose some shift in referent in these verses to all of humanity, a shift which is unnecessary if Adam is not the referent. Rather, as Theissen asserts, “Adam is not the *subject* of the conflict in Romans 7:7ff. but rather its *model*.”<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1.2.2 The redemptive-historical “I”

Karlberg<sup>37</sup> and Moo, in contrast, interpret the ἐγώ as Israel redemptive-

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<sup>33</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 196. See also S. Lyonnet, “L’histoire du salut selon le ch 7 de l’épître aux Romains,” *Bib* 43 (1962): 117-151; idem, “‘Tu ne convoiteras pas’ (Rom 7.7),” in *Neotestmentica et Patristica* (NovTSup, 6; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 157-65.

<sup>34</sup> Although Jewish tradition could equate the Sinai Law and the command to Adam, as in *Tg. Neof. Gen* 2:15, as noted by Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Paul’s Theology*, (trans. John P. Galvin; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987), 203n3.

<sup>35</sup> Middendorf, 143.

<sup>36</sup> Theissen, 203.

<sup>37</sup> Karlberg, “Israel’s History Personified: Romans 7:7-13 in Relation to Paul’s Teaching on the ‘Old Man,’” *TJ* (1986): 65-74.

historically rather than paradigmatically. Moo argues that “Rom 7.7-12 employs a vivid narrative style in order to give a theological interpretation of Israel’s encounter with the law at Sinai.”<sup>38</sup> He also suggests that ἐγώ in Romans 7 is used because Paul identifies himself with his people corporately, as may also be the case in Gal 2:18-21. Moo also mentions Jeremiah 10:19-22, Micah 7:7-10, Lamentations 1:9-22, and *Psalms of Solomon* 1:1-2:6 which use “I” as a rhetorical device in which the writer identifies and personifies the experience of his people<sup>39</sup> (cf. IQS 11:9-10; IQH 1.21-23; 3:24-26). Although Moo is correct that Paul is identifying with the experience of his people, the ἐγώ is paradigmatic rather than historical and describes human existence under Torah generically without specific reference to an event in Israel’s history such as Sinai or the golden calf. In addition, if the “I” in Romans 7 is historical Israel at Sinai, it is difficult, if not impossible, to carry through the interpretation into 7:14-25.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.1.2.3 The Gentile “I”

Like Kümmel, Stowers argues that the I in Romans 7 is fictive, though Paul is not referring to “every person” but to a specific group of people, namely Gentile believers who perceive in the Torah a means to self-mastery. Thus Romans 7 concerns Torah’s effect on Gentiles only and not the Jews, since Stowers believes that the letter as a whole is addressed exclusively to Gentiles in Romans 1:5. Thus the “I” in Romans 7 cannot refer to or include Paul, but instead is an example of the rhetorical device speech-in-character or προσωποποιία. It is a “rhetorical and literary technique in which the speaker or writer produces speech that represents not himself or herself but another person or type of character.”<sup>41</sup> R. D. Anderson, on the other hand, argues that Romans 7:7-25 must be understood as a personal παράδειγμα, as an illustration from his own personal experience,<sup>42</sup> rather than as προσωποποιία. Since

there are no signals in the text that Paul has introduced another

<sup>38</sup> Moo, “Israel and Paul in Romans 7:7-12,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 129.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>40</sup> Middendorf, 139.

<sup>41</sup> Stowers, “Romans 7.7-25 as a Speech-in-Character (προσωποποιία),” in *Paul in his Hellenistic Context*, (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 1995), 180.

<sup>42</sup> R. Dean Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, revised ed., (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 231-2.

speaker into his discourse here (e.g., Adam), . . . therefore προσωποποιῶ must be ruled out. Neither is there any hint that these verses are to be interpreted as any kind of generalized voice. The reader/hearer of these words *must* have interpreted them of Paul's experience."<sup>43</sup>

Given the lack of clear signals to indicate that Paul is speaking with the voice of another, it seems unlikely that προσωποποιῶ is being used here. Moreover, Stowers appeals to Origen as evidence of speech-in-character here,<sup>44</sup> but, as Anderson points out, Origen is quite tentative in his suggestion, since he encountered an apparent contradiction in Paul's description of himself as fleshly and sold under sin.<sup>45</sup> In other writings, Origen offered differing interpretations of Romans 7:14-25.<sup>46</sup> As Anderson notes, "Origen's caution in suggesting the application of προσωποποιῶ here, combined with the fact that he is led to this suggestion *because* of the difficulties encountered in the text, do not inspire confidence in the correctness of the interpretation."<sup>47</sup>

Stowers' insistence that "I" not include Paul seems to be based more upon his and Lloyd Gaston's rather tendentious thesis that Paul is only referring to the effect of Torah upon Gentiles.<sup>48</sup> At least some of the Gentile believers in Rome had been Jewish proselytes and thus had come under the authority of the Mosaic Covenant. But Romans 7 cannot be limited to Gentile proselytes attempting to observe Torah, as Stowers argues. In fact, there are clear contextual clues that demonstrate that both Jews and gentile proselytes are included here. Paul has already stated that his gospel is the power of God for the salvation of both Jew and Gentile (1:16-17) and that as far as sin is concerned, both Jew and Gentile are under its authority (3:9) and that there is no cultic distinction (διαστολή) between them, since all have sinned and lack the glory of God (3:22-23). In Romans 5:12-21, Paul makes it clear that the entry of the Sinai Torah did not in fact help Israel as opposed to the rest of humanity, but exacerbated the plight of

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson, 231n89.

<sup>44</sup> Origen's Commentary on Romans has not been preserved, but Stowers relies on Greek fragments from the *Catena*e and the *Philocalia*, upon Rufinus' Latin translation of Origen, and on Jerome's Epistle 121, which refers to Origen's commentary on this passage.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, 204. For a detailed response to Stowers' suggestion that Paul uses προσωποποιῶ in Romans, see 201-205.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 204

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 31.

sin which it shared with them. Thus the application of Romans 7:5, 7-25 cannot be limited to Gentiles, as Stowers would have it. Although Stowers is correct that the popularity of Judaism among Gentiles was largely due to the appeal of Torah as a means of attaining self-mastery over the passions<sup>49</sup> and although Paul is seeking to convince his gentile readers not to put themselves under the Torah as a means of attaining such self-mastery,<sup>50</sup> this does not mean that Paul is describing Torah's effect on Gentiles alone.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Paul's point in Romans 7:7-25 is that if Torah did not provide a means for attaining self-mastery for the Jews, it certainly will not provide a means for Gentile believers either. Paul has already stated that his gospel was to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (1:16), and established that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile as far as sin is concerned, since all are under sin (3:9). Thus Stowers' appeal to προσωποποιία seems to be demanded more by his thesis than by the text itself.

### 3.1.3 The personal and paradigmatic "I"

Thus the "I" in Romans 7:7-25 is neither purely autobiographical nor fictive, but personal and paradigmatic. Clearly the "I" possesses a rhetorical and paradigmatic sense, at least up until 7:25b, where Paul includes himself in the paradigm. The description is generic enough, however, so that the Roman readers, indeed all readers, can see themselves in the portrait described. The fact that Paul includes himself, on the other hand, means that he is not speaking fictively about the experience of "every person", but is drawing upon his own personal experiences of the law. It might be asked when these experiences were, but Paul gives few, if any, clues. Stendahl is probably correct, however, that it could not have been prior to his conversion, since Philippians 3:6 cannot easily be reconciled with the consciousness of sinfulness which is described in Romans 7:14-25.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, it does not appear to refer to Paul's present Christian experience, since Paul declares that he is not aware of anything against himself (1 Cor 4:4) and for reasons to be discussed below. Perhaps Paul is

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<sup>49</sup> Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 61.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Stendahl, 80.

referring to his post-conversion view of his zeal in persecuting the church.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.2 Paul's Rhetorical Purpose in Romans 7

If the "I" in Romans 7:7-25 is personal and paradigmatic, then the question must be asked who the intended audience was, who is included within the paradigmatic ἐγώ, and what was Paul's purpose in writing precisely this description of their plight to them. Ostensibly the purpose of his argument in Romans 6-7 is to defend his gospel against charges that it compromises the holiness of the Law and that it leads people to sin (the rhetorical questions in 6:1, 15; 7:7; 7:13), charges which some have actually leveled against him (3:8, cf. 6:1). The Roman believers may have heard rumors to this effect. But there is a certain inadequacy to this idea. It seems that Paul also wishes to stress the inadequacy and weakness of the Torah despite its goodness and holiness. In fact this appears to be the main point by the time the reader reaches 8:3, where the apparent task of vindicating the law appears to have disappeared completely from view.

#### 3.2.1 Romans 7 as representing Christian existence or existence under the Jewish Torah?

On the other hand, many have asserted that the main purpose of Romans 7 is to give believers a picture of the Christian struggle, especially since Augustine.<sup>54</sup> Or is Paul explaining the situation of one who is under the authority of the Torah? There are good reasons for adopting the latter approach. First of all, 7:5-6 portrays a clear contrast

<sup>53</sup> Philippians 3 reflects Paul's pre-conversion view of his zeal, since the standard of judgment there is κατὰ νόμον.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Barrett, *Romans*, 137-44; John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*. (trans. Ross Mackenzie, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 146-55; D. H. Campbell, "The Identity of ego in Romans 7:7-25." In *Studia Biblica* 1978, III, 57-64; Cranfield, 344-7; Dunn, 387-89; 403-12; Morris, 284-88; Murray, 256-59; Nygren, 284-97; J. I. Packer, "The Wretched Man' of Romans 7," *StudEv* 2 (1964): 621-7. Those who adopt the approach that 7:14-25 describes the pre-Christian state include: J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 237-43; R. Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul" (1932) in *Existence and Faith*, New York: Meridian, 1960), 147-157; Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 511-15; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 465; Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen*, 57-73, 97-138; Jan Lambrecht, "Man Before and Without Christ: Rom 7 and Pauline Anthropology," *Louvain Studies* 5 (1974-75): 18-33; Käsemann, *Romans*, 199-212; Moo, *Romans*, 447-51; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 126-30; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 114-16; Ziesler, *Romans*, 191-95.

between life in the flesh and under the law which is contrasted with life in the Spirit, a contrast which is developed in 7:7-25 and 8:1-17. The  $\nu\upsilon\iota\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}$  of 7:6 and  $\nu\upsilon\nu$  in 8:1 point to a decisive change in the life of those who believe, a change that is the result of dying to the law and being transferred from the realm of the flesh to that of the Spirit. Second, the absence of reference to the Spirit in 7:14-25, except for the mention of the law as “spiritual,”<sup>55</sup> points to a life lived apart from the Spirit. The  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$  in 7:14-25 is left to its own resources to attempt to keep the law, in fact, the only resource that it has is its knowledge of and joy in the law (7:22). Third, the  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$  is explicitly described as  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma$  (7:14), and confesses that nothing good dwells in him, that is,  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\eta\ \sigma\alpha\rho\kappa\acute{\iota}\mu\omicron\upsilon$  (7:18), a condition from which Paul says believers have been delivered (7:5-6; 8:9). Fourth, he describes the  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$  as sold under sin, an image of slavery, whereas in 6:14 he clearly stated: “sin shall not be our master, for we are not under law, but under grace.” Paul clearly associates the condition of being a slave to sin with the law (cf. 7:5-6). Fifth, in 8:2, the believer has been freed from the law of sin which bound him in 7:23. Sixth, the situation described here is not one of struggle, but of the total powerlessness of the  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$  against sin. Twice Paul says that it is no longer him who acts, but the sin dwelling in him who does it (7:17, 20). Sin appears to be a power outside of and over the self so that self can no longer determine the character of its actions. For these reasons, it is likely that the situation described in Romans 7 is that of existence under Torah.

Some who advocate that 7:14-25 refers to Christian existence argue that Romans 7 and 8 are to be held together in tension, so that what is reflected here is the tension in the Christian life that comes from living in the overlap of the age to come and the present evil age.<sup>56</sup> Dunn asserts that “for Paul the believer is caught between fulfillment and consummation; he lives in the overlap of the ages, where the new age of resurrection has already begun, but the old age of existence in the flesh has not yet ended.”<sup>57</sup> He goes on to say that “the believer, even as believer, is a divided man, a man at war with himself. As a man of the Spirit he is at war with himself as a man of the flesh.”<sup>58</sup> At

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<sup>55</sup> For the law as “spiritual,” see below, section 3.5.

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., Nygren, *Romans*, 34, 293 and Bruce, *Romans*, 151, 156; Middendorf, 215.

<sup>57</sup> Dunn, “Rom 7.14-25,” 264.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

one level, this is certainly true, since Paul calls upon believers to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (8:13). But the continuing struggle of the believer to resist temptation and to overcome sin in this life does not fit the portrait of powerlessness and defeat in Romans 7. This “dialectical” interpretation does not do justice to the extreme contrast between Romans 6 and 8, on the one hand, and Romans 7, on the other. Although the believer certainly does exist in the overlap of the ages, this is a reason for optimism, not despair (Rom 7:24a), since it is now possible to overcome sin in the flesh by the Spirit. As Gundry notes, “the ‘I’ in 7:14-25 is not merely unable to avoid a mixture of the good and the bad. Sin has taken over so completely that the ‘I’ is imprisoned. Contrariwise, those who are in Christ ‘do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit’ (8:4). The wording is exclusive.”<sup>59</sup>

Some have wondered how the person in the flesh can delight in the law (7:22) and seek to obey it. Middendorf appeals to Romans 1:18-32 to illustrate that the non-Christian could not possibly delight in the Law in his inner man as described in 7:22.<sup>60</sup> But Middendorf fails to recognize that 1:18-32 primarily describes Gentiles and not Jews. For Paul, the Jew under the law certainly delighted in God’s law, which is attested in Romans 2:17-20, and throughout Jewish literature of the period. Would Middendorf be willing to argue that all Old Testament saints did not delight in God’s Law, contrary to Psalm 119? Moreover in Romans 9:31, Israel is said to have pursued a law of righteousness, but has failed to attain to it, and in 10:2 Israel is described as zealous for God, but not according to knowledge. Paul himself was zealous for the traditions of his forefathers (Gal 1:14). Thus it is possible to delight in God’s law and yet be in the flesh and under the law.<sup>61</sup>

Another objection to the interpretation of Romans 7 as a description of existence under the Torah is that the phrase “therefore, I myself am a slave to the law of God in my mind, but a slave of sin in the flesh” in 7:25b would form “*prima facie a non sequitur*, and a shattering anticlimax” to chapter seven after the thanksgiving of v. 25a.<sup>62</sup> But it is more plausible to interpret 7:25a as an outburst of thanksgiving that anticipates chapter 8 and 7:25b as Paul’s emphatic self-identification with the paradigmatic picture

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<sup>59</sup> Gundry, 238.

<sup>60</sup> Middendorf, 190-1.

<sup>61</sup> *Contra* Fung, 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Contra* J. I. Packer, 625.

of 7:14-25 but to his past “in the flesh.”<sup>63</sup>

The main argument that 7:14-25 applies to the present experience of the believer is the shift to the present tense in verse 14. It is important to recognize that verses 14-25 do not form a complete unit, but are part of the section in which Paul answers the question “*Did that which is good become death to me?*” (7:13-25). The rest of the chapter is Paul’s answer to this question. In verse 13b, Paul provides an immediate answer to the question, which is really a summary of 7:7-12: “sin, in order to be manifested as sin, worked death through what was good, in order that it might become utterly sinful through the commandment.”

Verses 14-25 offer further explanation of how sin dominates human existence under the law. In other words, the shift in tenses does not occur between paragraphs, but *within the same paragraph*. The question in verse 13 ought to determine the time in which the following verses occur. Since ἐγένετο is aorist, the verb ought to point toward a condition in the past rather than in the present. But tense alone is insufficient to establish time.<sup>64</sup> According to S. Porter, “the change in tense usage denotes a shift from narration of an event to description of a condition.”<sup>65</sup> Thus the use of the aorist and present tenses in 7:13-25 do not necessarily indicate anything about the timing of this condition. One must look elsewhere for adverbial temporal indicators, which are present in 7:6 and 8:1, which clearly indicate a temporal contrast with the description in chapter seven. To argue, as M. Seifrid does, that Paul indicates “that the condition of the ἐγώ extends into the present,”<sup>66</sup> even though the condition began in the past is a gratuitous assumption for which Seifrid fails to provide any evidence. At most, the condition of 7:14-25 might continue into the present if the believer attempts to live according to the law in the strength of his own flesh, but in no fashion does the passage describe the normal condition or struggle of the believer. In fact, if 7:14-25 were to describe the normal struggle of the believer, Paul would have no satisfactory answer to the charge that his gospel has antinomian implications. Even if the law does not restrain sin, as his opponents assume, neither does his gospel! For this reason it is unlikely that

<sup>63</sup> Ἀυτός in conjunction with a personal pronoun is an emphatic self-reference in every single occurrence in the LXX, GNT, and the Pseudepigrapha in Greek. See notes 25-28 above.

<sup>64</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 75-109.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Seifrid, “The Subject of Rom 7:14-25, *NovT* 34 (1992):321.

<sup>66</sup> Seifrid, 322.

Paul is moving from past experience in 7:7-13 to present experience as a believer in 7:14-25. As G. Fee notes, "The questions as Paul puts them forward, and to which he offers a response, have to do with Torah, and therefore with life under Torah, not with life in Christ, which for Paul is decidedly not under Torah."<sup>67</sup>

Middendorf also argues that the deep consciousness of sin portrayed in Romans 7 is not characteristic of the Jews as Paul portrays them elsewhere in his letters: "those Jews who delighted in the Law as a means to gain or maintain their righteousness before God cannot be identified with the "I" portrayed by Paul in Romans 7:14-25. Paul charges those Jews with failing to recognize their own sin and characterizes them as being deceived by sin's perversion of the law."<sup>68</sup> But the writer of the eleventh column of the Community Rule appears to show an equally deep conviction of sin and an equal sole dependence upon the saving righteousness of God:

As for me, I belong to wicked humanity and the counsel of iniquitous flesh. My iniquities, transgressions, sins and corrupt heart belong to the counsel of deceit and to those who walk in darkness. Surely a man's way is not his own; neither can any person establish his own step. Surely justification is of God . . . . As for me, if I stumble, God's loving kindness forever shall save me. If through iniquity of the flesh I fall, my justification will be by the righteousness of God which stands forever (1QS 11:9-12, my trans.).

Thus if Middendorf's interpretation of Paul is correct, then the apostle himself is wrong: pious non-Christian Jews clearly were able to see their sinfulness and failure to keep the Torah, though they did not draw the conclusion that Christ was the means of deliverance, as Paul did. It seems that Middendorf has been caught up by the somewhat exaggerated rhetoric of Romans 1:18-2:24, as if every single Gentile and every single Jew fit into the descriptions there. Nevertheless, Middendorf is right in one regard: the Jews' consciousness of sin does not seem to have led them to the same conclusions about the Law that the person in Romans 7 and Paul reached, and for that reason it is likely that this description is not simply a retrospective of Jewish existence under the Torah, but something more complex.

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<sup>67</sup> Fee, 511.

<sup>68</sup> Middendorf, 200. It appears that Middendorf simply assumes a traditional Lutheran reading of Paul and the Law, which in light of the New Perspective and other new approaches to Paul can no longer be taken for granted.

So there is a certain inadequacy in the idea that Paul is presenting his readers with an abstract retrospective of Jewish life under the law from a Christian perspective. Dunn notes “the illogicality of arguing that the passage here expresses with Christian hindsight the existential anguish of the pious Jew -- which as a pious Jew [Paul] did not actually experience and which as a Christian he still does not experience! -- is usually not appreciated.”<sup>69</sup> Since the letter is addressed to the believers in Rome, it would seem appropriate that he would be addressing an existing situation. What possible significance could such an illustration have for his Roman readership, *unless existence ὑπὸ νόμον continued in some way to be a possibility for them?* Although the change in tense usage in Romans 7 may not necessarily indicate anything about the timing of the condition, nevertheless the vivid use of the present tense appears to indicate that he wishes his reader to identify with the description he is giving.<sup>70</sup> Paul is demonstrating to the Law-observant “weak” believers in Rome<sup>71, 72</sup> why it was necessary to be put to death to the Torah through Christ. He argues that sin, not Torah, is responsible for the spiritual condition of death. If this constitutes a defense of the Torah, it is a weak defense indeed, for Torah is exposed as powerless and rather useless in the struggle against sin. In fact, despite the introductory questions of 7:7 and 7:13, this is Paul’s real purpose: to expose the powerlessness of the Sinai Torah with regard to sin, which he states clearly in 8:3. He wishes to show both Jewish believers and Torah-observant Gentiles their need to be delivered from their covenantal obligations to God under the

<sup>69</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 394.

<sup>70</sup> J. I. Packer, 624, asserts that Rom 7:14-25 refers to present Christian existence because “the only natural way for Paul’s readers to interpret the present tense of vv. 14ff. is as having a present reference,” and “there is no recognized linguistic idiom which will account for the change of tense.” But if in fact Paul is addressing Torah-observant Christians who live ὑπὸ νόμον instead of ὑπὸ χάριν and κατὰ πνεῦμα, then 7:14-25 need not refer to the “normal” existence of the believer.

<sup>71</sup> Alan Segal also connects the weak in Romans 14 with the Torah-observant Christians in Romans 7 (*Paul the Convert*, 224-253).

<sup>72</sup> The terms “weak” and “law-observant” are not necessarily co-extensive. See Mark Reasoner’s sociological study of Romans 14-15, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1-15.13 in Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). According to Reasoner, the terms “strong” and “weak” were sociological terms in use among the Romans to “designate one’s place on the social hierarchy of status” (pp. 45-63, 202). The strong were of higher social standing and viewed the dietary practices and purity concerns of the weak as “superstitious” (*deisidaimonia, superstitio*), (p. 201). According to Reasoner, the strong included a high number of Roman citizens who identified with Roman culture, and were probably financially more secure than the weak (218). The weak, of lower status in Roman society and less wealthy, included Torah observant believers, both Jew and Gentile but also may have included those who observed dietary rules such as vegetarians (p. 202). The weak, therefore, cannot be limited to Jewish believers, or even to law-observant believers (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, purity laws), even though many of them may have fallen into that category.

Sinai covenant. Paul wishes his readers to identify themselves in the picture of captivity to sin he describes in 7:7-25 because they attempt to combine Torah-observance with faith in Christ; it is not simply an abstract post-Christian retrospective on Jewish life under the Torah, but a real experience in the lives of his readers, at least as Paul views it. Paul, on the other hand, believes that this should no longer be the case, since they have been delivered from the power of sin in the flesh under the law (7:5-6). Paul later comments that he has written to them rather boldly and one wonders whether he had this chapter in mind.

But what is it about existence *ὑπὸ νόμον* that makes it so fatal? One possibility might be that the Jews lived under a code with moral laws written out in detail whereas Christians simply live under the authority of the law of love (Rom 13:8, 10). But why should having detailed moral directives produce bondage to sin? Fung proposes that this passage represents the Christian still trying to live by self effort when the new way of the Spirit is now available.<sup>73</sup> It is questionable, however, whether *ὑπὸ νόμον* means to attempt to keep the law by one's own efforts. The concept of self-effort, though popular in 19th and 20th century holiness groups as a description of how not to live, is not to be found in Paul. Paul would hardly speak of not being under the law and dying to the law if all he meant was to rely on the Spirit to keep the law instead of relying on one's own ability. The phrase *ὑπὸ νόμον* more likely refers to existence under the authority of the Sinai covenant. In light of the discussion of the letter in 7:6, it is more probable that these Torah observant Christians rely on the letter, the cultic service required in the Sinai covenant to make them holy to God, rather than relying on the Spirit. This understanding is confirmed by Romans 14, where Paul writes of the Torah-observant weak Christians who are continuing to observe those laws of the Torah which were distinctive of Israel's cultic service to God, such as the food laws and the Sabbath (14:5, 14, 20).<sup>74</sup>

### 3.2.2 *Akrasia* and existence under Torah

Because Paul is addressing Torah-observant believers, he must demonstrate to

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<sup>73</sup> Fung, 34-48.

<sup>74</sup> See notes 69 and 70 above.

them why such observance will not help them overcome sin in the flesh. For this reason, Paul discusses the Torah in the context of the problem of ἀκρασία, a state of powerlessness over one's passions and impulses. Self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια) was the Mediterranean cultural ideal of masculinity at the opposite end of the continuum from *akrasia*.<sup>75</sup> In fact, Moore and Anderson remark that "Mastery--of others and/or oneself--is the definitive masculine trait in most of the Greek and Latin literary and philosophical texts that survive from antiquity."<sup>76</sup> Quoting Foucault, they state: "Enkrateia with its opposite, *akrasia*, is located on the axis of struggle, resistance, and combat . . . [and is] often cloaked in military and athletic metaphors. Grimly taking up arms and emulating the well-disciplined soldier, one valiantly resisted the pitiless assaults of the passions, drove them back, and utterly defeated them."<sup>77</sup> Usually one accomplished this victory through the vigorous application of one's reason in order to gain control of one's irrational impulses.

Stowers argues on the basis of numerous Greco-Roman parallels that Paul is addressing Torah-observant Gentiles who perceive in the Torah a means to gain self-mastery.<sup>78</sup> Stowers is correct that Romans 7 is directed towards the problem of *akrasia* and Torah's ability to deal with that problem. Stowers, however, fails to note that Diaspora Jews addressed the issue of *akrasia* in relation to themselves, and not merely in relation to the Gentiles. Similarly, for Paul, the problem of sin was not limited to Gentiles alone. In fact, Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin's power (Rom 1:18-3:19, esp. 3:9).

As in Greco-Roman literature, Diaspora Jewish literature exalts moderation and self-control as virtues, and denigrates desire or passion as the source of evil. For example, *4 Maccabees*, presumably addressed to fellow Jews, attempts to deal with the problem of *akrasia* by showing that reason is able to triumph over the passions. At 1:13, the author states the reason for his inquiry: to discuss "whether reason (λογισμός) is sovereign over the emotions or passions (πάθος)." In the course of his argument, he refers to the example of the Maccabean martyrs as examples of the self-

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<sup>75</sup> Moore, Stephen D. and Janice Capel Anderson. "Taking it like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees." *JBL* 117 (1998): 250.

<sup>76</sup> Moore and Anderson, 250.

<sup>77</sup> Moore and Anderson, 258-259, quoting Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 65.

<sup>78</sup> Stowers, 260-64. See also Theissen, 212-219 and Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 104-106.

control (σωφροσύνη, ἐγκράτεια) which reason exercises over the emotions. The author asserts constantly that reason has power to rule over and dominate the passions such as gluttony, desire (ἐπιθυμία), and pleasure (ἡδονή) (1:3, 31; 2:4, 15; 3:17; 5:22-23; 6:31-32; 13:4; 16:1; 18:2). The natural appetites of the body can be restrained and bridled by reason (1:35), so that one does not need to be enslaved by them (3:2). God gave humans emotions and desires, but also gave them the mind (νοῦς) to be the sacred governor over them (2:21-22; see 6:33). In fact, God gave humanity the Law, so that the mind will triumph over the passions: “To the mind he gave the law; and the one who lives subject to this will rule a kingdom that is temperate (σώφρων), just, good, and courageous” (2:23; see 2:14, 11:27). In fact, “as soon as one adopts a way of life in accordance with the law, even though a lover of money, one is forced to act contrary to natural ways and to lend without interest to the needy” (2:8). The Law trains in self-control (5:34), particularly through the food laws (1:33-35; 5:25-26). As Moore and Anderson remark, “Observant Jews are a superior race of ‘men’ (even when they happen to be anatomically female), since they are ruled not by reason alone, but by ‘devout reason’ (ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμός), reason subservient to the Torah.”<sup>79</sup> Clearly the author views the mind and the Law as possessing inherent power to overcome sin and so does not view the human condition as one of slavery or captivity to sin; on the contrary, reason is “freer than the free” (14:2). When some people are dominated by their emotions, it is their own fault, because any who “attends to piety with a whole heart . . . are able to control the passions of the flesh” (7:17-20). *4 Maccabees* represents a high degree of optimism within Jewish tradition concerning the ability of the human reason to overcome desires. Instead of advocating a spiritual slavery to sin, *4 Maccabees* asserts that humanity can hold their passions and desires in captivity to their reason with the aid of the divinely given Jewish Law.

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<sup>79</sup> Moore and Anderson, 256.

In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*<sup>80</sup> as well, evil is seen as the result of passions (ἐπιθυμία, πάθημα) such as sexual desire (*T. Reu.* 4:11; 6:1-5; *T. Levi* 9:9, *T. Jud.* 13:2-3; 14:2, 8; *T. Dan* 5:6), anger (*T. Dan* 2:4; 4:1-7), envy (*T. Sim.* 3:2; *T. Jud.* 13:3), insatiability (ἀπληστία, *T. Reu.* 3:3), and arrogant self-exaltation (ὑπερηφάνια, *T. Reu.* 3:5; *T. Jud.* 13:2; *T. Dan* 5:6); all these corrupt the mind and prevail over reason (ἔννοια, *T. Reu.* 4:11).<sup>81</sup> Promiscuity separates humanity from God and leads to idolatry and Beliar (*T. Reu.* 4:6; *T. Sim.* 5:3; see *Wis* 14:22-27). The author therefore exalts the virtue of self-control (σωφροσύνη, *T. Jos.* 6:7), so much so that the author says that “God loves the one who is faithful in self-control in a dark cistern than the one who in royal chambers feasts on delicacies with excess” (*T. Jos.* 9:2). God dwells among those who exercise self-mastery (*T. Jos.* 10:2-3). If, however, one does not exercise self-mastery and instead submits to these evil “spirits or passions,” one will become enslaved to desire and to Beliar (*T. Jud.* 15:2; 18:6; *T. Dan* 4:7; *T. Asher* 1:8; 3:2; 6:5; *T. Jos.* 7:8). This slavery to sin is not an inevitable condition, as in Paul, but is the result of submitting one’s will to one’s evil passions.

Thus when Paul writes of sinful passions at work through the Torah (*Rom* 7:5), he subverts a Hellenistic Jewish ideal of self-mastery through the Torah: reason subservient to the Torah does not produce self-mastery, for although the ἐγώ serves the law of God with its mind, it is captive to the law of sin in the flesh (*Rom* 7:25). Moreover, far from producing self-control over one’s desires, Torah has exacerbated the problem of desire, creating the opportunity for sin to express itself in concrete rebellious desires to transgress God’s Law, without which sin would be dormant or dead (*7:7-12*).<sup>82</sup> If “the function of an effective law code is to control the passions and desires of

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<sup>80</sup> As noted in Chapter One, note 20, the *Testaments* are second century Christian documents in their present form. Nevertheless, the ethical exhortations do not reflect Christian reworking, and reflect ideals common to Diaspora Jews and early Christians. De Jonge remarks that these exhortations “testify to the continuity in ethical thought between Hellenistic-Jewish and early Christian circles”, though he warns that “we can never be sure of the actual provenance of the wording of individual sayings” (“Light on Paul,” 107). Although the *Testaments* are second century in their present form, given the parallels in thought between Philo, *4 Maccabees*, and the *Testaments* and the fact that they contain nothing distinctively Christian, the ethical exhortations in the *Testaments* may reflect Diaspora Jewish piety that is much older.

<sup>81</sup> For this reason, πάθη (7:5) and ἐπιθυμία (7:7-12) should not be limited in meaning to sexual desire (so Gundry, Boyarin, Martin), but include desire for anything God has forbidden.

<sup>82</sup> As Moo, *NTS* 32, 123, asserts, “the omission of objects after the verb suggests that Paul, like Philo (*Decal.* 142-153, 173) and the author of *4 Maccabees* (2.6) before him, uses the tenth commandment as a representative summation of the Mosaic Law.”

its citizens,” then the Torah is not “an ideal constitution.”<sup>83</sup> Thus Paul uses the motif of *akrasia* to undermine the confidence of the weak that the Torah will enable them to achieve self-mastery over their passions. Paul uses the example of Israel and himself paradigmatically in order to convey to the weak why it is that they should not continue to rely on the Sinai covenant as a means for overcoming sin and its passions.

### 3.3 Romans 7:7-12: The Seduction of Eve/Israel and Captivity to Sin

#### 3.3.1 The seduction/deception of Eve/Israel

Romans 7:7-12 is an interpretation of the experience of Israel under Torah in terms of the story of Eve’s deception by the serpent. This is made clear by the allusion to Gen 3:13 in 7:11.<sup>84</sup> There may be additional allusions to the temptation story. In the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*,<sup>85</sup> the devil found an opportunity (*occasione*) to tempt Eve while the angels were absent. The idea of the serpent seizing the opportunity to tempt and lead Eve astray appears to have been part of the Jewish tradition that Paul inherited. Moreover, covetousness is described as the poison with which the devil coated the fruit of the tree of knowledge (*Apoc. Mos.* 19:3), which may be why Paul focuses on the command not to covet in Romans 7:7-12. But neither Adam nor Eve is the subject of 7:7-12; they only provide a model for Paul.<sup>86</sup> Since Paul is discussing Torah, he is clearly referring to himself as a paradigm for the experience of Israel. There is no need to import a reference to some kind of original historical “fall” on Israel’s part such as the sin of the golden calf; rather 7:7-12 refers to all under Torah, each of whom has become the Eve of their own soul.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps ἐξαπατάω should not be translated as “deceived” in 7:11, but as “seduced.” The verb ἀπατάω refers to seduction of a virgin in Exodus 22:16. In what way was Paul “deceived” by sin here? The law was intended to give life, but it

<sup>83</sup> Stowers, 34-36.

<sup>84</sup> As Theissen notes, the difference between ἀπατάω (in Gen 3:13) and ἐξαπατάω (in Rom 7:11) is negligible, particularly since Paul uses ἐξαπατάω in a clear allusion to the deception of Eve in 2 Cor 11:3..

<sup>85</sup> For the dating, provenance, and my use of the Adam and Eve literature, see Chapter One, note 101.

<sup>86</sup> Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 203. See also Bornkamm, “Sin, Law and Death,” 93.

<sup>87</sup> cf. 2 Bar 54:19, Käsemann’s comment about Adam neglects the fact that it was Eve who was deceived (196).

was subverted by sin, which through the law brought death. Unlike the serpent in Genesis 3, sin is not offering something to Paul that it cannot deliver, as when the serpent offered the possibility of wisdom and of being like God (Gen 3:5-6). Nor is some sinful action being presented as a means for obtaining some kind of good or pleasurable thing. On the contrary, there is a strong sexual undercurrent in 7:1-12: the marriage analogy, the mention of adultery and living with another man while the husband is still alive, the bearing fruit motif in 7:4-5, leads to the conclusion that the deception in 7:11 is a seduction, a spiritual seduction of Israel by sin by the paradoxical means of the law, just as Eve was seduced through the serpent's misinterpretation of God's command into unfaithfulness. In *4 Maccabees* 18:7-8, the mother of the martyrs proclaims: "no seducer corrupted me on a desert plain, nor did the destroyer, the deceitful serpent defile the purity of my virginity." In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, Paul fears that the Corinthian believers were being seduced from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ, just as Eve was seduced by the serpent, whereas he wishes to present as a chaste virgin to Christ. The spirit of the serpent, sin, has penetrated into Israel's flesh through metaphorical sexual union. The adulterous union is purely metaphorical of course: there is no reason to think that Paul thought of Eve as literally copulating with the serpent, as some later rabbinic sources appear to suggest.<sup>88</sup> Israel has been seduced into an adulterous relationship with one other than her rightful covenant lord and husband. Israel ought to have remained spiritually virginal and pure in her devotion in Yahweh, but throughout the OT Israel is continually portrayed as spiritual adulterous and unfaithful.<sup>89</sup> Instead of raising up godly children for Yahweh, she has borne fruit for death (7:5).

Paul uses Eve as a model for Israel here because of Mediterranean stereotypes of the female as lacking rationality and self-control over their passions, as, for example, Medea.<sup>90</sup> Females were viewed as the weaker vessels (see e.g. 1 Pet 3:7) and therefore as more susceptible to seduction by sin through the passions<sup>91</sup>. Moreover the female body functions as a symbol of the purity, the crossing or invasion of boundaries.<sup>92</sup> Through its seduction of virgin Israel, sin penetrates and dwells within her body (7:17,

<sup>88</sup> *Yebamoth* 103b; *Shabbath* 145b-146a; *Abodah Zarah* 22b.

<sup>89</sup> Especially Hosea, Ezekiel 16, 23.

<sup>90</sup> Stowers, 276.

<sup>91</sup> Sir 25:24; 42:14; Philo, *Opif.* 165; *Sacr.* 103; *Det.* 28; 172; *Mos.* I, 8; *Legat.* 319; 4 *Macc.* 16:1-5, 14; *T. Reu* 5:1-6;

<sup>92</sup> Neyrey, 98.

20). As a result Israel lacks the glory of God dwelling within her (3:23, see 8:18), since the indwelling of sin in the body constitutes a defilement that renders it uninhabitable for the divine glory. That Paul speaks of the glory to be revealed in us (8:28) means that the indwelling of the divine glory is yet future; that Paul can speak of the sanctification of the body implies its defilement (6:19, 22; see 1:24). Sin has defiled the purity and virginity of Israel, and rendered her unfit for the divine presence.

### 3.3.2 Wrath, Curse, and Captivity

This penetration of sin into the midst of Israel has another serious consequence. Sin uses the law to bring upon Israel the covenant judgment of death (7:9-11), wrath (4:15), and condemnation (8:1). Moreover, Israel is delivered over to the covenant judgment of captivity to a foreign oppressor: “You shall have sons and daughters, but they shall not remain yours, for they shall go into captivity” (Deut 28:41). Paul, however, understands this plight metaphorically as a state of captivity to the law of sin (Rom 7:23). This does not necessarily mean that Paul thought that his people were still in exile,<sup>93</sup> for the problem here is not the scattering of Jews from their land but their continuing captivity to sin. Although Israel is not in exile in a literal sense, the spiritual condition which gave rise to the exile, namely sin, still exists and still holds Israel captive.

Post-exilic writers continued to express concern about Israel’s plight even after the return from exile, and did not hesitate to describe it as a continuing state of captivity. Although Ezra had led the people back from the exile, he laments because Israel continues to sin: “From the days of our ancestors to this day we have been deep in guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case” (9:7). Likewise, Nehemiah confesses: “Here we are, slaves to this day—slaves in the land that you gave to our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts” (9:36). While the exile has ended, the captivity continues, since Israel did not “turn from their

<sup>93</sup> N. T. Wright has argued that for many forms of Judaism in Paul’s day the exile had not yet ended. Of course, he understands this in the metaphorical sense of God’s promises to Israel not yet being fulfilled, and of Israel’s present existence under Gentile cultural and political oppression. Nevertheless, the term “exile” has the unfortunate connotation of being forced from one’s homeland and being unable to return, which was no longer the case in Paul’s era. See Wright, *NTPG*, 268-279.

wicked works” (9:35). Daniel states that “all Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. So the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against you.” But since the book was written circa 165 BCE, the author is probably speaking of his own generation: he views the majority of Israel as involved in the same covenant-breaking sin as pre-exilic Israel, and this has invoked once again the Deuteronomic curse of captivity to Gentile rulers: “You shall have sons and daughters, but they shall not remain yours, for they shall go into captivity” (Deut 28:41). But it is not Gentile rulers which oppress Israel in Romans 7:7-25, but the cosmic power of sin. Paul has reinterpreted the captivity in spiritual terms, or more precisely, he has diagnosed the deeper spiritual captivity to sin which has caused the covenant curse to be invoked in the first place. Paul’s concern is not with how Israel is suffering, but with how God will be faithful to a faithless nation (Rom 3:3).

Since, as argued here, Paul has drawn upon the idea of *akrasia* and enslavement to the passions in Romans 7:5; 7-25, how can one know if Paul is drawing upon the motif of captivity in Israel’s cultural narrative as well? The idea of slavery to the passions is certainly implied here (Rom 7:5) and this idea is common in Philo also, although the idea of captivity (αἰχμαλωσία) to them occurs only once (*Sacr.* 26), and in Chrysippus once (*Fragmenta Moralia* 416.10). But Paul speaks of captivity to sin, rather than to the passions as such, and the two are not identical, even if sin is responsible for producing the passions. The term αἰχμαλωσία most commonly refers in the LXX to Israel’s experience of captivity under the nations.<sup>94</sup> It is unlikely that Paul had read either Philo or Chrysippus, and the frequency of αἰχμαλωσία as a reference to the historical exile points toward an allusion to Israel’s captivity. Moreover, as has already been discussed, it is Torah which Paul is speaking about here. Torah cannot be sundered from Israel’s cultural narrative as if Paul were speaking of an universalized set of ethical principles abstracted from the Law. Moreover, it has already been argued that the “I” represents Israel paradigmatically, and that the description in

<sup>94</sup> Deut 28:41; 2 Kgs 24:14; 2 Chr 6:37; 29:9; 1 Esdr 5:7, 56, 57, 6:5; 6:8; 7:6, 10-13; 8:65, 77; 9:3, 4, 15; Ezra 2:1; 3:8; 5:5; 8:35; 9:7; Neh 1:2, 3; 4:4; 7:6; 8:17; Esth Add 11:4; Judith 2:9; 4:3; 8:22; 9:4; Tob 3:4, 15; 13:8; 14:5; Zech 6:10; 14:2; Isa 45:13; Jer 1:3; 15:2; 22:22; 46:27; 30:18; 31:23; Bar 4:10, 14, 24; Lam 1:5, 18; 2:14, 21; Ezek 1:1, 2; 3:11, 15; 11:15, 24, 25; 12:3, 4, 7, 11; 25:3; 29:14; 39:25; 40:1; Dan 2:25; 11:33; see the LXX translation of Pss. 13:7=52:7; 67:19; 77:61; 84:2; 95:1; 125:1, 4; Hos 6:11; Amos 9:14; Joel 4:1, 8; Hab 1:9; Zeph 2:7; 3:20; Isa 1:27.

7:14-25 is the state of captivity that has resulted from her seduction by sin into apostasy in 7:8-12.

Earlier Paul described the consequence of this apostasy as wrath: “the Law works wrath” (Rom 4:15). Wrath is another term for the curse which the Sinai covenant has brought and continues to bring upon Israel as transgressors of the covenant (2:17-24; see Deut 28). Daniel prays for God’s wrath to turn away from his people (9:16, see 8:19; 11:36; Bar. 1:13; 1 Macc 1:64; 5:20; 7:38; 8:5), wrath which he earlier referred to as the curse which has been poured out upon them because of their sin (9:12). In Paul’s understanding, this wrath threatens to rupture Israel’s cultural narrative by divorcing her origin in God’s promise to Abraham from her destiny and inheritance as the people of God (Rom 4:13-16). This wrath took the form of being delivered over into captivity to sin, “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). Deutero-Isaiah proclaims concerning the exile: “because of your sins you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was put away.” (Isa 50:1). This concept is different from selling *oneself* to do evil, as in 1 Maccabees 1:15, where apostate Jews abandon the holy covenant and sold themselves to do evil. In Romans 7, being sold under sin is a consequence of being handed over in God’s wrath to enslavement, not a purposeful action. The broader context of Israel’s cultural narrative enables one to see this captivity to sin (*akrasia*) as the spiritual consequence of breaking her covenant with God (2:17-24, 3:3). Just as Israel was sold (πῖπρῶσκω) for her iniquities (Rom 7:14; Isa 50:1; 52:3) and God caused her to serve other gods (Jer 16:11-13; cf. 5:19; Joel 4:6 (MT 3:6) and foreign rulers like Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 17:4; 27:4, 17; 28:14; 40:9) as her masters, so God has delivered Israel over to sin as a foreign ruler. It is oppression by sin, not by the Gentiles, that is Israel’s true plight, one she has in common with the nations.

In the post-exilic period, penitential prayers were written which addressed the apparent continuing state of Israel’s captivity. Stuhlmacher<sup>95</sup> and Seifrid<sup>96</sup> have compared Romans 7:14-25 to penitential prayers.<sup>97</sup> R. Werline notes five characteristics of penitential prayers:<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Stuhlmacher, 110-111.

<sup>96</sup> Seifrid, 322-23.

<sup>97</sup> E.g. Deut 4:28-30; 1 Kgs 8:22-53; Ezra 9:5-15; Neh 1:4-11; 9:6-37; Dan 9:3-19; Bar 1:15-3:8; *PrAz*; Tob 3:1-6; 3 *Macc.* 2:1-10.

<sup>98</sup> Rodney Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 3-7.

1. They contain confessions of sin heavily influenced by Deuteronomic language and ideology, especially Deuteronomy 4:28-30 and 1 Kings 8.

2. There is a direct address to God in which an individual or group confesses sins and petitions for forgiveness.

3. Penitential prayer removes sin through repentance. According to 1 Kings 8, the nation can bring an end to the ultimate covenantal curse--foreign domination and exile--by confessing its sins in prayer (see Tob 13:5-6).

4. These texts testify to penitential reform movements.

5. There is minimal influence of Levitical traditions on them--prayer becomes a way to deal with sin in the absence of sacrifice.

The last two characteristics are highly questionable, since there is little evidence of penitential reform movements apart from these prayers. Werline fails to demonstrate "the development of a religious institution," as his title states, or the development of religious groups centered around such prayers. His summary of the characteristics of such prayers, apart from the last two, is nevertheless useful. Moreover, failure to mention Levitical sacrifices and priestly traditions does not mean that the authors of these prayers did not participate in or benefit from such practices: nothing can be determined from the prayers which Werline addresses. Though such prayers may have originated in the exile when sacrifice was impossible, the prayers continued to be made and written even when temple sacrifice was restored in the Second Temple.

Although Deuteronomic themes such as captivity are present in the letter, Romans 7 is not a direct address to God. Nor is the passage a petition for forgiveness, which is not even mentioned in Romans. There is no confession of sin and repentance does not remove the sin nor is there any assurance of mercy within the confines of the Torah. Finally, Romans 7:14-25 functions more as a confession of powerlessness rather than as a confession of sin, so that there is a cry for deliverance in 7:24 rather than for forgiveness.

Werline associates the development of penitential prayer to the idea that the restoration was not complete and the prophecies unfilled because of Israel's continuing sin.<sup>99</sup> The use of the present tense in 7:14-25 may indicate that Israel's state of spiritual captivity under sin and under Torah persists to the present day, just as Ezra stated:

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<sup>99</sup> Werline, 63.

“From the days of our ancestors to this day we have been deep in guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case” (Ezra 9:7).<sup>100</sup> For Paul, however, traditional ways of handling sin within the covenant, such as the penitential prayer advocated in 1 Kings 8:22-53, have been insufficient to deal with the present plight, and another solution must be found.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.4 The Nature of the Plight: The Identity of “Sin” in Romans 7:7-25

But what precisely is the nature of Israel’s plight under the Torah and under sin? It is clear that Paul personifies sin in Romans 7:7-25. But few studies have focused on the identity of “sin” as such. It is a common assumption that Paul describes a split within the ἐγώ in Romans 7:7-25, a struggle of “the self against the self,” as Holland describes it.<sup>102</sup> Dodd remarks that Romans 7:17, 20 suggest “a very intense experience of a divided personality.”<sup>103</sup> However, although Paul describes a split between willing and doing, it is not clear that the struggle is with one’s own self. The statement presupposes that sin is a purely anthropological reality, and that Paul is not referring to a cosmological power alien to the human self that has invaded and taken up residence. Since this is also a plausible interpretation of Paul’s words, it must be ascertained whether Paul is referring to a purely anthropological and psychological reality when he personifies sin, or to a cosmological power with ontological status, existing independently of humanity, or does sin have both psychological and cosmological dimensions?

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<sup>100</sup> Werline, 52.

<sup>101</sup> H. J. Schoeps asserts that Paul “did not know the Jewish belief in the power of turning again to God” (repentance) in *Paul: the Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*. Trans. H. Knight. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961). This view of Paul is difficult to accept, unless it is held that Paul had little familiarity with Deuteronomic tradition.

<sup>102</sup> Glenn Holland, “The Self Against the Self in Romans 7.7-25,” in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, JSNTSup 180, (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 260-271.

<sup>103</sup> Dodd, 114.

### 3.4.1 Sin as a personified abstraction

That sin is a personified abstraction cannot be denied—its character as rebellion against God’s law is apparent; sin produces desires contrary to divine law because the law gives the opportunity for sin to express its character as rejection of the divine will. Sin is also presented as the enmity which the flesh (unbelieving sinful humanity) displays towards God (Rom 8:7-8). At the same time, sin does not necessarily need to be understood as a personification of a *human* attribute or quality. M. Black rightly recognizes a cosmological dimension: “this is not simply a conflict . . . between a higher self and a lower self. . . . [but a] conflict between forces of evil in which a man is caught up and the opposing powers of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>104</sup> The enmity towards God in Romans 8:7-8 has its roots in a transgression of Adam incited by the serpent in the garden, which Paul elsewhere identifies with Satan (Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 11:2-3).<sup>105</sup> Likewise, Paul can speak of “grace” reigning through righteousness for eternal life, clearly referring to the grace of God, and not a human attribute. Thus the idea that sin is a personification does not necessarily imply a purely human attribute.

Paul does personify other abstractions, such as the flesh, death, and perhaps the law itself. Some have claimed that law, sin, and death form an evil triumvirate of powers which rule over humanity and from which it must be delivered.<sup>106</sup> Despite the fact that believers die to the Law (7:4) in a similar way that they die to sin, such a view is opposed to the thrust of Paul’s argument in 7:7-25, where Paul clearly opposes the identification of law and sin (7:7-12), and the view that the law was a death-bringer (7:13). Paul believes in the sanctity of the Torah (7:12); it is certainly not a reigning power.<sup>107</sup> Even the idea that Paul personifies the law in this chapter should be questioned. The view that the husband in 7:1-3 is the law has already been dismissed, and the description of the law ruling over a person as long as he lives (7:2) is not a personification, merely indicating the binding authority of the law.

Paul, however, clearly personifies death (Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 15:26, 54-56) and

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<sup>104</sup> Black, 107.

<sup>105</sup> Belial is called the Angel of Enmity (מלאך משטמה) in IQM 13:10-12, and Mastema (משטמה), which means enmity) is the prince of demons in *Jubilees* 10:8; CD 16:5; .

<sup>106</sup> See Nygren, 280: “The law takes its place among the powers that destroy.”

<sup>107</sup> *Contra* A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law and the Covenant*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 227, who views the law as a universal cosmic power which reigns over humanity.

flesh in one instance (Gal 5:16-17). But the personification of death is not sustained over several chapters, as is the case with sin in Romans 5-8. Within Romans, the personification is limited to a single verse (5:17), in which death reigns over humanity because of Adam's transgression. Moreover, death is not portrayed as an independent agent which dwells within human beings, possessing them and acting as the one doing the deeds (Rom 7:17, 20). The personification of sin goes far beyond that of death. And although Paul can personify the flesh as a power opposing the Spirit (Gal 5:16-17), it is also not sustained over several chapters. It seems that the description of sin dwelling in the flesh in Romans 7 is an advancement upon the personification of flesh in Gal 5: Paul now makes clear that the real power is sin dwelling in the flesh and not "flesh" itself.

### 3.4.2 Sin as a psychological principle

Since sin is closely associated with the flesh, which might be understood as human nature (cf. above, section 2.6.1 and below, section 3.4.2.5.6), perhaps sin is a psychological principle of some kind rather than an external power. In Romans 7:5 Paul says that "when we were in the flesh, sinful passions were at work in our members through the law." Also, Paul maintains that Jesus came in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and God condemned sin in the flesh (8:3). Despite this association, sin is not identified with the flesh, and Paul does not explain how sin and flesh are to be related, that is, whether sin is a psychological principle within human nature, or a cosmological power that has taken up residence in the flesh. The Qumran community could associate "flesh" (בשר) with sin (1QS 11:12; 1QM 4:3; 12:12; 4Q416 1 10-13; 4Q417 frg. 1 (formerly frg. 2) ; 4Q418 frg. 81),<sup>108</sup> and yet held to a primarily cosmological view of sin (cf. below, section 3.4.3.1). The *Teaching of the Two Spirits* (1QS 3:13-4:26) describes the purifying of a spirit of iniquity from the bowels of the flesh (4:20), and this spirit is to be associated both with the two spirits in which human beings walk (3:18-19) and with the angelic Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness (3:21-24). Flesh, in this context, is the arena in which the cosmic battle between the two spirits and

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<sup>108</sup> See Frey's treatment of the texts from 4Q416-418 in his article "Flesh and Spirit."

their angels is played out. Though inhabited by a spirit of iniquity, it is not itself the source of that iniquity. Nothing can be determined about the identity of sin from its use together with σάρξ.

### 3.4.2.1 Sin as the evil inclination

Davies, on the other hand, suggests that sin is to be identified with an evil inclination (*yetser hara*).<sup>109</sup> In his view, the expression τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς in Romans 8:5-8 is essentially equivalent to the evil inclination.<sup>110</sup> The source of this idea is Genesis 6:5 and 8:21, where God sees that every inclination of the thoughts in the human heart is evil all the time. In the context, *yetser* refers not to a hypostasized psychological principle capable of acting in opposition to the human will or to a good inclination, as the later rabbis developed the notion. The phrase צר בשר is found in the DSS (1QH<sup>a</sup> 24:5; 4Q416 1:16; 4Q418 f2:8). 4Q417 1 II 12 is the least fragmentary: “אל תפתכה מן השבת צר רע” (Let not the plan of an evil disposition mislead you). Frey notes that *4QInstruction* (4Q416-418) writes about Enosh and the people of the spirit (עם רוח) whose צר is according to the pattern of the holy ones (probably angels), contrasting them with the spirit of flesh, who are not able to discern good and evil (4Q417 1 I 17).<sup>111</sup> Frey is right to point out the ethical and cosmic dualism present here, but the suggestion that later Rabbinic teaching of the two *yetsers* is present here is incorrect.<sup>112</sup> There is no contrasting “good inclination” at Qumran.

Moreover, identifying sin as the evil inclination also does not resolve the question of whether sin is anthropological or cosmological, since the idea of an evil disposition can exist simultaneously with the idea of a cosmological spirit such as Belial, who holds people in captivity, as at Qumran (compare CD 2:16 with 4:12-18; 5:18; 8:2;

<sup>109</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 3rd. ed., (London: SPCK, 1970), 20-30. Schoeps, 184-185, states that the doctrine of two *yetsers* “obviously was a favourite theme of discussion in the age of Paul,” but provides no evidence.

<sup>110</sup> W. D. Davies, 20-30.

<sup>111</sup> Jörg Frey, “Flesh and Spirit in the Palestinian Jewish Sapiential Tradition and in the Qumran Texts,” in *The Wisdom Text from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, ed. C. Hempel, A. Lange, and H. Lichtenberger, (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 394-395.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

12:2; 19:14; and 1QS 5:5 with 1:18, 24; 2:5, 19; 1QH 13:6 with 10:6; 14:21-23; 15:3). According to 1QH 15:3, Belial is revealed with the inclination or disposition (of evil men) (כִּי בְלִיעֵל עִם הַיָּסֵד יִצָּר). As Cohen-Stuart notes, the *yetser* “seems to be governed by external powers,”<sup>113</sup> namely God and Belial. The concept of an evil *yetser* is not necessarily evidence of a purely anthropological view of sin, as the DSS attest.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to the ethical-cosmic dualism of Qumran, the rabbis developed the conception in a very different direction, into a psychological dualism of two contrasting hypostasized good and evil inclinations. The notion probably developed much later than first century C.E.<sup>115</sup> The evil inclination is hidden in one’s heart, growing in strength daily and seeking to kill (*bSukkah* 52<sup>a</sup>). The evil *yetser* accustoms a person to sin and ultimately slays him (*Ex. R.* 30:17), just as for Paul sin works death in a person (Rom 7:11, 13). And just as sin rules over people in Romans 5:21, so the evil inclination rules over Israel, so that they cannot repent (*bSanh.* 105<sup>a</sup>). Israel is “sunk in iniquity on account of the evil *yetser* which is within them,” (*Ex. R.* 15:6, trans. Cohen-Stuart). The good inclination does not seem to have been powerful enough to overcome the evil inclination,<sup>116</sup> but God gave to Israel the Torah as an “antidote” (*bQid.* 30<sup>b</sup>; *bBaba Bathra* 16a). Study of the Torah keeps the evil inclination from gaining authority over oneself (*ARNB* 13).<sup>117</sup> Although it is likely that the later Rabbinic teaching developed from earlier traditions such as those represented in 4QInstruction, the Rabbinic conception is a psychological dualism of a struggle between two inclinations within the individual, whereas the concept in 4QInstruction is an ethical cosmic dualism in which two groups of humanity have opposing dispositions.

The contrast of the two  $\varphi\rho\acute{o}\nu\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$  in Romans 8:5-8 reflects a similar ethical and cosmic dualism between two groups of people, rather than the later psychological

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<sup>113</sup> G. H. Cohen-Stuart, *The struggle in man between good and evil: an inquiry into the origin of the Rabbinic concept of Yeser Hara*, (Kampen: Kok, 1984), 100.

<sup>114</sup> Schoeps, 185, asserts that some later rabbis understood the evil inclination “almost on demonological lines, almost as an alien god dwelling in the body of man,” citing *Jer. Yoma* 6:4.

<sup>115</sup> For the idea that Paul is combatting a Rabbinic doctrine of two impulses in Romans 7, see Gary Shogren, “The ‘Wretched Man’ of Romans 7:14-25 as *Reductio ad absurdum*,” *EQ* 72 (2000): 119-134.

<sup>116</sup> Cohen-Stuart, 61.

<sup>117</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the evil inclination than can be pursued here, see the above work.

dualism of the rabbis. It is also unlikely that *4QInstruction* presents the same conception as the rabbis, since  $\text{רָצוֹן}$  refers in the Scrolls to the basic attitude or disposition of a person, rather than to an evil inclination *per se*.<sup>118</sup> The evil inclination is not a personified abstraction in the Scrolls, as in the rabbis; it is simply a disposition that makes one do evil. The testimony of the rabbis is too late, however, to help explain the origin of Paul's conception of sin.

#### 3.4.2.2 Sin as an evil root or seed in the heart

Related to the concept of an evil inclination is that of sin as an evil root or seed in the heart, as found in *4 Ezra*. This apocalypse is a response to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E. and the author understands the present plight of his people in terms of Israel's breaking of God's covenant and scorning of His laws (7:24). Israel failed to keep the good seed of the law safe in their hearts (7:31-37). The failure of Israel to keep God's law is rooted in Adam's disobedience in the garden, for though God gave the law to Israel, He

did not take away from them their evil heart, so that your Law might bring forth fruit in them. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained" (3:19-23, see 3:26; 7:116-126).

The author later laments that an evil seed had been sown in Adam's heart from the beginning, and how much ungodly fruit that evil has produced in humanity (4:30-31). Similarly, sin is described by Paul as a kind of seed at work in one's members to cause one to bear fruit for death (7:5, 23). But Paul does not locate the seat of sin in the heart, but in the flesh, in the members of the body. The comparison of sin to an evil root or seed in the heart does not answer the question of whether sin is fundamentally anthropological or cosmological in nature, character, and origin.

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<sup>118</sup> See Cohen-Stuart, 94-100.

### 3.4.2.3 Sin as evil desire

Because Paul states that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, perhaps sin is to be identified with desire, that is, with one's bodily desires and appetites, or at the very least, an exacerbation or perversion of desire in the human body. This idea is certainly suggested by Romans 7:5, where sinful passions are at work in the members of the body. In 7:23, Paul writes of the law of sin at work in the members of the body, warring against the law of my mind, which can be none other than the command not to covet (Rom 7:7).<sup>119</sup> In 7:5, however, "the passions of sins" does not mean that sin is to be identified with the passions; rather sin is that which produces the passions. Whatever sin is, it is intimately connected with and expresses itself in evil desires. Also commenting on the commandment not to covet, Philo understands desire to be the fountain of all sin:

The fifth [commandment] is that which cuts off desire, the fountain of all iniquity, from which flow all the most unlawful actions, whether of individuals or of states, whether important or trivial, whether sacred or profane, whether they relate to one's life and soul, or to what are called external things; for, as I have said before, nothing ever escapes desire, but, like a fire in a wood, it proceeds onward, consuming and destroying everything (*Decal.*, 173)

Elsewhere Philo calls desire the "infamous author of sin" (*QG.* 47; see *Leg.* II, 72, 74). But it seems that in Romans 7:7-12 the exacerbation of sinful desires is caused by the already existing but up till now dormant sin dwelling in the flesh, springing to life when it encounters the law. That is, the existence of sin in the flesh precedes the exacerbation of desire, and is therefore not to be identified with it. Instead sin has the character of rebellion rather than desire, for sin arouses all sorts of desires in rebellion against the divine command.

Philo's identification of the serpent as pleasure should also be considered here, since he personifies pleasure as if it were a force acting upon the human senses. Philo identifies the serpent in Genesis as a symbol of pleasure (*Opif.*, 157). Pleasure is the beginning of iniquities and transgressions (*Opif.*, 152), "employs innumerable champions and defenders who take care to advocate its interests" (*Opif.*, 160); it cajoles

<sup>119</sup> J. A. Ziesler, "The Role of the Tenth Commandment in Romans 7." *JSNT* 33 (1988): 41-56.

the mind (*Opif.* 165), it acts like a courtesan or mistress, eager to meet with a lover (*Opif.*, 166); it is a hostile and untameable spirit (*Leg.*, II, 92). It deceives and beguiles the outward sense (*Leg.*, III, 61, 109), cheating the soul and persuading it to exchange virtue for evil habits (*Leg.*, III, 109), and “endeavors to trip up and undermine the standing ground of the wise man” (*Leg.*, III, 89). But despite this personification, it is clear that pleasure is not a real entity of any kind but a literary device employed by Philo to emphasize the seductiveness of the human desire for pleasure. Pleasure is never understood to be an independent agent that dwells in and acts in place of the human self, as sin clearly does in Romans 7:17, 20. Pleasure is simply an emotional state experienced through the excitement of the senses. Moreover, pleasure is not described as a power under whose authority people exist, as in the case of sin (Rom 3:9). Philo is far less interested in mythological-cosmological powers such as Satan or the devil, which he refers to only once in a passage of doubtful authenticity (*QG.* I, 36), since it is not in the Greek text. In contrast to Philo, Paul’s understanding of sin seems closer to hypostatization than to mere personification.

#### 3.4.2.4 The language of external power: rhetorical exaggeration?

Stowers has introduced the intriguing possibility that Paul is merely speaking as if one were in the grip of external powers, when in fact what is being described is an internal moral or psychological state, particularly in tragic soliloquies, where the gods are blamed for the evils which humans do.<sup>120</sup> Stowers quotes from Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, in which Phaedra blames Aphrodite for her lust for evil, which she is unable to master (lines 358-359, 401). This phenomenon is even more apparent in the Stoic teacher Epictetus, who stated:

When a man out of passionate love is under the compulsion to do something contrary to his opinion, seeing the better thing but lacking the strength to follow, one might be all the more inclined to regard him as deserving pity, because he is in the grip of something violent, and in a manner of speaking, divine (4.1.147).<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Stowers, 272.

<sup>121</sup> Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual and the Fragments*, Loeb. ed., (trans. W. A. Oldfather; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 294-295.

In other words, Epictetus is apparently suggesting that when one experiences oneself under the violent sway of passionate love, it is merely as if one were in the power of something divine, but in fact one is not.<sup>122</sup> Thus if Stowers is correct, then Paul is speaking of being under the power of sin, that he is merely speaking “as if” he were under an external power. But Stowers fails to discuss the full context of Epictetus’ words in the context of his philosophy. Epictetus in his *Encheiridion*, contrary to what Paul says in Romans 7:7-25, asserts that one is in control of one’s desires and passions:

Some things are under our control, while others are not under our control. Under our control are conception (ὑπόληψις), choice (ὀρμή), desire (ὄρεξις), aversion (ἔκκλισις), and, in a word, everything that is our own doing; not under our control are our body, our property, reputation, office, and in a word, everything that is not our own doing (1.1).<sup>123</sup>

According to Brad Inwood’s entry on “Epictetus” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, knowing what is in one’s power and what is not is the “central idea of Epictetus’ moral teaching.” Inwood also relates that Epictetus taught that “our desires and aversions must be managed so as never to desire the unattainable nor to flee the inevitable.”<sup>124</sup> Although it is fairly clear that Paul and Epictetus do not mean the same thing by “desire,” nevertheless Epictetus is asserting the moral autonomy of the individual and his ability to master his internal states through reason, whereas Paul is maintaining the opposite. Thus it becomes obvious why Epictetus would state that when one experiences passionate love, it is only “as if” one were in the grip of something divine or godlike, even though such is not the case: the ability to control one’s desires through knowledge is the basis of his philosophy.<sup>125</sup> Paul, on the other hand, is stating that one cannot control one’s desires because of sin indwelling in the flesh. Thus the

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<sup>122</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, a specialist in Stoic philosophy, pointed out to me at the BNTS conference in September 2001 that Epictetus would have believed that one was actually “in the grip of something divine” and not merely as if that were the case. Ruth Padel argues similarly, that in the ancient world the divine and the human were in constant interaction, and that human emotions could be seen as divine influences from the outside (see below, section 3.4.4.4). Thus my critique concerns more Stowers’ use of his work than Epictetus’ philosophy itself.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 482-483.

<sup>124</sup> Brad Inwood, “Epictetus,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (ed. Edward Craig, London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 338.

<sup>125</sup> Schnelle likewise perceives the essential incompatibility of Paul’s and Epictetus’ views on this basis. Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John*, (trans. O. C. Dean; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 70.

quote from Epictetus, far from demonstrating that “sin” is an internal anthropological reality, in fact suggests the contrary. In other words, if Paul is truly asserting the inability to control desires, then perhaps one really is in the grip of something divine.

But let us examine Paul’s argument in Romans 7:14-25 from the viewpoint that it merely appears that one is in the grip of some supernatural cosmic power. Paul states that it is no longer I who do it, but the sin dwelling in me that does the sin (7:17, 20). All anthropological interpretations of Romans 7 ultimately depend upon an experiential reading of these verses, for if it were truly not I but sin, then sin is not a constituent part, aspect, or corruption of the human person, but some power distinct from the human self.<sup>126</sup> If Paul speaks purely from an experiential standpoint, then he means: “It is *as if* it were no longer I who did the sin, but sin dwelling in me, though I really know that I am the one sinning; it simply feels like I am not the one who is sinning and that I am in the grip of a power I cannot control.” If it is merely “as if were not I,” then the “I” really is in control. In consequence, Paul’s language of being in captivity to a law of sin in his members (Rom 7:23) would also be merely experiential: It is as if “I” were in captivity to sin, though we all know that “I” am not. Whereupon one must also conclude that it is merely as if “I” were delivered by Christ (7:24), for in fact “I” need no deliverance, since “I” am fully in control of my desires and faculties after all. Perhaps Christ delivers the ἐγώ only from the delusion that it is not in control, as if he were some Stoic teacher like Epictetus convincing the “I” that it really can control its passions through the correct application of its reason.

But another more serious consequence issues from the position that Paul is only referring to an anthropological reality and merely speaking experientially in Romans 7:17 and 20. If it is merely *as if* I who no longer did the sin, then it follows that it is only *as if* I did not do what I wanted, when in fact I did exactly what I wanted to do, namely, break God’s command. But if “I” do exactly what I want, then “I” can no longer agree that the law is good, (7:16). Paul’s entire argument begins to unravel. Sin cannot refer to a purely anthropological reality if Paul’s argument is to stand. Only if the experiential “as if” approach is abandoned can Paul’s argument be saved from

<sup>126</sup> Bruce’s argument, 154, that “as soon as our will consents to it [the sin], it is I that does it, even if it were not so before,” undermines Paul’s train of thought. For if sin’s mastery requires the consent of the human will, what need is there to speak of being sold as a slave under sin (7:14)? On the other hand, Bruce simply states outright the assumptions that undergird purely anthropological interpretations of Rom 7:14-25.

deconstructing.

Advocates of a purely anthropological perspective would not want to carry the conclusion this far. But once one begins to interpret Paul's words in Romans 7:17, 20 from an experiential standpoint, the rest follows like so many dominoes falling in a line. For once those who advocate the anthropological viewpoint allow that it really is not "I" that does the sin, but some power distinct from the self, the door is wide open to the cosmological interpretation. Of course it might be argued that "sin" refers to a split-off part of the self that holds the "conscious self" in bondage. But this psychoanalytic argument is anachronistic and introduces elements not found in Paul's own description in 7:14-25, since Paul nowhere writes of a split between parts or aspects of the self, but only between willing and doing, intention and action. A split self would mean that one had two intentions or wills and that one could not make up one's mind. So Paul is not referring to a struggle of the "self against the self." Nor can sin refer to some hypostasized "principle" or nature within the self by which one is held captive, for then it must be asked what the ontological status of this "principle" is. If the captivity to sin is as real and as binding as Paul seems to suggest, in that supernatural deliverance through Christ is necessary, then "sin" cannot be simply a split within the self, nor a principle in human nature, but a real power or spirit distinct from the human self.

### **3.4.2.5 Sin as a corruption of human nature: the view of Augustine**

#### **3.4.2.5.1 Sin as habit (*consuetudo*): the early Augustine**

The anthropological perspective of Augustine, however, must be dealt with in greater detail. In his view, sin is a corruption of human nature, a perverted will that is no longer able to effectively choose the good. The early Augustine, in common with Pelagius,<sup>127</sup> viewed sin as habit:

For today in our actions before we are implicated by any habit,  
we have free choice of doing anything or not doing it. But when  
by that liberty we have done something and the pernicious

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<sup>127</sup> Pelagius interprets "it is no longer I who do it" in Rom 7:17, 20 to mean that it was once he who did the sin, but now that sin has become a habit, the sinful habit has taken over: Not I, because I do it [as it were] against my will, but the habit of sin, though I myself have provided myself with this compulsion." (*Pelagius' Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, (trans. Theodore de Bruyn; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 104).

sweetness and pleasure of that deed has taken hold upon the mind, by its own habit the mind is so implicated that afterwards it cannot conquer what by sinning it has fashioned for itself. . . . And this is what wars against the soul, habit formed in the flesh.<sup>128</sup>

Sin in this view is weakness, a failure to exercise human freedom appropriately and the susceptibility to become enslaved to habit, rather than overt defiance against God.<sup>129</sup> According to Augustine, habit begins first with pleasure in the heart, which is followed by consent, then action, then habit (*Sermon* 98.6). The idea of sin as a habit which has taken hold of man appears earlier in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa: “But the habit of sinning entered as we have described, and with fatal quickness, into the life of man; and from that small beginning spread into this infinitude of evil.”<sup>130</sup> But it is the influence of Augustine that has proved so enduring in Western Christianity. Defining sin as enslaving habit, however, is insufficient to explain Romans 7:7-12. According to Romans 7:8-9, sin lies dormant in the flesh prior to the development of any sinful habit, waiting for the opportunity to manifest itself in all sorts of evil desires when the divine command is given. Moreover, habits are acquired over time, whereas Paul immediately dies (spiritually) when he encounters the command “Do not covet.” Finally, the idea of enslaving habits is neither Pauline and nor is it found in the rest of the New Testament nor even in the Apostolic fathers.

#### 3.4.2.5.2 Sin as *concupiscentia*

Augustine also defined sin as concupiscence: “even concupiscence itself, which is sin dwelling in our flesh, never ceases to diminish in those who are making progress, although it still remains in their mortal members” (*Concerning Man’s Perfection in Righteousness*, ch. 13). Augustine derives the term *concupiscentia* from the Latin text of Romans 7:8. He defined the concept as “that concupiscence of the flesh which lies in the gratification of all senses and pleasures” (*Confessions*, ch. 35). Concupiscence is

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<sup>128</sup> Augustine, *Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus, the Manichaeon*, 22 ; see also John Chrysostom, Homily XLI on Acts 19:8-9. For a discussion of *consuetudo* in Augustine, see Allan D. Fitzgerald, “Habit (*consuetudo*)” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), 409-410; J. G. Prediville, “The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of St. Augustine,” *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99.

<sup>129</sup> Prediville, 56.

<sup>130</sup> *On Virginity*, XII.

therefore uncontrolled desire or lust for whatever pleases the senses, but especially sexuality. Sin, therefore, for Augustine is a corruption or perversion of human nature, particularly of the bodily appetites and drives that leads them to uncontrollable excess.

This “carnal concupiscence” though rightly used within marriage, was absent from human nature prior to the Fall: “For although conjugal chastity makes a right use of the carnal concupiscence which is in our members; yet it is liable to motions not voluntary, by which it shows either that it could not have existed at all in paradise before sin, or if it did, that it was not then such as that sometimes it should resist the will.” (*On the Trinity*, ch. 18). But if Augustine is correct that carnal concupiscence has been responsible for the propagation of the species since the Fall, then sin certainly could not be dead or dormant until the commandment came. Thus sin cannot consist merely of an exacerbation of desire.

One should be careful, however, to distinguish the views of the early Augustine, in his debates against the Manichaeans and the *Confessions*, from the later Augustine, in his Anti-Pelagian writings and *The City of God*. Nevertheless, there is a stream of continuity in Augustine’s wrestling with the problem of sin and evil, though his position on the freedom of the will and predestination changes. Moreover according to the early Augustine, Romans 7:14-25 refers to existence under the law,<sup>131</sup> whereas later on he understood it to refer to the Christian’s continuing struggle with sin<sup>132</sup> (indeed he is the primary impulse behind this perspective). In both the early and mature Augustine, the problem of sin is grounded in free will, though later that free will is restricted to Adam and Eve.

#### **3.4.2.5.3 Augustine’s reaction against Manichaeism and rejection of a cosmological view of sin**

Augustine appealed to free-will in order to safeguard human accountability before God over against the determinism of the Manichaeans, who held that humanity was the victim of a metaphysical power of evil identified in some sense with the material world. The “dark particles of matter” trapped the “light particles” of the divine spirit

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<sup>131</sup> E.g. *The Confessions*, Book VIII, Chapters 5 and 10.

<sup>132</sup> E.g. *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Chapters 26 and 59.

and the moral struggles of human beings were the result of this evil principle overpowering them.<sup>133</sup> The Manichaeans thus held not only to a cosmological view of sin, but to a metaphysical view of evil as an eternal ontological reality not created by God, reflecting the Persian and presumably Zoroastrian origins of their founder Mani.

Augustine had been attracted to the Manichaean world-view for a period,<sup>134</sup> and his struggle with the problem of evil can be explained as a reaction against their determinism and metaphysical dualism. His fundamental argument was that sin was to be located in the will alone and not in any external power as the Manichaeans asserted: “free-will was the cause of our doing evil . . . . I was most certain that it was none but myself that was willing and unwilling’ and immediately I perceived that there was the cause of my sin. But what I did against my will I saw that I suffered rather than did, and that judged I not to be my fault, but my punishment.”<sup>135</sup> This “I” willing against itself was a divinely imposed penalty for submitting to sin in the first place, and Augustine referred to this enslavement of the will as *consuetudo*,<sup>136</sup> custom or habit: “For the law of sin is the violence of custom, whereby the mind is drawn and held, even against its will; deserving to be so held in that it so willingly falls into it.”<sup>137</sup> Augustine explained the process: “Because of a perverse will was lust made; and lust indulged in became custom; and custom not resisted became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I term it a ‘chain’), did a hard bondage hold me enthralled.”<sup>138</sup> In the early Augustine, each person does this to himself, but in the mature Augustine, Adam’s free choice resulted in all his descendants inheriting a nature corrupted by concupiscence. In other words, instead of each individual creating sinful habits which enslave, the habit of sinning is inherited from Adam, and human beings are slaves to sin from the time they are born.

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<sup>133</sup> Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2nd ed., (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992), 21, 24, 187-90. Kam-lun Edwin Lee, *Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good*, (New York, Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 41.

<sup>134</sup> For Augustine’s break with the Manichees, see Lieu, 190-1.

<sup>135</sup> *Confessions*, 7.3.

<sup>136</sup> For a more detailed discussion of *consuetudo* than can be pursued here, see Lee, 42-53;

<sup>137</sup> *Confessions*, 8.5.

<sup>138</sup> *Confessions*, 8.5.

#### 3.4.2.5.4 Augustine's redefinition of sin and the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being

In his argument against the Manichaeans, Augustine redefined the concept of sin as *privatio boni*. The Manichees had understood sin or evil as an ontological principle, but Augustine insisted that sin or evil had no substantial existence of its own, nor to be related to matter, but was in fact nothing at all.<sup>139</sup> Augustine did not mean that evil did not exist, but that it was merely a privation of the good. This concept should not be confused with a mere limitation<sup>140</sup> as opposed to the perfect and infinite being of God since such limitations are proper and appropriate to created beings, rather evil is a deprivation of some good that ought to be present in creation. The twin bases of Augustine's thought here are his reaction against Manichaean view of evil as substantial and his adoption of a Neoplatonic hierarchy of being.<sup>141</sup> God is pure immutable Being at the top of this hierarchy, which descends to nothingness or non-existence at the bottom.<sup>142</sup> Created beings participate in different grades of being within the hierarchy, depending upon their "mutability." The degree to which creatures are subject to change and are in a process of becoming and to which they reflect God's nature, determines where in the hierarchy they are placed: Angels are just below God, with human beings below them, and then animals, plants and matter at the bottom.<sup>143</sup> In this scheme, sin is a prideful desire for a higher place in the hierarchy of being than God has ordained:

And what is pride but the craving for undue exaltation? And  
this is undue exaltation, when the soul abandons Him to whom

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<sup>139</sup> Lieu, 190-1, comments that Neoplatonic philosophy aided Augustine in his conversion from a Manichaean perspective on the origin of evil. See also Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, (London: SCM, 1963), 201-2.

<sup>140</sup> As noted by Robert M. Cooper, "Saint Augustine's Doctrine of Evil," *SJT* 16 (1963): 265.

<sup>141</sup> Cooper, 274. Although Augustine, strictly speaking, departs from Neoplatonism in identifying God with "Being," whereas Plotinus viewed the "One" as beyond "Being" (*The Enneads*, 9:2). Moreover, Augustine does not follow Neoplatonism in its view of creation as emanations from the "One," creation *ex Deo*, instead following the traditional Christian teaching of creation *ex nihilo*. For a discussion of Augustine's relationship to Neoplatonism in his doctrine of evil, see Cooper, 263-265, and 274.

<sup>142</sup> In this regard, see Paul Vincent Spade, "Medieval Philosophy," in *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy*, (ed. Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 59-60. John Riches notes that "Platonist metaphysics provided an escape from Manichaean dualism," in "Readings of Augustine on Paul: their impact on critical studies of Paul" in *SBL 1998 Seminar Papers*, Part Two, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 951.

<sup>143</sup> See *The City of God*, 11.16

it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself. This happens when it becomes its own satisfaction. And it does so when it falls away from that unchangeable good which ought to satisfy it more than itself.<sup>144</sup>

Later in the same chapter Augustine remarks that “by craving to be more, man became less; and by aspiring to be self-sufficing, he fell away from Him who truly suffices him.” But in its attempt to find satisfaction in itself, the soul sinfully turns away from God and towards nothingness; in fact, sin is a kind of “nothingness”:

Now, nature could not have been depraved by vice had it not been made out of nothing. Consequently, that it is a nature, this is because it has been made by God; but that it falls away from Him, this is because it is made out of nothing. But man did not so fall away as to become absolutely nothing; but being turned towards himself, his being became more contracted than it was when he clave to Him who supremely is.<sup>145</sup>

The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is here reinterpreted in the light of Neoplatonic metaphysics: “Once Augustine has come to the clear conviction that all things owe their being to God, in so far as they participate in him, though he alone is pure substance, then the origin of evil has to be sought in the corruption of dependent being.”<sup>146</sup> Sin is redefined by Augustine as a turning towards the nothingness from which creation came and is not possible in his scheme unless the creation was made out of nothing.<sup>147</sup> Sin thus is a corruption of nature, a loss of wholeness or integrity:

What is evil? Perhaps you will reply, Corruption. Undeniably this is a general definition of evil; for corruption implies opposition to nature, and also hurt. But corruption exists not by itself, but in some substance which it corrupts; for corruption itself is not a substance. So the thing which it corrupts is not corruption, is not evil; for what is corrupted suffers the loss of integrity and purity.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *The City of God*, 14.13.

<sup>145</sup> *The City of God*, 14.13; *Concerning the Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans*, 10 (written about 405); *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, 2.48, 50.

<sup>146</sup> Riches, 951.

<sup>147</sup> This is because free-will is a kind of mutability, which is only possible because humanity is not pure supreme Being, but is made from nothing, as Augustine notes: “For will, being a nature which was made good by the good God, but mutable by the immutable, because it was made out of nothing, can both decline from good to do evil, which takes place when it freely chooses, and can also escape the evil and do good, which takes place only by divine assistance” (*The City of God*, 15.21).

<sup>148</sup> *On the Morals of the Manichaeans*, 5 (written about 388). See also *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*, 36-38 (written about 397); *The Enchiridion*, 12 (written after 420).

Sin therefore constitutes a deterioration into the nothingness from which creation came, though not a complete deterioration, for then the creature would cease to exist. It should be noted how original Augustine's use of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* with regard to sin really is: his use of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being has taken a doctrine primarily used to combat the idea of the eternity of matter and associated it with the origin of sin. Augustine is not, however, saying that "Nothing" is a metaphysical principle opposed to God and which is the source of evil and sin, but that the creatures misuse their free-will in turning away from God and in turning towards nothingness that is the cause of sin.<sup>149</sup> The deterioration of their nature, both in body and soul, is the effect of this turning away.

#### **3.4.2.5.5 Augustine's transformation of Paul and suppression of Pauline cosmology**

At this point it should be observed how far from Paul we have actually come. But that is just the point: Augustine moves in a far different symbolic thought world from Paul, even though both are concerned with the entrance of sin into the world and with the problem of moral *akrasia*. Nevertheless, in his debate with the Manichaeans, Augustine intertextually reinterprets and transposes Paul's language in categories provided by Plotinus and also the Manichaeans themselves. For even in understanding sin as a corruption of being, Augustine still understands the good substantively and evil as a privation of that good. For Paul, however, sin is a relational term: it is rebellion against and enmity towards God and there is no notion that the substance of the human soul has deteriorated or lost its integrity. There is also no concept in Paul's writings of a spectrum stretching from the pure immutable Being of God down to non-existence, with creatures made out of nothing somewhere in the middle. The very concept of sin as a corruption of human nature implies this spectrum of being and nothingness, and it cannot easily be extracted from its Neoplatonic roots. It should also be noted how indebted this conception is to Augustine's reaction against Manichaeism and indirectly to Manichaeism itself: Although Augustine no longer views evil substantively, he continues to equate good with "being." In so far as later interpreters of Paul base their

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<sup>149</sup> Bonner, 207, 211.

understanding of sin upon Augustine's conception of sin as a corruption of human nature, they continue Augustine's recontextualization of Paul's language in Romans 7 in the Neoplatonic and Manichaean terms which molded his thought.

Since Neoplatonism is an essentially monistic world-view, Augustine's transformation of Paul's view of sin "suppresses important dualist elements in Paul's thought," as Riches suggests.<sup>150</sup> Partly because of his adoption of a Neoplatonic framework, Augustine is not merely rejecting the metaphysical dualism of the Manichees, but any form of milder cosmic dualism. It should not be surprising that Augustine in his discussion of Adam's sin asserts that Adam actually sinned before the devil ever tempted him:

Our first parents fell into open disobedience because already they were secretly corrupted: for the evil act had not been done had not an evil will preceded it. . . . The devil, then would not have ensnared man in the open and manifest sin of doing what God had forbidden, had not man already begun to live for himself. It was this that made him listen with pleasure to the words, "Ye shall be as gods" . . . . Accordingly this wicked desire which prompts man to please himself as if he were himself light . . . already secretly existed in him, and the open sin was but its consequence.<sup>151</sup>

Thus Augustine wants to exclude a cosmic source of evil even at the very origin and entry of sin into the world. Although he does not deny the existence of the devil, his importance in Augustine's thought is much reduced compared to other early church fathers. Riches asserts that "without an appeal to some kind of supra-human source of evil, it is hard to make sense of the universality of human sin: explanations in terms of the failure of individual wills break down at this point."<sup>152</sup> But Augustine's explanation of Adam's choice corrupting human nature inherited by all does explain the universality of sin: the problem is not the power of Augustine's explanation, but the fact that it is not Paul's explanation. Paul has been removed from the cosmological context of Jewish apocalypticism and reinterpreted in the categories of Neoplatonic metaphysics. On the other hand, Riches is correct in his assessment that Augustine is "engaged in the same debates about the nature of evil and its overcoming as were those who wrote in the

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<sup>150</sup> Riches, 954.

<sup>151</sup> *The City of God*, 14.13

<sup>152</sup> Riches, 963.

traditions stemming from Jewish apocalyptic eschatology,” and that both Paul and Augustine “for *all their differences* . . . [were] addressing certain fundamental questions which were of wide influence and interest in the ancient world (emphasis his).”<sup>153</sup> But the manner in which Augustine answers those questions “eliminates precisely the cosmic dualist elements in his [Paul’s] thought. How indeed, after his struggle with Manichaeism, could he do otherwise?”<sup>154</sup>

#### 3.4.2.5.6 Σάρξ as corrupted human nature?

At this point it might be objected that Paul does have a concept of corrupted human nature, i.e. σάρξ. Paul says in Romans 7:18 that “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” Elsewhere Paul personifies the flesh as a power which has its own set of desires and which opposes the Spirit: “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these oppose each other, so that you do not do whatever you want” (Gal 5:17). But corrupted human nature is highly problematic as a translation of σάρξ. Must σάρξ refer to the corrupted ontological nature of human beings or does it simply refer to the sinful opposition and rebellion of humanity against God? Since Paul speaks of being delivered from the present evil age (Gal 1:4), is it not possible that σάρξ is just another name for the human collectivity that stands in opposition to God because it is under the dominion of evil powers? It seems that the translation of σάρξ as sinful or corrupted human nature presupposes the Augustinian interpretation. Moreover, what would it mean to say: “When we were in corrupted human nature” (see 7:5) or “You are not in corrupted human nature but in the Spirit,” (8:9)? Corrupted human nature is not something one is “in,” and in any case, Paul would then appear to be saying that believing in Christ effectively and completely delivers one from the state of corrupted human nature, whereas Augustine clearly teaches that this corruption of nature remains until one dies. At one point he interprets 8:9 to mean that believers “no longer are in that flesh, since

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<sup>153</sup> Riches, 963-964.

<sup>154</sup> Riches, 964.

they do not mold their understanding nor their life according to its principles.”<sup>155</sup> But Paul usually writes of walking according to the flesh when speaking of molding one’s life according to flesh, rather than of being ἐν σαρκί. It seems that ἐν σαρκί describes a state of existence rather than a pattern after which one may model one’s life. One is “in the flesh” in the same sense one is “in the present evil age” (Gal 1:4). Being “in the flesh” subjects one to the cosmological power(s) which dominate the present evil age.

#### 3.4.2.5.7 Paul and Augustine’s Differing Ideologies of the Body

It appears, then, that Paul and Augustine have two fundamentally different understandings of flesh or body. According to Dale Martin, two “differing ideologies of the body” co-existed in the ancient world, each characterized by differing conceptions of how the body was related to disease, pollution, and evil.<sup>156</sup> Martin asserts: “how a society constructs disease tells us a great deal about the nature of the body in that society. What kinds of language are used to talk about disease? How does disease interact with the body, and how does it differ from the body when it is ill? How does one heal the diseased body?”<sup>157</sup>

#### 3.4.2.5.8 Sin, the body, and the etiology of disease

I suggest that the manner in which Paul and Augustine deal with sin and death in relation to the body is closely associated with and even dependent upon the ways that disease is understood in relation to the body. The connection between sin and disease may not seem apparent to the contemporary interpreter, but would have been readily apparent to people in the ancient Mediterranean. In a world in which half of one’s children succumbed to childhood diseases by age five, and in which it was likely that

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<sup>155</sup> *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants*, chapter 45. The NIV, on the other hand, translates ἐν σαρκί in 7:5 and 8:9 as “controlled by the sinful nature,” but it is not evident that ἐν can be translated in this manner: had Paul meant to describe σάρξ as a sinful power that controlled human beings, he would have used ὑπό instead of ἐν.

<sup>156</sup> Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 139.

<sup>157</sup> Martin, 140.

one would die of one disease or another before an advanced age, the connection between disease and death would be obvious. Since Paul pointedly makes the connection between sin and death (Rom 5:12-13; 6:23; 7:13, 8:2, see 1 Cor 15:56), the connection between sin and disease is not difficult to make. The body is clearly the seat of sin for Paul in Romans 6-8.<sup>158</sup> Paul writes of the destruction of the body of sin (6:6); of dying to the Torah through the body of Christ (7:4); he asks who will deliver him from this body of death (7:24), since the law of sin and death dwells in and produces passions in the members of the body (7:5, 23; 8:2). In Romans 8:10 he mentions that the body is dead because of sin. Sin is clearly a disruption in the normal functioning of the human body as God created it, much like a disease.

Martin discusses two main etiologies of disease in ancient Greco-Roman society, imbalance and invasion. According to an imbalance etiology, "the body is normally a balanced ecosystem whose elements and forces are all necessary: good health results when none of those elements or forces oversteps its natural bounds or becomes too dominant. By contrast, disease results when there is imbalance," which may be caused by "the influence of outside forces . . . on the composition and balance of the internal elements."<sup>159</sup> These outside influences should not be considered to be hostile invading elements foreign to the body, but as Martin notes, "are usually composed of the same basic materials as the internal elements of the body."<sup>160</sup> The method of healing in this approach is to restore the equilibrium of the body through the alteration of external conditions, purging of excess substances that cause the imbalance, with a goal of moderation and harmony.

In the etiology of invasion, however, "the body is construed as a closed but penetrable entity that remains healthy by fending off hostile forces and protecting its boundaries. Disease is caused by alien forces, either personal agents (for example, demons or gods) or impersonal but harmful materials . . . that invade the body."<sup>161</sup> The main concern in this approach is not to maintain an equilibrium through moderation and self-control, but to expel the invading element(s) and to avoid pollution or contagion: "Health regimens according to the invasion etiology concentrate on solidifying the

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<sup>158</sup> See Gundry, 58 and note 39 in Chapter 2.

<sup>159</sup> Martin, 143.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-44.

boundaries of the body, assuring purity and avoidance of pollutions or infectious agents, and quarantining polluted or infected persons.”<sup>162</sup>

Martin’s typology is based upon the work of several anthropologists. René Dubos distinguishes ontological theories of disease from physiological theories. Ontological theories treat disease as “a thing itself unrelated to the patient’s personality, his bodily constitution, or his mode of life” and as “caused by an agent external to the body but capable of getting into it and causing damage.”<sup>163</sup> Physiological theories treat disease as “an abnormal state experienced by a given individual organism at a given time.”<sup>164</sup> Martin also draws upon the work of medical anthropologist George Foster, though with some modification.<sup>165</sup> Foster’s original typology distinguishes between a personalistic etiology of disease, in which “disease is explained as due to the active, purposeful intervention of an agent, who may be human (a witch or sorcerer), nonhuman (a ghost, an ancestor, an evil spirit), or supernatural (a deity or other very powerful being) and naturalistic etiologies.<sup>166</sup> The latter explain illness “in impersonal, systemic terms” and is thought to result from “such natural forces or conditions as cold, heat, winds, dampness, and above all, by an upset in the balance of the basic body elements,” thus following a model of “equilibrium.”<sup>167</sup> Martin charges Foster with lapsing back into the old distinction between supernaturalistic and naturalistic etiologies,<sup>168</sup> but as the above quotations demonstrate, Foster recognizes that personalistic etiologies may include human as well as supernatural sources of disease. Nevertheless, Martin has made a useful distinction between invasive and imbalance etiologies that goes beyond that of Foster’s. At the same time, Foster’s original typology should not be abandoned but combined with Martin’s, resulting in four distinct etiologies of disease:

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<sup>162</sup> Martin, 144.

<sup>163</sup> René Dubos, *Man Adapting*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, 1980 rev. ed.), 319-320. Martin also utilizes the work of Margaret Lock, *East Asian Medicine in Urban Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), especially 3-4, 24-25. Her work is based upon Dubos’ typology.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>165</sup> George M. Foster, “Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems,” in *The Art of Medical Anthropology: Readings*, (ed. Sjaak van der Geest and Adri Rienks, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1998); George M. Foster and Barbara Gallatin Anderson, *Medical Anthropology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), especially pages 53-55.

<sup>166</sup> Foster, “Disease Etiologies,” 143.

<sup>167</sup> Foster, “Disease Etiologies,” 143-144.

<sup>168</sup> Martin, 287n14.

personalistic and invasive (e.g. spirit possession), personalistic and imbalance (e.g. interpersonal stress, hubris/pride, fate), naturalistic and invasive (e.g. germs, infection, contagion, ritual pollution), naturalistic and imbalance (e.g. malnutrition, organ aging and deterioration). Despite Martin's desire to dismiss the distinction between personal and non-personal etiologies,<sup>169</sup> this distinction is very important.

Both invasion and imbalance etiologies are present not only in ancient culture, but in contemporary Western culture as well.<sup>170</sup> For example in American culture, disease may be attributed to infection (naturalistic-invasive), to malnutrition (naturalistic-imbalance), or to interpersonal stress (personal-invasive). Attribution of disease to an invading personal element such as a spirit, demon or deity, however, appears to be relatively rare in contemporary Western culture. Conversely, it does not seem that a naturalistic-invasive etiology (belief in germs/bacterial or viral infection) was an available option in the ancient Mediterranean.

Paul, of course, does not discuss the causes of disease at any length in his letters. But in 1 Corinthians 11:30, he mentions that some of the Corinthians have become sick and died for their failure to "discern the body" while partaking of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:29-30), which points towards a personalistic etiology. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul is given a thorn in the flesh, a "messenger of Satan," to keep him from becoming too boastful of his visionary experiences. Martin remarks that most scholars have interpreted this thorn in the flesh as a disease or affliction of the body,<sup>171</sup> which in Paul's view is caused by Satan or his messenger, pointing towards an invasion etiology.<sup>172</sup> Thus Paul appears to hold to a personalistic invasive etiology of disease.

#### **3.4.2.5.8.1 The etiology of disease and social context**

Martin argues that "different segments of society may hold different etiologies of disease within the same era."<sup>173</sup> In fact, Martin asserts that an imbalance etiology was characteristic of the philosophical and medical elite in Greco-Roman society,

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<sup>169</sup> Martin, 287n14.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-168.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

whereas the invasion etiology was more characteristic of the general populace,<sup>174</sup> who were ridiculed for their *deisidaimonia*, or superstitious fear of demonic spirits and divinities.<sup>175</sup> Thus the differing etiologies of disease appear to reflect the social stratification of ancient Greco-Roman society. He has been criticized, however, on this point, especially by Robin Scroggs and Thomas Tobin. Scroggs argues that Martin's "reduction of the divisions in Corinth to two factions the 'strong' and the 'weak'" is "simplistic."<sup>176</sup> If there are more than two factions in Corinth, then it may be difficult to associate different views of the body and disease with the "strong" and the "weak." Yet even if Martin's analysis of strong and weak in Corinth may be inadequate, his association of differing views of the body and disease with socioeconomic status may still hold generally.

Tobin, however, criticizes Martin on just this point, noting that "members of the upper classes of Greco-Roman society often enough had views of the body and pollution which M[artin] associates with those of lower status. Views of the body and pollution, then, are not easily correlatable with actual social status."<sup>177</sup> Tobin is certainly right if Martin's view (or Foster's) is taken to the extreme of asserting that each socioeconomic class can use only one etiology as opposed to other etiologies. The question to be asked is which etiology is more prevalent in a given social class or grouping. Thus the occasional presence of an invasion etiology among the upper classes should not be surprising, nor the presence of an imbalance etiology among the lower classes. Foster cautions concerning his own typology: "the two etiologies are rarely if ever mutually exclusive as far as their presence or absence in a particular society is concerned."<sup>178</sup> At the same time, he notes that anthropological literature "suggests that many, if not most, peoples are committed to one or the other of these explanatory principles to account for a majority of illnesses."<sup>179</sup> Foster is referring to his own

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<sup>174</sup> Martin, 153. The popular view is not as well preserved, and is attested mainly in the magical papyri. Cf. p. 158.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 156, 161-2. See Padel, 138-141, for a discussion of *deisidaimonia*. See also Reasoner, 159-174, for a discussion of the disdain for *deisidaimonia* and the related Roman concept of *superstitio*.

<sup>176</sup> Robin Scroggs, review of Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, *CBQ* 59 (1997): 384-6.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas H. Tobin, review of Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, *Theological Studies*, 57 (1996): 740-1.

<sup>178</sup> Foster, "Disease Etiologies," 144.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

typology, but it applies to Martin's as well. Martin, however, makes the additional point that the prevalence of one etiology over another may reflect class differences and the different experiences of the world that those who experience a degree of power and control over their world have (upper or privileged classes) from those who do not (lower or non-privileged classes).

Thus disease etiologies may reflect different views of society as a whole.<sup>180</sup> Because the individual body is a microcosm of the social body, an affliction in one body is reflected in the other: "Throughout Classical antiquity, soul and society, psychology and politics, the individual body and the political body were intimately connected. By Paul's time the parallelism of the body and the state is firmly in place. A corrupted body is not only a reflection but also a cause of a distorted community."<sup>181</sup> According to Martin, "in the imbalance etiology the healthy body imitates the stability of the polis when there is no strife between the classes; disease only occurs when that stability is disturbed."<sup>182</sup> This stability is not "maintained by an equality of members, but by all members occupying their rightful places in the social hierarchy." When a member of the body or of society demands more than what is due it or him given his position in the individual or social body, imbalance and disorder are the result, and "the unruly humor, like an antisocial citizen, must be kept in check by healthy humors, alias sound, upstanding members of the body."<sup>183</sup> As Martin asserts, "for the ancient hearer, such language would have evoked the conservative ideology of moderation advocated by [the] benevolent patriarchalism"<sup>184</sup> of the upper classes, whose experience of the world reflected "a sense of control over one's body and the environment."<sup>185</sup> For such people, sin or transgression would primarily be understood as pride, as attempting to assume a higher place in the hierarchy than one to which one is entitled by birth, or as the attempt to accrue more goods or wealth or honor than one is entitled to by one's position.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Martin, 159-162.

<sup>181</sup> Blumenfeld, 292.

<sup>182</sup> Martin, 159.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>186</sup> Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, rev. ed., (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 52-53; 103-107.

In contrast, the lower uneducated classes were characterized by “a social position of helplessness in the face of outside powers,” and they experienced the world as threatening and “precarious,” and felt that they were “inescapably at the whim of the forces of the universe,” so that “individuals seems to be nothing but marionettes at the end of power lines, pulled here and there without their knowledge by invisible forces.”<sup>187</sup> Sin and disease in the invasion etiology is the result of demonic or spiritual powers which have invaded and overpowered the individual through their failure to maintain appropriate purity boundaries that keep those hostile powers at bay. Since the vast majority in the ancient Greco-Roman world were not among the upper classes, “most of those outside the circle of the philosophically educated would “never [have] hesitated to ascribe disease [or sin] to invading non-human agents.”<sup>188</sup>

Since he was a bishop of relatively high status in Roman North Africa, Augustine’s social position was neither precarious nor particularly threatened by external powers beyond his control. He was more highly educated than most, and was therefore predisposed to the imbalance etiologies of the philosophical elite. His commitment to an imbalance etiology of sin may be seen in several regards. As discussed previously, Augustine derived his theology of sin from a Neoplatonic hierarchy of being in which sin is defined as the overreaching pride (*superbia*) of humanity. This overreaching and lust (*concupiscentia*) for a higher status than what God has given has created a disharmony in the order of nature. The internal harmony of human nature has been corrupted and lost its integrity. Secondly, against the Manichaeans, Augustine maintains that all external influences cannot be held responsible for human sin: sin is to be associated with the human will and the human will alone. The will is only enslaved by habit, not to any external power. Such a perspective has hardly anything in common with an invasion etiology in which sin is viewed as a cosmological power. In fact Augustine is so opposed to the idea of sin as an invading cosmological power that he must even maintain that Adam sinned secretly before the devil even tempted him (*The City of God* 14.13). Although Augustine takes the problem of *akrasia* in Romans 7 seriously, he does not come to grips with the language of sin as an invading power and substitutes the language of the corruption of

<sup>187</sup> H. D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, 2nd. ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii, as quoted in Martin, 161.

<sup>188</sup> Martin, 165.

human nature and defectiveness of will. What is rarely appreciated is the degree to which Augustine subverts Pauline cosmological dualism present in Romans 6-8.

### **3.4.3 Paul and invasion etiology: Sin as a cosmological invader**

Paul's language in Romans 5-8, on the other hand, reflects an invasion etiology of sin. Sin enters the world (5:12) and dwells in the members of the body (7:5, 23), and is an alien power since Paul says "it is no longer I who do it but the sin dwelling in me that does it" (7:17, 20). Moreover, the language of warfare in Romans 6-8 clearly points towards an invasion rather than imbalance etiology. Paul exhorts his readers not to present the members of their bodies to sin as weapons (ὄπλα) of wickedness (Rom 6:12); he portrays sin as "another law in my members at war with (ἀντιστρατεύομαι) the law of my mind, taking me captive (αἰχμαλωτίζω) to the law of sin in my members (7:23); and he describes the hostility (ἔχθρα) of τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός toward God and its inability to submit to God's law (8:7). Like a cunning opposing general, sin uses deception and seizes the advantage of a weakness in the enemy line to accomplish its goal (7:11, see 8:3). And because sin has established such control over the body, the body of sin must be destroyed (6:6), a rather extreme solution if the problem is an imbalance or corruption, which would seem to require only healing and restoration of balance. The problem does not appear to be human nature gone awry, but that some kind of cosmic power has invaded which does not belong and a solution of last resort must be used to expel the invader: destruction and resurrection of the body.

#### **3.4.3.1 Paul's apocalyptic Jewish context: cosmic dualism**

This interpretation of sin as a cosmological invader becomes even more apparent when one interprets Paul in intertextual dialogue with the writings of Jewish apocalypticism rather than in dialogue with Augustine. According to a section of the *Community Rule* (1QS 3:13-4:26), God appointed two spirits for humanity to walk in,

the spirits of truth and deceit (1QS 3:18).<sup>189</sup> These two spirits are warring in the hearts of humanity (4:23), even in the hearts of the sons of light, whose sins and iniquities are caused by the Angel of Darkness and the spirit associated with him (3:21-22). These spirits are given by God to all human beings “so that they may know good [and evil].” The outcome of final judgment for each person depends on which spirit is dominant at that time (4:26). It is not clear whether these two spirits are psychological or cosmological in nature (i.e. inclinations vs. supernatural powers), but since the Prince of Lights rules over the sons of righteousness and the Angel of Darkness has dominion over the sons of deceit (3:20-21), it does not seem necessary to make a distinction or that the original author would even have made such a distinction. Frey describes the dualism of 1QS 3:13-4:25 as basically a cosmic dualism with a strong ethical dimension and distinctive psychological aspects.<sup>190</sup>

That Paul thought of sin as a spirit is clear from the fact that it “dwells” in the body and in its members. For this reason, Paul can speak of the “body of sin,” that is, the body that sin inhabits (Rom 6:6), just as he can write of the body of Christ, the body which the Spirit of Christ indwells (Rom 8:9, 12:4; 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27). In Romans 8:15 Paul uses the phrase “spirit of slavery” in contrast to the Spirit of adoption (the Spirit of Christ). The spirit of slavery sums up well the activity of sin in Romans 7, since the ἔγῳ is “sold as a slave to sin (7:15) and the law of sin takes it captive in its

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<sup>189</sup> According to recent scholarship, this portion of 1QS was not part of the original rule and was inserted later. Nevertheless, it is probably earlier than the Rule as a whole and may represent pre-Essene sapiential teaching (Armin Lange, “The Essene Position on Magic and Divination,” in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues*, (eds. Moshe Bernstein et. al., Leiden: Brill, 1997), 419. See also his *Weisheit und Prädestination: Weisheitliche Urordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 121-170). Thus it may have had a broader circulation than the Essene circles which wrote and used the *Community Rule*. If so, then the idea of two spirits may not be unique to the Essenes, anymore than the idea of Belial as the leader of evil powers opposing God (see 2 Cor 6:15; *T. 12 Patr., Ascen. Isa.*).

<sup>190</sup> Jörg Frey, “Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library: Reflections on their Background and History,” in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 289. Despite the similarities between Paul’s spirit of sin and the two spirits of 1QS, there are important differences. In Paul’s thought, sin was not one of two divinely appointed ways for humanity to walk in, nor did God give it to man along with a spirit of truth in order that humanity might know good and evil (1QS 4:26). Sin entered the world illegitimately through Adam’s transgression (Rom 5:12), usurping control and operating his descendants through deception (7:11). For the author of the *Rule of Two Spirits*, the spirit of deceit is more clearly part of God’s preordained design, whereas Paul does not address directly the relationship of sin to that design. Despite the more strongly dualistic language of 1QS 3:13-4:26, there is in fact more dualistic tension in Paul’s theology, since sin appears to frustrate God’s design temporarily in its subversion of the Torah, whereas the teaching of the two spirits clearly ascribes the origin of the spirit of deceit to God who placed it in the heart of humanity.

members (7:23). Sin perhaps should be identified also with the spirit of the world, which is contrasted with the Spirit which is from God in 1 Corinthians 2:12, especially since Paul has already written in Romans of sin's entrance into the world (5:12).

### 3.4.3.2 Sin and Satan/Belial in Jewish literature

The concept of sin ruling over, dominating or holding one captive is conceptually similar to the concept of Satan/Belial in the DSS, and the early Christian *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, and *Ascension of Isaiah*.<sup>191</sup> According to CD 12:2-3, "Everyone who is ruled by the spirits of Belial and advises apostasy" will receive the sentence of death, and 1QS refers to the present age as the time of Belial's dominion (1:18, 23-24; 2:19; see 1QM 14:9), the time when Belial is unrestrained in Israel (CD 4:13) and traps her in three nets of wickedness (4:15-16). Paul also speaks of the present age as evil (Gal 1:4), and of the god who rules this age (2 Cor 4:4). Belial is not simply an external power over humanity, for 1QS speaks of the possibility of giving refuge to Belial in one's heart (10:21). Belial is the counselor of the wicked (1QH 14:21), and he is revealed in the *yetser* of the wicked (1QH 15:3). According to 11QAps<sup>a</sup> 4:7-8, Belial is to be identified with sin: "you are darkness and not light, [si]n and not justice."

In the *Testaments of the Twelve*, the spirits of Beliar are also at work within people (*T. Dan* 1:7). Beliar takes human beings captive (*T. Dan* 5:11) and those whose minds are disposed toward wickedness are overmastered by Belial (*T. Asher* 1:8). Just as Paul contrasts the law of my mind with the law of sin and death in Romans 7, so *T. Naph* 2:6 contrasts the law of God with the law of Beliar. In fact Satan dwells in the sinner as in his own vessel (*T. Naph* 8:6). The *Ascension of Isaiah* also speaks of Belial dwelling in the heart of Manasseh (3:11; see 1:9). The language of indwelling sin has its closest parallel in Satan's or Belial's indwelling in the *Testaments of the Twelve* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Although not definitive, these conceptual parallels strongly suggest that Paul's language concerning sin is to be understood as cosmological.

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<sup>191</sup> As noted in Chapter One, note 20, I understand the *Testaments* to be early Christian documents of the second century C.E. The *Ascension of Isaiah* is clearly Christian as well, dating from the second century (see Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995]).

### 3.4.3.3 Sin, Satan, and Romans 7 in the pre-Augustinian church fathers

It should also be noted that a number of church fathers prior to Augustine identify sin in Romans 7:7-25 as Satan or the devil. Epiphanius (*Adversus haereses*, Volume 2, page 488, line 15) writes concerning Romans 7:7-11: “κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ὁ διάβολος.” Pseudo-Macarius also identifies the sin which deceives and produces desires as the devil (*Sermones* 64 (collectio B), Homily 2, chapter 2, section 3, line 4). Didymus Caecus (*Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos (in catenis)*, Page 3, line 32) writes about the sin which takes the opportunity afforded by the law to kill: Ἐπεὶ οὖν οὐδ’ αὐτὴ ἡ ἀμαρτία, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν ὁ διάβολος, φύσει καὶ οὐσίᾳ ἀμαρτία ἐστίν, ἐπιφέρει λέγων.” And concerning indwelling sin in 7:17, 20, he writes that it is the devil who dwells in transgressors and does the evil through them, just as Christ works the good in believers: “οὐ γὰρ ἡ σὰρξ ἦν περικείμεθα οἰκεῖ ἐν ἡμῖν, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐν τοῖς παρανόμοις οἴκων διάβολος. ᾧ γὰρ λέγω Χριστὸς οἰκεῖ ἐν παντὶ δικαίῳ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐργαζομένῳ, τὸν αὐτὸν, οἶμαι τρόπον οἰκεῖν τὸν διάβολον ἐν παντὶ κακοποιῶ” (*Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos*, Page 5, line 14 to Page 6, line 4). Diodorus, commenting on the law of sin in 7:22-23, states that it is as if the law of sin is the devil’s opposing legislation to the legislation of God: “δείκνυσι δὲ ὅτι ὥσπερ ἀντινομοθετεῖ τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ νομοθεσίᾳ ὁ διάβολος” (*Fragmenta in epistulam ad Romanos (in catenis)*, Page 87, line 20 to page 90, line 6). Methodius also interprets sin as the devil in Romans 7: “But the devil, whom he calls sin, because he is the author of sin, taking occasion by the commandment to deceive me into disobedience, deceived and slew me . . . . By such a choice I am sold to the devil, fallen under sin . . . . the law of the devil according to the lust which dwells in the flesh.” (*Discourse on the Resurrection*, Part 3, 2). Basil of Caesarea labels the devil “sin itself”: “αὐτοαμαρτία ὁ διάβολος ὀνομάζεται” (*Asceticon magnum sive Quaestiones (regulae brevius tractatae)*, Volume 31, page 1268, line 10). Other writers, not commenting directly on Romans 7, still identify sin and Satan. Irenaeus, for example, says that Adam became a vessel in Satan’s possession (*Adversus haereses*, Book II, chapter 23, 1). Origen, interpreting the statement in John that the one who sins is a slave of sin, states: “ἀμαρτία δὲ νῦν

ὀνομάζεται ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν διάβολος” (*Expositio in proverbialia [fragmenta e catenis]*), Volume 17, page 229, line 40). Although this interpretation of sin in Romans 7 as a reference to the devil is clearly based upon the allusion to the serpent in 7:11, at the same time it should be noted that the line between the anthropological and the cosmological was much easier for the church fathers to cross than for Augustine or for contemporary interpreters today.

#### 3.4.3.4 Objections to a cosmological view of sin in Romans 7

Moo, however, rejects the notion that sin is ultimately a power outside the human self, insisting that sin dwells “in me,” and therefore the “ ‘I’ [is] ultimately at fault, certainly not the law, not even sin.”<sup>192</sup> But the location of sin “in me” does not demonstrate that sin is a purely anthropological notion, for in early Judaism, Belial and demons and spirits can dwell in the human body or heart. Dunn, on the other hand, asserts that “perhaps we have to say that Paul himself engaged in his own demythologization at this point,” and that sin and death are “existential more than ontological realities, the personifications or reifications, or, better, recognition of powers which were (and are) nevertheless all too real in human experience.”<sup>193</sup> Besides being anachronistic, it seems inappropriate to describe Paul’s treatment of sin as a kind of “demythologizing.” Such a description begs the question, after all, as if it could be taken for granted that Paul were not describing an ontological entity. In any case, describing sin as an existential reality does not get one very far, simply referring to a fact of human existence without really defining it. Sin certainly is an existential reality, but that does not prevent sin from being an ontological entity or another ontological being such as Satan from being the power behind it. Neyrey notes that “modern readers have tended to give Romans 7:7-25 an existentialist, psychological interpretation,”<sup>194</sup> and suggests instead that sin and death are the two chief agents of Satan.<sup>195</sup> So Paul probably took his own “mythological” language more literally than Dunn would have one believe. Even the term “mythological,” however, begs the question. What Dunn

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<sup>192</sup> Moo, 451, see 458.

<sup>193</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 110.

<sup>194</sup> Neyrey, 172.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

finds unacceptable is Paul's cosmology, just as Bultmann found it unacceptable. Mythology is basically a term for a cosmology in which supernatural and divine powers are operative and that Dunn and Bultmann no longer accept. The same critique applies to Udo Schnelle, who writes that "Paul consciously chooses mythological language to present a general anthropological state of affairs."<sup>196</sup> The reach of Bultmann's spectre is long.

Sanders also objects to pressing dualistic motifs in Paul's thought too far, because of "the dominance of monotheism in his thought about sin."<sup>197</sup> But his definition of monotheism is too restrictive. Many forms of early Judaism were filled with angels and archangels, and angelic mediators, demons and other powers of good and evil, without calling into question the uniqueness of the God of Israel. Likewise, Sanders' definition of dualism is also too restrictive. Gammie and Frey list ten different kinds of dualism (the use of the opposition of two causal principles to explain reality).<sup>198</sup> For our purposes, it is only necessary to discuss three of them. (1) Metaphysical dualism is the opposition of two dominating causal powers of equal rank; this form of dualism is characteristic of Zoroastrianism and is not found here or in early Judaism generally. (2) Psychological dualism involves the opposition of two hypostasized elements of human nature that oppose each other and are the source of good and evil human behavior (e.g. the two yetzers of rabbinic Judaism). (3) Cosmic dualism teaches a division of world/humanity into two opposing forces of good and evil, but in this case evil is neither equal with God, nor co-eternal, but is in some sense under God's ultimate authority. In addition, cosmic dualism involves suprahuman spiritual powers that influence or even control human behavior. Thus, although metaphysical dualism compromises monotheism, the same cannot be said for the more moderate cosmic dualism. Sanders also objects to this kind of reconstruction of Paul's thought concerning sin and Satan, since "Paul did not put all these [ideas] together to form a dualistic theology."<sup>199</sup> But this is clearly an argument from silence, since we only have occasional letters from Paul and no systematized theology. Nevertheless a coherent

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<sup>196</sup> Schnelle, 68.

<sup>197</sup> Sanders, "Sin, Sinners," *ABD*, 45.

<sup>198</sup> John G. Gammie, "Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature," *JBL* 93 (1974): 356-85; Frey, "Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library," 275-335.

<sup>199</sup> E. P. Sanders, "Sin, Sinners," *ABD*, VI, 45.

apocalyptic core to Paul's gospel can be discerned from his letters, as Beker has argued,<sup>200</sup> though perhaps apocalypticism should be defined more in terms of cosmology rather than eschatological themes.

Gunter Röhser also objects to such a portrayal of sin as a cosmic power and emphasizes the "deed-character" of sin:

Was die Sünde betrifft, so halte ich es für entscheidend, daß man ihren Charakter als Abstrakt-Personifikation erkennt und jegliche Anklänge an die Satanologie vermeidet (Teufel und Dämonen spielen in dem vorliegenden Zusammenhang für Pls schlichtweg keine Rolle; die Sentenz zeigt, daß sie nur da, wo sie auch genannt werden, in Anschlag gebracht werden können!). Andernfalls hebt man den Tatcharakter der Hamartia auf und untergräbt damit das Fundament des atl.-frühjüdischen wie des paulinischen Nachdenkens über Sünde.<sup>201</sup>

Röhser considers sin, death, and law to be "abstract-personifications" which means that a "mythological background is explicitly denied."<sup>202</sup> But this is an arbitrary argument, since abstract-personifications by no means rule out mythological imagery.<sup>203</sup> Sin is certainly a personification of rebellion, but this rebellion could be Satanic rebellion in which humanity participates and by which it is dominated. Without specifically identifying sin and Satan, sin may be seen, as Macky argues, as a spirit from Satan, through which Satan controls and rules over humanity, just as the Holy Spirit is sent from God and reproduces within individuals the character of Christ. But Macky notes that "The fact that Paul does not specifically mention Satan in Romans 6-7 does not prevent him from alluding to him."<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless this is the most powerful objection against a cosmological interpretation of sin in these chapters. How can Paul expect his readers to understand that a cosmological figure such as Satan lies behind the word "sin"? Nevertheless Satan is mentioned in four of the seven undisputed letters

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<sup>200</sup> J. Christiaan Beker, 11-19.

<sup>201</sup> Günter Röhser, *Metaphorik und Personifikation der Sünde*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 163. Peter Macky, 100, translates: "as to sin, I take it as decided, that one recognizes its character as abstract-personification and avoids any suggestions of Satanology. Devil and demons plainly play no role in the present context; only where the devil is named specifically can we bring him in. Otherwise one abolishes the deed-character [*Tatcharakter*] of *hamartia* and undermines thereby the foundation of ancient Judaism as of the Pauline reflection."

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>203</sup> Peter W. Macky, *St. Paul's Cosmic War Myth: A Military Version of the Gospel*, (New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 101.

<sup>204</sup> Macky, 101.

(Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians). Satan is mentioned at least seven times,<sup>205</sup> and once more as “god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4), which is comparable to the number of times that such important concepts as δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (8 verses in 4 letters), reconciliation (7 verses in 4 letters), and the letter/Spirit contrast itself (5 verses in 2 letters) are mentioned. It should also be noted that the letters of Paul are directed to specific situations, often with polemical concerns which strongly influence the use of certain vocabulary. Since Satan was probably never an issue between Paul and his opponents or the early Christian community, the failure to mention him more may be accidental and no reflection of his significance in Paul’s thought. Rather, the fact that Satan is mentioned in a number of letters to explain misfortune or suffering or temptation, and the fact that the final eschatological victory over the powers of evil can be understood as a victory over Satan, in Romans 16:20 no less, indicates an importance beyond what a mere seven references might indicate.

That sin is always a deed or always has a deed-character is contradicted by Romans 7:8, where sin seizes the opportunity afforded by the commandment to produce all sorts of sinful desires in me. Sin must be something prior to and distinct from a deed, but which inspires, motivates and gives rise to sinful deeds. Sin exists in the body prior to any evil desire, let alone sinful action of any kind. The law only gives the opportunity for sin to express itself in sinful deeds. The language of sin deceiving me in 7:9 is also difficult to understand as a deed which deceives me; deception is the activity of an external power acting upon the human self. Furthermore, it is difficult to conceive of how the “sin dwelling in me” in Romans 7:17 and 20 is to be understood as having a deed-character. Indeed Paul does say that it is no longer him but the sin dwelling in him who produces the sinful actions that he does not want to do, but sin exists prior to the deeds, producing them.

Moreover, Röhser’s language of the undermining of the foundation of ancient Judaism appears to presuppose a uniformity in ancient Judaism which many scholars are increasingly calling into question. One simply cannot speak of the foundations of Judaism as a monolithic whole whose essence can be undermined. In light of his argument, however, it is interesting that Röhser fails to discuss or even mention the

<sup>205</sup> Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess 2:18. In the disputed letters Satan is mentioned an additional 3 times (2 Thess 2:9; 1 Tim 1:20; 5:15), and “the devil” occurs five times (Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:6-7; 2 Tim 2:26).

Jewish background of the language of indwelling of Satan or Belial in the DSS documents, or the early Christian parallels in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Ascension of Isaiah*.

Winger, like Röhser, also objects to the portrayal of sin as a power.<sup>206</sup> He claims that the statement “all are under sin” in Romans 3:9 is conceptually equivalent to “all have sinned” in 3:23 and that reading 3:9 as a reference to sin as a power “depends upon reading later passages back into this one.”<sup>207</sup> But is reading 3:9 in terms of Romans 6-7 an entirely illegitimate practice? Perhaps Paul’s meaning in 3:9 only becomes clear in Romans 5-8, just as the meaning of 3:20 “through the law comes the knowledge of sin” will only become clear in 7:7-12. Paul is quite capable of making elliptical comments that are clarified later in his letter, if at all. Secondly, ὑφ’ ἁμαρτίαν is grammatically similar to ὑπὸ νόμον, which clearly refers to being under the law’s authority or power. Being “under sin” means more than simply doing sinful deeds; it means being under the authority of something greater than oneself. Moreover, Winger claims that “sin entered the world through one man” (Rom 5:12) means only that one man (Adam) sinned and that “sin” simply means “to sin.”<sup>208</sup> But this argument is not at all self-evident; his argument does not exclude the possibility that Paul is referring to sin as a power separable from the human race. Winger, on the other hand agrees that sin is personified in 5:21: “Sin reigns in death,” just as grace is personified. He asserts that “grace refers to Christ, but that Paul mentions no figure with whom sin might be identified.”<sup>209</sup> He questions what the criteria are for identifying the power of sin.<sup>210</sup> But the fact that Paul does not identify the power behind sin in the immediate context does not mean that such a figure does not exist. Winger’s argument, however, has one important implication, that a personified abstraction such as sin cannot function as a cosmological power unless some ontological being stands behind it. Thus it is no longer permissible to speak of sin as a cosmic power without relating it to some

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<sup>206</sup> M. Winger, “From Grace to Sin: Names and Abstractions in Paul’s Letters,” *NovT* 41 (1999): 168-175.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>208</sup> Winger, 170.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

cosmological being, even if the being in question cannot be identified with certitude.<sup>211</sup>

### 3.4.3.5 Sin and cosmological beings in Paul

So there must be some kind of supernatural being behind sin in order to function as a cosmic power. Paul refers to the eschatological victory of believers over Satan in Romans 16:20, but there are other powers to which sin may be related. Paul refers to angels, rulers (ἀρχαί), and powers (δυνάμεις) in Romans 8:38, but it is not clear that Paul is referring to evil powers in the context.<sup>212</sup> At the eschaton, Christ will destroy every rule, authority and power, but whether these are earthly political powers or angelic powers or both or even impersonal structural principles of the universe is unclear.<sup>213</sup> The same is true for 1 Corinthians 2:6 and 8 he refers to the rulers (ἄρχοντες) of this age who crucified Christ. If angelic rulers and powers were an important element in Paul's thought, one would have expected them to be mentioned more often and more clearly. Paul writes of an angel from heaven preaching a gospel contrary to the one Paul had preached to the Galatians (1:8), but the case is merely hypothetical. There is only one reference to demonic powers in the undisputed letters (1 Cor 10:20-21), where Paul refers to those participating in pagan sacrificial meals as partaking in the table of demons.<sup>214</sup>

The only cosmological power of any importance in Paul's letters is Satan, who is mentioned seven times by name in four letters. Satan is presented as plotting against

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<sup>211</sup> Martinus de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 147, refers to sin as an alien intruder and reigning cosmological power, but does not identify a figure behind the abstraction. Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus*, (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), 122, refers to sin as a demon which has entered into man.

<sup>212</sup> Though of course, Ephesians and Colossians speak of a multiplicity of evil angelic powers (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 4:27; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10; 2:15). See Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: the concept of power in Ephesians in light of its historical setting*, SNTSS 63 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>213</sup> For recent more in-depth discussion of the powers and authorities than can be pursued here, see: James R. Hollingshead, *The Household of Caesar and the Body of Christ: A Political Interpretation of the Letters from Paul*, (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 34-52; Chris Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?" *JSNT* 82 (2001): 61-88; "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, Powers and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 51-73; Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: the background, meaning and development of the Pauline phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai*, SNTSS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>214</sup> 1 Tim 4:1 refers to the teachings of demons.

and attempting to deceive God's people, whether through false teachers or through temptation (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14), as the agent of death and destruction (1 Cor 5:5), and as the cause of suffering and misfortune (2 Cor 12:7; 1 Thess 2:18). Satan is also associated in 1 Corinthians 7:5 with the state of ἀκρασία, being portrayed as the tempter, which, as described above in section 3.2.2, is the subject of Romans 7:7-25 and the role of sin in 7:7-12. The significance of this association of Satan with ἀκρασία should not be underestimated.

Once Satan is described as the "god of this age" in 2 Corinthians 4:4. This title indicates that Paul viewed Satan at the top of the cosmic hierarchy of evil, and for this reason it is likely that Satan is the power which stands behind sin. In Romans 16:20, Paul proclaims that God will soon crush Satan under the feet of the Romans, referring to the eschatological victory in Christ of the saints over Satan and a clear allusion to the serpent in Genesis 3 (cf. Rom 7:11). The connections of Romans 16:17-20 with Romans 7 should be noted. The false teachers "serve their own belly" rather than Christ, which is related to the idea of being enslaved to the passions of the flesh (Rom 7:5). In addition, the false teachers attempt to deceive (16:18), just as sin deceived the ἔγωγ in Romans 7:11 and the serpent deceived Eve (2 Cor 11:3, cf. Gen 3:13). Just as the false teachers are servants of Satan (2 Cor 11:14, cf. 11:3-4), so also are sin and death.

It might be objected that Romans 16:20 refers only to potential false teachers causing dissension (16:17). But the crushing of Satan under the feet of Roman Christians also refers more broadly to the eschatological victory of Christ over Satan in the eschaton.<sup>215</sup> It is likely that Romans 16:20 is a combined allusion to Genesis 3:15 and Psalm 110:1, as the phrase "ὑπὸ τοῦς πόδας ὑμῶν" indicates.<sup>216 217</sup> This final victory can be described as a crushing of Satan because Satan is the leader of forces of evil, just as the Second World War could be described as a crushing of Hitler. It would

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<sup>215</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 905; Käsemann, 418.

<sup>216</sup> Karl Sandnes also notes the influence of Psalms 110, which most commentaries miss, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles*, SNTSS 120, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 169n16.

<sup>217</sup> The idea of God placing enemies under one's feet is found only in 1 Kings 5:3; Psalm 47:3, in which the enemies of David or Israel are placed under their feet; Psalm 8:6, in which all things are put under humanity's feet, which reflects the dominion given to humanity in Genesis 1:26-27, and Psalm 110:1. It is likely that 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 alludes also to Psalm 8:6, since "all things" is not mentioned there. Thus the eschatological victory is also redemption of God's creation.

be incredible if Paul conceived of the enemies of sin and death mentioned in Romans 6-8 as independent of Satan, the leader of the opposing forces. In 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, Paul describes death as the last enemy to be destroyed and placed under Christ's feet. Hengel suggests: "As long as humans sin and die, death reigns, a power which for Paul - as in parts of Judaism - is possibly identical with Satan. He as the last enemy will have to be destroyed."<sup>218</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 and Romans 16:20 are the only two allusions in the undisputed Paulines to the eschatological placing of enemies under the feet of Christ. Satan is also presented as the agent of the destruction of the flesh of a man who is handed over to him as punishment for sin (1 Cor 5:5), and thus apparently stands as the effective power behind death. Sin, death, and Satan are clearly connected in the final victory; it should not be surprising that Satan stands behind the cosmic powers of sin and death.

Finally, the assurance of a final victory in 16:20 over the arch-enemy who is behind sufferings and sin is a fitting conclusion to the letter, particularly Romans 6-8, in which sin is presented in military terms as a power which rules over humanity and which uses the members of the body as "weapons" of wickedness (Rom 6:13). Therefore the sin that enters the world in Romans 5:12 is not merely "sinning" or sinful deeds (*contra* Winger, Kaye, Röhser) but something more: through his transgression Adam has participated in something greater than himself, a Satanic rebellion against God. If sin represents the cosmological power of the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4), then this captivity is not simply an anthropological enslavement to desire or pleasure, but a captivity to Satan or Belial as well, a view characteristic of groups convinced of the apostasy of the majority of Israel.<sup>219</sup>

#### 3.4.3.6 Sin as a hypostatization of a Satanic attribute

Perhaps, then, sin is a hypostatization of a Satanic attribute. Despite his opposition to the concept of sin as a cosmological power, Röhser concedes that sin is

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<sup>218</sup> Hengel, "Sit at My Right Hand!," 165.

<sup>219</sup> See now Mark Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), esp. 393-432.

presented almost as a “Hypostasierung.”<sup>220</sup> It is important, however, to distinguish hypostatization from intense forms of personification. Hypostatization gives to the concept a semi-independent status, such that it is conceived as acting independently of the person or deity. Not only divine attributes such as Wisdom or the Logos can be hypostasized; human attributes or psychological elements can also be hypostasized. For example, Freud’s conception of the id and superego are hypostasized conceptions of psychological elements in human nature, elements which act independently and at times even at odds with the conscious human will (ego).<sup>221</sup> Paul, however, is probably hypostasizing a Satanic rather than human attribute. Peter Macky has argued: “In Romans 5-8 Paul probably spoke of Satan’s *activity* under the name of Sin. If that is so, then Sin is probably here imagined as a demon, the power of Satan at work in individuals, as the Holy Spirit is the power of God at work in individuals.”<sup>222</sup> Sin “is the immanent agent of Satan as the Holy Spirit is the immanent agent of God.”<sup>223</sup> Just as wisdom is a personification/hypostasis of an attribute of God (Prov 8:12-31; Wis 7), and can dwell in the human body (Wis 1:4), so sin in Romans 5-7 may be a personification of Satanic rebellion which dwells in human beings and in which they participate. For Grundmann, Romans 7 describes the state of one “possessed by the demonic power of sin.”<sup>224</sup> Ashton states that “replacing ‘sin’ with ‘the devil’ would bring us closer to Paul’s meaning.”<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Röhser, 173-176. It is not necessary for our purposes to deal with the distinction between personification and hypostasis here, since it matters little whether sin is a personification of a Satanic attribute or whether sin is an attribute of Satan that has acquired some kind of independent status, like the Logos or Wisdom with respect to God. For discussions on the use of the terms hypostasis and personification, see C. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 36-45; Hurtado, *One Lord, One God*, 37, 41-50, 85-90; Helmer Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom: Studies in the Hypostatization of Divine Qualities and Functions in the Ancient Near East* (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons, 1947); James Barr, “Hypostatization of Linguistic Phenomena in Modern Theological Interpretation,” *JSS* 7 (1962): 85-92; A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic: A Preliminary Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 92-96; Andrew Chester, “Jewish Messianic Expectations and Mediatorial Figures and Pauline Christology,” in *Paulus und das antike Judentum*, (Tübingen : Mohr, 1991), 17-89.

<sup>221</sup> Perhaps Freud’s psychoanalytic theory has its ancestral roots in the Augustinian reinterpretation of Romans 7:7-25 in terms of a psychological rather than cosmic dualism.

<sup>222</sup> Macky, 98.

<sup>223</sup> Macky, 98.

<sup>224</sup> W. Grundmann, “ἀμαρτία,” *TDNT*, I, 311.

<sup>225</sup> John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle*, (New Haven: Yale, 2000), 228.

### 3.4.3.7 Sin as a deified abstraction

On the other hand, Paul also may be presenting Satan's activity as a deified vice as a deliberate parody of the well-known practice of deifying virtues in Greco-Roman culture. Deification is stronger than mere personification, in which the virtue is merely presented as living in a mere literary fashion (see e.g. 2 Tim 1:5, the faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois").<sup>226</sup> On the other hand, deification does not necessarily imply the existence of an actual cult with sacrifices. Rather, sin, like many virtues could have been understood as a *numen*, a divine spirit or power which in early Roman times was conceived of as inhabiting places or material things, but which in later times could include abstractions such as virtue or loyalty or even the *numen* of the emperor.<sup>227</sup> For example, the virtue Δίκη or *Iustitia* could be perceived as the power of divine justice operative in the world. When Paul escaped the shipwreck on Malta and was bitten by a snake, the natives thought even though he had escaped the sea, he could not escape Justice (Acts 28:4).<sup>228</sup> Whether Justice is actually perceived as a goddess is not relevant here, what is relevant is that Justice was a divine power operative in the cosmos, i.e. a cosmological power. Augustus actually established a state cult and built a temple to *Iustitia* in Rome in 13 C.E.<sup>229</sup> This, of course, makes the personification of sin as a divine-like power all the more poignant in the context of Romans. It is as if Paul were saying it is not divine *Iustitia* which is at work in the Roman empire, in the cosmos and in the human body, but the Satanic power of *Hamartia*, its opposite.

### 3.4.4 Sin as both cosmological and psychological

But sin is probably not to be identified outright with Satan, as R. Leivestad has

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<sup>226</sup> Axtell remarks that to personify something is to give it personality, whereas to deify is to "ascribe superhuman attributes." Harold L. Axtell, *The Deification of Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions*, (University of Chicago Press, 1907, repr. New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1987), 7. Axtell, however, is more concerned with whether the virtues in question were actually worshipped and received a cult, whereas my concern is with their status as superhuman cosmological powers at work in the universe.

<sup>227</sup> Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Dictionary of Roman Religion*, (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 165.

<sup>228</sup> Gottlob Schrenk, "δικη," *TDNT* II, 181.

<sup>229</sup> Axtell, 36-37.

suggested.<sup>230</sup> If Paul simply meant Satan, he could have made this clearer by mentioning Satan by name. This reasoning is problematic, since in Romans 7 sin and Satan are not simply interchangeable; indeed there are several places in Romans 5-8 where sin cannot be replaced by Satan, e.g., Romans 6:2: “We have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?” One might envision dying to Satanic power in the death of Christ, but the idea of continuing to live in sin conveys the idea of living a sinful lifestyle and committing sinful deeds. Although the cosmic connection of sin to Satan should not be denied, there is a certain irreducible connection between sin and actual deeds as well, as Röhser and others have insisted. In Romans 7:8 Paul states: “Apart from the law, sin is dead.” Of course, Satan is not dead apart from the law; Paul is simply saying that rebellion against God has no opportunity to express itself apart from an expression of the divine will in a command. The idea that sin is dead and then springs back to life gives the picture of a dormant seed springing to life with the first rain, rather than a picture of a malevolent being intent on humanity’s destruction. Romans 7:7 also does not fit well with the equation of sin and Satan, “I would not have known sin if not through the law.” Paul’s point is not that Satan would not have been known Satan, but that disobedience and rebellion would not have been experienced if it were not for the law. Paul’s concept of sin clearly has both cosmological and psychological components. The difficulty in distinguishing between cosmological powers, spirits, and psychological dispositions or inclinations has already been noted in the Qumran writings and in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In fact it is questionable whether people in the ancient Mediterranean world would have made a rigid distinction between the two.<sup>231</sup>

### **3.4.5 Sin and the psychological component of guilt: the cycle of iniquity**

Another psychological element present in Paul’s conception of sin is that of guilt, not as an internal feeling, but as a state of guiltiness before God. Although Paul does not use a Greek equivalent for the word “guilt” as such in this context (e.g.,

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<sup>230</sup> Ragnar Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the NT* (London: SPCK, 1954), 115, states: “In Romans 6-7 *he hamartia* often functions as a substitute for Satan himself.”

<sup>231</sup> As Elliott, 393, notes of Jewish apocalyptic groups.

αἰτία), nevertheless the idea of human guilt and accountability is implied.<sup>232</sup> From the beginning of the letter Paul has maintained that human beings are without excuse (Rom 1:20), that their present condition is the consequences of their own sinful choices and actions (1:21-28; 2:8-9, 23-24). Even when humanity is described as under the power of sin (3:9), the element of human guilt is clearly present, for the whole world is held accountable before God (3:19).<sup>233</sup> Since in Romans 7 it is Israel under Torah which is in view, sin here includes an element of Israel's guilt in breaking her marital covenant with God and her seduction by the Satanic serpent. Perhaps the Hebrew concept of יָוָע (iniquity) lies behind Paul's concept of sin. Iniquity can be understood as ruling or having dominion over a person: "Keep my steps steady according to your promise, and never let iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa 119:113, 118:113 LXX). Iniquity is not simply transgression (עָשָׂה), but can be used with the sense of punishment (Cain, Gen 4:13; Sodom, Gen 19:15), and a cycle of sin and guilt which goes down the generations. In Genesis 15:16, God informs Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete for another four generations. In Exodus 20:5, Yahweh describes himself as "punishing the children for the iniquity of the parents down to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me" (see also 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9). Significantly, in three of these references, יָוָע is translated in the LXX by the singular ἁμαρτία (Exod 20:5; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9; but ἀνομία in Exod 34:7). The idea is not simply that God punishes the children for the sin of the parents, but that the children continue in the sin of their parents and continue to reject God. "Iniquity" has the sense of a cycle of sin and guilt which goes down the generations, spreading like an invasive disease.<sup>234</sup> For this reason, the Israelites do not only confess the sins of their own generations, but the iniquities of their ancestors as well (Lev 26:40; Neh 9:2; Psa 79:8; Isa 65:6-7; Jer 11:10; 14:20; 32:18; Lam 5:7; Dan 9:16). David can speak of being born in iniquity (Psa 51:5, 51:4 MT). In the same way Adam's transgression has iniquitous consequences for the rest of humanity (Rom 5:12-21), so that when sin

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<sup>232</sup> *Contra* Sanders, *PPJ*, 500, who maintains that Paul "really does not deal with sin as guilt." Caird chides Sanders on this point in his review, *JTS* n.s. 29 (1978): 542.

<sup>233</sup> Schnelle, 65, also notes the connection of sin and guilt in Paul's thought in Romans.

<sup>234</sup> See Koch, "יָוָע" *TDOT*, X, 550-552.

entered the world, the consequence was that all sinned and that all received the ultimate consequence of death. If sin is simply to be replaced by Satan, then this element of human guilt and responsibility for this condition is missed. Paul by no means wishes to present either Israel or humanity as a whole as a victim of Satanic power; rather, the enslavement to such a power is the consequence of a willing complicity in a Satanic rebellion against the divine will (Rom 7:7-12). The captivity of Israel to sin is a consequence of transgression of the Torah, and this connection between law, sin, and captivity would be broken in Paul's thought if the human contribution to sin were denied. At the same time, the concept of iniquity is not a sufficient background for Paul's conception of sin, since iniquity does not seem to have a cosmological dimension in its OT context. In the DSS, however, iniquity is associated with the dominion of Belial (1QS 1:23-24; 3:22), or is even identified with Belial (11QApPs<sup>a</sup> 4:7-8). Because there are both cosmological and psychological aspects to Paul's complex view of sin, Paul can portray sin both as a cosmic invader which acts in place of the human self (7:17, 20), and at the same time speak of human accountability for sin (Rom 3:10-19; 6:23).

#### 3.4.4.2 Sin and the body

There is also for Paul a close and irreducible association of sin with the body, an association which is not brought out by simply identifying sin with Satan. Paul writes of the "body of sin" (τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) in 6:6, the "deeds of the body" (τὰ πράξεις τοῦ σώματος) in 8:13; and the desire or passions of or in the flesh (Rom 7:5; Gal 5:16-17, 24). Moreover, Paul exclaims, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). If sin referred to nothing more than Satan overpowering human beings, then why not say "who shall deliver me from Satan (or Belial)"? Sin appears to have invaded and structured the bodily existence of human beings. The *Hodayoth* may reflect a similar idea, describing a human being as "a structure of dust (גִּבְרֵה עֲפָר)" over which "a spirit of iniquity rules" (1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:21). The writer is alluding to the idea that Adam and Eve were made from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7; 3:19). In another hymn, the writer describes himself as a "structure of sin, a spirit of error" (9:22). Sin

has pervaded the body, the structure of dust, that it may be called a structure of sin. Paul asserts that participation in the death and resurrection of Christ is the only escape from this invasion of the body by sin. If the plight were merely Satanic possession, it would simply be a matter of casting Satan out of an essentially neutral body that could be cleansed or purified. *Contra* Dunn, the body is not neutral,<sup>235</sup> at least not in Romans, though it may be redeemed (8:24). A more radical solution than mere cleansing or even exorcism is necessary: sin so pervades existence in the body that the body itself must be put to death *in nuce* in the crucifixion of Christ (Rom 6:6).<sup>236</sup> Believers, though they are no longer “in the flesh” (7:5) in some sense, must put to death the deeds of the body (8:13), and offer their lives in this world as living sacrifices (12:1).

#### 3.4.4.3 Sin as a cosmological law structuring human bodily nature

Thus sin is also portrayed as a cosmic law that dwells within a person’s members and takes one captive despite the desire to do God’s will (7:23). There is some debate over whether the law of sin refers to the Torah as misused by sin or whether it refers to sin as a governing norm or principle. Since the law of the mind in 7:23 is identical with the law of God in 7:22,<sup>237</sup> and this law is opposed by the law of sin in the members, this other law (ἕτερος νόμος) perhaps should be understood as a governing principle. Bauer’s lexicon, however, offers little support for “governing principle” as an interpretation of νόμος outside of the letter to the Romans.<sup>238</sup> Nevertheless it is clear that this νόμος is not the Torah. As tempting as it might be to minimize the number of νόμοι in this difficult passage, the law of sin, unlike the Torah, has no *prescriptive* force, but merely *describes* what is in fact the case. Thus the law of sin is closer to the idea of a law of nature (e.g. the law of gravity) than to the idea of custom, usage, or law (as e.g. the law of the Romans or the Jewish Torah). The law of

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<sup>235</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 72.

<sup>236</sup> So also T. L. Carter, *Paul and the Power of Sin: Redefining ‘Beyond the Pale’*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178.

<sup>237</sup> *Contra* Black, *Romans*, 107, there is no reason to understand the law of my mind as the Stoic *lex naturalis*, and import yet another law into the context.

<sup>238</sup> Walter Bauer, νόμος, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., (Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 677.

sin is a description of the inevitable sinning which the ἐγὼ carries out despite its own best intentions. Since the ἐγὼ is not merely an individual case of slavery to sin, but indicative of the situation of all humanity, the law of sin in the members should also be understood as a cosmic law, especially since sin entered the κόσμος through the transgression of Adam (5:12).

Ideas of cosmic law in the ancient Mediterranean derive from Stoic thought. The idea of a cosmic law that “permeates the whole universe” is “foundational to Stoic philosophy.”<sup>239</sup> Cleanthes, in his hymn to Zeus, describes that deity as “the prime mover of nature, who with your law steers all things.”<sup>240</sup> Philo argues for the harmony of the law with the cosmos and the cosmos with the law, and that those who observe the law regulate their actions “by the purpose and will of nature, in accordance with which the entire world itself is administered,” implying the existence of a universal law of nature (*Opif.* 3.3).<sup>241</sup> Of course in Romans 7:23 Paul is referring not to the law of nature but to a universal law of sin that embraces and permeates the social world of humanity. Paul’s apocalyptic dualism has divided the single cosmos of the Stoics into two opposing worlds or aeons with their respective νόμοι.<sup>242</sup> Thus one might describe the law of sin as the cosmological law of the present evil aeon. Since Satan is portrayed as the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4), it is therefore likely that the law of sin represents a Satanic anti-Torah<sup>243</sup> and that sin is not a power independent from the other spiritual powers of this age. Calvin, in his commentary on 7:22, calls the law of sin “the tyrannical law of Satan,” which shows that for previous generations the separation between the anthropological and the cosmological was not as acute as it is for those

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<sup>239</sup> Ira Jolivet, “Stoic Philosophy and Jewish Scripture in the Argument from the Letter and Intent of the Law in Romans, *SBL 1999 Seminar Papers*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 450. See also H. Kleinknecht, νόμος, *TDNT* IV, 1032-33.

<sup>240</sup> Translation from A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1: Translations of the Principle Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 326-327.

<sup>241</sup> See also Philo’s reference to the law of nature (νόμος φύσεως) in Abr. 135.

<sup>242</sup> Kee remarks how Jewish apocalypticism is sharply dualistic in contrast to the monism of the Stoics, “Pauline Eschatology: Relationships with Apocalyptic and Stoic Thought,” in *Glaube und Eschatologie*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985), 145.

<sup>243</sup> Barrett, 140 calls the law of sin “an evil double of the Mosaic law” and remarks that “sin produces a counterfeit law, which makes war on the true law.”

who live in a post-Enlightenment setting.<sup>244</sup> When Paul is informed that a form of sexual immorality not even found among the pagans is present in the Corinthian congregation, he advises them to hand the man over to Satan, to cast the man back into Satan's realm, the world where he rules (1 Cor 5:5).<sup>245</sup> Through his cosmic law of sin and death, Satan has structured the bodily existence of human beings in the flesh within the present evil age.<sup>246</sup>

#### 3.4.4.4 Sin as a defiling spirit invading the porous body

The indwelling of sin in the body may also be conceived as a pollution/defilement of the body as God's temple. It is not accidental that the indwelling of sin in Romans 7:17-20 immediately precedes the description of the indwelling of the Spirit in the very next chapter (8:9-11). Thus "Sin" is more than "simply a violation of rules but [a] pollution that invades the body and threatens to pollute its pure insides."<sup>247</sup> The very conception that the body can be invaded and indwelt by sin presupposes that the boundaries of the body (whether individual or social) are porous and unable to prevent the intrusion of external influences or powers. Ruth Padel states "In a sense, 'the human body is simply a system of *poroi*,<sup>248</sup> or channels between the internal workings of the body and the outside world, and that '*Poroi* begin Western medical portraiture of the infinitely penetrable body.'<sup>249</sup> Drawing upon examples in Greek tragedy, Padel also notes that this is not only true for disease, but for emotional states as well: "An external agent (say, Aphrodite) comes in and works on and through an inner material (say Phaedra's feelings)."<sup>250</sup> Her point is that destructive emotions

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<sup>244</sup> John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, (trans. Ross Mackenzie, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 153.

<sup>245</sup> Richard Hays, *First Corinthians*, (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 85.

<sup>246</sup> It has already been noted that sin is described as a spirit of slavery (πνεῦμα δουλείας, 8:15). Since this spirit dwells in the body, and constitutes a cosmic law which structures human bodily existence, perhaps the relationship of the spirit of sin to the body should be understood in Aristotelian terms of form structuring content, just as the soul is the form to the content of the body.

<sup>247</sup> Douglas, 108.

<sup>248</sup> Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. Padel is citing Iain M. Lonie, "Medical Theory in Heraclides of Pontus," *Mnemosyne* ser. 4, vol. 18 (1965): 128.

<sup>250</sup> Padel, 59.

and passions are portrayed in Greek literature as divine influences coming from the outside but able to penetrate the human “innards.” Such a conception is dependent on the notion that the cosmos is full of divine forces that permeate all things<sup>251</sup> and also on the notion that the body is no barrier to such forces.<sup>252</sup>

The human body in Paul is likewise porous, allowing for the invasion of sin and its indwelling within it. It is of one piece with the surrounding cosmos, so that when the spirit of sin entered the world (5:12), it entered and indwelt the human body, both individual and social. Sin is thus an unclean spirit that has invaded the sacred space of the body (Rom 1:24, see 6:19, 22; IQS 4:20-22; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 9:22), meant to be the temple in which God’s Spirit dwells (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). Sin has driven the glory of God from His rightful place in the human body-temple (Rom 3:23), analogous to the departure of Yahweh’s glory from the temple (1 Sam 4:21; Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:23). Purity is a prerequisite for the dwelling of the divine glory among His people (Num 5:3; 35:34). But the body-temple cannot ultimately be purified, it can only be destroyed and recreated/resurrected. The defilement that sin brings is so severe that the destruction of the body is required (Rom 6:6). Again, the cosmological and psychological cannot be distinguished here: sin may be an unclean spirit, but it also defiles the human body, which is permanently and irrevocably affected by sin’s indwelling, unless it is destroyed and resurrected.

But if, as cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas asserts, the physical body is an image of society,<sup>253</sup> then the portrayal of a body invaded and indwelt by sin in Romans 7:14-25 indicates that Paul views Torah as unable to maintain the boundaries of the social body against the threatening forces of chaos and evil. T. L. Carter remarks: “Since the physical body symbolises the social body, Paul can portray the social

<sup>251</sup> Padel, 139-140, remarks: “In our lives we might expect to divide ‘non-human’ into two categories, animal and divine, or natural and supernatural. These categories will not do for fifth century [BCE Greek] experience. The fifth century world . . . is a world crackling with temperamental, potentially malevolent divinity. Personal, particular gods, permeating and disturbing all things, acting through and under the world’s solid fabric, in ‘natural’ elements.”

<sup>252</sup> Although Padel is writing about fifth century BCE Greek culture, the beliefs and conceptions of Greco-Roman and even Jewish culture of the 1st century CE are quite similar. Compare, for example, the concern with demonic or evil spirits in the synoptic gospels (Matt 4:24; 7:22; 8:16, 28-33; 9:32-34; 10:8; 11:18; 12:22-28; 15:22; 17:18; Mark 1:32-39; 5:15-18; 6:13; 7:26-30; 9:38; Luke 4:35-41; 7:33; 8:2, 27-38; 9:1, 42, 49; 10:17; 11:14-20; 13:32; John 7:20; 8:48-52; 10:20-21), see also Tob 3:8; 6:8, 14, 16, 18; 8:3; See also the DSS: (CD 12:2; IQS 3:18, 24-25; 4:23; IQM 13:4; 13:11; 14:10)

<sup>253</sup> Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 70.

problem of porous boundaries in terms of the danger of allowing sin to regain control over the physical body,” commenting about Romans 6. Applying this insight to Romans 7, it would seem that Paul felt the problem to be far more acute in the Torah-bounded community than he had realized prior to his conversion: sin had invaded and dwelt in the social body as a permanent resident.<sup>254</sup> Such forces have entered into the community, with the result that there is no longer any distinction between the sinful outsider and the righteous insider (see Gal 2:15 “Gentile sinners”). Any distinction between the two is now overturned (Rom 3:23), since all are under the power of sin (3:9). And it is the permeability and porousness of the individual and social bodies that makes this possible.

#### 3.4.4.5 Sociological analysis of the body invaded by sin

So the fleshly body has been invaded, possessed and defiled by the power of sin, so that the law is unable to reach its intended goal of giving spiritual, eschatological and eternal life (7:10, see 2:7; 5:17-18, 21; 6:22-23). Sin dwelling in the flesh has subverted the Torah and worked death by means of it (7:5, 10). In 7:24, Paul exclaims: “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” It is not the mortality of the body from which he seeks to escape, nor is he describing an anthropological dualism in which the body is a tomb from which the ψυχή or νοῦς seeks to flee. Rather the body of death portrays a “living death” of spiritual captivity to the cosmological power of sin that characterizes existence in this world. But what has caused Paul to so despair of bodily existence in the world that he can characterize it as one of “death?” And what has caused Paul to view the body itself as so corrupt that it must be destroyed in the death of Christ and raised up again?

It is not enough to observe that Paul holds to these theological positions, nor is it sufficient to appeal to a set of possible antecedent Jewish or Greco-Roman beliefs. Instead, it must be asked why he holds these beliefs, that is, why he chose to accept, reject, or modify certain views.<sup>255</sup> R. Grimes, a cultural anthropologist, remarks that “Because the body is so primary most cultures regard it as sacred. The body is a

<sup>254</sup> Carter, 180.

<sup>255</sup> John Gager, “Body-Symbols and Social Reality: Resurrection, Incarnation and Asceticism in Early Christianity” *Religion* 12 (1982): 345.

specially marked preserve, a repository of ultimate value. The body does not merely front for or point to the sacred; it is sacred, a locus of revelation and hierophany.<sup>256</sup> But for Paul the body apart from Christ is no longer sacred; it is not a locus of revelation, and it is not a specially marked off preserve. It has been invaded and defiled by sin, characterized as a living death.

Paul's reference to "this body of death" is not simply an individual plight, but also the plight of all those under Torah, i.e. Israel, since he intends his description not to be individual but paradigmatic. Israel's plight under Torah is thus both a social plight and a bodily plight, since the body may be taken as an image of society, as Douglas observes: "doctrines which use the human body as their metaphor . . . are likely to be especially concerned with social relationships . . . the human body is never seen as a body without at the same time being treated as an image of society."<sup>257</sup> Therefore Romans 7 may be taken as a form of profound social protest that eschatological life could not be found within the Torah-bounded community, but only a living death, because the society created by Torah had been subverted by cosmological powers of Sin and Death.

Douglas also asserts that "the body is a bounded system" and that "its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious."<sup>258</sup> For Paul, the social boundaries that Torah creates are ineffective. Sin or chaos has invaded and cannot be kept out: the world is out of control. Douglas writes: "bodily control is an expression of social control."<sup>259</sup> The converse is also true: lack of bodily control symbolizes a lack of social control. Thus the image of a body indwelt by sin, in a state of *akrasia*, symbolizes at a deeper level a world in chaos, out of control, reeling inevitably towards destruction. Such a view marks a person whose social world is insecure and unpredictable. What was once perceived to be the bedrock and foundation of society can no longer be relied upon to provide protection from the forces of chaos and disorder. Such a view is not the intellectual armchair response of one who, having

<sup>256</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*, (U. of South Carolina Press, 1990), 148.

<sup>257</sup> As quoted by Gager, 347. Original quotation from Mary Douglas, "'Social preconditions of enthusiasm and heterodoxy,' *Forms of Symbolic Action, Proceedings of the 1969 Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society*, (Seattle and London: American Ethnological Society, 1969), 71.

<sup>258</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 104.

<sup>259</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 70-71.

encountered a new solution for humanity, consequently invents a plight for them.

At the same time, it should be remembered that Romans 7 was written nearly twenty years after Paul's conversion. But I suggest that even if the details of Romans 7 may reflect later development (e.g. the portrayal of the plight as *akrasia* in terms drawn from Hellenistic moral philosophy)<sup>260</sup>, nevertheless the fundamental insecurity and sense of chaos that Romans 7 reflects is not the result of momentary intellectual reflection or rhetorical flourish and exaggeration, but represents a deeply abiding sociological threat to Paul's symbolic world. As argued in Chapter One, there were indications of this threat in Paul's pre-conversion zeal to preserve the purity of his symbolic world of his Judaism against the encroachment of early Christian ideas and practices.

The picture related here could give the impression that Paul was an incredibly insecure person, a psychological aberration. But that would be a mistake. The social forces which felt so out of control for Paul were felt by many Jews in the Second Temple period, though only Paul responded with his distinctive theology of Torah and sin. M. Elliott observes a response to perceived apostasy in Israel in terms of a cosmic pneumatological dualism: "The undeniability (as some saw it) of Israel's apostasy must have provided a perplexing dilemma for faithful Jews" which led to "various attempts at a national theodicy that attempted to explain the inexplicable presence of evil within Israel and its most severe consequence, divine rejection. Many of these attempts, as it turns out, were framed in pneumatological terms."<sup>261</sup> As demonstrated above (sections 3.4.3.1 to 3.4.3.6), Paul also uses the strategy of pneumatological dualism to explain the covenant faithlessness of Israel, the possibility of which first distressed him as a Pharisee, but to which he has now found an answer in Christ as exalted ruler and Son of God in power.

### **3.5 The Weakness of the Letter: the failure of Torah in the sphere of the flesh**

Thus Torah is presented as utterly ineffective in dealing with this cosmological-anthropological plight of spiritual captivity, defilement, and possession. In 8:3, Paul

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<sup>260</sup> See especially Stowers, 260-64 and the discussion above in section 3.2.2.

<sup>261</sup> M. Elliott, 395-6.

writes of “the powerlessness of the law” What precisely is the nature and cause of this weakness? First of all, Paul’s argument is not primarily concerned with human powerlessness to keep the law, but rather with Torah’s powerlessness in the face of sin. Torah is unable to provide the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  with the ability to master sin and its passions, and is thus ineffective as a law code, the primary purpose of which was “to control the passions and desires of its citizens.”<sup>262</sup> Secondly, Torah is unable to keep Israel from being morally defiled by the indwelling presence of sin in the flesh. It could not effectively purify the nation, nor could it drive sin out once sin was present. Thirdly, the law is cultically ineffective as a solution to Israel’s plight since neither penitential prayer nor sacrifice is adequate to deal with the plight: Christ’s death as a sin offering is necessary (8:3). Fourth, since Paul exclaims “Who shall deliver me from this body of death” (7:24), the law is clearly unable to deliver Israel from its cosmological plight of captivity to the power of sin, and from the consequence/curse of death that inevitably follows. Instead the Torah has been subverted from its divinely intended purpose of giving life, and used by sin to bring death (7:11). Fifth and finally, and most importantly, the Torah is therefore unable to fulfill its intended goal of granting and guaranteeing spiritual and eschatological life ( $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\zeta\omega\eta\nu$ , 7:10).

The reason for the law’s failure is that “it was weakened by the flesh” (Rom 8:3). It is the fleshly existence of humanity that renders humans subject to sin’s power, an existence that came into being through Adam’s transgression of the divine command and through which sin entered the world of flesh and into the human body (5:12). In contrast to his fleshly existence, Paul describes the law as spiritual (7:14). Paul is not primarily referring to its divine nature or to the origin of the law in divine inspiration by the Spirit.<sup>263</sup> Although a statement of the law’s divine inspiration fits Paul’s defense of the holiness of Torah (7:12), it does not serve well as a contrast to the fleshliness of the  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$  and its slavery under sin (7:14). Moo notes that the OT “abounds in similar assertions about the holy origin and character of the law” but then oddly remarks that the law “is never called spiritual.”<sup>264</sup> Cranfield unsuccessfully tries to introduce the

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<sup>262</sup> Stowers, 34-36.

<sup>263</sup> As most commentators maintain: Dunn, *Romans*, 387; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 473; Barrett, 137; Black, *Romans*, 104; Sanday & Headlam, 181; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 110; Cranfield, 355; Moo, *Romans*, 453.

<sup>264</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 453.

idea of the law “as understood with the help of the Spirit” and that “those without the Spirit grasp only the letter.”<sup>265</sup> Cranfield’s view is dependent on his understanding of the letter as the legalistic misuse of the law,<sup>266</sup> which fails to grasp the eschatological and redemptive-historical nature of its contrast with πνεῦμα. But the fact that the law is πνευματικός is not a matter of perception or understanding, whether correct or incorrect.

Dunn attempts to go beyond a mere understanding of πνευματικός as divine inspiration of Torah and concludes that it refers to the fact that it (1) derives from the Spirit; (2) manifests the Spirit; (3) embodies the Spirit; and (4) is intended to address at the level of the Spirit.<sup>267</sup> Of course, Dunn’s perspective here is bound up with his interpretation of Romans 7:14-25 as referring to one aspect or side of the Christian life in eschatological tension with the other aspect described in Romans 8:1-13. Nevertheless, Dunn’s view here fails to take seriously the letter/Spirit contrast in 7:6. If 7:7-25 are taken as an explication of the oldness of the letter in 7:6, how can the γράμμα manifest or embody the Spirit when it is set in contrast to the Spirit in 7:6? Moreover, it is unclear what Dunn means when he describes the Torah as intended to address “at the level of the Spirit”—as opposed to what other level? Perhaps he means that for Paul the law is meant to address those who are in the Spirit rather than those who are in the flesh. This interpretation threatens to undo his own portrayal of Romans 7:14-25 as an aspect of the eschatological tension in the Christian life, since the ἐγώ in 7:14-25 is “in the flesh,” a condition clearly in the past for Paul (7:5). Dunn clearly recognizes that σάρκινος refers to the “‘I’ as embodied in flesh, belonging to the realm of flesh, . . . the individual in his belongingness to the old epoch.”

Dunn fails to recognize that the σάρξ/πνεῦμα contrast is not only an eschatological, but also a cosmological contrast as well. Stuhlmacher recognizes that “in its origin and intention” the law “belongs to the world of God,”<sup>268</sup> and Fitzmyer notes that “the law does not belong to the world of earthbound, natural humanity” but

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<sup>265</sup> Cranfield, 355.

<sup>266</sup> Cranfield, 339-40.

<sup>267</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 387.

<sup>268</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 110.

“to the sphere of God, to the sphere of the Spirit of God.”<sup>269</sup> Neither, however, draw conclusions from this contrast of cosmological spheres for Paul’s argument concerning the Torah. That the law is πνευματικός refers not only to the spiritual origin or divine inspiration of the law, but also to the fact that law belongs to a distinct and entirely separate sphere of existence, as Winger correctly notes: “if νόμος is πνευματικός and ἐγώ is σάρκινος the two are in separate, mutually exclusive warring realms.”<sup>270</sup> These realms are that of the Spirit or the divine world of heaven as opposed to the earthly world of sinful humanity. The σάρκινος/πνευματικός contrast should be understood as the contrast between the earthly realm of mortal humanity and the heavenly exalted state of the resurrected Christ in the presence of God (Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:44- 47), as argued in Chapter One concerning the σάρξ/πνεῦμα contrast generally. The νόμος is in its very nature a heavenly reality, a cosmic law that characterizes, structures, shapes, and orders heavenly existence just as the law of sin structures human bodily existence in the present evil aeon. Thus the νόμος which is spiritual does not merely refer to the prescriptive force of the Torah as written code (mere γράμμα), but is descriptive of the law which structures heavenly existence in the same way that the Stoic law of nature structured the cosmos. Hence the law’s ineffectiveness is grounded in its inability to cross the gap from the πνευματικός realm of heaven to enter into human life. As Winger remarks: “Neither we nor sin attain to the realm where νόμος is found; how then can νόμος help us?”<sup>271</sup>

The fact that the law is πνευματικός limits its effectiveness as descriptive law to the heavenly realm. But humanity is fleshly, sold as slaves under a different νόμος, that of sin, which structures their bodily existence and prevents the heavenly spiritual νόμος from being the cosmically ordering law of the fleshly realm, so to speak: “In this argument everything focuses on two points, the power of νόμος, and the limitation of νόμος to its realm. The power of one νόμος in its realm is insufficient to conquer the power of another in its realm; in matters of σάρξ, νόμος πνευματικός is helpless before νόμος σάρκινος.”<sup>272</sup> Νόμος cannot bridge the cosmological divide and

<sup>269</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 473.

<sup>270</sup> M. Winger, *The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul*, 173.

<sup>271</sup> Winger, 173.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

cannot fulfill its intended task of giving life. Ironically it is the categorically πνευματικός nature of the Torah which keeps it from being effective, and it is precisely the sending of the Son into the flesh of sin (8:3) which enables God to accomplish through Christ what could not be accomplished through the Torah.

Because of this ineffectiveness, Torah has become mere γράμμα or letter. Even though the mind (νοῦς) and the inner man rejoice in the Torah, in the earthly realm of flesh Torah can only assume the form of mere γράμμα, written code which is unable to transform and restructure human bodily existence. Instead of excluding sin and its passions from the body, the observance of the letter merely excluded Gentiles. Had the Torah been effective in its task, and had it not been subverted by sin, the Law would have distinguished Israel as God's holy people and formed an effective boundary against sin, which then would not have been present in their flesh to subvert the Torah. The letter of Torah is unable to create and maintain an effective boundary against the invading intruder sin so that Israel remains under the power of sin like the rest of humanity under the power of sin.

That Paul is concerned about boundaries in Romans 6-8 is indicated by the "entrance" of sin into the world (5:12), by the boundary-crossing ritual of baptism in Romans 6, in which new converts transverse the boundary of death into life, and sin into righteousness. Paul writes that the members of one's body were once offered to sin as slaves to impurity (ἀκαθαρσία), now they are offered as slaves to righteousness for sanctification (ἀγιασμός, Romans 6:19). In Romans 7:4, Paul discussed how believers are put to death to the Torah through the body of Christ, a reference to leaving the sphere of Torah's authority. In fact Paul's use of the term σῶμα in Romans 6-7 (body of sin in 6:6, body of Christ in 7:4, body of death in 7:24) points towards a conception of the body with porous boundaries capable of being invaded and possessed by external powers. In 7:17 and 20, Paul refers to sin indwelling the flesh, a power that inhabits and dominates the body, having entered the world through Adam's illegitimate crossing of a divinely set boundary (παράβασις).

Moreover, in the broader context of Romans as a whole, Paul is particularly concerned with those aspects of the Law whose purpose is to sanctify Israel as God's holy people. In Romans 2 and 4 he deals with circumcision, the purpose of which was

to create a cultic boundary between the sacred community of Israel and the profane world of the nations, but because physical circumcision of the flesh did not guarantee circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:25-29), the ritual was ineffective. Paul demonstrates the same point in his discussion of the food and Sabbath laws in Romans 14.<sup>273</sup> The Jewish cultic regulations were often understood as having a moral and spiritual efficacy that actively sanctified Israel and those Gentiles who entered into Israel's covenant. Philo understands circumcision as a symbol of the excision of the pleasures which delude the mind (*Spec. Leg.* I, 9). *Jubilees* asserts that the observance of circumcision sanctifies Israel so that they might be with God and with the holy angels (*Jub.* 16:27, see vv. 25-32); those who break the command to circumcise on the eighth day are sons of Beliar given over to evil spirits, resulting in eternal loss and destruction (16:26, 31, 33-34). In the *Damascus Covenant*, Abraham's acknowledgment of and obedience to the divine command of circumcision is viewed as actually restraining or blocking the power of Mastema (CD 16:4-5).<sup>274</sup>

But Romans 7 appears to have more to do with the universal than with the special<sup>275</sup> cultic aspects of the Torah, particularly with its emphasis on the command "Thou shalt not covet" in 7:7. But in 7:6 Paul clearly contrasts letter and Spirit, whereas in 7:14, he states that the law is πνευματικός. In 7:14, Paul is referring to the universal aspects of the Torah which he cannot fulfill since he is enslaved to sin dwelling in his flesh. These universal aspects of the Torah are πνευματικός. In 7:6, however, Paul is contrasting two modes of the cultic service of God that characterize the old and new covenants respectively. The fundamental difference between these two modes of service is not in the content of the universal law, which believers are to fulfill (2:25-29, 8:4; 13:8, 10), but in the special laws which were to set Israel apart from the nations as His holy people. But they did not do so. It is the cultic failure of these special laws that results in the inability of human beings to fulfill the universal aspects of Torah, and thus attain eschatological life. Thus the letter refers to the ineffectiveness of the universal

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<sup>273</sup> That Jewish food laws are at issue is illustrated by the use of the κοινός, an exclusively Jewish purity term (Dunn, *Romans*, 818).

<sup>274</sup> M. Kister, "Demons, Theology, and Abraham's Covenant," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Fifty*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 178.

<sup>275</sup> Special in the sense of pertaining to Israel alone in its worship of God, as opposed to those aspects of Torah which applied universally to all humanity. Philo makes this distinction in his books "*The Special Laws*."

Torah as well. Because circumcision, food and Sabbath laws cannot function as they were intended, that is, to create a sacred sphere in which fulfillment of the universal Torah was possible, the Torah is unable to fulfill its divine intention of giving life. The cosmological power of sin has invaded human flesh and rendered the Torah weak and ineffective. Sin transforms Torah into letter.

### **3.6 From Plight to Solution: The Origin of Paul's Distinctive View of Torah in Romans 7**

In Romans 7:1-8:13 the Mosaic Torah is clearly displaced from the center of Paul's symbolic universe. Paul speaks of dying to the Torah and of the weakness of the Torah. Thus it must be asked what factors led Paul to transform Israel's cultural narrative and her symbolic universe in such a radical manner. At least three explanatory scenarios are possible. First, Paul perceived a plight, whether personal or of Israel corporately, prior to his conversion. Secondly, Paul realized that he and/or Israel had a plight as a direct and immediate result of his conversion. Thirdly, Paul realized that Israel had a plight at some time subsequent to his conversion, for reasons having nothing to do with his apocalyptic vision of Christ. For example, perhaps he came to his understanding of sin's subversion of Torah through his struggle with the Judaizers. Or possibly Israel's rejection of his gospel led him to believe that Israel was "blinded by the god of this age" and hopelessly enslaved to sin apart from Christ.

The third post-conversion option may be rejected on the grounds that the opposition between Torah and Christ in his conception, however conceived, appears to have been present before his conversion,<sup>276</sup> given Paul's radical conversion from persecuting the church out of zeal for Torah into a zealous proclaimer of Jesus as Messiah. Torah and Christ reversed roles in Paul's thought as a result of his conversion.<sup>277</sup> At best Israel's unbelief and also the conflict with the Judaizers at Galatia may have deepened his sense of Israel's plight, but they did not create it. Paul's call to preach to the Gentiles by itself would not have produced the idea of dying to the Torah nor the idea of a gospel without observance of circumcision/food laws etc. There

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<sup>276</sup> As Donaldson, 289, also claims.

<sup>277</sup> Gager, "Notes," 700.

was already a way for Gentiles to be admitted into God's people and a mere call to preach to the Gentiles does not logically result in the abrogation of the Torah. Moreover, as strict in his observance as he had been, Paul did not abandon Torah for purely sociological reasons, that is, to make it easier for Gentiles to enter into God's kingdom, as Watson suggested<sup>278</sup>--such an idea would have been absolutely anathema to him.

The pre-conversion option is often associated with traditional Lutheran interpretation, according to which Romans 7 represents Paul's pre-conversion struggle to keep the Torah, which finally led him to Christ as the solution. Finding that he could not be justified by his own attempts to keep God's standard in the Law, in his despair he put his faith in Christ's death as providing justification from his sins. Kümmel and Stendahl have thoroughly dealt with this conception of Paul's pre-conversion plight and there is no need to pursue it further here.

Building on the work of Kümmel and Stendahl, Sanders has argued that Paul had no pre-conversion plight and that he reasoned from solution to plight. Paul formulated the universal plight of humanity under sin and inability to keep the law in response to and as a result of his dramatic encounter with Christ, since there is no indication prior to his conversion that Paul was dissatisfied with the Torah (see Phil 3:3-6). But Sanders fails to probe deeply enough. He perceives Paul's struggle over Torah as only post-conversion and concerns the purpose of the law in light of Paul's new found conviction of Christ as universal Savior.<sup>279</sup> To be sure, Paul does wrestle with the question of the purpose of the law in redemptive history given that salvation is through Christ and not through Torah. But Paul does not invent the plight of captivity to sin as a response to this question, *rather he invents the idea that the law was given to diagnose this plight*: "through the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20, 7:7, 13, see Gal 3:19).

According to Sanders, "the passion of his expression is more likely to be explained as resulting from an acute theological problem than from an analysis of the

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<sup>278</sup> Watson, 34.

<sup>279</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 76. Sanders has not modified his views on Paul's solution to plight reasoning in this subsequent book, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*; rather he builds upon the view he set forth in *PPJ*.

human plight.<sup>280</sup> The plight of Romans 7 is thus “a reflex of his soteriology,”<sup>281</sup> since Paul has reasoned from solution to plight,<sup>282</sup> rather than the reverse: “Paul did not, while under the law perceive himself to have a ‘plight’ from which he needed salvation . . . It appears that the conclusion that all the world--both Jew and Greek--equally stands in need of a savior springs from the prior conviction that God had provided such a savior. If he did so, it follows that such a savior must have been needed.”<sup>283</sup>

Sanders also asserts that Romans 7 should not be understood “as springing from an anthropological/existential analysis of the hopeless state of humanity as it struggles to obey God without accepting Christ.”<sup>284</sup> This may be granted, since in my opinion Paul is addressing Torah-observant believers in Christ, not non-believing Jews or Gentiles.<sup>285</sup> He also argues that “the discussion is focused on God (particularly the divine purpose, the law, and sin, and on the relationships between them), and not primarily on the human condition for its own sake.”<sup>286</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that Paul simply invented a plight to resolve a theological problem.<sup>287</sup>

Moreover, Sanders turns Romans 7 into a struggle with a problem of theodicy: “How does the law fit into God’s plan?”, a problem which was a concern neither for the Torah-observant, nor for the strong who did not observe Torah. Sanders fails to

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<sup>280</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 79.

<sup>281</sup> Sanders, *PPJ*, 510.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>283</sup> Sanders, *PPJ*, 443.

<sup>284</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 77. Sanders, 78, also claims that Romans 7 represents an “extreme” plight which is unique in the Pauline corpus. If unique, then Romans 7 can be dismissed as mere exaggeration, since it is merely an anomaly in Paul’s thought created by his wrestling with the problem of why the law could not save. In addition, although Romans 7 is the most detailed description of captivity to sin, it is simply not true that it is Paul’s only presentation of the plight. In Galatians 3:22, Paul describes how Scripture has imprisoned all under sin, and how those under the Torah are under a curse for their disobedience to the Law (Gal 3:10). In 1 Corinthians 15:56, Paul states that “the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” See Frank Thielman, “The Coherence of Paul’s View of the Law : The Evidence of First Corinthians.” *NTS* 38 (1992): 235-253.

<sup>285</sup> See pages 74-75 and 19n79 above for my view of the addressees of Romans.

<sup>286</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 77.

<sup>287</sup> There is a cost to Sanders’ approach: all attempts to relate Paul rationally to his Jewish background must be given up. As Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 187, notes: “The Lutheran Paul has been replaced by an idiosyncratic Paul who in arbitrary and irrational fashion turns his face against the glory and greatness of Judaism’s covenant theology and abandons Judaism simply because it is not Christianity.” A solution-to-plight approach to Romans 7, however, creates precisely this image of Paul’s portrayal of life under the law in that context: in place of a spurious picture of Judaism as burdensome, legalistic, and hopelessly self-striving, there is now a picture of Paul who is arbitrary, irrational, and prone to flights of rhetorical exaggeration which bear no relation either to reality or to his own Jewish past.

account for the rhetorical context of Romans 7. I have already argued that Paul is attempting here to convince the Torah-observant believers in Rome that Torah does not lead to self-mastery, and is not the solution to sin.<sup>288</sup> If this is correct, then the possibility should be left open that Paul really was wrestling with a universal plight of sin and the inability of Torah to deliver from it.

But the question remains: did Paul perceive this plight before his conversion? If so, in what form? It is almost certain that both before and after his conversion Paul viewed Gentiles as enmired in sin, despite the possible exception of a few righteous Gentiles in 2:14-16. Romans 1:18-32 represents a conventional Jewish view of the Gentiles, and there is no reason to believe that Paul believed otherwise, especially given his commitment to Ἰουδαϊσμός (Gal 1:14). The pre-conversion Paul viewed the world in terms of the distinction between righteous Jew and Gentile sinner (Gal 2:15). Thus the issue is: when and how did Paul come to view the Jewish people as participating in that plight as well? I suggest that the pre-conversion Paul saw Israel as righteous vis-à-vis the nations, but perceived that righteous status to be continually threatened by impurity, disobedience, and the “immoral” and “idolatrous” Gentile culture surrounding and ruling over Israel. As mentioned before, his zeal for Torah witnesses to how deeply Paul felt this threat. So the concept of sin expressed in Romans 7 goes back to his conception of Gentile sin in his pre-conversion symbolic universe. As a result of his conversion, he began to view Israel as participating in that plight.

Sanders' approach leaves the sense, however, that Paul's understanding of Israel's plight arose *de novo* as a result of this apocalyptic vision. In a few moments of visionary experience Paul encountered Christ as the universal Savior, and he abandoned Torah without a moment's glance back. Saldarini remarks that

Sanders' case is further weakened because he cannot explain the origins of Paul's ideas . . . . Paul's struggle to interpret law, his use of the Hebrew Scriptures, and his constant reference to Judaism argue to a more intrinsic and genetic connection between what he teaches about Jesus and what he lived and knew as a Jew--as radical as his transformation into a Christian seems to have been. It seems that the abstractness of Sanders' comparative tool, the pattern of religion, has separated his analysis of Paul's religion from the many

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<sup>288</sup> See sections 3.2 and 3.2.2

substantial links it has with Judaism, even at its core.<sup>289</sup>

Caird, in his review of Sanders' book, agrees with Sanders that "Paul's theology is to be deduced from his experience of Christ and his acceptance of Christ as Lord." He maintains, however, that Sanders takes this principle to absurd lengths, noting that "Paul's conversion did not erase from his memory all traces of his earlier experience, nor did he, except in one or two hyperbolic moments, regard it as a negation of his past. By ignoring these obvious facts Sanders manages to push his rule to absurdities."<sup>290</sup>

For Sanders, Paul's conviction of Christ as universal Savior is a solution where there was no need, no plight, no reason for Paul to be even seeking a solution. This is highly problematic, for Sanders does not consider why the apocalypse of Christ had the impact it did and why it shook the plausibility structure of his symbolic universe. He does not recognize that Paul's very zeal for the law testifies to the threatened nature of his symbolic world.

Sanders also does not precisely delineate how his pre-conversion convictions were transformed. Ernest Best, in his review of Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, notes: "Curiously Sanders has little to say about Paul's conversion, nor does he see the significance of his pre-Christian contacts with Christianity."<sup>291</sup> Although it is possible that the vision itself was so powerful and self-attesting in its authority that Paul was simply overwhelmed by it, and so impressive that he could not come to any other conclusion than that Christ was the universal Savior,<sup>292</sup> it is more likely that the vision functioned as a catalyst to resolve anomalies already present in the structure of Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe.

Perhaps then Paul's distinctive view of the Torah and sin in Romans 7 derives

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<sup>289</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, Review of E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, *JBL* 98 (1979): 301.

<sup>290</sup> G. B. Caird, 540.

<sup>291</sup> Ernest Best, *SJT*, 33 (1980): 191-2. Beker makes a similar point in his review, *Theology Today*, 35 (1978): 108-111.

<sup>292</sup> Dunn makes a similar point: "It may be, of course, that Paul was totally bowled over by his encounter with the risen Christ outside Damascus, and this experience gave him a jaundiced and unfairly prejudiced view of his erstwhile faith from that time on. But Paul was by no means the only Jew who became a Christian, and it is difficult to see such an arbitrary jump from one 'system' to another commending itself quite as much as it in the event obviously did to so many of his fellow Jews," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 187.

directly from his visionary experience of Christ. On the other hand, perhaps Paul, having had a vision of a divine-like figure, was afraid of dying for his newly-exposed sinfulness, like the prophets and saints of old (cf. Isa 6), and thus became aware of his own and Israel's sinfulness in a way he had not experienced up until now. Paul's vision/revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus has two distinct aspects: the content of what was communicated to him (his call to preach to the Gentiles) and secondly, the impact or effect that the vision of Jesus as the Lord of glory (see 2 Cor 4:4-6; Ezek. 1:26-28) had upon his self-understanding.<sup>293</sup>

The vision probably produced an immediate awareness of the depth of his own sinfulness despite the "flawlessness" of his obedience to the Torah (Phil. 3:6), especially since he had persecuted the ἐκκλησία of the Messiah. In OT theophanies, the person witnessing the theophany often responds with a deep sense of sinfulness, both personal and of Israel corporately (Isa 6:1-7), fear of death (Manoah--Judg. 13:20-22; Hagar--Gen 16:13; Jacob--Gen 32:30), or the person falls to the ground as if dead (Rev 1:17; Ezek. 1:28). At least two of these (Isa 6, Ezek 1) involved a prophetic call, which was how Paul interpreted his call (Gal 1:15-16, see Jer 1). But the power and impact of this vision on Paul and on his theology of sin and Torah must not be underestimated. Dunn is correct in observing that the call was the content of the christophany, but it is quite debatable if the call constituted "its most immediate as well as most lasting impact."<sup>294</sup>

When Christ was revealed to him on the Damascus Road as the One whom he was persecuting, Paul realized that he was in captivity to a spiritual power that was able to subvert and misuse his zeal for the Law in a sinful manner. Paul's transformation led to a reversal of his self-understanding--and he reevaluated his prior life as unclean/impure and under domination of sin/Satan/cosmic powers of evil/chaos. So his zeal for God's law led him to do what he "did not want to do," namely persecute the people of God.<sup>295</sup> Paul was pursuing one goal with his mind, but Sin was accomplishing another goal in his actions. Paul's zeal, as he later says of Israel, "was not according to knowledge." In Galatians 1:13 Paul describes his zeal and persecution

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<sup>293</sup> See Carey Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology*; Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert*, Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*.

<sup>294</sup> Dunn, "A Light to the Gentiles," 253.

<sup>295</sup> Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 94.

of the church as καθ' ὑπερβολήν or excessive, so that his zeal was a passion out of control, as desire is in Romans 7. Paul's dissatisfaction with Torah perhaps stemmed from the overwhelming realization that his excessive zeal for Torah had in fact resulted in persecuting God's people. This realization shattered his previous self-understanding and righteousness. Gager speaks of a dramatic reversal, in which "the fundamental system of values and commitments. . . . is turned upside down, reversed, or transvalued."<sup>296</sup> Where Paul once pursued righteousness through the Torah, he now pursues righteousness through Christ: "But whereas the law had been the chosen path to this goal, and Christ the rejected one, their order is reversed after the event."<sup>297</sup> Now Paul regards his righteousness according to Torah as if it were human feces (σκύβαλα, Phil 3:8). *Contra* Räisänen, Paul does hint "at the connection between law and sin in connection with his conversion or his person,"<sup>298</sup> since Paul says in Romans 7:25b: "I myself serve the law of God with my mind and the law of sin in my flesh." As stated above, in this verse Paul describes his pre-conversion life as sinful and includes himself in the description of 7:7-24. This is clearly an example of the autobiographical reconstruction characteristic of converts, who often portray their prior life as horribly wicked or sinful.<sup>299</sup> Autobiographical reconstruction, however, does not necessarily mean that no pre-conversion plight of any kind existed, even if Paul was not frustrated with his efforts to keep the law. But contrary to Gaventa, this does not mean that Romans 7 has nothing to say about Paul's conversion.<sup>300</sup> Certainly it reveals nothing about the event itself or about Paul's pre-conversion view of himself, Torah, and sin, but it does reflect about the effects of that event upon Paul's theology of Torah, which is the present concern.

If even he, with his flawless observance of Torah, was a sinner, then surely all other Jews were under Sin's dominion. Thus Romans 7 becomes a universalization of Paul's own experience. Gager notes "Nock's observation that 'we all tend to

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<sup>296</sup> Gager, "Some Notes on Paul's Conversion." *NTS* 27 (1981): 700; see Donaldson, 170.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> Räisänen, 'Paul's Conversion and the Development of his View of the Law', *NTS* 33 (1987): 402.

<sup>299</sup> For a discussion of biographical reconstruction, see Snow and Machalek, 266-69; N. Taylor, 134-35; Berger and Luckmann, 159-160.

<sup>300</sup> Gaventa, B. R. *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 34.

universalize what life has done to us . . .’ is but another way of saying that much of Pauline thought can be taken as an extended exegesis of that pivotal event.<sup>301</sup> Paul sees a deep connection between his own plight revealed to him as a result of his conversion and that of Israel. Nevertheless it is unlikely that it was through his conversion alone that Paul arrived at the plight of Israel, even if, as seems likely, he came to view himself as dominated by sin through his vision. As with Sanders’ view, this perspective fails to account for why the vision would have the impact that it did, why it shook the plausibility structure of Paul’s symbolic universe. As discussed in the first chapter, Paul could very easily have dismissed the vision as a demonic or Satanic counterfeit in which Satan masqueraded as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14, cf. *Vita Adam et Eve* 9:1 and *ApocMos* 17).<sup>302</sup> The vision was able to change his belief system because cracks already existed in the internal structure of his thought.

So it is more probable the vision functioned as a catalyst to resolve anomalies already present within Paul’s pre-conversion symbolic world, anomalies which might be regarded as a plight of some kind. Without some kind of plight prior to his conversion, it is difficult to understand why the vision of Christ would have had the impact that it did and why the role of Torah was replaced by Christ in his symbolic universe, in contradistinction to most other Christian Jews of his time. Philippians 3:3-6, far from contradicting the conception of a pre-conversion plight, actually suggests one.<sup>303</sup> As noted in sections 1.5 and 1.5.1, Paul’s very “zeal for the law” and persecution of the early Christian community point toward a precarious and threatened symbolic universe, that is, to the existence of a plight.

Donaldson suggests Paul’s pre-conversion plight might be a struggle over the

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<sup>301</sup> Gager, 702. Gager is quoting Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The old and the new in religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933).

<sup>302</sup> See Chapter One, note 101.

<sup>303</sup> Moreover, Philippians 3:3-6 does not represent Paul’s post-conversion view of his past: he is simply responding to his opponents’ boasts of their righteousness *κατὰ νόμον*, and claiming that even according to that standard Paul has better qualifications than they. The polemical context must be taken into account. Paul’s post-conversion evaluation of his past is found in Philippians 3:7, where he regards such righteousness as penalty or liability (*ζημία*) or even as dung (*σκύβαλα*). Paul self-identification with the portrait of the *ἐγώ* in Romans 7:25b (*αὐτὸς ἐγώ*) does not stand in tension with Philippians 3:7-8. There is a tension between Romans 7 and Phil 3:7-8, on the one hand, and 3:3-6 on the other, because the latter verses represent his pre-conversion self-evaluation according to the law. But that is exactly what one would expect from a convert: Paul has reconstructed his past as liability and dung and sinful in contrast to his prior view of himself as righteous. But his zeal and persecution (Phil 3:6) reveal the cracks in his pre-conversion symbolic universe.

salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>304</sup> There is no evidence, however, that Paul struggled with Gentile conversion prior to his conversion. Donaldson does not adequately explain why it is necessary to die to the Torah, or the origin of Paul's view that the power of sin has subverted the Torah. This is not surprising, since Donaldson is dependent upon Sanders' view that Paul reasoned from solution to plight, at least as far as Romans 7 is concerned.

Wright, on the other hand, suggests that this pre-conversion plight is that of "the sorry state of Israel, interpreted as a problem about the covenant-faithfulness and justice of the creator God who had called her to be his chosen people."<sup>305</sup> Here Wright correctly interprets Paul's as well as Israel's plight as one of theodicy. He also rightly understands Paul to have moved from plight to solution to a radicalized understanding of that plight.<sup>306</sup> Wright further defines this plight as one of exile, Israel's oppression by the nations: "As long as Herod or Pilate ruled over her, Israel was still under the 'curse' of exile."<sup>307</sup> But Wright does not draw the necessary links between the two plights to show how one was transformed into another.

Underlying Romans 7 is a threat to the plausibility of his pre-conversion symbolic universe, a plight which drove him to persecute the early Christians. Paul's plight before his transformation was not one of personal sin and impurity before God. As was argued in Chapter One, Paul was already deeply troubled prior to his conversion by the transgressions and impurity of Israel.<sup>308</sup> Although he may have kept the law flawlessly in his own judgment (Phil 3), this does not mean he thought the same of the Jews around him, though he hardly doubted the ability of Torah to deal with their plight. After all, prior to his vision of Christ, Torah's place in his symbolic universe was unquestioned (see Phil 3). Paul's deep conviction of Israel's impurity is indicated by the fact that he outstripped his contemporaries in his Ἰουδαϊσμός (Gal 1:14), which implies a view that the majority of his fellow Pharisees, let alone the vast majority of Jews, did not live up to his understanding of Torah. Moreover, Paul describes his pre-conversion religion as one of zeal for the Law and the ancestral traditions, which led him

<sup>304</sup> Donaldson, *passim*.

<sup>305</sup> Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 261.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 261. See also his *NTPG*, 268-278.

<sup>308</sup> As also Scott Hafemann, "Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, (ed. James M. Scott, Leiden: Brill, 1996), 369n74.

to persecute the church (Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:6). His persecution of the early Christians indicates an intense concern for boundaries and for when those boundaries are violated or trespassed. Paul possessed a strong consciousness of Israel as a community but perceived that community as perpetually threatened by impurity and sin. At that time, however, he believed that the observance of Torah was sufficient to overcome the threat of impurity.

At the same time it is precisely the zeal with which he persecuted those who threatened Israel's purity that points to incipient cracks in his symbolic world. Such zeal makes particular sense in a context in which the community boundaries are perceived as threatened and in which the conventional means for maintaining such boundaries are not seen as effective--powers outside the group are viewed as able to permeate or penetrate group boundaries and thereby threaten the purity of the community. Neyrey remarks that "Paul and most people in his world perceive intense threats to the boundaries of their world, the boundaries of both city and country, as well as those of the physical body. A world that should be orderly is under attack."<sup>309</sup> This experience of a "world under attack" was fertile ground for the development of Jewish apocalypticism with its dualistic cosmology, and "reflected an experience of crisis, disaster, and injustice in the lives of people who claim faithfulness to God but who experience war, not peace."<sup>310</sup> Paul's symbolic world centered around the Jewish Torah was already under attack; it was already threatened. In the context of a more secure and dominant community, less threatened by rival symbolic worlds, Paul would not have perceived in the tiny Christian group enough of a threat to warrant persecuting them. After all, the structures of society would have been stable enough to tolerate such a group and to keep them at the fringes of society. And if Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe were secure and stable, he would not have experienced a threat serious enough to attempt to destroy the source of it. Thus Paul's pre-conversion plight was not a personal struggle to keep the Torah but a concern with whatever threatened his symbolic world, more specifically the impurity that he perceived threatened Israel's purity, of which the Christians were one example.

The extreme danger of faithlessness thus posed a significant threat to the

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<sup>309</sup> Neyrey, 158.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

plausibility of Paul's symbolic universe. Perhaps Beker is right that the ἀποκαλύψις of Christ brought to full awareness a previously unrecognized conflict in Paul,<sup>311</sup> not his personal inability to do Torah, but Israel's faithlessness in keeping it: How would God prove faithful to his covenant promises to a faithless and disobedient nation in the context of the Torah? I suggest, however, that Paul probably did not view Israel as faithless, but as in constant danger of becoming faithless through the encroaching influence of Gentile sin. When Paul encountered Christ, Paul recognized the depth of Israel's plight: Israel was not just threatened by Gentile sin, that sin had penetrated into the social body of Israel. Paul realized that the threat was in fact a reality and that Torah provided no solution. Paul's apocalyptic vision of Christ operated as a catalyst to transform the role of Torah in his symbolic universe, thereby delegitimizing the plausibility structure of his prior symbolic universe and social reality.<sup>312</sup> This vision radicalized the nature of Israel's plight, and caused him to perceive the inherent weakness of the Torah and its subversion by the cosmological power of sin.

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<sup>311</sup> Beker, 240-1: "The autobiographical element in Romans 7 consists in a perceptual shift that brings to unprecedented clarity a hidden conflict--a conflict that only the Christophany unmasked and resolved."

<sup>312</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 50-51.

## Chapter 4

### From the Letter to the Life-giving Law of the Spirit of Christ

#### 4.1 Romans 8:1-4

##### **The transformation of Torah in the death and resurrection of Christ**

Although in Romans 7 Paul exposed the weakness of the Torah in the sphere of the flesh, that does not mean that he discards the law altogether. For in Romans 8:1-13 Paul introduces the concept of the law of the Spirit of life in contrast to the law of sin and death which had reigned in the members of his body. But this law, though embodying the same divine will as the Mosaic law, is not a set of commands written on stone, but the living Spirit of the resurrected Christ, who now dwells within believers to keep the law through them in fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:26-27. The indwelling of the Spirit in believers is made possible by the bodily death of Christ which delivers believers from the body of sin and death which characterizes the old humanity in Adam.<sup>1</sup> Through proleptic participation in Christ's resurrection, believers may now participate in the heavenly reality of the Spirit and so transcend the fleshly condition of their as yet unredeemed bodies. By walking according to the heavenly reality of their new identity with and in the resurrected and exalted Son, believers may escape the inevitable sinning that characterizes life in the sinful flesh of the old aeon. This escape is possible because Christ who is the exalted heavenly king, is now living law and dwells in his people as law of the Spirit of life. In this way then, the Spirit of the resurrected Christ living through believers is the fulfillment of the Torah since Christ the king is living law to His people.<sup>2</sup>

##### **4.1.1 The transformed Torah and eschatological justification**

In Romans 8:1-13, Paul describes the transformed Torah which is now identified with the resurrected Spirit of Christ. This Torah, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, unlike the Torah of the letter, is able to provide justification to believers, since they participate in

<sup>1</sup> See below, sections 4.1.7 and 4.1.7.1.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of Christ as indwelling and living law will be developed further in sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.4.

the vindication of the Messiah from death (4:25). Thus in Romans 8:1-13, Paul's answer to the pressing issue of justification finally appears. Contrary to much traditional exegesis of Romans, Paul did not leave behind the issue of justification in Romans 5:12-21 and move on to the sanctification in chapters 6-8.<sup>3</sup> Rather, for Paul there is an indissoluble link between justification and obedience that he has maintained since Romans 2:13; "it is the doers of the law who will be justified."

It is not enough for Israel's (and the nations') disobedience to receive atonement and forgiveness in the death of Christ: the disobedience itself must be reversed in order to participate in eschatological life. Paul's exclamation in 7:24 is not a cry for deliverance at the eschaton, but a cry for deliverance in the present, from the present state of spiritual death brought about by the indwelling law of sin through its subversion of the Mosaic Torah. This spiritual death, if not dealt with, will issue in eschatological death, for the wages of sin are death (6:23). This spiritual and eschatological death is the same as the curse of the Mosaic law, to which Paul refers in Galatians 3:10 (see Deut 27:46)<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer remarks that νόμος is portrayed here "as the judge of human conduct [that] has passed judgment on those who violate its precepts. Such a curse or condemnation was leveled by the Mosaic law itself on those who were subject to it."<sup>5</sup> For Paul the curse of the law takes the form of captivity to the alien power of indwelling sin at work in the body, a spiritualized understanding of the curse of Deuteronomy 28:41, in which Israel was to be delivered over in captivity to foreign powers for her breaking of the Sinai covenant. Thus the deliverance that Christ brings into effect must issue in a deliverance from the body of this death in 7:24, and therefore from sinning in the present so that the inevitable verdict of eschatological death and condemnation may be averted.

Death and life, condemnation and justification, curse and blessing, are eschatological sanctions for sin and obedience respectively, and the Torah cannot lead to life because the cosmological law of sin indwelling the flesh actively opposes the intended purpose of the law to give life for obedience (Rom 7:10). Thus there is no

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<sup>3</sup> As still seems to be implied by the outlines of Romans in the commentaries of Cranfield, 28; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, ix; Dunn, *Romans*, viii.

<sup>4</sup> So also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 481.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

reason to oppose the language of justification and participation,<sup>6</sup> since participation in Christ is now the means by which the obedience necessary for eschatological justification is accomplished and the goal of eternal life obtained.

Hence when Paul asserts that now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, he is not speaking about a verdict which bears no relationship to the behavior and obedience of believers. Verse two gives the reason that there is no condemnation: for (γάρ) the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered from the law of sin and death. Verse 3 in turn grounds the deliverance effected by the law of the Spirit of life in the death of Christ as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*.

#### 4.1.2 The identity of the two laws in 8:2

There is some dispute concerning the identity of the two laws in verse 2: Do they refer to two principles or governing norms;<sup>7</sup> or do they both refer to the Torah, as misused by sin or misinterpreted by the Jews in the old aeon, and as used or filled by the Spirit in the new aeon?<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, Fitzmyer, asserts that the law of the Spirit of life “is the dynamic principle of the new life, creating vitality and separating humans from sin and death, indeed supplying the very vitality that the Mosaic law could not give.”<sup>9</sup> Thus this law cannot be “identical with Torah, indeed [it is] an oxymoron to apply *nomos* to the Spirit, which in his understanding is anything but law.”<sup>10</sup> Fitzmyer fails to recognize fully the background of Paul in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36: “I will put my laws in you/I will put my Spirit in you to cause you to walk in my ways.” The Law of the Spirit is not simply a principle of vitality, but the *πνευματικός* Torah itself (7:14), but now not written on mere stone as ineffective letter, but dwelling within human

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<sup>6</sup> *Contra* Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*. (trans. W. Montgomery, New York: Holt, 1931).

<sup>7</sup> So Moo, *Romans*, 474; Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 201; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 481-2

<sup>8</sup> So Dunn, *Romans*, 416-17; Wright, *Climax*, 209-210; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 119; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, (trans. James C. G. Grieg, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1984), 144-145; Dunn, *Romans*, 416-417; E. Lohse, “ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς: Exegetische Anmerkungen zu Röm 8,2” in *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz Festschrift H. Braun*, (eds. H. D. Betz and L. Schotroff, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1973), 279-88. Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 202, on the other hand, understands the law of Spirit as distinct from the law of Moses and equivalent to the law of faith in Romans 3 and the new covenant, but law of sin and death is Mosaic law misused by sin.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 481-2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

beings as the Spirit of Christ. Christ is the πνευματικός Torah of life, an indwelling person/ruler who lives out His Law through the believer, enabling them and fulfilling through them the stipulations of the covenant, so that they inherit the covenant blessing of the glory of the divine presence as the regard for the works of obedience that Christ does in and through them. It is not simply that the Torah is no longer misused by sin, but that the universal Torah has been transformed into the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and the aspects of Torah specific to the Jews have been quietly dropped.

On the other hand, Wright understands the law of sin and death as “the Torah taken over, prevented from doing what it really wanted, by sin.”<sup>11</sup> Stuhlmacher also views the law of the Spirit of life as a “positive evaluation of the Law of God as God’s goodwill which now encounters the Christian in the manner now determined by the Spirit of Christ which makes alive.”<sup>12</sup> Dunn as well argues that Paul is able to think of the law in two different ways: “the law caught in the nexus of sin and death, where it met only *sarx*, is the law as *gramma*, caught in the old epoch, abused and destructive . . . but the law rightly understood and responded to ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι is pleasing to God (2:29).” Thus he argues that the Law of the Spirit refers to Torah because:

1. the link between the law, the Spirit, and life was strongly affirmed in Romans 7 (Rom 7:14, the law is πνευματικός, and in 7:10, ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ εἰς ζωὴν.
2. the requirement of the law is fulfilled in those who walk κατὰ πνεῦμα.
3. it coheres with Paul’s claim to establish the law (3:31)
4. the law of the Spirit is the eschatological law (cf. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27).<sup>13</sup>

None of the reasons Dunn puts forth, however, are actually decisive. Although the link between law, Spirit, and life is certainly present in Romans 7, it is precisely the law’s inability to provide life which is emphasized. Moreover, as argued in the previous chapter (section 3.5), the law’s πνευματικός character is precisely the reason given for its inability to deal with sin dwelling in the fleshly ego. Thirdly, it does not seem that the

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, *Climax*, 209-210.

<sup>12</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 119.

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 416-417.

problem with the law is that it is wrongly used and wrongly responded to: on the contrary, the ἐγώ delights in God's law and desires to keep it, but finds another law in its members preventing it from fulfilling its desire. It seems that there are shades of the old Lutheran interpretation in Dunn's comment here: that the letter is the law misused for the purpose of self-justification before God (as in Käsemann and Bultmann).<sup>14</sup> There is no hint in Romans 7 that people misuse or misinterpret the Law, as argued previously on 7:6. Keck's objection to Käsemann's interpretation applies here as well: "Where does Paul ever speak of something bad that has befallen the Torah in such a way as to pervert it? Both Lohse's<sup>15</sup> and Käsemann's interpretations come too close to answering Paul's question, 'Did the good (the law) become death to me?' with a resounding Yes!"<sup>16</sup> But interpretations which equate the Law with the law of sin and death do precisely that. Nevertheless, there does appear to be a bifurcation in the Torah, though not the one that Dunn suggests: between the earthly written form of Torah (γράμμα) and its spiritual heavenly archetype (πνευματικός νόμος).

There are several decisive reasons against the idea that the two laws in 8:2 are references to the Mosaic Torah. First of all, the law of sin and death from which one is delivered must be viewed as the same as the law of sin in the members in 7:23, which is clearly described as *another* law (ἕτερος νόμος), distinct from the law of the mind, which is the Mosaic Torah which the ἐγώ desires to obey. The law of sin is not the law of Moses, for the Torah's misuse by sin is not that it causes one to sin and wars against itself, but that sin misuses the Torah to bring about death. The misuse of Torah, then, consists in the fact that concrete demands of the Torah give sin the opportunity to express its rebellions in concrete acts of transgression, which consequently brings about Torah's condemnation. It makes more sense to view the law of sin and death as an anti-Torah, a mockery of the divinely-given Torah.

Secondly, it is unlikely that Paul would identify Torah as the law of sin and

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<sup>14</sup> R. Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," in *Existence and Faith: The Shorter Writings of R. Bultmann*, (trans. Schubert Ogden, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1961), 147-157; E. Käsemann, "The Letter and the Spirit," *Perspectives on Paul*, (trans. Margaret Kohl, London: SCM, 1971), 138-168.

<sup>15</sup> Lohse, "ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς," 279-88, asserts that the law is always the law of sin to the unredeemed person, but explains that "the law of sin" is not what the law is in itself.

<sup>16</sup> Leander E. Keck, "'The Law of Sin and Death' (Rom 8:1-4): Reflections on the Spirit and Ethics in Paul," in *The Divine Helmsman. Festschrift Lou H. Silberman*, (New York: Ktav, 1980), 47.

death after taking great pains to disassociate law and sin in 7:7-12, unless his goal were to completely confuse his readers. Moo rightly notes that “to make the Mosaic Law the liberating agent in v. 2 would be to make v. 2 contradict v. 3.”<sup>17</sup> Moo also remarks that there is a certain “incongruity, however the qualifying genitives [might] be construed and the concept paraphrased, of the *nomos* liberating the believer from the same *nomos*.”<sup>18</sup>

One also has to ask in what sense the Mosaic Torah would actually deliver the believer in Christ, for it is not the universal content of the Torah now used by the Spirit that liberates from the law of sin and death, rather it is the Spirit as the eschatological power of the enthroned Son of God which liberates. According to Käsemann, “The Law of the Spirit is nothing other than the Spirit himself in his ruling function in the sphere of Christ.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time the Spirit’s rule causes believers to behave in a certain way: according to an internalized Torah! Perhaps, then, the law of the Spirit of life should be taken as a reference to the internalized law of the new covenant, as in Jeremiah 31 (see Ezekiel 36).<sup>20</sup> Paul certainly intends an allusion to Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 and the internalization of the Torah, but goes beyond their conceptions. The law/Spirit that is placed within the believer is not simply the moral content of the law, nor simply a new covenantal arrangement, but the eschatological heavenly life-giving power of the risen Christ,<sup>21</sup> an idea hardly within the purview of these prophets. Even though it is not the universal content of the Law which is the agent of deliverance, nevertheless such content is apparent in the way that the Spirit rules in the lives of believers. Thus in 8:4 and in 2:25-29 believers who walk *κατὰ πνεῦμα* in some sense fulfill the law though here again it is not the Mosaic Torah as such that is fulfilled but the universal moral content of Torah taken up into the eschatological new covenant and identified with the Spirit.

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<sup>17</sup> Moo, 474.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Käsemann, 215-16.

<sup>20</sup> Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 202.

<sup>21</sup> Moo, 474, remarks that “the law of the Spirit is the liberating power of the new age. This . . . rules out any notion of the law of the Spirit being a new, Christian ethical standard that takes the place of the Law of Moses.”

### 4.1.3 The Torah, the Spirit and the exalted Christ

So the Spirit is not simply the internalization of the Torah, nor a moral power enabling one to keep God's Law. Instead it is an animating force that restructures human bodily existence according to a new structuring principle, the spiritual law of God. In terms of moral and cultic content it is the same as the universal aspects of the Mosaic law, but now it has been internalized through the life-giving Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of life is a heavenly reality that enables one to transcend the earthly existence of the flesh even while one remains in the unresurrected state of flesh. Spirit is also not merely a new eschatological reality; it is the cosmological mode of resurrected existence appropriate to and characteristic of heaven, but it is newly/eschatologically made available to humanity through the death and resurrection of Christ.

For Paul, the Spirit is christologically defined since its sphere of operation is in Christ Jesus. For that reason, participation in the Spirit is a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus the Spirit is not an additional element added to human nature to enable fulfillment of the law (as in Augustine's *On the Letter and the Spirit*), but the means by which the believer is transferred proleptically from the realm of flesh to the heavenly and exalted state of Christ—the believer enters into a new cosmological (heavenly) sphere of existence in which the law of sin and death no longer operates and in which the law of the Spirit of life is the animating principle and *modus operandi*. Thus, just like the law of sin and death, the law of the Spirit of life is not a prescriptive law (and therefore not identical with the Sinai Torah or letter), but descriptive law, like a law of nature, or the law of gravity. It is important to recognize the dual background of the law of the Spirit of life in Ezekiel 36-26:27 on the one hand: "I will put my Spirit in you to cause you to walk in my ways" and also in the revivifying "spirit of life" in the national "resurrection" or restoration of Israel in Ezekiel 37. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, since he has risen from the dead (Rom 4:24-25) and resurrection is the vindication of Israel in Jewish tradition (Dan 12, the righteous in Israel). The eschaton has been inaugurated with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the resurrection of one is *in nuce* the resurrection of Israel, indeed of all who believe in Christ, since for Paul these prophecies are fulfilled in the Spirit of Christ which now dwells in the body of believers. But the Spirit is not just an additional power or

motivation given to believers so that they may fulfill the law. Rather, as stated above, human existence is, for Paul, always embodied existence—participation in the Spirit is deliverance from the body of this death and participation in a new body, the resurrection body of Christ. Thus dying and rising with Christ constitute a restructuring of human bodily existence according to a new structuring principle. This new *nomos* renders the law of sin and death inactive in the flesh (since believers still possess a mortal body of flesh in which the law of sin and death is ever ready to make itself manifest in deeds, see 8:13). Because of the background in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36-37, it is reasonable to suppose that the νόμος of the Spirit of life takes over the universal content of the Mosaic Torah, only now it is not prescriptive law, but rather descriptive. The eschatological time has come (νῦν in 8:1, see νυνὶ δέ in 7:6) in which the Spirit causes the people of God to obey Him, and the law is internally written on the heart so that there really ought to be no need for prescriptive law at all: believers should spontaneously do God’s will without the need for external commands. For this reason, in Galatians 5:23 Paul can write about the fruits of the Spirit: “against these things there is no law.”

This situation pertains because the Spirit is identified with the universal Torah (not with the special cultic laws the purpose of which was to distinguish Jew from Gentile). This was the problem with the Sinai Torah—as lifeless letter, it was unable to counteract the virulent law of sin and death which structured human existence in the flesh. Thus the bifurcation of the Torah in Romans 7 is not between the law of the mind and the law of sin in the members, but between the earthly written letter and the heavenly πνευματικός Torah.

The law of the Spirit of life is operative in Christ Jesus. Whether the phrase “in Christ Jesus” is to be associated with the Spirit of life or with ἡλευθέρωσεν is immaterial,<sup>22</sup> since even if the phrase is taken with the verb, the law’s sphere of operation is “in Christ Jesus.” In 7:24-25 it is clear that the deliverance effected is from the body of this death (ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου), and by the agency of Jesus Christ our Lord (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν).<sup>23</sup> This

<sup>22</sup> See Cranfield, 375, and Dunn, *Romans*, 418, who both take “in Christ Jesus” with the verb.

<sup>23</sup> Fee, *The Empowering Presence*, 523 remarks: “The Spirit of life is God’s response to the living death of those who are under Torah and captive to sin.”

implies that the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is an abbreviation for “in the body of Christ,”<sup>24</sup> since the deliverance from the body of this death is effected through believers’ participation in and inclusion in the crucified and risen body of Christ (see 6:6 and 7:4).

In addition, since Christ became a life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν) by virtue of his resurrection from the dead (1 Cor 15:45), and since the deliverance of the law of the Spirit of life is effected through Christ (7:24, 8:2), the law of the Spirit of life operative in Christ Jesus is nothing other than the exalted Christ Himself identified as a new life-giving Torah. But this Torah does not consist of commands to be obeyed or disobeyed, and sanctions to be applied; rather, Christ as the living (or life-giving) Torah produces within believers the required obedience to God, with the result that the eschatological promise of Ezekiel 36:27 is finally fulfilled in the risen Christ: “I will put my Spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.”<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.1.4 The Inclusion of Believers in the Death and Resurrection of Christ

But how is one to account for the fact that for Paul believers appear to be included in the death and resurrection of Christ? There does not seem to be any adequate OT or Jewish background to Paul’s eschatological-cosmological participationism: corporate representation, while possibly adequate for understanding the relationship of Adam and Christ to humanity in Romans 5:12-21, does not include the idea of actual participation of individuals in the actions of another (as, for example, in Rom 6:3-8).<sup>26</sup> Corporate representation applies only to judicial responsibility before

<sup>24</sup> So also J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, (London: SCM, 1952), 47.

<sup>25</sup> Thus in Romans 8:2 we have nothing less than the inauguration of Israel’s promised restoration, as noted by Thielman, 182-3.

<sup>26</sup> The classic treatment of corporate personality is H. Wheeler Robinson’s *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964). See also Aubrey Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God*, (Cardiff: U. of Wales Press, 1961); A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘In Christ’ and ‘With Christ’” *JSNT* 25 (1985): 83-97. For recent critiques of the idea of corporate personality and representation, see Stanley Porter, “Two Myths: Corporate Personality and Language/Mentality Determinism,” *SJT* 43 (1990): 289-307, and Andrew Perriman, “The Corporate Christ: Re-Assessing the Jewish Background” *TynB* 50 (1999): 241-63. See also the older critique of J. W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-examination,” *JTS* n.s. 21 (1970): 1-16.

God, to the idea of one individual acting as a representative of all without any denial of individual personality (e.g. “one died for all,” 2 Cor 5:14), but there is no OT or Jewish parallel for the idea of actually sharing in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ: “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him” (Rom 6:8). Fatehi remarks that “at times other important components of meaning are also present which cannot be reduced to the concept of representation.”<sup>27</sup> He asserts that “in Christ” is not exactly parallel to “in Adam”:

it is Adam who is a foil for Christ and not the other way round. Thus one cannot come to a full understanding of what it means to be in Christ purely on the basis of what it means to be in Adam. So although it makes sense to speak of one's being in the sphere of influence of Adam, or of being determined by him, it does not make as much sense to speak of being under his power or lordship.<sup>28</sup>

Thus he suggests that the idea of corporate representation ought to be combined with Tannehill's idea of spheres of power or dominion.<sup>29</sup> According to Tannehill, these spheres of dominion are “a power-field. It is a sphere in which a power is at work. Since Paul sees human existence as being determined by such powers, this existence can be characterized by speaking of it as in sin, in law, in flesh, or in Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> Although it is true that being “under sin” or “in the Spirit” are power-fields or spheres of dominion, this is more descriptive language than an explanation of Paul's thought. An important component is missing in all these ideas: the participation in Christ is bodily. The crucifixion is a bodily event, for believers are put to death to the law through the body of Christ (7:4) and the body of sin is destroyed or nullified through the death of Christ (6:6), so that it is through the body (of Christ) that believers are delivered from “the body of this death” (7:24).

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<sup>27</sup> Mehrdad Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: an Examination of Its Christological Implications*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000), 266.

<sup>28</sup> Fatehi, 272.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, (Berlin: Alfred Toepelmann, 1967), 18.

#### 4.1.4.1 Christ's body as a microcosm of the world

For the body of one human being to incorporate all of humanity suggests that the Greek idea of the body as a microcosm of the world underlies Paul's conception here.<sup>31</sup> Adams remarks: "Since the κόσμος -- the heavens and the earth and all life in them -- is the sum of all its parts, human beings are related to the κόσμος as parts to the whole."<sup>32</sup> He also comments that although Democritus (5th c. BCE) is the first to use the phrase μικρὸς κόσμος of the human person (Fr. 34),<sup>33</sup> the idea is earlier, and informs Plato's *Timaeus* (30d, 44d-45b), being most thoroughly developed by the Stoics.<sup>34</sup> Philo too refers to the human being as a small world (βραχὺς κόσμος) and the world as a great man (μέγας ἄνθρωπος) (*Quis Rer.* 155). The concept of the body as a microcosm of the world provides several distinct advantages over that of corporate personality or representation. The idea of personality is a rather anachronistic conception, and it is not after all the psychological aspect of their humanity but their "bodies" in which humanity participates. Also, the old humanity and the body of sin should not be understood in an individualistic manner, but as having a collective, corporate reference as well.<sup>35</sup> Most significantly, the idea of the body as a microcosm of the world provides an understanding of how Paul's cosmological participationism functions. It is not enough to say that Christ represents humanity in his death, for it is not that Christ represents people like an elected member of Congress or Parliament. In contrast to mere representation, believers are actually thought to participate in the dying and rising of Christ so that His death is also their death, and His resurrection is their resurrection. The action of one is in fact the action of all *in nuce*: One died for all, therefore all died. Thus to be in Christ or in Adam is not merely to be represented by them, but to be part of the social-bodily reality which they have created through their

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<sup>31</sup> It is surprising, given the recent critiques of corporate representation and treatment of the language of in and with Christ, that Greco-Roman backgrounds are hardly mentioned, except to dismiss Paul's background in the mystery religions.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 66.

<sup>33</sup> See also *Anonymus Photii Fragmenta* 240.7; Posidonius, *Fragmenta* 240.7; Rufus, *De partibus corporis humani* 1.3.

<sup>34</sup> Adams, 66.

<sup>35</sup> So also Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 226; Dunn, *Theology*, 318-20.

actions of obedience and disobedience/transgression. And to participate in them bodily is to share in the Spirit which motivates and inspires their actions. Through the Spirit of life, believers already proleptically participate in the πνευματικὸν σῶμα of Christ, even though they do not yet possess their own resurrection bodies.

#### 4.1.5 The weakness of the Torah and the sending of the Son

In verse 3, Paul provides the basis (γάρ)<sup>36</sup> for the deliverance from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit of Christ. The phrase “Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός” should be understood as an accusative absolute in apposition to the previous verse,<sup>37</sup> yielding the sense: “this being what the law was unable to do.” Since the Spirit gives life and delivers from the law of sin and death, what the law is unable to do is grant spiritual and eschatological life, as is clearly implied by the purpose of the law in 7:10.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the reason that the law could not accomplish its intended goal was its inability to produce in human beings the commanded obedience.<sup>39</sup> The reason given for the law’s powerlessness is that it is weakened by the flesh, or more specifically by the law of sin dwelling in the flesh.<sup>40</sup> The spiritual, heavenly nature of the law prevents it from fulfilling its intended goal in the fleshly realm.

In response to this plight, God sends His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. There is some debate concerning whether the sending of the Son implies his preexistence as a divine being.<sup>41</sup> Dunn correctly notes that Johannine references (John

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<sup>36</sup> So Cranfield, 378.

<sup>37</sup> Following J. F. Bayes, “The Translation of Romans 8:3” *ExpT* 111 (1999): 14-16, and *pace* Fitzmyer, 483-4, who interprets the phrase as a nominative absolute in apposition to what follows, so that what the law is unable to do is to condemn sin in the flesh. But condemnation is the one thing that the law *can* do, especially since the law is described as a ministry of condemnation in 2 Cor 3, and works wrath according to Rom 4:15.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, *Climax*, 202.

<sup>39</sup> *Contra* Wright, 202, who asserts that only the purpose of giving life is meant here, not producing “mere ethical behaviour.”

<sup>40</sup> I understand ἐν ᾧ as causal rather than modal, with Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 484 and Cranfield, 379.

<sup>41</sup> The classic treatment and defense of Jesus preexistence here is E. Schweizer., “Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der ‘Sendungsformul’ Gal 4:4f; Röm 8:3f; Joh 3:16f.; 1 Joh 4:9” *ZNW* 57 (1966) 199-201. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 485; Moo, *Romans*, 479, Schreiner, *Romans*, 402; Byrne, 243 also think a reference to preexistence and incarnation are present here.

3:16-17; 1 John 4:9) are much later, and that “the idea of God’s sending someone is well-established in Judaeo-Christian thought as a way of expressing the messenger’s or prophet’s authorization, without any reference to his place of origin.”<sup>42</sup> So there is nothing in “being sent” which indicates a pre-existent heavenly origin, the parallel of Wisdom 9:10 (“He sent his holy spirit from on high”) notwithstanding.<sup>43</sup> But the phrase “in the likeness of flesh” distinguishes 8:3 from these authorizations and speaks of Jesus’ “divine” origin and the humanity he assumes: none of the prophets were described as being sent *in human likeness*. It is rarely noted how unusual this language is, and that no human being would ever be described as being sent in human likeness, for the simple reason that it is so obvious that it need not be said at all. But in describing the Son as being sent in the likeness of flesh, Paul emphasizes his non-human origins--that the Son comes from another sphere of existence altogether. Dunn, on the other hand, emphasizes “the dimension of Adam Christology, without which the verse cannot be understood.”<sup>44</sup> The assessment that Adam christology is in view here can only be based upon the presence of the term ὁμοίωμα and the Adam-Christ typology of Romans 5:12-21. But neither consideration is decisive: A comparison of Adam and Christ two chapters away demonstrates little without more extensive verbal correspondences, and the fact that Christ being sent in the likeness *of flesh* points to Adam “made in the image and likeness *of God*” (Gen 1:26-27) only by way of contrast. If anything, the reversal indicates how different the sending of the Son is from the creation of Adam. The phrase “in the likeness of flesh” instead points to a divine or heavenly figure assuming human form and not to Adam. The living creatures in Ezekiel 1:5 are described as having ὁμοίωμα ἀνθρώπου (ὁμοίωμα ἀνδρός in 8:2). Similarly in Daniel 7:13, one like a son of man (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) approaches the Ancient of Days. Noah is described in 1 Enoch 106:5 as not being “like a human being,” but “like the children of the angels,” and “as one whose form and image are not like the characteristics of human beings” (106:10). The idea of human likeness and

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<sup>42</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 420. For example, prophets may be “sent by God” or from “on high” but are not pre-existent heavenly beings, see Exod 3:15; Num 16:28; Judg 6:8; 1 Sam 15:1; For other OT references, see Gen 24:40; 45:50; Judg 9:23; Isa 6:8; 19:20; Ezek 2:3; Wis 9:10; Fitzmyer, 485, lists Hellenistic parallels of gods sending messengers or heralds on certain missions, see Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 3.23; Plutarch, *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna* 1.6 329c.

<sup>43</sup> So also Byrne, 236.

<sup>44</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 420-1. See also *Christology*, 45.

form is only mentioned when it is surprising that a human being does not possess human form or likeness or because a non-human (angelic or divine) possesses human form or likeness. Otherwise there is no reason to mention the fact. In Philippians 2:6-7, Jesus, although he was in the form of God (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων), was born in human likeness, and found in form as a human being (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὔρεθείς ὡς ἄνθρωπος).<sup>45</sup> Of course, Dunn understands Philippians 2:6-7 in terms of Adam as well,<sup>46</sup> though there seems to be no warrant in the text for doing so. Moreover, Augustus, whose title as *divi filius* has already been discussed in the first chapter, is also described as having descended from heaven at his birth in both Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*<sup>47</sup> and Horace's *Second Ode*.<sup>48</sup> The achievement of Augustus in bringing peace and stability to the Roman empire was perceived as a divine work, so much so that the emperor himself must have originated in the divine sphere and descended to help the poor mortals in the earthly realm. What Virgil, Horace, and the Roman elite may have believed about Augustus' divine origin and deification is ultimately irrelevant, for the mere fact that it was part of the imperial

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<sup>45</sup> Gillman, *A Study of Romans 6:5a*, (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1992), 204, views Rom 8:3 as dependent on the formulation in Phil 2:7.

<sup>46</sup> Dunn, *Christology*, 114-21. Dunn argues that μορφῇ θεοῦ is essentially equivalent to εἰκὼν θεοῦ, that Jesus' assumption of the form of a slave, refers to what Adam became as a result of his fall, a slave of sin, that Adam sought equality with God in heeding the serpent's temptation that if they ate of the tree of knowledge they would become like God, that Jesus' being born in human likeness refers to his "freely accepting the lot and fate of all men -- ὁμοίωμα ἀνθρώπου -- mankind's mortality and corruption -- the antithesis of τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, the antithesis of God's immortality and incorruption" (p. 117). If Paul or the pre-Pauline author (and there is no evidence for a pre-Pauline theology of Christ as the last Adam) had intended a reference to Adam, he would have made the reference to Adam much clearer, at the very least using εἰκὼν θεοῦ instead of μορφῇ θεοῦ. But there is nothing about human bondage to sin or mortality mentioned anywhere in this passage, nor does the likeness of human beings refer to his taking on human mortality and corruption, ideas that must be read into the passage. The hymn is not about sin, fall, and redemption, but about Jesus' refusal to grasp for divine honors, and taking the lowest position in Greco-Roman society--that of a slave, and of allowing himself, in his unswerving obedience to God, to be subjected to a slave's death, i.e. crucifixion. For that reason God highly exalted him to a position of cosmic lordship.

<sup>47</sup> "The last age of Sybil's poem is now come . . . Now a new offspring is sent down from high heaven. Do thou, chaste Lucina, favour the birth of the child under whom the iron breed will first cease and a golden race arise throughout the world. Now shall thine own Apollo bear sway." As quoted by A. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," *Principat 23/2 vorkonstantinisches Christentum*, (New York; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 1333-1394.

<sup>48</sup> Horace, Odes, 1.2.41-44: "siue mutata iuuenem figura, ales in terris imitaris almae, filius Maiaie patiens uocari, Caesaris ultor." Guy Lee's recent translation: "Or if you, wing'd son of the kindly Maia, Changing shape on earth, imitate a young man, Suffering yourself to be nominated Caesar's avenger" (*Horace: Odes and Carmen Saeculare*, Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1998).

myth would have compelled a Christian response, especially in a letter written to the Christians in Rome. For them, Jesus was the true Son of God (*divi filius*), the true Savior (Phil 3:20; Rom 1:16), and the one who truly descended from heaven and assumed human likeness.

Byrne also notes that “the sending statement conveys a sense of divine invasion from the outside into the human realm, while also stressing the degree of divine identification with the human condition.<sup>49</sup> It is this point that Dunn fails to appreciate in his attempt to interpret 8:3 in terms of Adam christology and to view Christ as merely an eschatological human being: he fails to recognize that the death of Christ is the action of God, not merely the fulfillment of a divine mission, as in 2 Corinthians 5:19. As one leading a “divine invasion” from the πνευματικός realm into the that of the flesh, the Son is able to accomplish what the Torah was not.<sup>50</sup> If Christ were merely flesh, and not in the likeness of flesh, he would be bound by the same law of sin and death which dominates the flesh. Just as Augustus was perceived as coming from the divine realm, so Jesus must come from outside the world corrupted by sin, from the pure and undefiled realm of heaven in order to effectively deliver the people from the power of sin.

#### 4.1.6 In the likeness of sinful flesh

Paul asserts that the Son was sent in the likeness of the flesh *of sin*, and there is some debate concerning whether this means that Jesus assumed human nature without sin or sinful human nature, and if the latter, whether this in turn involves a fundamental compromise of Jesus sinlessness (2 Cor 5:21). Much of the debate has focused on the term ὁμοίωμα, specifically whether it means exact likeness or mere similarity or some combination of the two. The docetic option, that Jesus merely appeared to be flesh, has rightly been rejected by almost all interpreters.<sup>51</sup> The second possibility is that Jesus assumed human nature, but one without sin, so that ὁμοίωμα does double duty: he is exactly like human beings as far as his humanity is concerned, but only similar to

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<sup>49</sup> Byrne, 236.

<sup>50</sup> Keck, 50, notes that “the power of the flesh was broken by the arrival in the flesh of the pre-existent, and hence, divine, Son, and tacitly by his resurrection from the dead as well.”

<sup>51</sup> See Cranfield, 379.

human beings in that he did not assume sinful human nature.<sup>52</sup> But it is unlikely that ὁμοίωμα can bear two meanings simultaneously without any indication in the context that Paul intends a double *entendre*. Thirdly, some have argued that Jesus was fully human with a sinful nature like ours, yet remaining personally sinless.<sup>53</sup> The difficulty with this interpretation is that Paul does not seem to be referring here or elsewhere to Jesus' overcoming a sinful nature. Dunn asserts that ὁμοίωμα refers to "Jesus' complete identity with the flesh of sin. Jesus had to share fallen humanity or otherwise he could not deal with sin in the flesh."<sup>54</sup> Vincent Branick likewise argues that ὁμοίωμα means exact likeness and that Jesus could possess sinful flesh in the sense of fully participating in the flesh as a cosmic realm, while remaining personally sinless.<sup>55</sup>

All of these interpretations, however, suffer from the flaw of assuming that Paul is referring to the life of Jesus, and fail to consider that Paul may be referring to the crucifixion. As Branick notes, Paul "never separates the crucifixion from the incarnation."<sup>56</sup> In other words, it is on the cross that Jesus was "made sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21) and not before. That he was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh simply refers to the purpose for which the Son was sent: He came to die as sinful flesh. All that really matters for Paul at this point in his argument is that Jesus was faithful and obedient to the point of death and that he was sinful flesh on the cross. Whether he was sinful flesh before the cross is a matter of speculation and ultimately irrelevant. Dunn's point, however, that Jesus must have complete identity with the flesh of sin is important, for otherwise he would be unable to deal with sin in his flesh, for the place in which sin is

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<sup>52</sup> This is the traditional orthodox position. Most recently Schreiner, *Romans*, 403 and Moo, *Romans*, 479-80 have defended this position. Moo writes: "The use of the term implies some kind of reservation about identifying Christ with sinful flesh. . . . *Homoioioma* rights the balances that the addition of sinful to flesh might have tipped a bit too far in one direction." See also J. Schneider, ὁμοίωμα, *TDNT* V, 191-8.

<sup>53</sup> So Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 485; Barrett, 156; Byrne, 236; Dunn, *Romans*, 421; Florence M. Gillman, *A Study*, 189-205, especially 203-4.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of the Death of Jesus" in R. Banks, *Reconciliation and Hope*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 128. See also his *Christology*, 112. Gillman, 203, likewise argues that ὁμοίωμα points "to the full identity between Christ and all others," because "within 8:1-4, the immediate context of v.3, there is no evidence that Paul in any way was interested in differentiating between Christ and all others." She also notes the condemnation of sin took place ἐν τῇ σαρκί, in the flesh of Christ.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent Branick, "The Sinful Flesh of the Son of God (Rom 8:3): A Key Image of Pauline Theology." *CBQ* 47 (1985), 261.

<sup>56</sup> Branick, 253.

condemned in Jesus' own flesh on the cross.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.1.7 Christ's death as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*

The purpose of being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh is to fulfill the role of *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, a sin offering. According to Gillman, both *ὁμοίωμα σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας* and *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* “are linked to *πέμψας*: God, having sent his own Son (firstly) in the *ὁμοίωμα* of sinful flesh and (secondly) *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, condemned sin in the flesh.”<sup>58</sup> *Περὶ ἁμαρτίας* almost certainly means sin-offering,<sup>59</sup> rather than “to deal with sin” (as e.g. NRSV), since there is no indication that a prepositional phrase can be interpreted as an infinitive. On the other hand, perhaps *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* is to be associated with the following clause: “concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”<sup>60</sup> But interpreting *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in this manner separates the subject (*θεός*) and verb (*κατέκρινεν*) with an otherwise inexplicable *καί*. There are only a few instances of *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* which are not atonement related. In most of these, the reference is clearly to the specific sin of an individual,<sup>61</sup> and sometimes accompanied by a possessive pronoun to emphasize this (John 8:46; 15:22; Lam 3:39; see *T. Reub* 4:2). The contexts are those of judgment, conviction or punishment of a person's sins, and the identity of the person is clear from the context. The use of *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* even in an atonement related context is not necessarily a technical term for a sin-offering, but may be used in the sense of pardon, prayer, or the offering of atonement for sin(s).<sup>62</sup> In fact, the original formula appears to have been: *προσάξει περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ ἧς ἥμαρτεν* (Lev 4:3). The atoning action of sacrifice was just one response among many to a person's sin. It might be argued

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<sup>57</sup> F. Gillman, “Another Look at Romans 8:3: “In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 601; Cranfield, 382; also Sanday and Headlam, 193; Käsemann, *Romans* 217; Schreiner, *Romans*, 403.

<sup>58</sup> Gillman, *A Study*, 191.

<sup>59</sup> So Dunn, *Romans*, 422; Wright, *Climax*, 220-225; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 120; Moo, *Romans*, 480; Schreiner, *Romans*, 403; Byrne, 243.

<sup>60</sup> So Cranfield, 382; Barrett, 156; Black, 114; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 485-6; Sanday and Headlam, 193.

<sup>61</sup> In two cases, it refers to the sin of the world (John 16:8-9)

<sup>62</sup> The plural *περὶ ἁμαρτίων* has the same range of meaning (Deut 9:18; 1 Kgs 15:30; 16:13; Tob 3:5; Sir 28:4; 39:5; Dan 4:27, 33).

that God's condemning sin in the flesh is quite different from the idea of offering Christ as an atoning sacrifice, given that there are no other indicators of a sacrificial allusion in the context. It seems, however, that the decisive factor is the *καί*. If *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* is taken with what follows, one would have expected *πέμψας* to be in the aorist indicative like *κατέκρινεν*. It makes more sense to argue, as Gillman does, that the *καί* joins the sending of the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh with his sending as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. If that is the case, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* can only refer to a sin-offering.<sup>63</sup>

The major difficulty with the interpretation of sin-offering is the difficulty in relating that concept to the context. Paul can hardly be referring to the purification of the temple, if Milgrom's interpretation of *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* as a purification-offering is correct.<sup>64</sup> Nor can the purpose of Christ as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* be the forgiveness of sins, a concept to which Paul never refers directly in his undisputed letters, except perhaps Romans 4:8, where David's sins are not counted against him. Paul's conception of Christ's death as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* therefore goes beyond anything in the Levitical laws. Dunn remarks: "the death of the sin-offering effects God's condemnation of sin . . . by the destruction of the sinful flesh; the only remedy for the flesh's incorrigible weakness in the hands of sin is its death. . . Christ's death in its identity with sinful flesh, breaks the power of sin by destroying its base in the flesh (the new humanity beyond death is not of flesh, and so also not under sin.)"<sup>65</sup> But Dunn does not explain how a sin-offering brings into effect God's condemnation of sin when this is not the function of a sin-offering in Leviticus and Numbers, unless Paul is referring to a scapegoat offering on the Day of Atonement, which is also described as a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* (Lev 16:5, two goats for a *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*).

If understood as an apotropaic scapegoat-offering,<sup>66</sup> the crucified body of Christ becomes the body of sin which is destroyed upon the cross when the old humanity is crucified with him (Rom 6:6). This body of sin is the social body of the world into

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<sup>63</sup> McLean's objection (p. 46) that *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* requires an initial article in order to refer to a sin-offering is incorrect; see Lev. 4:14.

<sup>64</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 260. See also his article "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray," *RB* 83 (1976): 390-99.

<sup>65</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 422. See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 485-6.

<sup>66</sup> For Christ's death in Paul as a scapegoat ritual, see Bradley McLean, *The Cursed Christ: Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996)

which sin entered and enslaved humanity through the transgression of Adam (5:12), just as the ἐκκλησία is one body in Christ in which the Spirit dwells (Rom 12:5, 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27). Through his identification with the body of sin, “he who knew no sin became sin for us” (1 Cor 5:21), and in his death on the cross, he died to sin (Rom 6:10), leaving the sphere of the flesh in which sin holds humanity captive. Paul understands the curse of the law to refer to one specific curse of Deuteronomy 28: captivity to a foreign power (28:41), in this case the power of sin, as is implied by Galatians 3:22-23 and is further developed in Romans 7:14-25. Thus the wrath and condemnation which the law had worked was that of delivering Israel over into captivity to the cosmological power of sin. Therefore release from condemnation constitutes release from the curse of captivity to sin. According to McLean, the curse which is associated with sin must not be psychologised or spiritualised by modern interpreters. . . . transgressors truly incur a deadly curse and are subject to its power.<sup>67</sup> Thus, sin is an active, menacing, independent power which physically clings to the human flesh as a hostile power (Rom 7:17, 20) and enslaves people (Rom 5:12-14; 6:6-23; 7:14).<sup>68</sup> Thus McLean concludes that the phrases under a curse in Galatians 3:10 and under sin in Galatians 3:22, and Romans 3:9 are synonymous.<sup>69</sup> But Christ bore the curse of captivity of sin in his own body by being put to death and undergoing the wages of sin (Rom 6:23) for his people.

#### 4.1.7.1 Christ's body and the macrocosmic body of sin

The crucified body of Christ can function in this representative capacity (one died for all, therefore all died, 2 Corinthians 5:14), because of the principle of microcosm and macrocosm, that is, the individual physical body (a microcosm) replicates the social body (macrocosm).<sup>70</sup> As Dale Martin notes, “construing the body as really (not just figuratively) a microcosm blurs any boundary between the inner body and the outer body. The workings of the internal body are not just an imitation of the

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<sup>67</sup> McLean, 122.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>70</sup> Neyrey, 16, 104-105.

mechanics of the universe; rather, they are part of it, constantly influenced by it.”<sup>71</sup> Thus what is done to the individual body of Christ is done to the social body of those included in Christ. The body of Christ therefore could be identified with the macrocosmic body of sin (Rom 6:6) and the body of this death (7:24) because he had entered into the realm of the flesh and had become part of it: God sent his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin (8:3). Of course, for Paul, the macrocosmic body of sin is not so much the physical cosmos as the social world of humanity alienated from God, i.e. the flesh. Mary Douglas asserts that “we cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.”<sup>72</sup> Because the body of Christ is a microcosm of the larger social body of humanity, any ritual action performed upon the body of Christ affects that social body. Thus for Paul the crucifixion of Christ’s body is able to deal decisively with the danger of sin to the social body. The impurity of sin cannot be expelled: the body has become so corrupted and defiled by the presence of sin that it must be destroyed by means of the microcosmic body of Christ which is identified with the macrocosmic body of sin on the cross. In his resurrection from the dead a new social body is re-created: “one body in Christ” (Rom 12:5). In other words, Christ not only receives a new individual resurrection body, but *in nuce*, a new social body is created—a new creation: “If any one is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new!” (2 Cor 5:17).

#### 4.1.8 The fulfillment of the righteous requirement of Torah

The purpose of destroying the body of sin in the body of Christ is that the δικαίωμα of the law might be fulfilled in believers. Dunn is therefore correct that the ἵνα “expresses not merely result, but God’s purpose in sending his Son in the first place.”<sup>73</sup> The meaning of the phrase τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου is a matter of some

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<sup>71</sup> Martin, 17. See Padel, 58-59; 140-41. For a discussion of microcosm, see section 4.1.4.1 above and Adams, 66.

<sup>72</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of purity and taboo*, (New York: Routledge, 1966), 116.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 423; Cranfield, 384.

debate, as also the nature of its fulfillment. In the plural, δικαίωμα most often refers to the requirements (ordinances, statutes) of the law or God's requirements more generally (Rom 2:26; Luke 1:6; Heb 9:1, 10; in the LXX, 110 times), though it may refer to ordinances given by others (1 Macc 1:13; 4 Macc. 18:6; Mic 6:16;), righteous deeds (Rev 19:8; Sir 32:16; Bar 2:19; 1 Sam 8:3) or to divine judgments rendered (Rev 15:4). In the singular, it most often refers to an ordinance or legal requirement (Exod 21:9, and 13 more times), to a legal right or claim (2 Sam 19:29), justice (as rendering just judgment, 1 Kgs 3:28; 8:45; 1 Kgs 6:35; Prov 8:20; 19:28; Bar 2:17), and to a just cause (1 Kgs 8:59; Jer 11:20; 18:19). The debate in Romans 8:4 concerns whether the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου refers to the righteous requirement or claim of the law or the righteous judgment of the law (i.e., its verdict). Most commentators opt for the former,<sup>74</sup> but disagree whether the fulfillment of this requirement is fulfilled ethically in the lives of believers,<sup>75</sup> or fulfilled only representatively by Christ.<sup>76</sup> The main difficulty with the latter approach is that it ignores verse two: that there is no condemnation because (γάρ) the law of the Spirit of life has freed you from the law of sin and death. The fulfillment of the law must include righteous behavior produced by the Spirit, as in 2:25-29. Schreiner rightly notes against Moo that the passive does not point "to something that we are to do but to something that is done in and for us"<sup>77</sup> but "signal that the obedience described is the work of God" in believers.<sup>78</sup> A representative fulfillment of the law's requirement would seem to require ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν rather than ἐν ὑμῖν.

Although the ethical view is superior to the merely representative interpretation, it seems better to understand τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου as the legal judgment, decree, or even verdict of the law. Wright argues that δικαίωμα refers to a covenant decree, connecting it with what the law could not do--give life (7:10, 8:3). The covenant decree

<sup>74</sup> See especially H. W. M. van de Sandt, "Research into Rom 8,4a: The Legal Claim of the Law," *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 37 (1976): 252-269, who concludes that the legal claim of the law is the obligation to love.

<sup>75</sup> So Cranfield, 384; "the use of the singular brings out the fact that the law's requirements are essentially a unity. God's purpose in condemning sin was that His law's requirement might be fulfilled in us, that is, that His law might be established in the sense of at last being truly and sincerely obeyed." So also Fitzmyer 487; Schreiner, 405; Thielman, 203.

<sup>76</sup> So Moo, *Romans*, 483-4; Käsemann, *Romans*, 217-8;

<sup>77</sup> So Moo, *Romans*, 483.

<sup>78</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 405. So also Byrne, "Living out the Righteousness of God. The Contribution of Romans 6:1-8:13 to an Understanding of Paul's Ethical Presuppositions." *CBQ* 43 (1981): 569; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 120.

is that the one who does these things shall live (Deut 30:6-20; Lev 18:5), the converse of God's verdict in Romans 1:32 that those who do such (evil) things deserve to die.<sup>79</sup> He asserts that this "frees δικαίωμα from the necessity of being interpreted as something which has to be done or performed" and that "commentators have been misled into treating the word as indicating performance of the law's demands by the apparent emphasis on ethical behaviour which immediately follows."<sup>80</sup> Wright's perspective has the advantage of construing the singular of δικαίωμα in a manner consistent with the meaning in 1:32 and especially 5:18, a decree εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, it also seems to fit the context better in that the purpose that the Son was sent was to accomplish what that law could not--to give eschatological life. But Wright is incorrect to exclude all notion of moral fulfillment of the law in this verse. It is precisely those who walk according to the Spirit in whom the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου is fulfilled. In addition, the law of the Spirit of life frees believers not only from the covenant judgment/decreed of death, but from the law of sin as well, which can be nothing other than the operation of the law of sin in their behavior. The deliverance must therefore take the form of transformed behavior, and not merely from death. Wright's interpretation of δικαίωμα as God's decree that those who do these things shall live is correct, provided that an intermediate step is understood as implied--that the Spirit transforms the behavior of believers resulting in a covenantal verdict of life based upon the righteousness done through the believer by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

#### 4.1.8.1 Fulfillment of Torah and Walking κατὰ πνεῦμα

Thus the phrase τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα is not merely descriptive, but conditional, as 8:1-2 clearly implies.<sup>82</sup> The deliverance from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life is presented as the basis for the freedom from condemnation for those in Christ. Walking in the Spirit

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<sup>79</sup> Wright, *Climax*, 202.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>81</sup> Keck, 53, as well views the fulfillment of the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου as "the right intent of the law--life."

<sup>82</sup> So Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 488. Pace Cranfield, 385; Schreiner, *Romans*, 405. Schreiner agrees with Moo that the phrase is merely descriptive.

is not incidental to the fulfillment of the law but the means by which one fulfills the law and is a condition for eschatological justification (8:12-13; see Gal 6:7-8). It is precisely in those who walk according to the Spirit that the righteous verdict of the law is fulfilled.

Dunn rightly notes that the idea of walking “would evoke the typical image of walking in the law(s) of God,”<sup>83</sup> in his ways,<sup>84</sup> or in his statutes.<sup>85</sup> As Holloway remarks, “this ‘walk’ is not *merely* conduct, but conduct that is an expression of one’s commitments and devotion.”<sup>86</sup> He also notes that “a persistent theme associated with the call to ‘walk in his ways’ is that the covenant by which God has graced Israel demands the response of obedience and allegiance to his claims”<sup>87</sup> and so “designates Israel’s covenant obligation as the holy people of Yahweh.”<sup>88</sup> But according to Romans 2 and 7, Israel has not fulfilled her covenantal obligations nor walked according to God’s law. Thus, as Dunn notes, “Paul clearly intends to imply that this is only possible as an eschatological reality, as enabled by the Spirit given in the outworking of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”<sup>89</sup> God had promised through Ezekiel to put His Spirit in the Israelites to cause them to walk in my statutes (MT: וְהִלַּכְתֶּם בְּחֻקֵי, although the LXX uses πορεύομαι instead of περιπατέω: ἐν τοῖς δικαιώμασίν μου πορεύθησθε). So the day when the fulfillment of Israel’s covenantal obligations could be fulfilled had dawned with the resurrection and exaltation of Christ whose Spirit now dwells in the covenant people of God to cause them to walk in his ways.

It should be noted, however, that κατὰ πνεῦμα is not identical with κατὰ νόμον, as if walking according to the Spirit were to be reduced to doing God’s will,

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<sup>83</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 424. See Exod 16:4; 2 Kgs 10:31; Psa 78:10; 119:1, etc.

<sup>84</sup> Deut 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; Josh 22:5; Judg 2:22 etc.

<sup>85</sup> 1 Kgs 6:12; 8:61, and esp. Ezek 5:6-7; 11:12, 20; 18:4, 9, 17; 20:13, 16, 19, 21; 33:15; 36:27; 37:24.

<sup>86</sup> Joseph O. Holloway III, *Περιπατεω as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics*, (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Holloway, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Helfmeyer, וְהִלַּכְתֶּם, *TDOT*, III: 396.

<sup>89</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 424.

fulfilling a set of ethical commands, or walking according to a set of new moral values.<sup>90</sup> After all, the ἐγώ in Romans 7 had all the right moral values and desired to do them in his inner man, but was not able to do so. Thus the Spirit does not simply provide a new motivation or desire to fulfill those commands or give the ἐγώ the “power” or “ability” to fulfill them. If the Spirit merely provided power, the connection to the death and resurrection of Christ would be severed. Rather, the Spirit is the means by which the believer is enabled to transcend the sphere of the flesh and participate in the cosmological sphere of Christ exalted and enthroned in heaven. The law of the Spirit of life delivers from the law of sin and death by lifting the believer up from the cosmological sphere in which sin and death rule—the body of this death or the flesh, proleptically transferring them into a new sphere, the sphere of Christ’s heavenly dominion, so that a new law operates in their being. Of course this transfer is not yet complete, since believers have obviously not yet received their resurrection bodies. Yet the transfer is real, as long as believers walk by the unseen reality to which their faith attests, and not by the seen reality of their flesh (2 Cor 4:16).

#### 4.1.8.2 Walking κατὰ πνεῦμα as visionary ascent

Walking according to the Spirit, therefore, is walking in a continuous state of visionary mystical ascent. Although written forty years later, Revelation 1:8 describes the seer as “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:8), presumably using apocalyptic

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<sup>90</sup> The issue of Pauline ethics is beyond the purview of this thesis, though it may be said that Pauline ethics are not identical with keeping the universal moral laws of the Torah. Although believers are presented as fulfilling the law (Rom 8:4), and love is presented as the fulfillment of the law (13:8-10, Gal 5:14), this does not mean that believers *must* fulfill the law. As Westerholm, 201, notes, the language is descriptive, not prescriptive. Rather, as they walk according to the Spirit, the law is in essence fulfilled.

Moreover, Pauline ethics has a christological, eschatological, and cosmological orientation not found in the Torah. They are christologically oriented because the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ becomes the pattern upon which life is to be lived (Phil 2:5-11, 2 Cor 4:7-12, see Gal 6:2); they are eschatologically oriented, because life is to be lived in light of the fact that this age will soon pass away (1 Cor 7:29-31), and cosmologically oriented, because one is to live in accordance with the unseen world of the Spirit, and not according to the flesh (Rom 8:5-8, 12-13; 12:2; 2 Cor 4:17, Gal 5:22-25, 6:8). Torah, however, is oriented towards life in the land in this world and in the flesh, and is characterized by the distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the flesh. Thus although Paul may use the Mosaic Law at times for ethical guidance (e.g. 1 Cor 9:8-11), Pauline ethics has a different orientation. For the argument that Paul derived *halakha* from the Mosaic Torah in 1 Corinthians, see P. J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

language that was familiar to his audience and in use before his time. Rowland remarks that “Life in the Qumran community was closely linked with the glory of the heavenly world (1QS 11.6f.) . . . . What appears to have been the case is that language more appropriate to the apocalyptic ascent has been taken over to describe the character of life in the community.”<sup>91</sup> If the cosmological understanding of the flesh/Spirit contrast for which I argued in previous chapters is correct, then it is likely that Paul too has taken over the language of apocalyptic ascent and applied it to believers. After all, to participate in the resurrection of Christ, to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4), is not merely to be resuscitated but to participate in the heavenly life which now characterizes Christ. As Fitzmyer writes concerning Romans 6:4, believers are “identified with the risen life of Christ” since “baptism brings about Christians’ identification with the glorified Christ, enabling them to live actually with the life of Christ himself.”<sup>92</sup> It is therefore extremely improbable that Paul leaves his readers hanging with Jesus on the cross, as Dunn suggests.<sup>93</sup>

That Paul viewed the Christian life as participation in mystical ascent can be seen from the metaphor of “putting on” Christ as a heavenly garment as it were.<sup>94</sup> Himmelfarb notes that “In most of the later ascent apocalypses the visionary attains his place among the angels by putting on a special garment or joining in the praise the angels offer to God,” referring to *T. Levi* 5:2; *ApocZeph* 3:3-4.<sup>95</sup> In *2 Enoch* 22: 8, the Lord says to the archangel Michael, “Take Enoch and extract (him) from his earthly clothing . . . and put him into the clothes of my glory.” Afterwards, Enoch look at himself and exclaims: “And I gazed at all of myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference” (22:10).<sup>96</sup> The visionary state is therefore marked by putting on heavenly garments which make Enoch the equivalent of the angels in heavens. According to Galatians 3:27, “As many are baptized into Christ

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<sup>91</sup> C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 118.

<sup>92</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 434.

<sup>93</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 332-33.

<sup>94</sup> So also Fitzmyer on 13:14, *Romans*, 684.

<sup>95</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, “Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple,” *SBL 1987 Seminar Papers*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 212.

<sup>96</sup> The translation is that of F. I. Anderson, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, (ed. James H. Charlesworth, New York: Doubleday, 1984), I: 138-9. The two recensions of Slavonic Enoch, J and A, are essentially the same in these verses.

are clothed with (ἐνεδύσασθε) Christ,” and in Romans 13:14, believers are exhorted to “put on (ἐνδύσασθε) the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.” The tension between the indicative and imperative in these verses reflects the fact that the redemption of believers is not yet complete but awaits the *parousia* of Christ (Rom 8:22-24). Nevertheless the fact that believers have put on and can continue to put on Christ<sup>97</sup> demonstrates that a proleptic participation in the life of Christ in heaven is possible now.<sup>98</sup> Walking according to the Spirit is living proleptically as if one were already raised from the dead and living in the heavenly sphere, even though one still lives in a body of flesh.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.2 In the Flesh and in the Spirit: Romans 8:5-13

Verses five to eight describe an ethical dualism which splits humanity into two groups, those who are in the flesh and those who are in the Spirit.<sup>100</sup> What is important

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<sup>97</sup> Dunn, 79 notes that a “similar phrase [is] attested in the first century B.C.E. by Dionysius of Halicarnassus 11.5, used of acting: τὸν Ταρκύνιον ἐνδύεσθαι, ‘to play the role of Tarquin’ (LSJ, ἐνδύω; *TDNT* 2:319).” But believers are not merely playing a role and putting on a mask external to themselves that they later take off at the end of the play. Rather what is asserted is that the believer is to assume Christ as their full and complete identity, as who they truly are: the “mask” is never removed: believers are transformed into Christ, as Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 684, argues. Dunn also states that “Paul no doubt had in mind a richer, more mystical (or better) spiritual meaning in a double sense. . . . Hence the closest parallels come in talk of the final ‘putting on’ of the incorruptibility and immortality (1 Cor 15:53-54), which is the ‘image of the heavenly,’ ‘the last Adam’ (15:45-49), and of putting on the new man (Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:24).” Putting on the image of the heavenly man now, of course, means a present participation in the heavenly life.

<sup>98</sup> Himmelfarb remarks that “the heroes of ascent apocalypses teach their readers to live the life of this world with the awareness of the possibility of transcendence.” Paul, however, is teaching more than an awareness of a possibility, but that transcendence of the earthly and sin-dominated realm of the flesh is possible now by participation in the Spirit of the risen Christ, even while continuing to live in the flesh.

<sup>99</sup> To put on Christ therefore does not refer to following Christ “in the way of discipleship and to strive to let our lives be moulded according to the pattern of the humility of His earthly life” (Cranfield, 688-9). Nor does it mean that “we are consciously to embrace Christ in such a way that his character is manifested is all that we do and say” (Moo, 825-6), or that we should “model” our behavior after the ethical pattern of Christ (so Michael Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: the example and teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 151-2. It is not ethical qualities that are being put on in Rom 13:14 and Gal 3:28, but the resurrection body of Christ himself.

<sup>100</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 409 notes that “verses 5-11 do not constitute an exhortation to live according to the Spirit or to fulfill the law. Rather, they describe what is necessarily the case for one who has the Spirit or still in the flesh.” So also Fee, 537.

for our purposes is that those who are in the flesh have a mindset or inclination<sup>101</sup> which is at enmity with God, and which is unable to submit to the law of God, and therefore they are unable to please God (8:7-8). Because the inclination of the flesh is death (8:6), those who are in the flesh are trapped in a body of death (7:24) despite a desire to please God in the mind and inner man (7:22, 25). This description basically summarizes the situation under the Torah in Romans 7:13-25.

Believers, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in them (8:9). As in 7:5-6 and 8:4, the flesh/Spirit contrast is cosmological, and the transfer from being “in the flesh” to “in the Spirit” parallels the exaltation of Christ from flesh into the sphere of the Spirit of holiness (1:3-4). Thus being in the flesh is the unresurrected state characterizing existence as part of the present evil aeon of this world, whereas being in the Spirit is the resurrected state of Christ in heaven.<sup>102</sup> Just as the law of sin and death structured the existence of humanity in the flesh, now the Spirit of life structures the existence of believers as the indwelling law of the new aeon.<sup>103</sup> The phrase εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν should be understood as a true condition, and not simply as a fulfilled condition, since in the next clause Paul describes the case of one who does not have the Spirit.<sup>104</sup> Dunn correctly notes that “only those who demonstrate by character and conduct that the Spirit is directing them can claim to be under Christ’s lordship,” so that “Paul’s point is not to assert ‘that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit’ (Cranfield).”<sup>105</sup>

#### 4.2.1 The Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ: Christ as the indwelling Torah

It is important to recognize how easily Paul moves from “Spirit of God,” to

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<sup>101</sup> Cranfield 386, views τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς as “the flesh’s mind, outlook, assumptions, values, desires and purposes.” Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 488, views it as a “life of self-centered interest, self-oriented aspirations.”

<sup>102</sup> So also E. Schweizer, for whom σὰρξ and πνεῦμα are two different and successive spheres of existence, one earthly and human, the other heavenly and glorious, “Röm 1.3f. und der Gegensatz von Fleisch und Geist vor und bei Paulus,” *Neotestamentica*. Zurich: Zwingli, 1963, 185-7. He is followed by Beasley-Murray, “Romans 1:3f.,” 151; Hengel, *Son*, 60; Horn, *Angeld*, 60; Jewett, “Redaction,” 116.

<sup>103</sup> Keck, 52, remarks: “The power of sin and death, which operated in the flesh, has been displaced by the power of the Spirit. One power structure has replaced another.”

<sup>104</sup> Pace Cranfield, 388; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 490, Käsemann, *Romans*, 223.

<sup>105</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 429.

“Spirit of Christ” to “Christ in you” to “the Spirit of Him (i.e. the Father, see 6:4) who raised Jesus from the dead” in the space of three verses (8:9-11). That all these names refer to the same Spirit is beyond doubt, as nearly all commentators agree. What this implies is some kind of identification of Christ with God, some kind of inclusion within the divine identity that makes this interchangeability of expression possible.<sup>106</sup> It would probably be too much or even anachronistic to press for an ontological identification here (especially in the later trinitarian understanding of *homoousios*).<sup>107</sup> At the same time, even a functional identification of Christ and God with reference to the Spirit is extraordinary.<sup>108</sup>

Dunn notes that “for Paul as much as for the earlier Jewish writers the Spirit is the dynamic power of God himself reaching out to and having its effect on men.”<sup>109</sup> According to Fatehi, the Spirit of God (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים or רוּחַ יְהוָה) in the OT “refers to God’s activity as he relates himself to his world, his creation, his people” and “does not refer to Yahweh as he is in himself, in his inner personality or being, but as he communicates to the world his power, his life, his anger, his will, his very presence.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, in Ezekiel 36:26-27, the Spirit represents the reassertion of God’s sovereign rule over the lives of His people: “such experiences of Yahweh’s presence and action through the Spirit are essentially experiences of Yahweh’s sovereign rule over his people’s life.”<sup>111</sup> In the promise to put God’s Spirit in the Israelites, “Ezekiel explicitly connects the realization of the covenant formula to a new work of Yahweh’s Spirit” in Ezekiel 36:27, which constitutes a “realization of Yahweh’s covenant lordship” in their

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<sup>106</sup> *Contra* Dunn, *Romans*, 429, the Spirit of Christ is not merely the “Spirit known by the character of his life and ministry,” since the life and ministry of Jesus seems to play so little role in the shaping of Paul’s thought as it exists in his letters. On the contrary, it has already been shown how Christ has been assumed into the identity of God in some manner.

<sup>107</sup> As Gordon Fee apparently does in “Some Reflections on Paul as a Trinitarian” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 312-331.

<sup>108</sup> As Dunn, *Romans*, 430, remarks: “The astonishing nature of this identification made between a not-long-ago crucified Galilean and the creative, revelatory, and redemptive power of God should not go unremarked.”

<sup>109</sup> Dunn, *Christology*, 144.

<sup>110</sup> Fatehi, 53.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 58, 61.

innermost being.<sup>112</sup> Thus when Paul identifies the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ, he can do so because Christ exercises God's sovereign lordship over the cosmos (Phil 2:9-11), and the Spirit indwelling human beings is the means by which Christ establishes God's rule over the lives of human beings and delivers them from the cosmological power of sin,<sup>113</sup> just as the Spirit would be the means by which the covenant lordship of Yahweh was reestablished over Israel in Ezekiel 36:26-27.<sup>114</sup> The language of "(not) belonging to Christ" (οὐτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ) in Romans 8:9 is that of covenantal ownership.<sup>115</sup> As Paul states "You are not your own (οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐαυτῶν), you were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20). Therefore if the Spirit is the means by which God puts his law in the hearts of his people, and if the Spirit also the extension of Christ's cosmic rule over them, then it may be said that *the exalted Lord is the living, or better, life-giving law in the lives of his people.*

#### 4.2.2 "Christ in you": Christ living the Torah in believers

Thus "Christ in you" is no mere statement of his spiritual location in the hearts of believers, nor does it refer simply to a personal relationship he has with believers.<sup>116</sup> Nor is he a moral example to be followed, which would offer little improvement over the νόμος in chapter 7. On the contrary, the idea of indwelling (οἰκεῖ ἐν) in Romans 8:9

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<sup>112</sup> Fatehi, 61. See also *Jub.* 1:23-25; 1Q34bis f3ii:6-7; 1QS 3:6-8; 1QH 8:16, 20-21; 15:6-7; 4 *Ez* 6:26.

<sup>113</sup> Thus the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of the risen Christ, not the Spirit of the earthly Jesus who "impressed his character and personality on the Spirit" (so Dunn, "Jesus, Flesh and Spirit," *JTS* n.s. 24 [1973]: 59), nor is Jesus to be understood by analogy with the Spirit of Elijah (Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 201), even if Jesus was a man uniquely empowered and inspired by the Spirit during his lifetime. Dunn, *Romans*, 429, remarks that "the Spirit of God may be known now as the Spirit of Christ, that is, by the character of his life and ministry" but on the following page notes that "the identification with the Spirit of God was made only in terms of the risen and exalted Christ" (Dunn, *Romans*, 430). I think only the latter statement is true: the Spirit is the Spirit of the exalted Christ.

<sup>114</sup> Thus Turner remarks: "The Spirit is now also thought to act as the dynamic extension of the risen Christ's personality, and activity, as formerly he had been thought to act as God's," "The Spirit of Christ and 'Divine' Christology," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 432. And if the Spirit of God is the means by which Christ extends his cosmic lordship over the cosmos, this means that the phrase "Spirit of Christ" need not imply an ontological identification, but only a functional or dynamic identification.

<sup>115</sup> William Barclay, *"Christ in You": A Study in Paul's Theology and Ethics*. (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 1999), 84.

<sup>116</sup> *Contra* Barclay, 81.

denotes “a settled permanent penetrative influence,”<sup>117</sup> and “possession by a power superior to the self.”<sup>118</sup> Dunn notes that the statement: “If anyone does not have (ἔχει) the Spirit of Christ,” is the language of possession in the NT, though normally used of possession by demons or spirits.<sup>119</sup> In Galatians 2:20, an earlier formulation concerning the indwelling Christ, Paul asserts: “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Just as sin once replaced the ἐγώ (Rom 7:17, 20) the indwelling Christ refers to his taking the place of the ἐγώ in the believer as the initiator, producer and actor of their actions, as the one who lives, in, through, and even as them (Gal 2:20). Betz remarks that “since the ‘I’ is dead, another agent must do the living in me,”<sup>120</sup> and Matera comments that Christ has replaced the self, the “ego as a controlling factor in his life.”<sup>121</sup> Thus it may be said that “this new life is nothing less than the risen Christ living his life in the believer.”<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.2.3 The replacement of the “I” in believers by Christ

Engberg-Pedersen’s exegesis of Galatians 2:20 and Romans 8:9-11 in terms of Stoic ethics is particularly helpful here. He asserts that the key to these passages in which the I “dies” or “is crucified” and thus “no longer lives” is “to see Paul as talking of self-identification.”<sup>123</sup> Thus it is not that the “I” has literally physically died, but that it

will be dead in the sense that there is *nothing whatever* in the

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<sup>117</sup> Sanday and Headlam, 196. See Dunn, *Romans*, 429: “οἰκέω is probably chosen to denote a settled relation rather than the more transitory state of possession. . . . As later rabbinical comment noted, he who dwells in a house is the master of the house, not just a passing guest (Str-B, 3:239).”

<sup>118</sup> Cranfield, 388.

<sup>119</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 429. See Matt 11:18; Mark 3:30; 9:17; Luke 4:33; 7:33; 8:27; 13:11; John 7:20; 8:48-49, 52; 10:20; Acts 8:7; 16:16; 19:13.

<sup>120</sup> H. D. Betz, *Galatians*, 124.

<sup>121</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 96. Similarly, Martyn, *Galatians*, 258. Dunn, *Galatians*, 145, considerably weakens the force of Paul’s language in describing Christ as “the new focus of his personality” and says on page 146 that “the language of verse 20 was overdrawn for effect.” Christ, however, is not simply the focus of a new personality, but appears to replace the ego as most recent commentators note. Dunn also curiously notes the presence of Adam Christology in this context, but there is no indication of Adam in the context. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 92, also blunts the force of Paul’s words in referring to a “death to the jurisdiction of one’s own ego,” which has “ceased to be a controlling factor for the direction of the Christian life.”

<sup>122</sup> So F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 144.

<sup>123</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 147.

individual person whose self-reflection is here being described with which he wishes to *identify normatively* . . . . As normatively seen by himself, he no longer is that individual person (Paul himself with all his individualizing traits). That person is normatively ‘dead’ and gone. He has *no* value for Paul. Instead *Christ* lives in me.<sup>124</sup>

In other words, Paul ceases to define himself by anything that belongs to the cosmological sphere of the flesh: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Colossians is even more explicit: in the new humanity, “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11).<sup>125</sup> All individualizing traits, all marks of social identity in this world are removed, one might even say obliterated in Christ:<sup>126</sup>

What is left behind is precisely the ‘I’ (*ego*), that is, whatever makes a person *that particular individual* as whom he would previously identify himself and to whom he would ascribe value. No substantive individual remains as the target for this kind of normative self-identification. What there is, is only a hollow shell: the formal self or self-identifying ‘I’ (the one who does the self-identification) who is now filled with a new substantive content that he in fact shares with others--and who normatively identifies himself in relation to nothing but that--as a Christ person.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, 147. Italics are his.

<sup>125</sup> As stated above in Chapter One, I view Colossians as Pauline. Even if, however, it is written by a disciple of Paul, in my opinion Col 3:11 faithfully represents Pauline teaching as reflected in Gal 2:20 and 3:27-28.

<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, some scholars have argued that Paul only relativizes social and ethnic identities in comparison to the new identity in Christ, rather than obliterating such distinctions. In this regard, see William Campbell, *Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans*, (Frankfurt; Peter Lang, 1991), 116; Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 1996), 183; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 2003), 133. Campbell, p. 116 remarks: “Reconciliation consists not in the elimination but rather in the overcoming of differences in Christ. Its goal is the eradication of the hostility that springs from differences.” Likewise Nanos, 183 states that “Paul would have been surprised to hear that his teaching has been made the basis for believing a Jew lost their Jewishness (no longer kept Torah, became a gentile as it were) when they became a believer in Jesus.” On the other hand, these scholars do not recognize the full force of the statement “There is no Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11), nor do they recognize that Paul can write of the Corinthians as former Gentiles (1 Cor 12:2), and of his own former life in Ἰουδαϊσμός (Gal 1:13). Of course Paul is careful to assert that this does not mean the rejection of historical Israel, nor that God will prove faithless to His promises to the nation of Israel (Rom 9-11), since Paul himself is after all an Israelite (11:1, though interestingly Paul does not call himself a Jew in Romans).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

So there is no “I” that is a Christian, anymore than there is an “I” who is a Jew. Christ himself is the self-identification of the believer (Christ is all and is in all, see Col 3:11).<sup>128</sup> Paul can speak in this manner because he has given himself so completely over to Christ that all other identifications and self-definitions have effectively ceased to exist for him. The life which he now lives, he lives in the faithfulness that characterized the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him (Gal 2:20).<sup>129</sup> That is, it is the life of Christ’s faithful self-giving which is now being lived out through and in him as if he were some kind of vessel to be filled. Paul also exhorts the Galatians to “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). Perhaps the law of Christ should be understood not possessively, that is, as the law which belongs to Christ, or as the law which is promulgated by Christ, or as the law which is given by Christ, but exegetically, as the law which is Christ. Christ Himself fulfills his own law in the lives of believers as they walk by faith in His faithful self-giving.

Thus when Paul writes of Christ dwelling in believers, as in Romans 8:9-10, he is not commenting on the location of Christ, or on a personal relationship that Christ has with the believer. It is, rather, the language of possession: Christ has replaced the individual “I” as the self-identification of the believer, and is the initiator and producer of the actions which flow out of that identity. But this indwelling is not a definition of what it means to be a Christian, as if it were automatically true regardless of the believer’s obedience. On the contrary, the indwelling of Christ depends on the believer’s continuing identification with Christ in his death and resurrection and if the believer fails in this identification, then Christ does not live His life through them and is not the effective ruling power in their lives, despite the fact that they may be believers in the technical sense.

#### **4.2.4 Consequences of Christ’s indwelling: the deadness of the body and the life of the Spirit**

There is a dual consequence of Christ’s indwelling: the body is dead because of

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<sup>128</sup> Though of course not in an ontological sense, but only existentially, in terms of one’s self-definition.

<sup>129</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, 146.

sin,<sup>130</sup> and the Spirit is life because of righteousness.<sup>131</sup> The deadness of the body does not refer to the body's mortality,<sup>132</sup> but to a present "state of deadness."<sup>133</sup> Nor is the death described here the living death of Romans 7:24<sup>134</sup> since the believer has been delivered from that death in 8:2. It is unlikely that the believer's death to sin in conversion/baptism is meant here,<sup>135</sup> since Paul would have said dead *to sin*, and not *on account of sin* (8:10).<sup>136</sup> Instead Paul is referring to the fact that the body of sin has been rendered inoperative through the indwelling of Christ--that is, if and only if it is truly Christ who is living through the believer and the believer has truly identified with Christ's death and resurrection. Again, if a believer fails to perceive, understand and believe that his "I" has died with Christ and that it is now Christ dwelling in him and not his own "I" then the body is not rendered inoperative, the Spirit is not life to them, and the captivity to the law of sin and death once more pertains to the believer. But because the body has been rendered dead and inoperative, the believer is still utterly incapable of bringing forth fruit for God apart from the life-giving power of God, just as the deadness of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb were unable to bear fruit apart from God's miraculous intervention (Rom 4:19).<sup>137</sup> So the Spirit is the power of life in the believer's "dead" body on account of the righteousness of God at work in Christ. According to Dunn, δικαιοσύνη "denotes particularly the gracious action which inaugurated the new epoch and continues to sustain those in it,"<sup>138</sup> *contra* Byrne, who

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<sup>130</sup> Barclay, 36. The *μεν* clause should not be interpreted concessively, following Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 490; Moo, *Romans*, 524; Schreiner, *Romans*, 414.

<sup>131</sup> Πνεῦμα in 8:10 is clearly the Spirit of Christ or God, not the human spirit, since the human spirit cannot be equated with life and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of life in 8:2, as most recent commentators now acknowledge (Cranfield, Dunn, Moo, Barrett; Murray, Byrne, Schreiner, *contra* Sanday and Headlam, Godet, Fitzmyer). Curiously, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 490-1, however, views πνεῦμα as the human spirit in union with the Spirit of Christ, so that the human spirit now lives. But Paul does not say that the πνεῦμα lives, but that the πνεῦμα is life. The RSV, NIV and NASB all understand πνεῦμα anthropologically, but the NRSV translates "The Spirit is life."

<sup>132</sup> *Contra* Cranfield, 389: "the Christian must still submit to death as the wages of sin, because he is a sinner." Also *contra* Byrne 246, Moo, *Romans*, 491; Schreiner, *Romans*, 414.

<sup>133</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 431.

<sup>134</sup> *Contra* Dunn, *Romans*, 431.

<sup>135</sup> *Contra* Barclay 36; Barrett, 158; Käsemann, *Romans*, 224.

<sup>136</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 431.

<sup>137</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 491, remarks that "the human body is like a corpse because of sin (5:12, cf. 6:6, 7:24)."

<sup>138</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 432. So also Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 122; Schreiner, *Romans*, 415. This righteousness is not, however, to be reduced to a merely forensic imputed sense (so Moo, *Romans*, 492).

understands it as the ethical righteousness of believers.<sup>139</sup> But the Spirit's action of giving life must be prior to any ethical action on the part of believers; otherwise they remain captive to the law of sin and death. In verse 11, Paul explains the eschatological consequence of Christ's indwelling: the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead (i.e. the Father; see 6:4) will give life to their mortal bodies also through precisely that indwelling Spirit.<sup>140</sup>

#### 4.2.5 The conditional nature of participation in eschatological resurrection

This assurance of participation in eschatological resurrection will only hold true for believers if the Spirit of Christ truly dwells in them, that is, lives His life through them. For that reason in 8:12-13 Paul makes explicit the imperative implied in 8:1-11, that believers are not to continue living according to the flesh, since they have no obligation to the social world of sinful humanity, as they no longer identify with that realm ("You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," 8:9), despite their continuing existence in the body. Believers are to live out what is already true of them by virtue of their participation in Christ's death and resurrection and because the Spirit of Christ now dwells within them, replacing the individual "I" in the believer as the producer and initiator of their actions. In Romans 8:1-13 Paul is trying to get the readers to understand themselves in light of the Christ-event: "all through 8:1-11 Paul is basically making an appeal to the self-understanding of his addressees. His description is aimed to make them see who they themselves are."<sup>141</sup> Engberg-Pedersen takes the conditional clauses in 8:9-11 as genuinely conditional, so that "Paul is after all not just describing facts about his addressees, but stating what will (in fact!) hold of them *if* certain other things also hold. And *whether* these things do hold is--*up to the addressees themselves*."<sup>142</sup> Thus if the readers identify with the story of Christ's death and resurrection, if they perceive the Spirit of Christ to be dwelling in them, if they see themselves as being in the Spirit and in Christ Jesus, "in short, if they see themselves as

<sup>139</sup> Byrne, 245. So also Käsemann, *Romans*, 224.

<sup>140</sup> *Contra* Calvin, 166. Most commentators now understand the reference to refer to the eschatological future, and not to the present. Byrne's argument that "The object 'mortal bodies' shows that the verb ζωοποιήσει must refer to resurrection" is decisive (Byrne, 246).

<sup>141</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, 251.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

having been taken over by God, Christ and the Spirit, then their sinful body will in fact have been made inoperative, namely through that seeing. They will now identify exclusively with Christ. Where ‘they were,’ Christ now is.”<sup>143</sup> And because the body of sin will have been made inoperative (just as Christ’s body made sin had been destroyed (Rom 6:6), the readers “*will themselves in fact cease altogether to sin,*”<sup>144</sup> as long as they identify themselves and understand themselves in the way that Paul describes. If they do not, then the threat of eschatological judgment remains, and they will die eternally and eschatologically (εἰ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆτε, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν, 8:13),<sup>145</sup> but if they live according to the Spirit in the manner Paul describes, they will live, *i.e.* inherit eternal life as the sons of God (8:13-14).

### 4.3 The present process of transformation

Nevertheless ceasing to sin is a process, since, as Dunn notes, believers are

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<sup>143</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, 252.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> So also Byrne, 246; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 130; Moo, *Romans*, 495; Schreiner, *Romans*, 420; Cranfield, 394; Dunn, *Romans*, 448.

presently in a process of transformation (μεταμόρφωσις).<sup>146</sup> Paul commands the Romans: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Rom 12:2). But what is being transformed? The present transformation is certainly not of the body, a transformation which awaits the appearing of Christ (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:51-52; Rom 8:19, 21, 23). Rather it is one’s behavior that is progressively transformed as one identifies with Christ and as Christ comes to live out more and more through the believer as the believers’ truest identity (see Gal 2:20). The transformation occurs by the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:2), which does not refer to adopting good moral values or following God’s will as revealed in the Torah—if that were the case, there would be no need for the indwelling Christ, for such transformation would have already been available in the law. The renewal (ἀνακαινώσις), on the contrary, occurs in the identity of believers, in their self-understanding, as Engberg-Pedersen has asserted in the quotation in the previous paragraph. Just as the believer

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<sup>146</sup> Dunn, *Theology*, 468. It should be apparent that the picture of eschatological tension that has been drawn here is quite different from that drawn by Dunn in his theology of Paul (461-98). On the one hand, it is undeniable that for Paul believers live in the overlap of the ages, between the times as it were, between what has already been accomplished for and in believers and what is not yet with regard to their eschatological redemption (Dunn, *Theology*, 461-67). Moreover, it is clear that believers do not yet have their resurrection bodies, that they are subject to the continuing power of death, not only in their mortality (Rom 8:21, 23), but also in the form of pain and suffering (Rom 8:17-18), since death will be the last enemy to be defeated by Christ (1 Cor 15:26). Believers also continue to experience trial and temptation from the flesh (Rom 8:12; 13:14; Gal 5:13, 16-17; 6:8; see 1 Cor 10:13), so that believers remain “in danger of succumbing to the flesh” and in particular to the danger of the power of sin in the flesh which always threatens to retake them as its captives (Dunn, *Theology*, 480).

Dunn, however, views Rom 7:14-25 not as a potential in the lives of believers, if they live κατὰ σάρκα, but as the continuing reality of their lives, so that the deliverance from the body of sin “will happen only at the resurrection of the body” (Dunn, *Theology*, 480). Thus captivity to sin in the flesh is not a mere potentiality, danger, or threat, but the reality of their existence, from which there is no escape until the *eschaton*. Dunn views the sinning of believers as an inevitability, so that the deliverance effected by the Spirit from the law of sin and death in 8:2 becomes a fiction and one wonders how the situation is any better than under Torah. What is the “already” in Dunn’s understanding of Paul? And how is Paul’s understanding of existence κατὰ πνεῦμα any advance over life ὑπὸ νόμον, which is clearly implied by Rom 6:14-15? Dunn asserts that “the point is not the battle has been won, but that the battle has been joined” (Dunn, *Theology*, 478). Does this mean, however, that the Jew under Torah has not been and is not engaged in any serious battle with sin? The battle was joined long before the death and resurrection of Christ, at least from the time when the law had been given through Moses, if not before. The battle with sin had reached a standstill, and the law was unable to break the standstill due to sin’s subversion of it, whereas the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ has provided the decisive element that has turned the tide against the power of sin. The Spirit does not enable the joining of the battle, but has already won the decisive battle and reclaimed the territory occupied by sin. What believers must do is believe it and live as if this were actually true. Romans 7 does remain a very real danger for the believer, if they define themselves according to the flesh, if they do not perceive that their real identity is Christ, but Romans 7 does not represent a necessary side or aspect of the believer’s life in Paul’s view.

initially participated in the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism (Rom 6:4-5), so the believer is called to continue to crucify any self-identification with the fleshly domain and any desires and deeds that might issue from any identity according to the flesh (“Put to death the deeds of the body”; Rom 8:12). The body in this verse refers to the self-identification of the believer in any terms having to do with this present world, the realm of flesh and not in terms of Christ, the Spirit, and God. As believers find their identify more and more in the realm of the Spirit, the Spirit of the indwelling Spirit of Christ produces an increasing conformity to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29). Elsewhere Paul describes believers “with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18, ASV). We look in a mirror in order to look at ourselves, to obtain a realistic picture of ourselves. But here Paul has believers looking in the mirror and they behold Christ: as their self-understanding is transformed into that same image, that is, Christ himself, so their lives are transformed into the image of Christ himself, but only in so far as they understand this, see this and believe this. At the present believers see through a mirror dimly, but at Christ’s appearing “we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). Although full conformation to the image of the Son thus awaits the eschaton (8:29), believers are presently being conformed to the person of the Son, who embodies the law in his person as the image of God (8:29).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In Romans 8, Paul presents a portrait of a transformed humanity in whom the law has been internalized by means of the Spirit. Torah itself has been transformed from an external letter, written merely on stone, into the indwelling Spirit of Christ, who as the living law now fulfills the law in and through them. This transformed Torah (“the law of the Spirit of life”) is intimately linked with the transference of humanity from flesh to Spirit and with the transformation of Christ himself from flesh to Spirit in his death and resurrection (Rom 1:3-4). The πνευματικός Torah (7:14) could only be internalized if humanity were transferred into a new cosmological realm, since the written letter was weakened in the cosmological realm of the flesh.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the written letter could not protect the boundaries of the body, both personal and social, against the invading usurper of sin, because it was πνευματικός (heavenly) and humanity was fleshly, enslaved under sin's power. Since sin apparently could not be expelled by any means available within the divinely given Torah, the only solution is to kill the body in order to destroy the infecting agent of sin. This destruction was accomplished in the microcosmic death of the body of Christ in which the macrocosmic body of sin was destroyed *in nuce*. The resurrection of Christ's body according to the Spirit (Rom 1:3-4) transfers believers into the cosmological realm of the Spirit, so that now they are indwelt and operated by the Spirit of Christ rather than by the spirit of enslavement to sin (Rom 8:15). Because Christ has been exalted to heavenly and cosmic lordship over the universe as a result of his resurrection (1:3-4; Phil 2:9-11), he is now the living animate law (ἔμψυχος νόμος). Since he is also identified as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45, see 2 Cor 3:17), the Spirit of the risen enthroned Christ is the means by which that law is internalized into believers. The Spirit of Christ manifests the law-character of Christ within the mortal bodies of believers, if they walk in light of Christ's death and resurrection as those who have been raised from death to life, that is, if they walk according to the Spirit (Rom 6:13, 8:12-13). Thus the law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh (8:4). The indwelling Spirit of the risen and exalted Christ thus answers the threat of sin to Paul's symbolic universe that the written Torah could not resolve.

## Conclusion

This study opened with the observation that many recent interpretations of Paul's view of the law have neglected or rejected Romans 7:1-8:13 as significant for his thought regarding Torah. In consequence, scholars such as Stendahl, Sanders, Dunn, Wright, Gaston, Stowers, Thielman, and Westerholm have not perceived the sociological significance of this passage as a witness to the transformation of Paul's symbolic universe that resulted from his "apocalypse" of Christ. These recent approaches have difficulty explaining why and how Paul, apparently satisfied with his life under the Torah (Phil 3:3-6), could then express such concepts as being put to death to the Torah (7:4), and the weakness of the Torah as subverted by sin (Rom 7:7-25), and in the same context affirm the law's spiritual nature (7:14) and reaffirm the law in some sense as the "law of the Spirit of life." To interpret Romans 7:1-8:13 as merely the end result "of repeated attempts to explain the purpose of the law in God's plan" now that Christ has come,<sup>1</sup> as Sanders does, does not do justice to the sociological context of Paul's thought here. As we have seen, however, the plight represented by Romans 7:7-25 is rooted not just in a theological conundrum but in the twin sociological threats that Paul perceived in Israel's disobedience to Torah and in the Gentile cultural and political oppression that was both the cause and consequence of such sin.

Hence I have not simply presented a theological exegesis of these chapters of Romans, but rather a sociological analysis of the origins of the change in Paul's theological convictions regarding Torah and of the function of those beliefs within his symbolic universe. The use of such method reflects my conviction that theological beliefs cannot be appropriately understood apart from their sociological context. In some way Paul's pre-conversion symbolic universe was threatened beyond the ability of that universe to legitimate itself in Paul's mind. Having been presented in his "apocalypse" of Christ with a superior means (at least in his perception) to legitimate his Jewish symbolic universe, Christ replaced Torah as the central organizing symbol. In this manner Paul's Jewish symbolic universe was reconstructed around a new center, and all his other beliefs and convictions were redefined in terms of this new center.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, *PLJP*, 79.

Thus Romans 7:7-25 testifies not just to a real issue in the Roman churches; it also testifies to a pre-conversion plight. Older approaches which view this passage as a statement about Paul's frustration in keeping the law prior to his conversion<sup>2</sup> have rightly been rejected. Yet even if he himself had no personal struggle to keep the Torah, as Philippians 3:6 apparently indicates, nevertheless this does not exclude the possibility that prior to his conversion Paul was deeply concerned about a sociological plight, that is, the threats that Gentile culture and political domination posed to the purity of Israel. In fact it is likely that Paul's pre-conversion symbolic world was deeply threatened, as his zeal to preserve the boundaries set by Torah around Israel indicates. Among these threats was the proclamation of and devotion to Jesus as the exalted messianic king by the early Jewish Christian community.

In the first chapter it was asserted that it was precisely Paul's pre-conversion opposition to the message of the exalted Christ on the basis of the Torah that led to his distinctive view of Torah after his conversion. Other early Christian leaders and teachers never perceived any conflict between Christ and Torah; Christ was simply added to their Torah-centered faith. Paul, however, perceiving a conflict before his conversion, continues to do so afterwards. The roles of Torah and Christ are almost inverted.<sup>3</sup> But Torah is not simply rejected, as Christ was. Like all converts, Paul took elements of his previous symbolic universe and transformed them into a new pattern. In other words, *Paul did not reject Torah, he transformed it* into the living and indwelling spirit of the exalted Christ, perceived as the eschatological fulfillment of Ezekiel's promise to put God's spirit within his people to cause them to keep his laws. This sociological transformation of Paul's Jewish symbolic universe reconstructed around Christ helps explain both the continuity and discontinuity of Paul with the Law and his Jewish heritage generally. Paul's relationship to the Law and Judaism is neither one of pure discontinuity or continuity, but of transformation.

The first chapter laid the christological basis for this transformation. It was argued there that Paul took an early confession of the church and changed it in light of his experience of the exalted Christ in his vision. Specifically, the transformation of Christ from flesh to Spirit is the distinctive contribution of Paul to this confession. This

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., A. Deissmann, *Paul*, 66, 79, 91.

<sup>3</sup> As Gager, "Notes," 700, asserts.

transformation of Christ from the earthly to the heavenly sphere forms the paradigm for his transformation of Torah from letter to Spirit. The two are inseparably related. The first chapter also addressed how this vision of the transformed exalted Christ addressed the threatened and precarious nature of Paul's pre-conversion symbolic world. More specifically, Paul's encounter with the early Christian community and its proclamation, as well as his apocalypse of the exalted Christ provided a resolution to the interconnected plights of Gentile political and cultural domination, as well as the threat they posed to the purity of Israel. In that early proclamation and in Paul's vision, Jesus was portrayed as the enthroned Lord of the cosmos (see Phil 2:9-11), in contrast to the Roman emperor, who held sway only over the earthly realm. Moreover, as Davidic Messiah and Lord, the homage of the nations was rightfully his, and the threat of the "Gentile outsider" could now be overcome through their submission and faith in him as the Messianic Lord (Rom 1:5). Finally, the exalted enthroned Christ provided an answer to the problem of Israel's faithlessness and disobedience to Torah. Since Paul's revelation of the Son was in him (ἐν ἐμοί, Gal 1:16, see 2:20), the exalted and now indwelling Spirit of Christ provided a resolution to the problem of faithlessness and disobedience that the written law (γρόμμα) could never accomplish. In other words, the exalted Christ provided, in Paul's perception, a superior legitimation of his symbolic universe, less susceptible to the threats of sin, death, and the Gentiles.

In the second chapter it was argued that the law was transformed from letter to Spirit. The letter/Spirit contrast in Paul derives from a variety of sources: a christological reinterpretation of the prophecy of the Spirit being put in the hearts of the Israelites so as to move them to obey the Torah (Ezek 36-37), but also the cosmology of Jewish apocalypticism (the flesh/spirit contrast), as well as the contrast of the written law as lifeless letter with the king as living law in Hellenistic ruler ideology. For Paul, the Torah is transformed from the written lifeless letter which is misused by the cosmic power of sin to bring about death into the life-giving spirit of the reigning and exalted Christ. Through his resurrection-exaltation to God's right hand as Son of God in power (Rom 1:3), Christ has become the living law of Hellenistic ruler ideology, and because he has entered into the cosmological realm of the Spirit, he has also become the life-giving Spirit to his people (1 Cor 15:45). Thus the risen and exalted Christ is not merely a living example of the law righteously kept, rather he has become the living

spiritual personification of the law. This identification of the law, the exalted Christ and the Spirit overcomes the inability of an external law written on stone to overcome the sociological and cosmological threat of sin to the community of God's people.

In the third chapter, we explored the cosmological plight of the Torah as letter. Through an extended analysis of the identity of sin in Romans 7, it was determined there that sin has both cosmological and psychological elements, probably representing the hypostatization of a Satanic attribute that has invaded and taken up residence in human flesh. At the same time the element of human guilt/iniquity should not be underemphasized. Because of the law's spiritual or heavenly nature, it is unable to penetrate human flesh and contend with the anti-Torah of sin which structures human nature, and so remained mere written letter. At the end of the chapter I argue that this plight is rooted in Paul's pre-conversion perception of the threat of Israel's faithlessness to the covenant, a sociological threat to his symbolic world.

Finally, it was argued in the last chapter that the sending of the Son into sinful flesh broke through the barrier between the heavenly and earthly realms (Spirit and flesh). In his crucifixion, Christ became identified with the macrocosmic body of humanity indwelt by sin, which was put to death *in nuce*. Thus, when Christ rose from the dead as life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45), he opened up for humanity the possibility of transcending their present fleshly condition even while they remain in the flesh. But not only was humanity transformed (at least proleptically), the Torah itself was transformed into the Spirit (8:2, the law of the Spirit of life). But the Spirit for Paul is christologically redefined. Christ became a life-giving spirit in the resurrection, and this paved the way in Paul's thought for an identification with God's Spirit, which, according to Ezekiel 36-37 was an eschatological promise to Israel. As a result of this identification, the spirit of Christ, the living law could now dwell within believers and cause them to walk in God's ways as Ezekiel had prophesied (Ezek 36:27). So Christ now fulfills the law in and through his people (Romans 8:9-11; Gal 2:20). In this manner the law has been transformed from mere letter subverted by sin, into Christ, the living law and life-giving Spirit. Thus for Paul, the threat of sin to his symbolic universe is overcome by the indwelling Spirit of the exalted Christ, who is the internalized law within his people.

Since I have grounded the transformation of Paul's convictions regarding Torah

in his conversion, this thesis has broader implications for Pauline theology and the origins of Paul's thought generally. His apocalypse of Christ transformed his entire symbolic universe, not only his convictions concerning the role of Torah. Thus the method proposed here could be applied to other convictions and beliefs of Paul, especially his views of Israel and the Gentiles, and his view of God, for example. In addition, the transformation of Paul's symbolic universe reflected in Romans may also be perceived in Paul's other letters, especially those which deal with the issue of the Torah, Israel, and the contrast of old and new (2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians). Finally, the adaptation of Berger's method applied here may be used to analyze any transformation or shift in a symbolic universe represented even within non-Pauline writings of the New Testament, or indeed any religious writing that represents a major shift in religious convictions. Indeed, if it is true that theological convictions cannot be understood apart from their sociological context, then a method such as the one proposed here is necessary to understand more completely the nature and reasons for a change in the convictions of both individuals and communities. More specifically, in analyzing the ways that an individual or community legitimates or fails to legitimate their prior symbolic universe, as well as the ways that the transformed or new symbolic universe resolves the apparent inadequacies, this sociological method can deepen our understanding of their theological beliefs and convictions.

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