

## The Spirit as Taskmaster and Troublemaker in Romans 8

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RICHARD J. DILLON

Fordham University  
Bronx, NY 10458

CHRISTIAN EXISTENCE governed by the Spirit of God was very likely one of the issues in the controversy swirling about the figure of Paul of Tarsus in Rome during the year 57 C.E. The redoubtable missionary and his breed of Christian convert were known in the *Urbs* through migrant representatives (Rom 16:1-15) as well as invidious rumor (Rom 3:8). His critics as well as his friends were regaining their former residences in the capital city, now that the repressive measures of the late Claudian period had presumably expired.<sup>1</sup> The apostle happened to be at the end of the eastern segment of his planned mission circuit (Rom 15:19), and he was anxious to organize a beachhead in the imperial city for his westward sweep to Spain, where he would apparently

<sup>1</sup> I abide by the widely accepted appraisal of sparse documentation made by W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in *The Romans Debate* (ed. K. P. Donfried; rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 85-101, here 92-96; similarly, Peter Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (WUNT 2/18; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987) 4-8; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 14-15, 64-65, 83. The famous decree of Claudius (Acts 18:2) is usually dated in 49 C.E. (pace G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984] 164-71; R. Penna, "Les juifs à Rome au temps de l'apôtre Paul," *NTS* 28 [1982] 321-47, here 331, 343 n. 79), and that emperor's death is usually placed in the fall of 54 C.E. His "decree" will have affected mostly the Jewish Christians involved in the disturbances "impulsore Chresto" mentioned by Suetonius (Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 54-59), and it will have undergone either formal revocation or, more likely, gradual desuetude under the successor, Nero (Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 129).

finish at least the northern semicircle of his mission. The letter to the scattered house-churches in Rome was to be the "visa" for his sojourn, as J. Blank has suggested.<sup>2</sup> Tensions between law-observant Christians, mostly Jewish believers recently repatriated, and a now ascendant Gentile Christian majority were likely to be heightened further by his visit and had to be addressed squarely in the letter. His "visa," therefore, had to combine the features of a personal apologia with those of an appeal for comity between the factions.<sup>3</sup>

The apologetic purpose of Romans is immediately in the open with the letter's "platform" statement in 1:16-17, which C. K. Barrett considers "the 'text' of the epistle."<sup>4</sup> The declaration "I am not ashamed to preach the gospel" is hardly just a formulaic litotes equivalent to "I openly confess the gospel";<sup>5</sup> nor does it merely anticipate the antagonism which, by its very nature, the gospel provokes everywhere.<sup>6</sup> The negative expression, taking up

<sup>2</sup> J. Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," in *The Law of the Spirit in Rom 7 and 8* (Monograph Series of *Benedictina*, Biblical-Ecumenical Section I; ed. L. De Lorenzi; Rome: St. Paul's Abbey, 1976) 73-100, here 77. The decentralized nature of Christianity in Rome during most of the first two centuries has been scrupulously documented by Lampe (*Die stadtrömischen Christen*, part 5), who relies on the characterization *Hausgemeinde* for the pluralistic social organization of Roman Christians (pp. 313-20). On the analogy of the scattered synagogues in the *urbs* in contrast to the centralized Jewish community in Alexandria, see Wiefel, "Jewish Community in Ancient Rome," 89-92; Penna, "Les juifs à Rome," 327-30.

<sup>3</sup> K. Haacker, "Der Römerbrief als Friedensmemorandum," *NTS* 36 (1990) 25-41. Cf. the diagnosis of the letter's occasion and purpose offered by J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 76-80, who adopts and adapts the explanation of W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) 92-104. On the other hand, in the analysis of U. Wilckens ("Über Abfassungszweck und Aufbau des Römerbriefs," in his *Rechtfertigung als Freiheit: Paulusstudien* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974] 110-70, here 119-39), the letter's combination of apologia for Paul's gospel and appeal for unity among believers is correctly assessed, but it is explained one-sidedly in terms of his approaching visit to Jerusalem, without adequate attention to his missionary plans for the "far" West. (This approach is similar to those of G. Bornkamm and J. Jervell: cf. their contributions to *The Romans Debate* [ed. Donfried], 16-28 and 53-64, respectively.) P. Stuhl-macher ("The Purpose of Romans," in *The Romans Debate* [ed. Donfried], 231-42, esp. 236) redresses the balance in favor of the mission project.

<sup>4</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 27. Cf. Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 82.

<sup>5</sup> So, apparently, Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 21-22. Most commentators prefer not to relinquish the negative pathos of οὐ . . . ἐπαισχύνομαι, which was very likely prompted by the prospect just introduced in v. 15: καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι (rightly, H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* [HTKNT 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1977] 42; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* [KEK; 4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966] 51).

<sup>6</sup> This seems to satisfy U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (3 vols.; EKKNT 6; Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978-82) 1. 82; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) 1. 86-87.

from the statement of Paul's eagerness to "preach the gospel" finally in Rome (1:15), "makes far better sense if some in Rome had in fact claimed that he ought to be ashamed of his gospel," which they found to be "in some way discredited and disgraceful."<sup>7</sup> This does not seem to be unwarranted "mirror reading" of a text which, as part of a genuine letter, demands that interpreters do their level best to hear the other end of the conversation.<sup>8</sup> With the apologetic pathos of their introduction the paired statements of 1:16 and 1:17 become a program of the expository chaps. 1-11,<sup>9</sup> but in inverted or chiasmic arrangement: chaps. 1-4 unfold the revelation of "the righteousness of God" which the gospel contains, according to 1:17, and chaps. 5-11 confirm, against doubts now being sown in Rome, that this is a genuine message of *salvation* for Jews and Gentiles alike, just as 1:16 declares.<sup>10</sup> Within this defense of the true *saving* power of Paul's message, then, chap. 8, our subject, should find its place. The chapter's exalted discourse ought to make sense as part of a concerted response to specific objections from Paul's detractors, not simply as something determined by an overall discursive schema which guided the disposition of the letter's parts.

This is where the present author makes bold to join the "Romans debate." He remains convinced that "what *makes* Romans tick" is essentially dependent on "what *made* it tick," and that researching what Paul intended to accomplish

<sup>7</sup> Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 104. His reading is considered hesitantly, but then resisted, by Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 255). Cf. C. K. Barrett, "I Am Not Ashamed of the Gospel," in *Foi et Salut selon S. Paul* (AnBib 42; ed. M. Barth; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 19-41.

<sup>8</sup> The "occasional" hermeneutic of Romans, which identifies its genre with that of the other Pauline homologoumena, has been argued successfully, in our opinion, by J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) esp. 59-93; idem, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990) 39-59. A useful—though a trifle histrionic—alarm over the obstacles and complexities which historical exegesis puts in the way of present appreciation of Romans is sounded by K. P. Donfried, "What Makes Romans Tick," in *Pauline Theology 3: Romans* (ed. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 3-29. Donfried, of course, is a major contributor to the state of the historical question, so he is not about to abandon the method, though his wariness of "mirror reading" comes out several times in this essay (pp. 5, 24 n. 66).

<sup>9</sup> Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 1: 90; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 98-99, 253-55; R. Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in *Romans Debate* (ed. Donfried), 265-77, esp. 268-73.

<sup>10</sup> Among those who have suggested this chiasmic arrangement is J. Dupont, "Le problème de la structure littéraire de l'épître aux Romains," *RB* 62 (1955) 365-97, here 375. The idea of such an arrangement is impugned by U. Luz ("Zum Aufbau von Röm. 1-8," *TZ* 25 [1969] 161-81, here 166) on constricting terminological grounds (e.g., σωτηρία, despite σώζειν in Rom 5:9-10; 8:24) and under the mistaken exclusion of Romans 9-11 from the discursive structure of Paul's apologia. Wedderburn (*Reasons for Romans*) is right to stress the repeated reverberations of 1:16 in the arguments of chaps. 5-11, including the theme of hope in 5:2-5; 8:24-25, 38-39 (pp. 105-8), Paul's rebuttals of the charges of encouraging immorality and denigrating the Law in 6:1-7:25 (pp. 133-36), and the vindication of God's fidelity to Israel in chaps. 9-11 (pp. 136-38).

through what he wrote is the only way of determining how what he wrote cuts across the grain of Christian cultures in the here-and-now.<sup>11</sup> It is not only the “inner logic of the gospel” that accounts for the contents and position of Romans 8, but also some live and pressing concerns of the moment of its writing. The pursuit of these concerns is not a chase after “a past-tense answer to a present-tense question”<sup>12</sup> but is a search for the vital cutting edge of statements which effectively lose their edge when they are blended into the architecture of a *summa doctrinae christianae*.

A single paragraph of Romans, 3:1-8, alerts us to the fact that more than the “inner logic of the gospel” is at stake throughout the document. It shows that the author is a man “with his back to the wall,”<sup>13</sup> clustering in the space of eight verses the potentially devastating objections against his message which could have doomed his mission and cast him adrift as a lonely pariah. The battery of rhetorical questions articulates three basic complaints: (1) that Paul denies Israel’s historic privilege, and so (2) that he proclaims an unfaithful God who has no right to judge people, and (3) that his law-free gospel is, in fact, a “law-less” gospel, a license for self-indulgence and immorality. Of the three complaints, Paul hastens to answer the second one first (in 3:21-4:25); he then gathers all his weaponry to demolish the third (in chaps. 5-8),<sup>14</sup> whereupon he can finally lay the first to rest (in chaps. 9-11). These challenges, and the *challengers* as well, must have been *real* menaces to Paul’s reception in (Jerusalem and) Rome (15:30-32), not merely rhetorical strata-gems for advancing the exposition of his doctrine.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I am parrying Donfried’s arguments in “What Makes Romans Tick,” esp. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Donfried, “What Makes Romans Tick,” 5, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, I, 163.

<sup>14</sup> This means that Paul’s rebuttal of the “blasphemous” accusation he quotes in 3:8 (“let us do evil that good may come of it”; cf. 6:1, 15) is not limited to chaps. 6-7 (*pace* W. S. Campbell, “Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter,” in *Romans Debate* [ed. Donfried], 251-64, here 259-60) but requires chaps. 5 and 8 as its foundation and amplification. Chapter 5 is the “bridge” between the vindication of God’s righteousness in 3:21-4:25 and the true premise used by the blasphemous detractors, the dominion of grace invading that of sin (5:20-21; 6:1, 15). Chapter 8 forges the crucial connection between the moral earnestness of Paul’s message and its indomitable eschatological assurance. Note Campbell’s valuable observation (“Romans III as a Key,” 257-60) that 3:1-8 and 3:27-31 help us locate “the structural center out of which the entire letter is developed,” and the similar comment on 3:1-8 made by J. D. G. Dunn (*Romans 1-8* [WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988] 130).

<sup>15</sup> Blank, “Gesetz und Geist,” 78; Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 115; Campbell, “Romans III as a Key,” 260-62. Luz (“Zum Aufbau von Röm. I 8,” 169, 175) reflects the older “treatise” approach in making 3:1-8 an excursus anticipating far in advance the argument of chaps. 9-11. In an important study of the diatribe form in relation to Romans, S. K. Stowers (*The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans* [SBLDS 57; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981] 119-54) has documented the real-life, experiential basis of the objections volunteered by philosophers

This study is based, accordingly, on a reading of Romans 5–8 as a rounded, concerted answer to the last of the three objections of 3:1–8. In extending this apologetic purpose all the way through the triumphant discourse on the Spirit in Romans 8, we shall be doing what is usually not done by commentators whom the chapter's spectacular theology lures back to the perspective of unfolding Pauline "doctrine."<sup>16</sup> We shall propose that the four chapters constitute a comprehensive defense of the law-free gospel as a genuine way of salvation, giving hope and joy to its adherents amidst their earthly travails, and urging upon them the very highest moral standard of living instead of the anomie with which, no doubt, wayward Paulinists were currently tarring the great Apostle's image. To show how Romans 8 rounds out this two-faceted argument—the truth of the salvation Paul preached despite all contrary appearances, and the moral rigor of his message despite the tenet *χωρίς νόμου* (3:21) that seemed to disgrace it—we shall speak briefly of the continuity between chap. 8 and the argument that builds up to it, and then we shall bear down on the continuity between the portraits of Spirit-*taskmaster* and Spirit-*instigator*, the continuity which unifies the stages of our chapter's discourse.

### I. The Train of Thought in Romans 5–8

The oft-noted symmetry between Romans 5 and Romans 8, and the reprise in chap. 8 of the themes first sounded in 5:1–11, produce the impression of a rounded exposition which completes in its final paragraph what it set out to do in its first.<sup>17</sup> Rom 5:1–11, by way of a conclusion (marked as such by *οὖν*) drawn from the exposition of the law-free gospel in chaps. 1–4, proclaims the security of Christian hope for salvation in the future despite the

who used the form (see esp. p. 177 on Paul himself); nevertheless, Stowers ("Paul's Dialogue with a Fellow Jew in Romans 3:1–9," *CBQ* 46 [1984] 707–22) misleads us on Rom 3:1–8 when he reduces it to a fictitious model debate with Jews—apparently any Jews—presented for the instruction of Gentiles. One does better to balance the fact that the dialogue is "staged" with the fact that both the challenges and the challengers are worrisomely *real* in the Roman situation Paul is addressing. How should we understand otherwise the emotional intensity of 3:8?

<sup>16</sup> Rhetorical criticism is hardly a suitable alternative to this when it prescind from the real dialogue of which the letter is part. This seems to be the case in Jewett, "Following the Argument," esp. 276–77, where "the abstract, doctrinal themes" of the earlier chapters take second place to the "emotional appeals" at the letter's "'high point' or 'climax,'" chaps. 15–16 (the "peroration").

<sup>17</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 13–15; P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie* (FRLANT 112; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 57–60; N. A. Dahl, "The Missionary Theology in the Epistle to the Romans," in his *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977) 70–94, here 88–90 (a synopsis of the parallelism between the two chapters).

prevailing tribulations of the present.<sup>18</sup> Rom 5:12-21, logically connected to the first paragraph by the  $\delta\iota\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$  of 5:12, lifts the first paragraph's self-contained believer's confession onto the level of universal history, involving the entire race of humankind in the eschatological prospect opened by the deed of Christ's obedience. Romans 8, in its turn, follows the same sequence of thought. An exposition of the eschatological outlook for believers, based on the shift of their allegiance to the regime of the Spirit and the status of divine offspring conferred therewith, is reassessed in 8:18-39 in terms of a cosmic solidarity between the Spirit people and the aching universe awaiting redemption with them.<sup>19</sup> What has been gained between the first two-stage definition of Christian hope (chap. 5) and the second (chap. 8) is an understanding of the completely reformed *moral commitment* which results from the new allegiance and becomes its indispensable condition.

Moral commitment has indeed been the agenda of the two chapters separating Romans 5 and 8, and the series of rhetorical questions which move their successive segments—6:1 (“Shall we persist in sin so that grace may abound?”), 6:15 (“Shall we go on sinning because we are not under the Law but under grace?”), and 7:7 (“Are the Law and sin equivalent after all?”)—are restatements of the potentially destructive corollary of a law-free gospel first stated back in 3:8, “so let us go on doing evil that good may come of it!”<sup>20</sup> Paul could defend the truth of the universal salvation he was preaching only if he could show that it did not make God party to immorality and lawlessness.

<sup>18</sup> The old debate about where the structural division lies in the exposition of Romans 1-8—whether at the beginning, the middle, or the end of chap. 5 (see the surveys in Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 1. 181-82; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 96-97)—is hard to settle because of the clearly transitional function of 5:1-11, acknowledged even by those who want to keep it in the greater argument's first section (e.g., Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 1. 17; H. Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung in Römer 8* [WMANT 43; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974] 18). Those who place the first section's caesura after Rom 4:25 insist on the integrity of the argument begun (5:1-11) and ended (8:12-39) in celebrations of the eschatological existence in peace and hope acquired by those delivered from sin's domain (so von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8*, 128, 158-59; H. R. Balz, *Heilstrauen und Welterfahrung: Strukturen der paulinischen Eschatologie nach Römer 8,18-39* [BEvT 59; Munich: Kaiser, 1971] 28-31). Luz (“Zum Aufbau von Röm. 1-8,” 180) wonders, finally, whether the bipartite division of chaps. 5-8 is not ill conceived, since Paul probably did not write with such a hard-and-fast plan in mind.

<sup>19</sup> R. Schnackenburg, “Die Adam-Christus Typologie (Röm 5,12-21) als Voraussetzung für das Taufverständnis in Röm 6,1-14,” in *Battesimo e Giustizia in Rom 6 e 8* (Serie monografica di *Benedictina*, Sezione biblico-ecumenica 2; ed. L. De Lorenzi; Rome: Abbazia S. Paolo fuori le mura, 1974) 37-55, here 41. Cf. von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8*, 158-59; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 243; and on 5:12-21, see C. H. Giblin, “A Qualifying Parenthesis (Rom 5:13-14) and Its Context,” in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of J. A. Fitzmyer, S.J.* (ed. M. P. Horgan and P. J. Kobelski; New York: Crossroad, 1989) 305-15, here 312-13.

<sup>20</sup> Luz, “Zum Aufbau von Röm. 1-8,” 175; Campbell, “Romans III as a Key,” 259-60; Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 133-35.

So in the reprise of the schema of chap. 5 in chap. 8 the apostle has filled the schema with indispensable new content on which his reputation depends very, very heavily.

The apocalyptic nexus between individual and cosmic salvation,<sup>21</sup> the rationale of the symmetry between Romans 5 and 8, is what gave Paul his answer to the charge that his gospel was promoting immorality because it was free from the Law. The dualistically conceived spheres of power to which we are introduced in chaps. 5–8—Sin and Grace, anomie and righteousness, flesh and spirit—are the cosmic projections of those irreconcilable contestants for personal allegiance of which every believer is vividly aware. The connection between personal and cosmic dimensions can be observed by comparing Rom 5:8, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” and 5:20, “Where Sin flourished, Grace waxed all the stronger.” Right in the territory of Sin’s regime a new sovereignty invaded and took root when Christ died for the guilty. It is the old adage of the two masters, of course, that you cannot serve the one and the other; and so Paul could rest his case on the proverb that Jesus used (cf. Rom 6:16; Matt 6:24 || Luke 16:13). Still, the spatial convergence of the two realms, and the fact that the dominion of Grace advances where once the tyrant Sin reigned unchallenged, mean that the change of allegiance, effected sacramentally in Baptism, remains insecure and embattled. The new Adam’s conquest must alternately be stated as a fact and be urged as an unrelenting struggle; thus, we have the trademark Pauline dialectic of indicative and imperative which energizes Paul’s defense of his gospel’s moral seriousness in chap. 6.<sup>22</sup>

The celebrated portrait of the divided ego in chap. 7 reminds us that it was the gospel’s revelation of God’s justice “without the Law” which led critics to challenge both its ethical corollary and the fidelity of the God whom it portrays renouncing the Torah.<sup>23</sup> Taking the change of circumstance between Galatians and Romans into account, one can ponder the suggestion that Paul the apologist was prompted to mollify substantially in Romans the criticism of the Law in Galatians in which Paul the polemicist had registered such

<sup>21</sup> Schnackenburg, “Adam-Christus Typologie,” 41, 46–48; cf. Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 38; Beker, *Triumph of God*, 26–27; idem, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 36–38; E. Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Röm. 5,12–21 (1. Kor. 15)* (WMANT 7; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962) 235–47, esp. 260–64.

<sup>22</sup> See G. Bornkamm, “Taufe und neues Leben bei Paulus,” in his collection *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (BEvT 16; Munich: Kaiser, 1963) 34–50, esp. 34–35; Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 275–78.

<sup>23</sup> “Only a capricious false god . . . would fit a message of libertine morality, a completely irrational, untrustworthy god” (Blank, “Gesetz und Geist,” 78; cf. Wedderburn, *Reasons for Romans*, 123).

radical antinomies.<sup>24</sup> Whereas in Galatians the Law was practically an expression of the hostile world powers (Gal 4:9) and was itself the bailiff of Sin's regime (Gal 3:23-24), here in Romans Paul is at pains to ward off the idea that the Law ever entered the service of any sovereign other than God. After the energetic *μη γένοιτο* in response to the question "Is the Law itself sin?" (Rom 7:7), Paul declares it "holy . . . just . . . [and] good" (7:12), even "spiritual" (*πνευματικός*) by contrast to the "fleshly" (*σάρκινος*) disposition of the ego struggling under it (7:14). At this point, new names have been given to those antagonistic powers which make the difference in human striving, and the way is prepared for the arguments of chap. 8. We learn that it was not God's Law that failed but that human beings governed by it failed to please God because the power of "the flesh" commanded their allegiance.<sup>25</sup> "Flesh" is understood, of course, as the sphere of influence generated by human ungodliness, the "house" in which Sin comfortably resides. Its antinomic opposite, therefore, is not "spirit" as anthropological constituent but the powerful *Spirit of God* which invades and besieges the fleshly domain (see esp. Gal 5:17). As D. Zeller explains, the Greek division between human faculties—mind and members, say, as in Rom 7:23—has been overlaid with the Old Testament and Jewish antinomy between the spheres of God and humanity.<sup>26</sup>

The bridge between chaps. 7 and 8 is the astonishing paragraph 8:1-4 in which Paul declares the dramatic change of regime for believers in Christ.

<sup>24</sup> Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 104-8; idem, *Triumph of God*, 554-59; Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 79, 81-82; Wilckens, "Über Abfassungszweck und Aufbau," 160; idem, *Brief an die Römer* 1, 47-48; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984) esp. 53-55; 59-60. Hübner is more interested in the maturation of "Paul the theologian" and less inclined to factor the new circumstances of Romans into the case made in the letter, though he does speak of "a far from trivial process of development in Paul the theologian—a process which would be understandable even as a response to Jewish-Christian objections to his understanding of *nomos*" (p. 54). The texts seem better respected when they are understood this way than they are when hopeless self-contradiction, brought on by Paul's wars with the Judaizers, is posited in his statements on the Law (so H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* [WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1983] esp. 201-2, 256-69). F. Hahn ("Das Gesetzesverständnis im Römer- und Galaterbrief," *ZNW* 67 [1976] 29-63) relativizes Galatians as a polemical product of circumstance, while he makes Romans a mature testamentary treatise and insists that "the inner unity of Paul's understanding of the Law" survives in both letters.

<sup>25</sup> Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 79.

<sup>26</sup> D. Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer* (RNT 5; Regensburg: Pustet, 1985) 135. F. W. Horn (*Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur paulinischen Pneumatologie* [FRLANT 154; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992] 274-81) contends that the characterization of flesh and spirit as warring powers is original with Paul, but that it responds to the dualistic estrangement of divine and human realms which arose in Jewish thinking under Hellenistic influence (p. 278). Wilckens (*Brief an die Römer*, 2, 67-68) agrees with E. Brandenburger (*Fleisch und Geist: Paulus und die dualistische Weisheit* [WMANT 29; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968]) in seeing fuller Hellenistic-Jewish parentage of Paul's thought in this respect.

He has previewed this change at Rom 7:5-6, before his exposition of the divided ego: "While we were under the rule of the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the Law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that which held us captive, so we now serve in the newness of the Spirit and no longer under the old written code." If Rom 7:7-25 was the explication of the first sentence of this pair, Rom 8:1-17 will unpack the second, in which the Spirit's newness (καινότης) is nothing less than the καινή κτίσις in Christ proclaimed at 2 Cor 5:17.<sup>27</sup>

## II. The Integrity of the Spirit's Functions in Romans 8

We propose that Romans 8 should be read not as the next step in expounding the "inner logic of the gospel" but as a continuation of the dialogue between the apostle and his critics—or more accurately, between him and a community in which his critics were on one side of a polarizing dispute about him. In order to continue to hear both sides of the dialogue, we should be attentive to certain points of emphasis and inner tension in the text which are frequently overlooked. The points of emphasis and tension will usually pertain to the two principal roles assigned to God's Spirit in the course of the chapter. They are not the preferred roles of wonder-worker, consoler, and bestower of rapture, though language that suggests such roles is surely to be found here. At the forefront, instead, are the roles of guide and instigator of Christian *moral conduct*, the way of living which testifies to the coming age in the midst of the present one. "Taskmaster and troublemaker," our title has it. In Romans 8 Paul has to deliver the final *coup de grâce* to that hurtful accusation of 3:7-8 which has remained on his mind over the three chapters that have built up to this one as to a climax.

### A. Romans 8:1-4

The dauntingly complex bridge paragraph, 8:1-4, confirms a friendlier view of the Mosaic Torah guiding this defense of Paul's ethical standards. From 8:1 ("Now then, there is no verdict of condemnation against those who are in Christ") we learn that for those who have been transferred to Christ's realm,<sup>28</sup> the desperate plight of the "I" in chap. 7 lies in the past. Now, in

<sup>27</sup> Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 87-88. On Rom 7:5-6 as an example of Paul's use of titular sentences (like 1:16-17; 3:21-22; 10:4) to sound the themes of ensuing sections of text, see Luz, "Zum Aufbau von Röm. 1-8," 166-67, 172, 177.

<sup>28</sup> Ἐν Χριστῷ has local rather than instrumental meaning for sure (cf. Gal 3:28). The very difficult question of the sequence of ideas from 7:25 to 8:1 has prompted theories of interpolation about both verses, but these are solutions of convenience which have no support at all in the

support of that assertion, Paul, in 8:2, can register his triumphant answer to the tormented cry of 7:25, "Who will rescue me from this death-bound body?"<sup>29</sup> What surprises us is that we do not hear, "the *Spirit* of life in Christ Jesus has freed us," but "the *law* of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the law of sin and death." Can Paul be making the Mosaic Torah the agent of liberation, the Torah which was once the warden of our hopeless confinement? Or is he invoking some transferred sense of νόμος in which, as Käsemann contends, "the law of the Spirit" means "nothing other than the Spirit himself in his ruling function in the sphere of Christ"?<sup>30</sup>

The antithesis in 8:2 plainly echoes the two *nomoi* of 7:23, one in the mind, the other in the members. Are these dialectical perspectives on the revealed Torah,<sup>31</sup> or are they only pungent metaphors stressing the uneven conflict between the ego's warring impulses?<sup>32</sup> Stuhlmacher contends that they echo the dialectic in Jewish thought between the Torah of Sinai and the eschatological or messianic Torah, the latter freed from Sin's clutches to be written on the heart and obeyed spontaneously.<sup>33</sup> Those who maintain that

manuscript tradition. P. Stuhlmacher (*Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Louisville: Westminster-John Knox, 1994] 113-14) defends the authenticity of both and claims that they reflect the Jewish scholastic tradition of summarizing sections of teaching with terse aphoristic statements (in that case, 7:25b would summarize 7:7-24, and 8:1 would anticipate chap. 8). On the logical sequence between chaps. 7 and 8 forged by 8:1, see E. Lohse, "Zur Analyse und Interpretation von Röm 8,1-17," in *The Law of the Spirit in Rom 7 and 8* (ed. De Lorenzi) 129-46, here 132-33; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 237. According to Wilckens (*Brief an die Römer*, 2. 119), κατάκριμα depicts the plight of the fallen ἐγὼ under the Law (7:7-23), and οὐδὲν . . . κατάκριμα connects with the titular statement of 7:6.

<sup>29</sup> The immanent perspective of 7:7-24 could only warrant the answer No one! (Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2. 95).

<sup>30</sup> Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 215-16. For a review of the issue and a more nuanced version of Käsemann's view, see H. Merklein, *Studien zu Jesus und Paulus* (WUNT 43; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987) 85-92.

<sup>31</sup> Hahn, "Gesetzesverständnis," 45-47; Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2. 89-93.

<sup>32</sup> Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 205; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 142. Cranfield (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1. 364-65) prefers a position in the middle: he recognizes "the law of the mind" as the law of God, and thus the Torah, as 7:22 seems to require, but he maintains the metaphorical sense of "power, authority, control . . . exercised over us by sin" in the "other law."

<sup>33</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter*, 122-28; see pp. 117-19 on 8:2; see also P. Stuhlmacher, "The Law as a Topic of Biblical Theology," in his *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 110-33, here 123-28. Stuhlmacher insists, however ("Law as Topic," 126), that it is "an oversimplification and not really illuminating" to maintain that Paul always speaks of the one Mosaic Torah when he uses the word *nomos* (as Wilckens holds). "The 'torah of Christ,' as 1 Cor 9:21 clearly shows, is not identical with the Mosaic Torah, but in it . . . the intention of the Torah from Sinai reaches its goal and the love command, deepened to include love for enemies, together with the fundamental demands of the Decalogue are required as valid expressions of God's will."

one and the same Mosaic Law is referred to in all these instances do make several estimable arguments: (1) the Law was declared to be πνευματικός in 7:14, despite the fallen condition of its subjects; (2) in 8:4 the finality of Christ's mission is determined as the fulfillment of the just demand of the Law among his new Spirit people (the historic Torah is surely meant here); (3) it is difficult, as Wilckens has said, to find comparable uses of the word *nomos* in the transferred sense of competing "norms" or "orders" which exegetes usually find in 7:23 (and 3:27).<sup>34</sup> The issue is daunting, to say the least.<sup>35</sup> Even if we admit that the death of Christ has taken the Torah out of the hand of the slave master Sin, can we really understand the Torah as the subject of ἐλευθέρωσεν in 8:2 after the analogy of the *freed* wife has been applied in 7:4 to all who have "died to the Law through the body of Christ," and after "dying to that which held us captive" has been added in 7:6? Without some expedient like the distinction between the historic and the eschatological Torah, it hardly seems possible to avoid the thought that within a single chapter in Romans Paul openly contradicted himself on the relationship of Law and Spirit.

Nevertheless, an important point about the "new-age" Spirit is firmly established even if we cannot settle the question of its relationship to the Torah of Moses. At very least, "the law of the Spirit" is an argumentative paraphrase of "the Spirit," analogous to "the law of faith" in Rom 3:27, and it clearly gives the Spirit the role of governing power in a new world order and of monitor of the human conduct which proclaims that order. In the purpose clause of 8:4 a hoary metaphor is used to express this "new obedience": "*walking* [περιπατεῖν] according to the Spirit" is said to fulfill the "just demand" (δικαίωμα) of the Torah and, thus, to realize the purpose of the

<sup>34</sup> For these arguments, see E. Lohse, "ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς: Exegetische Anmerkungen zu Röm 8,2," in *Neues Testament und christliche Existenz: Festschrift für H. Braun* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973) 279-87, esp. 285-87 (now in Lohse, *Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments: Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments 2* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982] 128-36, esp. 134-36); idem, "Zur Analyse und Interpretation von Röm 8,1-17," 137-40; Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2. 121-23; von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8*, 226-34; Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, 144-46; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 416-17, 436-37.

<sup>35</sup> Against a *tertius usus legis*, which would mean that the Christian subject rehabilitated by the Spirit can now live under the moral guidance of the Torah, see Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 215-16; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 152; Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1. 374-76; Horn, *Angeld*, 371-74; F. Lang, "Gesetz und Bund bei Paulus," in *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für E. Käsemann* (ed. J. Friedrich et al.; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1976) 305-20, here 318; O. Hofius, "Das Gesetz des Mose und das Gesetz Christi," *ZTK* 80 (1983) 262-86, here 278-84 (= Hofius, *Paulusstudien* [WUNT 1/51; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1989] 50-74, here 66-72).

sacrificial death of Christ (8:3).<sup>36</sup> The antithetical phrases with *κατά* in the purpose clause bring out the *normative* effect as well as the enabling effect of the Spirit's governance; we shall contend that it is the former effect which gets the greater emphasis in the argument of 8:5-13.<sup>37</sup>

### B. Romans 8:5-13

In 8:5 the foregoing purpose clause is explicated with a rule of thumb declaring that the modes of existence "according to the flesh" and "according to the spirit" are distinguished by opposite goals or policies of human conduct (*φρονεῖν*). This means that the basic allegiance of every human life is declared unmistakably by its moral commitment.<sup>38</sup> One of the inner tensions of the text appears in the simultaneous play of the *normative* and the *empowering* functions of the Spirit in this paragraph. In 8:5-8 the assertion of the Law's incapacity is taken up from 8:3a (*ἀδύνατον*), just as "walking according to the Spirit" in 8:4 will be explicated in 8:9-11. Even though the Law was *πνευματικός* (7:14), the superior power of "the flesh" over the lives of its subjects made it unable to deliver life and salvation according to its promise.<sup>39</sup> "The human subject under the dominion of the flesh can only behave in an ungodly way," according to 8:7-8, for its moral resolve (*φρονεῖν*) "is earmarked for enmity with God and death."<sup>40</sup> This is why the change of regime had to bring an empowerment, and indeed an insight into the whole predicament of those under the Law, which did not exist before.

On the other hand, Käsemann ignores the dialectical moment in Paul's argument when he insists, on the basis of Paul's resolute conviction of "the *extra nos* of grace," that the Spirit in Romans 8 is uniformly the enabling

<sup>36</sup> "Those who walk according to the spirit rather than according to the flesh" is matched by such expressions as "walk in the newness of life" (Rom 6:5) and "serve in the newness of the spirit" (Rom 7:6), each a statement of the finality of Christ's redemptive act (von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 233). On "the law of the spirit of life" as expression of the new world order and rule of conduct rather than a proper reference to Torah, see also Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 238-39.

<sup>37</sup> In agreement with G. Haufe, "Das Geistmotiv in der paulinischen Ethik," *ZNW* 85 (1994) 183-91, esp. 188-89.

<sup>38</sup> Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2. 130.

<sup>39</sup> Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 96; Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2. 124. Cf. the different view of von der Osten-Sacken (*Römer* 8, 146-48), who contends that what the Law could not do is expressed in the final clause of 8:4: it could not enable people to fulfill its own demand. The more natural reference, however, is the *ἐλευθέρωσεν* just spoken in 8:2. It is true, nonetheless, that 8:5-8 explicates the negative picture of the Law's frustration under the dominion of the flesh: "those who live under the flesh [*ἐν σαρκί*] cannot please God" (*ibid.*, 152).

<sup>40</sup> As von der Osten-Sacken (*Römer* 8, 235) puts it.

Pneuma, "the power of miracle and ecstasy."<sup>41</sup> "For him," Käsemann declares, "the body was never a subject in the true sense but a battleground over which we are not the ones who decide."<sup>42</sup> Paul was admittedly a stranger to modern theological cruxes like that of grace versus free will, but this overstatement risks losing track of our chapter's line of argument altogether. In 8:5-13 the paraenesis of flesh versus spirit in Gal 5:13-26 is resumed both thematically and terminologically, with the antithesis between life in the two spheres driving the argument in both texts from the indicative mode to the imperative.<sup>43</sup>

The *indicative* gets potent statement in Rom 8:9-11, but the conditional clauses there already prepare for the shift at 8:12, where "we are debtors" averts the false security and presumption of the "spirit people" whom the rest of primitive Christendom closely associated with Paul and his churches. The alternation of the expressions "spirit of God," "spirit of Christ," and "Christ in you" in 8:9-10 makes it clear that "the Spirit" is code for the powerful presence of the resurrected Christ and the exertion of his sovereign rule among his faithful, for whom it can be said simply that "the Lord is the Spirit."<sup>44</sup> The one-dimensional exploitation of this language among Paul's converts at Corinth had led to the misconception of the resurrection and the Risen One in disembodied spiritual terms, and to the kind of elitist spirituality which regarded the final union of Christ with his own as a union already realized within the segregated society of the πνευματικοί.<sup>45</sup> There is perhaps an echo of the exclusivism of Paul's spirit people here in 8:9c, where something like an inspired "sentence of holy law" declares that only those who

<sup>41</sup> Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 212-13; idem, "The Cry for Liberty in the Worship of the Church," in Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 122-37.

<sup>42</sup> Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 226. Cf. the sounder appraisal by Horn (*Angeld*, 281): the struggle between flesh and spirit does not reduce the human subject to the passive condition of "battlefield" for the contest; rather, "the believer's decision is inseparably connected to the opposition between flesh and spirit." The responsibility of each person for the decision to serve the one power or the other is the basis of the shift in the present paragraph from the indicative to the (implied) imperative (8:12-13).

<sup>43</sup> See Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 66-68; Horn, *Angeld*, 279.

<sup>44</sup> See von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 232-33; Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 88.

<sup>45</sup> In this diagnosis of the wayward soteriology of the Corinthian enthusiasts, Horn (*Angeld*, 219-62) is in basic agreement with the recent studies of G. Sellin (*Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung von 1. Korinther 15* [FRLANT 138; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986] and of A. J. M. Wedderburn (*Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background* [WUNT 44; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1987]), both of whom trace the spiritualized vision of the resurrected Christ and disposition against bodily restoration (1 Cor 15:12-19) to the influence of Apollos and the Hellenized Jewish theology of Alexandria which Apollos brought to Corinth. Cf. the qualified endorsement of this in Horn, *Angeld*, 258-62.

have the spirit of Christ actually belong to him. Such a "boundary statement," if it is indeed the expression of the spirit enthusiasm begotten in the Pauline churches,<sup>46</sup> would more likely have drawn the boundary between the pneumatic elite and the rest of the church than between the church and the world. As Paul uses it, however, amid the series of conditional clauses leading up to 8:12, it suggests the boundary between those who *act* according to the promptings of the Spirit and those whose deeds are dictates of "the flesh," the supposedly bygone allegiance whose only end is death (8:13).<sup>47</sup>

The tensive balance of this discourse is shifted at 8:12 from the indicative to implied *exhortation* by Paul's interpretation of the *praesentia Christi* in terms of the death of the sinful self ("body") under the discipline of the Spirit. The concessive clause of 8:10, "the body, though dead because of sin," becomes a moral imperative at 8:13, again framed as a conditional clause, "if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The pivotal verse, 8:12, which declares that we are "debtors" (ὀφειλέται, meaning "under obligation"), though not to the flesh, which would involve our living by its direction (κατὰ σάρκα), confirms that in this context not only the prepositional phrase κατὰ σάρκα but also the instrumental dative πνεύματι in 8:13 primarily express *normativeness* rather than agency.<sup>48</sup> In a clear adaptation of the indicative-to-imperative inferences of chap. 6, we move from soteriological assertion—that the death stipulated for sinners by the

<sup>46</sup> Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 37-38, 47; Horn, *Angeld*, 232-33, 234-37. Michel (*Brief an die Römer*, 192-93) characterizes 8:9c as a "formula of exclusion" (*Scheideformel*); Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 131, calls it an "excommunication formula," comparable to those of 1 Cor 16:22 and *Did.* 10:6. According to Horn (*Angeld*, 237), a statement of Paul's with polemic overtones is found in 1 Cor 7:40, which seems to presume that "having the Spirit" was considered the distinction of a narrower spiritual elite. Cranfield (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1, 388) has noticed the critical implication of Rom 8:9c in regard to the nominal Christian "whose life bears no evidences of the Spirit's sanctifying work," but "this," he says, "is not the point which Paul wishes to stress here." In our opinion, however, such a critical current running against enthusiasms of the Spirit which fail the test of *deeds* is part of the inner tension of our passage, and this tension is just what the conditional clauses of 8:9-11 are building in preparation for the two following verses.

<sup>47</sup> Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans*, 223) recognizes the critical thrust of 8:9c, but he thinks it is directed against the presumption of "ecstasies and thaumaturgists" to hold a special position in the community; he does not think it has mainly ethical implications.

<sup>48</sup> This is the sense of these constructions generally in Paul's writing, according to Haufe, "Geistmotiv," 188. Cf. πνεύματι στοιζῶμεν in Gal 5:25, resuming the πνεύματι περιπατεῖν in Gal 5:16. See Lohse, "Römer 8,1-17," 136-37. As Cranfield (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1, 394) says, the dative is not to be taken to imply that "the Holy Spirit is to be a tool in the hands of Christians, wielded and managed by them"; On the contrary, "a safeguard against such an understanding is afforded by πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται in the next verse."

Law has been undergone for us by Christ (8:3)—to a stringent moral demand: we must take upon ourselves the fate of the Savior by putting our sinful person to death.<sup>49</sup> This, finally, is what it meant to say that “the just demand of the Law” was to be “fulfilled by us who walk . . . according to the Spirit” (8:4).<sup>50</sup>

The condition for sharing the life of the Risen One, πνεύματι τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε (8:13), is the negative paraphrase of what Paul lists positively in Gal 5:22-23 as “the fruit of the Spirit,” which results from crucifying “the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24).<sup>51</sup> The Spirit, thus, is a “taskmaster” indeed, but one who enjoins integral attitudes and a total comportment, not new regulations to be applied to life casuistically. Accordingly, it is not correct to speak of a cyclonic force of “miracles and ecstasy” that takes my will by storm and stuns me with grace remaining dramatically *extra me*, as Käsemann would have it, since the resumptive clause beginning Rom 8:14 should be rendered “for those who are led by the Spirit,” not “for those who are driven by the Spirit,” as he translates it.<sup>52</sup> After all, as the inner dialectic of our text suggests, Paul was defending the *nova oboedientia* precisely against the complaint that he was unleashing irresponsible, antinomian spirit people on the church. Why, in chap. 8, would he want to make us less fully accountable for the way we “walk” than he unsparingly did in chap. 6?

### C. Romans 8:14-17

A word now about the all-important passage 8:14-17, which yokes the Christian moral imperative of 8:12-13 to the cosmic soteriology of 8:18-27. In according the privileged status of divine offspring to those who are “led by the Spirit” (8:14), Paul is interpreting the promise “you will live” of the preceding verse and is also keeping the moral commitment of the Spirit’s people in focus as the corollary of the cry “Abba,” which is the Spirit-induced

<sup>49</sup> On the mutually interpretive relationship between the “pneumatology” of Romans 8 and the statements with σὺν Χριστῷ in Romans 6, see von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 242; also Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 41-42. The grammatical form of the imperative is not present in 8:12-13, of course, but the imperative is “virtually present” in the declaration with ὀφειλέται in v. 12 and in the conditional sentence of v. 13; cf. Lohse, “Römer 8,1-17,” 146.

<sup>50</sup> See von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 233, 240-41.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>52</sup> Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 226; cf. Michel, *Brief an die Römer*, 194, 196. The majority of commentators are correct in citing the relation to Gal 5:16 and 5:18 (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε) rather than a relation to 1 Cor 12:2-3 as appropriate for our context (so Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 136 [cf. 131-32]; Horn, *Angeld*, 397; Haufe, “Geist-motiv,” 189). Cf. a more moderate view, on Käsemann’s side, in Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 450, 459.

testimony of their adoption.<sup>53</sup> In the sequence of 8:13-14 two temporal perspectives are juxtaposed: the future ("you will live"), and the present ("[they] are God's children"). The present continues in the next two verses ("we cry," and "we are God's children"), but the adoption is restored to the future in 8:23 ("we await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies"). Thus, a new tension will be developed in the remainder of the chapter to match, and perhaps elaborate upon, the indicative-imperative tension of 8:5-13. There is apparently a present experience of divine adoption, but the promise of life is not yet realized, and bodily death is still before us.<sup>54</sup> Here is the eschatological reservation which also accompanied the indicative-imperative dialectic back in chap. 6 ("if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him," 6:8).<sup>55</sup> The tension of time between "shall live" and "are children of God" is resolved in 8:17, where the status of offspring and heirs is modified by an essential condition: "if indeed we suffer with him so as also to be glorified with him." That brief clause, which looks like an afterthought, is really the hinge which coordinates the argument of the two sections, 8:12-17 and 8:18-30.<sup>56</sup>

Our special interest is in the substantial parallelism between two conditions, "if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (8:13), and "if indeed we suffer with him in order to be glorified with him" (8:17c). The future salvation still awaited finds expression in both the apodosis of 8:13 ("you will live") and the final subjunctive of 8:17c (ὅνα δοξασθῶμεν). Do not the two protases, "if you put to death the deeds of the

<sup>53</sup> Cranfield (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1, 400-401) is one of the few commentators to recognize that the theme of "new obedience" (8:12-13) is not interrupted and left behind in the next verse (but see also Michel, *Brief an die Römer*, 197-98; by contrast, cf. Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 159-60). Like the adoption and its certifying cry, the "new obedience" is wrought by the Spirit and is not a human possibility: "The objective occurrence of the cry of abba by individual Christians at worship, as an event wrought by the Spirit, certifies for the entire community their status as divine offspring" (Horn, *Angeld*, 412; see also p. 410).

<sup>54</sup> See von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 134-38.

<sup>55</sup> On the relationship between the eschatological tension of Christian existence and the indicative-imperative dialectic in Pauline discourse, see Blank, "Gesetz und Geist," 85; Bornkamm, "Taufe und neues Leben," 43-47; Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 277-78; E. Käsemann, "The Righteousness of God" in Paul," in his *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 168-82.

<sup>56</sup> Against those who think 8:18-27 has uniquely to do with συνδοξασθῶμεν, von der Osten-Sacken (*Römer* 8, 138-39) states correctly that 8:18-30 explicates the condition of 8:17c as a whole, keeping both aspects of Christian existence in view, the present suffering and the future hope. On the pivotal function of 8:17c (with 8:29) in coordinating the two segments of chap. 8 on either side of it, see also Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 229, 231-32; Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 147, 152; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 150-51.

body," and "if we suffer with him," likewise refer to the same thing? The conditional clauses have, in fact, sustained the same tensive factor from vv. 9-10 over v. 13 to the chapter's pivot, v. 17c. It is the *demand* the Spirit makes on those it introduces to the new world; it is the *nova oboedientia*. And the continuous conditions which impose the demand in this charter statement of the church under the Spirit find their continuation in the motif of "groaning" in the following paragraph—where, as we have said, Paul raises the plane of the discourse from the community of faith to the cosmos at large.

#### D. Romans 8:18-27

In 8:18 the conditional phrase of 8:17c (εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν) is made into a topical statement declaring the surpassing moment of the future glory (δόξα) over the present sufferings (παθήματα). The thesis is then progressively grounded in three stages forming three concentric circles, rhetorically speaking, and coinciding with three sources of the groanings: (1) creation degraded by human sin (8:19-22), (2) believers endowed with the Spirit as first fruits (8:23-25), (3) the interceding Spirit itself (8:26-27).<sup>57</sup> The apocalyptic travails of creation are related, as we know, to the punishment of the protoparents, since God made it share in their retribution (Gen 3:17-18), but also in their hope (Rom 8:21).<sup>58</sup> The groanings are attributed

<sup>57</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 258; also Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 33; Horn, *Angeld*, 295; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 231; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 150-51. The structure effected by the progressive "groanings" is obscured if we make v. 22 initiate the second stage (so Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 147; Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter*, 132). Consecutive γάρ at the beginning of v. 22 connects the verse with what precedes it, whereas the disjunctive οὐ μόνον δέ at v. 23 suggests a new step in the argument.

<sup>58</sup> See Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 40-45 (who includes pseudepigraphical and rabbinic material); A. Vögtle, "Die Schöpfungsaussagen Röm 8,19-22," in his book *Das Neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1970) 183-208, here 194-96; and most of the commentaries. For an apocalypticist's reflection on the fatal connection between the Fall of Adam and the fortunes of the created world, see 4 Ezra 7:11-12: "I made the world for their [Israel's] sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. And so the entrances of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships" (J. H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983] 537). In keeping with this traditional background, but especially because of the phrase ἐφ' ἑλπίδι in the immediate context, God, rather than Adam (or humankind), should be identified as "the one who subjected it" in 8:20, although the use of the accusative after διὰ to express agency is uncommon (rightly, Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 114-15; Vögtle, "Schöpfungsaussagen," 195; also Barrett, Cranfield, Dunn, Fitzmyer, Käsemann, Michel, Schlier, and Stuhlmacher in their commentaries; *pace* Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 41; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 162; Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 154 [who is undecided]).

first to the subjugated creation, fallen humanity's partner (v. 22), then to the Spirit-endowed children of God (v. 23), and finally to the Spirit in its intercessory "translation" of their prayers (v. 26). This sequence makes it clear that the groans are moments of eschatological revelation whose author and instigator is the Spirit; they are not mere echoes of the Hellenistic restlessness of the soul with apocalyptic overtones.<sup>59</sup> As knells of the old world's passing and portents of the redemption that is underway but is not yet completed, they are testimonies of the suffering which the Spirit shares with the creatures whom it must constantly remind of their distance from the goal.<sup>60</sup>

The suffering of believers in the present situation is, accordingly, the *result* of their possession of the Spirit as first fruits and does not belie it. For this reason, we might better resist the concessive sense which exegetes often propose for the participial clause in 8:23, "*although* we have the first fruits of the Spirit." Such a translation compromises the Spirit's responsibility for the restlessness in favor of bringing out the nuance of "pledge" or "surety" in the "first fruits" (cf. 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5).<sup>61</sup> That nuance gets some restraint, in any case, from the explanation of hope's elusiveness which follows in 8:24-25. The duplication of καὶ αὐτοὶ on either side of the clause τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες is admittedly "extremely emphatic," and both are to be construed with the following indicative, στενάζομεν, rather than with the participle ἔχοντες.<sup>62</sup> The "unexpected" element brought out by the doubled καὶ αὐτοὶ, however, is the solidarity of believers with the rest of creation (οὐ

<sup>59</sup> So, rightly Michel, *Brief an die Römer*, 204-5. The background of the expression συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει in Jewish apocalyptic imagery of the last times with their elevated tribulations and "birth pangs," is well known and is routinely cited in connection with this text (see Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 52-53; Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 119; Vögtle, "Schöpfungsaussagen," 198, and the authors of most commentaries, Fitzmyer excepted). Hellenistic echoes of the "groaning" of the soul trapped in the material world, or of humans bemoaning their destiny, or of the earth bringing forth its produce in spring, exerted indirect influence at most on the choice of the two verbs (Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 54; Michel, *Brief an die Römer*, 204-5 n. 6).

<sup>60</sup> See Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 57, 60.

<sup>61</sup> Most exuberant in this respect are Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 264-65, and Vögtle, "Schöpfungsaussagen," 201, the latter speaking of the "strange" (*paradoxon*) and offensive thought that those whom the Spirit has made God's heirs (Rom 8:14-17) should have to share the afflictions of the unredeemed world. The attraction of the concessive reading is felt by many commentators, for example, by Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 237 (who is correct, nevertheless, in saying that Christians do not sigh "because they do not yet have the Spirit totally"); Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 157-58 (who makes room, nevertheless, for the Spirit's causality); Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 510; von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 267-68 n. 25. Exceptional are the explicitly causal interpretations of the phrase by Michel, *Brief an die Römer*, 205; Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 56; Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 473; see also Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 128.

<sup>62</sup> So rightly, Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1, 417. The instability of ἡμεῖς in the manuscript tradition prompts Cranfield to prefer the reading in Codex B, which has it with neither of the two αὐτοὶ.

μόνον [ἡ κτίσις] δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοί) in sighing for their bodily deliverance; the participial phrase expresses the *source* of the groaning “within ourselves” which endorses the exterior testimony of other creatures. Accordingly, in our opinion, the phrase is better left indeterminate (“who have the first fruits . . .”), so that it can support the causal sense as well as any possible concessive sense.<sup>63</sup>

No matter how the numerous other issues of our passage should be resolved, it is reasonably clear that there is thematic continuity between the “groaning” of the Spirit’s people and their “cosuffering with Christ” (8:17c), which is now being explained in terms of their participation in the woes of the last days. But we also observed the connection between the cosuffering and “putting to death through the Spirit the deeds of the body” (8:13). The chapter’s dialectical moment is thus carried forward. The travails of God’s children are the inevitable consequence of their new obedience, which locks them into a state of gnawing, propulsive dissatisfaction with the ways of the unredeemed world. As the Spirit is the goad of their new obedience, so is it the poltergeist of their unrest. As the Spirit inspired their rapturous cry “Abba,” so it provokes the cry of pain that tells of their struggles with the dominion of “the flesh.” In other words, it is as “taskmaster” that the Spirit becomes “troublemaker.” My two homely epithets thus coalesce in one and the same unwelcome agenda for the Spirit of the Risen One in his church.

It is important not to end the discussion of such a dialectically nuanced chapter in a one-dimensional warp. Obviously the keynote of 8:18-39 is the security of Christian faith amidst the toils of its interim situation. The mainstay of this assurance is the Spirit’s “intercession” (vv. 26-27), which is coherently reinterpreted as that of the exalted Christ in v. 34. To this remarkable “hermeneutic” of the uncomprehending prayers of the faithful the expression στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις is attached, furnishing the third knell of the “groan” motif in an obviously deliberate, ascending series. The hope which cannot see its object (vv. 24-25) cannot find the language to pray for it either (v. 26); and so the Spirit “translates” the prayers of beleaguered pilgrims into the language of the realm which is their unseen and unimaginable destination.<sup>64</sup> Like the cry “Abba” in v. 15, the *wordless* groans of the Spirit’s advocacy in v. 26 have reminded interpreters since Origen of the ecstatic forms of worship practiced

<sup>63</sup> In the revised *NAB* this preference is followed, with removal of the older edition’s “although.” This brings the revised *NAB* into line with the *RSV*, the *NRSV*, and the *NEB* in this respect.

<sup>64</sup> On this Pauline version of the Spirit as intercessor, without close analogy in Jewish tradition, and only obliquely related to Mark 13:11 and to the Johannine Paraclete, see Horn, *Angeld*, 418-22; Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 87-91. The Spirit as subject of the verb ἐντυγχάνειν is found only here in the NT; elsewhere the subject is Christ (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).

in some early Christian churches, including specifically the glossolalia spoken at worship in Paul's Corinth (1 Corinthians 14).<sup>65</sup> If Paul does in fact have the gift of tongues in mind here, he has given it a most unusual twist by using the same word, "groans," with which he characterized the unrest of the cosmos and the church in Rom 8:22-23. Now the rhapsodic prayer is a testimony of the weakness and ignorance of the spirit people, not a testimony of their exaltation to celestial society.<sup>66</sup>

Whether Paul intended such a critical allusion to enthusiastic worship or not, the point of our argument remains standing: by making the sighs of the battle-weary universe become a heavenly language capable of naming its hope, the Spirit continues the testimony which secures the community of the baptized under the new dominion mobilized for the final defeat of its adversary Sin, or "the flesh." The ethical contest with "deeds of the body" (8:13) and the suffering of Christ's "coheirs" with him (8:17c) are a sustained counter-current to the flow of the Spirit's munificence among the faithful. Both themes have their moment in Romans 8, but the former is more easily muted. It recalls the hard disciplines and the patient endurance that have to continue under the goad of the One who alone holds the key to the future. Indeed, the rhetorical continuity of the three "groans" makes it clear that authentic Christian "spirituality" is not to be found in retreat from the problems of the rest of humanity and of the physical universe which remains our home. Its nature is perseverance and struggle for the sake of a world that is still distant from the goal which only the prayer of the Spirit can name.

### III. Conclusions, Paul's and Ours

In the chain-linked inferences of Rom 8:28-30 and in the lyrical *tour-de-force* of 8:31-39 Paul brings his defense of the authenticity of his message of salvation to closure.<sup>67</sup> In both concluding passages he retrieves the

<sup>65</sup> Horn (*Angeld*, 294-97) now endorses this widespread opinion; see also Käsemann, "Cry for Liberty," 131; Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 80; Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 122-23; Zeller, *Brief an die Römer*, 163; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Romans 8.26—Towards a Theology of Glossolalia?" *SJT* 28 (1975) 369-77. The view is still vigorously opposed, however, by Schlier, Wilckens, Cranfield, and Fitzmyer in their commentaries (see esp. Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, 1. 421-24; also von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer* 8, 272-74; and less peremptorily, Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 479).

<sup>66</sup> Käsemann, "Cry for Liberty," 134-36; Balz, *Heilsvertrauen*, 91-92. Cf. the similar analyses by the other proponents of this position listed in n. 65.

<sup>67</sup> Wilckens (*Brief an die Römer*, 2. 42, 139) correctly observes that the critics' objection—first recorded in 3:8, then echoed at 6:1, 15—that Paul's gospel encouraged evil deeds in order to promote the triumph of God's grace does not receive its full refutation until the conclusion of chap. 8.

controversial theologoumenon, justification by faith apart from the Law (retrieved in vv. 30, 33-34), which had raised all the doubts in the first place, and he triumphantly proclaims that God's deed "for us" in the expiating death of Christ is what frees us from the fear of condemnation in the coming judgment of our deeds. "Who will bring an accusation against God's elect," indeed, when God has changed the sphere of their allegiance, and when the Spirit who directed their way of living has also translated their groans under its pressures into the divine language of glorification? "Who will render a verdict of condemnation" against those for whom the new sovereign of the heavens intercedes (ἐντυγχάνει in v. 34 appropriately identifying his function with the Spirit's in v. 26)? Even in the chapter's hymnlike peroration Paul keeps sight of the accusation which provoked the four-chapter exposition it concludes: that his law-free gospel was no saving message at all but was a recipe for moral decay and a guarantor of divine condemnation for all who subscribed to it.

In Romans 8, therefore, the tension between the boon and the liability of life under the Holy Spirit is kept before us right to the end. According to Wilckens's excellent summation of Paul's pneumatology, "The Spirit does indeed instill love, joy, peace, patience, . . . (Gal. 5,22), but this has nothing to do with a bourgeois quietude and self-contentment. Often enough it bursts into a high degree of unrest and agitation. . . . The Spirit not only brings bliss and contentment but also breaks through all human fortifications and acts as an unsettling corrective force. Wherever the Church has tried to elude this prophetic, critical, innovative assault, she has had to pay dearly for it in the defection of rebellious spiritual movements which staked their positions outside the Church and against it."<sup>68</sup>

This is one side of the Spirit's coin; on the other is the Spirit's role as supporter and beatifier of the faithful. Through the text of Romans 8 the two sides of the coin are kept together by the gentle tensions between gift and demand, indicative and imperative, future glory and present suffering. We have looked at the darker and rougher side of the coin, not only because it is often underestimated but also because the bright side had been so clamorously touted by the "pneumatics" whom the rest of the Christian world presumed to be "Paul's people." The apostle had to bring that harsher side of the coin with the Spirit as "taskmaster" and "troublemaker" into balance with the more attractive side, so as to convince his critics that the promise of salvation he proclaimed was something genuine and invincible, not a joyride to destruction for gullible neophytes.

<sup>68</sup> Wilckens, *Brief an die Römer*, 2, 141.